

SOCIAL MOBILITY: CURRENT THRUSTS (AND NON-THRUSTS):
A CRITICAL APPROACH TO THE ANALYSIS OF MOBILITY

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"...the most important thing...that we can know about a man is what he takes for granted, and the most elemental and important facts about a society are those that are seldom debated and generally regarded as settled."

(Louis Wirth, preface to Karl Mannheim's IDEOLOGY AND UTOPIA, 1936, xxii, cited in Pease, Form and Rytina, 1970: 127)

In the sections which follow, various aspects of mobility research will be examined, beginning in Section II with a brief summary of various approaches which have been taken. The discussion of the sources and functions of social mobility in industrial societies leads to a discussion of the relationship between mobility and industrialization trends, including changes in the occupational structure. The paper ends with a critique of some of the dominant assumptions and lacks of attention in mobility research. The title of the paper indicates a certain skepticism with regard to any progression to date towards shedding light on the "taken for grantedness" of the mobility researcher's world, which encourages a narrow focus on some elements to the exclusion of others. Some reasons why this is so are suggested in the concluding section.

I INTRODUCTION: THE MEANING OF MOBILITY

The theory of social mobility, Goldhamer informs us in the INTERNATIONAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES, attempts to account for the frequencies in movements of individuals, families and groups from one social position to another. As Moore (1966: 195) notes, such movements may be in terms of location, relative position, sector or industry, in terms of lateral or occupational moves, or in terms of employer. Movements may be intra-generational (career mobility) or inter-generational (change from father's to offspring's status). Clearly, some types of mobility will be of more importance than others when such questions as degrees of opportunity or social inequality are raised.

The subject of social mobility is an element in the more general study of "social selection"--the distribution of people into positions in social structures, with positions in turn varying in terms of three major "scarce and desirable" social rewards: income (or material goods), prestige, and power. Thus, there is a relationship between the stratification system of a society and mobility within it--an "open" class system produces a certain kind and degree of mobility distinct from more closed "estate" systems or nearly rigid caste systems. Different mechanisms or processes

are said to operate in each type, and these types have a relationship to the type of society--agrarian or industrial, and within industrial, whether "market" (capitalist) or "command" (Soviet-type) systems.

Industrialism and its impact on the stratification system and implications for mobility will be examined in Section IV. At this point, however, it is important to note a number of general features of social structures which determine forms mobility will take in different societies. Smelser and Lipset (1966: 8-11) identify three such features: (1) "ascription" or "achievement" as the institutionalized basis of legitimation for movement, implying collective and individualistic bases respectively; (2) the degree to which differentiation in the kinship, religious, economic, and political institutions makes for differential status of individuals among the dimensions of wealth, power and prestige (a high degree of formal segregation existing in highly institutionally differentiated social structures making it easier for individuals to move on the basis of a single role); and (3) the locus of control of sanctions (rewards)--and if in the hands of a few, the degree to which these concentrations coincide in various institutional orders.

Smelser and Lipset (:2) also make the point that economic development (specifically, industrialization) requires more movement, or at least different forms of movement, and that the ease or difficulty of such movements will depend on the social structure of that society--there is an "emerging tension" between the "demands" of the developing structure and the characteristics of traditional structures. Social systems, in their view, have certain "directional tendencies" and certain resources, which are linked by social structure in terms of basic units: roles and social organization (clusters of roles). Systems have "functional imperatives" which must be met if systems are to survive: the economic, political, and "integrative" (norms, values, culture) are basic. These imperatives are interrelated, both in terms of interdependence and also in terms of the way in which sanctions produced in one may be used or involved in complex interchanges in another context, to produce other sanctions (e.g. wealth transformed as power, or education as information). Thus the stratification system must be seen in terms of roles characterized by different (and differential) receipts of sanctions; roles, organizations, individuals or classes may be seen as stratified on the basis of these distributions (:2-7). To the functionalist, stratification (and hence inequality) is both necessary and inevitable if efficiency and survival of the social system are to be assured. Historical and empirical data have at least confirmed the ubiquitousness of stratification.

Parkin (1973: 49) states that "as a rough general estimate, between a quarter and a third of those born into the manual working class in modern Western countries will move into the ranks of the middle class."--and for most of these, as Blau and Duncan (1967) have found, mobility will involve only short-range changes, such as to low white-collar positions, with the less usual cases, Parkin notes, becoming mobile by entry into middle-class professions.

McRoberts' (1975) survey of the literature shows that mobility, whether up or down, occurs in single "steps" (i.e. to adjacent categories) (:7).

Lipset and Zetterberg (1966: 566; first published 1956), using only the statistically crude comparative tools available at the time, concluded that most western industrial societies revealed roughly the same "high" rate as the U.S., but perhaps it would be preferable to say "low" (for obviously, what one regards as evidence of an acceptable rate of mobility will be a normative judgment). (Rates of mobility, however, were not related to differences in income inequality)

These findings have been confirmed by more recent comparisons which show that there is little difference in mobility between countries at different levels of economic development, having different normative orientations or class structures (McRoberts, 1975: 7; from Muller and Kayer, 1973). As for the United States over time, for example, Duncan (1968) concludes that the data to the 1950's tell a "monotonously repetitive story"--no regular increases or decreases in the magnitudes of correlations to be expected if stratification were becoming less rigid since about World War I, that is, no trend either towards increasing or decreasing mobility (:711). Moreover, Blau and Duncan's (1967: 424) findings indicate that manual workers are less likely than others to achieve an occupational status different from that of their fathers. They identify the three major class divisions in terms of manual/non-manual and blue-collar/farm as manifested in inter-generational and intragenerational mobility matrices; the lowest white-collar and lowest blue-collar categories, located just above the class boundaries, apparently serve as channels for upward mobility, while self-employed groups are largely "self-contained" (:422).

II APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF MOBILITY

Perhaps the most striking aspect of mobility research over the decades is how little it has progressed. Duncan, as cited in the introductory section, concluded that the results of his research were "monotonously repetitive"; the same could be said about mobility research in general. Research has been dominated by the questions "What factors affect mobility?" and "How 'open' a society is this?" (or more often, "What is the rate of mobility?"). Some different kinds of questions have recently been raised, but as will be shown in the concluding section, even these have fallen short of the mark in terms of a contribution to a more encompassing understanding of the mechanisms, consequences, and structural-causal roots of lack of mobility, the other side of the coin which comes closer to the heart of questions of inequality, "relative deprivation," and the like.

Goldhamer highlights one objection to the mobility-measurement enterprise:

"...moral and political critiques of society must rest not on distributions of children's status by parents' status.. but on the nature of the processes that produce these distributions." (INTERNATIONAL ENCYCLOPEDIA.. :430)

Obviously, such questions are not contained within the limits of statistical inference--they must be placed there through theory which guides data-gathering and interpretation, and what is included in theory as relevant depends upon the researcher's bias and the bias of the dominant mode of thinking he accepts. What is absent in the theory will not magically appear in the statistics.

Duncan (1968) dates the methodological emphasis on measurement from the 1940's with the publication of an article by Sibley (1942). Up to that time only Cooley and Sorokin had made some contribution to an understanding of mobility. But even Sibley's work had no data on vertical mobility *per se*, only on net shifts in the occupational structure as presumed evidence for past mobility.

Sibley's focus was on structural factors--demography, in terms of immigration and differential fertility, and on the educational system as a mechanism facilitating selection of talent and merit. Between that time and about 1952, most writers were concerned with the "rigidification" thesis--that the opportunity structure of America had rigidified or that people had "lost the belief" in the possibility of mobility. It was not until Natalie Rogoff's 1953 study, with its "methodological elegance," that any significant data was brought forward, according to Duncan; her finding was that there had been no significant changes in mobility rates between 1910 and 1940.

McRoberts (1975: 2-6) defines three main approaches to the study of mobility. These are all approaches at the "macro," societal level, as distinguished from much rarer "micro" approaches such as that of Harrison White in CHAINS OF OPPORTUNITY (1970), in which a mathematically sophisticated "systems" analysis is applied to the mechanisms of mobility within organizational settings involving populations within them. All three "macro" models, the "matrix," "status-attainment," and "life-history" approaches, are essentially mathematical models, relating variables together and searching out statistical associations.

The earlier approach uses a matrix of father's occupation and son's current occupation (father's occupation represented at approximately mid-career by specifying his occupation at the point when the son was 16); the matrix describes the amount of mobility in a society intergenerationally.

The status-attainment approach goes further. Initially developed by Blau and Duncan (1967), the model introduces the variables of father's education, respondent's education, and respondent's first job on completion of education. It attempts to account for factors which contribute to the transformation of son's origin status into son's present status, but also allows for an examination of the relationship between educational attainment and status attainment independent of origin, through the statistical method of path analysis, which also allows the introduction of other factors thought to be relevant (McRoberts :2-6). As Duncan (1968: 681) explains it:

"The rigidity of stratification, in this sense [i.e. intertemporal predictability greater than chance], is measured by the intergenerational correlation or coefficient of association...to be distinguished from the degree of inequality, which refers to the extent of differentiation on a relevant scale of rewards...".

The analysis "places" the present generation on an occupational scale relative to placement of the father, but little more.

Aside from the limitations of the model, a number of methodological problems come to mind: first, the impact of structural change on occupational categories (this is addressed in section IV); second, the question of scaling of positions in terms of whether a "step" from one occupation to another always has the same significance (a point raised by Goldhamer :430 and also by Smelser and Lipset, 1966: 18, particularly in terms of the autonomy and social relations connected with jobs). The Elau and Duncan model appears to be able to deal with the first but not the second objection.

The life-history approach (which McRoberts thinks of not as distinct from but as an extension of the status-attainment model) places its emphasis not so much on inter-generational movement but on the process of intra-generational (career mobility) movements and factors in the opportunity structure (1975: 7). As developed in the later work of Katalie Rogoff (now Ramsøy) in the Norwegian occupational life-history study (1974), the focus is on "the socio-economic life cycle of a cohort" and on the distances between groupings in terms not only of societal goods but "bads" (the distribution of negative rewards such as unemployment, illness, work discomforts, and factors usually labelled "quality of life").

Ramsøy questions "how effective the occupational system is as a transmitter of the rewards involved in the stratification system." (:14), noting that occupational status has been found to account for "relatively little of the variance in income in the United States." (:15). The Norwegian study found it accounted for only 22% of the variance in income (:18). Education and occupational status correlated .70 (slightly less than half of the variance), the highest correlation obtained (:19). Ramsøy also pointed to the possibility in there being a trend towards education bringing a lower monetary return than it did in the past (:22). Although she did not raise the question, a relevant concern of research would seem to be the variance unaccounted for--what is there in the structure of industrial (specifically, capitalist) societies which perpetuates inequality and lack of mobility?

III SOURCES AND FUNCTIONS OF MOBILITY

As mentioned in section I, Sibley's (1942) analysis of mobility focussed on structural conditions, including the demographic "clues" of immigration, which aided mobility of native Americans by injecting a large number of unskilled workers into the bottom end of the labour force, and fertility differentials between the

lower and higher occupational classes, which created a surplus at the lower end who could move up the social ladder to fill places left vacant there due to lower rates of reproduction. Two other sources of upward mobility Sibley identified were continuing technological progress, and the ability of the educational system to outfit people for positions of skill and responsibility. As Sibley suspected immigration and differential fertility might eventually be "dwindling sources of upward mobility," he placed great emphasis on the educational system rather than on the effects of technology for upgrading the labour force, since he also noted the appearance of the offsetting effects of unemployment. He saw the future of technological progress as depending on the "ability of the nation's leaders to readjust political-economic institutions so as to produce a genuine 'economy of plenty.'" (:325), thus preventing political unrest and polarization into distinct classes.

An important mechanism of stratification is intergenerational transmission of status including not only those parental statuses which influence offsprings' opportunities and orientations, such as parental occupational status and educational attainment, but also, as Duncan (1968: 683) points out, such ascribed statuses as racial, ethnic, cultural, or religious group membership. Other factors which affect mobility are inheritance of property, wealth or "intangibles," genetics, socialization, access to opportunities, advantages or handicaps of environment, and something which Duncan calls "differential association," which includes items such as assortive mating, which place constraints on the socialization field or act as limits on access to opportunity (:685).

Causes of mobility identified in the literature may be divided into two types--those which are structural in nature such as demographic factors and occupational structure as related to industrial development, the creation of vacancies; and those which are "individual" in nature: genetic (intelligence, native ability) conditioned by environment, education, training, motivational factors (aspirations to achieve and to be mobile), and valuational (cultural orientations and belief in mobility as a good end) (see Lipset and Bendix, 1959; Goldhamer; Lipset and Zetterberg, 1966; Blau and Duncan, 1967).

It can be argued that much of the latter concern constitutes an "individualistic bias" in the literature, inasmuch as it places a great deal of responsibility for success or failure on the individual rather than on social conditions (as, for example, Lipset and Bendix's 1959: 286-7 statement that "the cumulation of disadvantages at the bottom of the social scale is in large part the result of a lack of interest in educational and occupational achievements" which cannot be attributed solely to the environment but to individuals' defence mechanisms against psychological burdens of mobility). By focussing undue attention only on the characteristics of mobile versus non-mobile individuals qua individuals, attention is drawn away from characteristics of social structures and of social groupings relative to one another--that is, from the relationship between existing social arrangements and social classes, in the Weberian and Marxian senses.

Smelser and Lipset (1966) argue that "status values"--a "strong concern for social mobility in a society"--will contribute to economic growth because those desiring mobility success "will seek ways to maximize resources" (:20). Their distinction, cited earlier, between ascription- and achievement-oriented societies is important here--in societies where emphasis is on ascribed status of people based on kin groupings, "particularistic" rather than "universalistic" standards will tend to prevail, and so impede the workings of meritocratic principles to seek out and elevate talent--principles which are applicable to individuals and not to like groupings. Thus, according to these theorists, "This phenomenon of increasing individual mobility appears to be one of the universal consequences of industrialization" (:12). Blau and Duncan (1967: 430) also express a belief that "expanding universalism" (the prevailing of objective criteria of evaluation of individuals over particularistic and subjective bases of evaluations) are causes of mobility, since such criteria become tied to a concern of individuals with materialistic values and hence to an interest in achievement and efficiency. For technological progress and efficiency to continue, the social system has to be such that "The great potential of society's human resources can be more fully exploited in a fluid class structure with a high degree of mobility" (:431). Hence class lines which restrict mobility are a waste of human talent.

The assertion of the democratizing and politically stabilizing effects of industrialization and hence mobility has been expressed by many writers, among them Blau and Duncan (1967: 439), and also by Lipset and Bendix (1959), although the latter also remark that it is a strong belief in mobility, aside from the actual rate, which has the stabilizing influence (:260). Lipset and Zetterberg (1966: 571) observe that it is strains introduced by thwarted mobility aspirations which predispose individuals towards more extreme political views. They see a consequence of economic development being a potential tension in contradictions between the aristocratic and egalitarian sentiments, where egalitarianism is a characteristic of mature industrial societies.

The functions of mobility are also taken up by Lipset and Bendix (1959: 260-265) in connection with the impact of rapid industrialization creating structural instabilities and disrupting orderly political processes through such factors as conflicts between individual aspirations and kin loyalties, or between emphasis on personal achievement and the management of failure; they speak of the "social and psychic costs" of high rates of mobility. This concern is also expressed by Tumin (1970), who views the emphasis of mass societies on mobility strivings and the success ethic as creating: (1) fragmentation of the social order into status-competing groups each striving to emulate higher groups and shut out lower ones, (2) a move away from the belief in the dignity of work and work for its own sake to a cynical instrumental use of work as a means to the ends of social and financial success, and (3) a "cult of gratitude" among those who are mobile, blunting social criticism and reinforcing an acceptance of the "status quo" (:335-338). Tumin's overriding concern, however, does not appear to be for individuals or for social classes, but rather for social

stability and cohesion of society. Tumin's functionalist (and conservative) concern for the social system makes of individuals merely means for the ends of "system needs," it would seem.

Although Blau and Duncan (1967: 402) identified social origins, career preparation, and first job as important conditions for occupational success, they also argued that it is the "basic structural features" of industrial society which are the source of high rates of occupational mobility, and expressed a faith that technological progress would continue to improve chances for upward mobility by making possible the shift from primary and secondary to tertiary industry (especially in professional and semi-professional services), thus expanding the occupations at the top of the hierarchy, contracting the bottom, and acting as a vehicle for upward mobility (:426-429). This is the thesis of the general upgrading of the labour force which many writers have seen as basic to the process of industrialization, and these remarks will thus serve as a suitable introduction to the critical issues raised in the next section.

IV INDUSTRIALIZATION, SOCIAL STRUCTURE, AND MOBILITY

The assertion of the occupational upgrading of the labour force as a result of advanced industrialism, and the assertion of the increasing homogenization of class groupings arise from two kinds of social structural analysis which are closely related: the "logic of industrialism" model as exemplified by Clark Kerr (see Goldthorpe, 1966: 649; see Ossowski's statement cited in Lipset and Bendix, 1959: 281), and the "post-industrial society" thesis as exemplified by Daniel Bell (see Rinehart, 1975: 83-88). Both of these approaches have been much criticized for their lack of accord with empirical facts, and they will not be dealt with here. However, they both share the "upgrading" thesis in common and it is this aspect which has important implications for mobility theory.

Although Goldthorpe (1966: 651-3) agrees that in general, industrial societies appear to have higher rates of mobility than non-industrial societies, it does not follow that industrial society is in essence "open" or "meritocratic" or that high rates of mobility are inevitable consequences of technology, increasing specialization and the need for talent expressed in the division of labour. He cites two sources of counter-argument: after Kolko and Myrdal, Goldthorpe argues that levelling in some ranges of the income distribution (as, for example, a swelling of the middle ranks) does not mean more equality, since other trends may be operating--the gap between top and bottom may have remained the same or have widened (indeed there is evidence that in some nations, this latter appears to be the case). Moreover, Goldthorpe points out, increased inter-generational mobility as indicated by the data may be associated with an actual limitation on intra-generational, or career, mobility.

Lipset and Zetterberg (1966: 567) argue that the expansion in white-collar positions at the expense of manual creates a "surge of upward occupational mobility to the extent that new industrial labour is

drawn from farm areas." Although they cite a study by Bendix which shows a parallel trend in a number of western industrial countries towards an increase in administrative employees per 100 production workers since the beginning of this century, they give no evidence to support the argument that in general white-collar work represents upgrading, or that a move from farm work to industrial manual work represents upward mobility.

Far from representing upgrading, Rinehart (1975: 86) argues that the swelling of white-collar ranks has not occurred at the expense of manual work but at the expense of farm, and that in 1971 the overwhelming majority of white-collar workers (six out of ten in clerical and sales) were engaged in low-level white-collar work, and that within the category "professional and technical," 70% were semi-professional or technical workers not involved in the complex and challenging "knowledge-work" attributed to them by post-industrial society theorists. Moreover, he indicates there is evidence that people are becoming over-educated for their jobs (:87). An extended argument is made by Braverman (1974) for the increasing "deskilling" of much work which previously demanded higher amounts of skill and thought, through the process of subdivision of tasks and the separation of conceptualization from execution of tasks, with control of conceptualization and execution in the hands of high-ranking members of hierarchies or their agents. Thus, in effect, much of what may appear to resemble mobility from blue-collar to low-level white-collar and the proliferation of low-level technicians is in actuality a process of "proletarianization" of increasing proportions of the labour force. These arguments would point to a form of downward mobility as more blockages are introduced into the occupational structure, or at minimum, that relative position in terms of class distribution has remained the same despite changes in the nature of work.

Despite the fond hopes of some of the structural theorists cited here, attempts at measuring structural (occupational) trends also lend support to the interpretation that the progression of industrialism has not resulted in increased mobility--as for example is shown by Natalie Rogoff's 1953 finding that when changes in the occupational structure were "standardized out", a major factor in mobility changes between 1910 and 1940 was accounted for (cited in Moore, 1966: 196). Although Moore recognizes that skill dilution rather than upgrading is a possibility of structural change (:197) and that it is not clear why some white-collar occupations are termed "head" work (such as typists) while some blue-collar jobs are "hand" work (such as linotypists) (:206), he argues that "it is generally true that occupations commonly classified as non-manual require somewhat higher educational levels and...yield higher incomes." (:206). The question of certification through education will be addressed shortly.

Arguments for upgrading (and hence, sources of mobility) tend to take on a curiously circular cast. Occupations which require more education often do so as a result of decisions by employers and may have nothing to do with job content. A listing of occupations in some kind of rank-order says little about differences in authority or job-content between two adjacent categories and may in fact be

a reflection of other factors, such as income differentials which may be the result of unionization or its absence. Status rankings on which objective rankings are in part based have experienced little change in consensus over the years or from country to country because they are part of the dominant definition of reality. The last point refers to Parkin's insight that through socialization into or by dominant-class ideologies, people learn not the placement of every occupation in the scale but rather, "the criteria by which positions are to be ranked...certain criteria become institutionalized as 'relevant' for ranking purposes, while other criteria are excluded or defined as 'irrelevant'." so that technical expertise, skill, or responsibility are accepted by subordinate classes as relevant for high prestige, and not physical effort, danger, or dirtiness (1973: 42). If the assertion of occupational upgrading is based upon upgrading in status, and status is a subjective dimension, then a serious point of confusion is introduced into what is purported to be an attempt to measure objective phenomena.

Since Blau and Duncan's task was to measure the extent to which a man's occupational achievements depended on occupational status of his father, the question of occupational changes was a crucial one. The issue, as Duncan sees it, is "whether occupational status... is sufficiently stable over time as to permit meaningful inter-temporal comparisons..." (1968: 705). Duncan's "strong presumptive evidence" of stability was based on income positions and on prestige rankings, and he concluded that the occupational status structure is subject to such small "random shocks" that changes cumulate very slowly and have thus not affected the statistics to an appreciable degree (:709). It could be argued equally as well, following Parkin, that after all, there has been no major overturning of the criteria by which the dominant view accords status, and no major questioning of its legitimacy. The question of whether or not an occupational structure has been "upgraded" cannot be answered by reference to a scale but involves other criteria and other kinds of observations. If upgrading cannot be shown, then one is left only with data which indicates there has at best been no change in the occupational structure, however much it may have changed in other ways, to make any difference to mobility.

Before proceeding to some general critical comments, it will be in order to discuss one other aspect of the industrialization arguments which pertains to what might be described as "the myth of increasing rationality" and "the myth of increasing universalism." Since a highly sophisticated industrial society needs efficiency and rational means for allocating ability, so Blau and Duncan's argument went, "Objective criteria of evaluation that are universally accepted increasingly pervade all spheres of life and displace particularistic standards of diverse ingroups, intuitive judgments, and humanistic values not susceptible to empirical verification." (1967: 429).

However, in "Strategies of Social Closure in Class Formation," Parkin (1974) puts forward a different interpretation of the use of universalistic criteria. He distinguishes between two historically distinct ways in which dominant groups exclude others

from claims to social rewards: "classes of nomination" are the product of rules of exclusion "that single out the specific attributes of individuals rather than the generalized attributes of social collectivities" (:o) which are the historically older "classes of reproduction." He points out that individualistic rules of exclusion operate within societies dominated by the "liberal ideal." The establishing of universal criteria for evaluating individuals in the form of "credentialism" is a way of controlling entry to valued positions to those qualified, using seemingly impersonal means, but universalism is distorted when the "means of credentialism" are monopolized by one social group, and by the transmission of "cultural capital" which introduce "socially inherited handicaps and easements" that are de facto types of collectivist exclusion and class reproduction (:7-8).

Certain desired social qualities (that is, desired by groups in control of occupational recruitment and selection) come to be more predominant in some groups than others--the nebulous quality of "character" is one such that is sufficiently loose to be used by dominant groups subject to their own definition. There are many such "intangibles" which go into the selection process of potential new elites, for example, by established elites, such that through the recruitment of people "like" themselves and through co-optation, existing social arrangements are perpetuated.

V CRITIQUES OF THE MOBILITY-MEASUREMENT ENTERPRISE

What follows is not a critique of measurement per se, but of the way it has been used, particularly its lack of including any other methods of data-collection. The attempt at making statistical connections usually begins or ends with a nod to social structure and accepts the dominant theories and assumptions about industrial societies as put forward by structuralists who are often functionalists in one guise or another. The fact remains that statistics do not tell a story in themselves--they are subject to interpretation and they are only as reliable as the operationalization of variables that went into them. The selection of variables in turn is only as good as the theory behind them. A number of reasons will be suggested for why this theory may be found lacking.

The study of mobility over the years has been largely an enterprise based on variations of the same themes; it has utilized mathematical models of increasing sophistication which have nevertheless been premised on an oversimplified view of the social system, one aspect of which they purport to account for. Their variables have been few, their assumptions lacking in theoretical inclusiveness--many have fallen easily into the "individualistic" trap and have hence been overly psychologistic in their explanations of the sources and mechanisms of mobility; many, often the same, have also fallen into the "logic of industrialism" trap. It is perhaps no accident that the two types of explanation are not unrelated in their minds: that is, the belief in the overriding effect of meritocratic and universalistic principles operating impersonally in the selection system means that the burden of responsibility for mobility is upon the individual, and that if there are any

imperfections in the system, "tinkering" with the system to increase equality of opportunity will make the race more fairly run. Duncan (1968: 685) notes that "from a normative standpoint" one could be concerned with whether the race is fairly run, given the rules, or whether changes should be made in the rules--but the problem with mobility studies is that they rarely get around to explicating the implications of their findings in even the first instance, let alone the second.

Although some studies (particularly the work of Blau and Duncan) have noted the differential rates of mobility between the two broad occupational (and societal) groupings centering around the manual/nonmanual "divide," to my knowledge few if any have spent much time on intra-group differences, and none has related these differential rates to dominant class-configurations in society: that is between different categories of manual or of white-collar workers and their differing relationship to the dominant value and resource centres of the society. The one exception is that of elite studies, which have made exhaustive analyses of social origins, career patterns, and mechanisms of exclusion and cohesion which mark off elites from non-elites--but the studies have not been linked to the mainstream of mobility research. It would appear from this lack of connection that the reality of the elite world is not thought to have repercussions for the non-elite world in terms of opportunity structure at lower points on the ladder, in terms of the locus of control and power, and the basis of elite dominance. This is particularly curious considering the concern expressed by elite researchers about the economic and institutional consequences of concentration of power.

The notion of dominant and subordinate classes and of the property system around which their relations revolve in capitalist societies have been conspicuously absent in the mobility theorist-researchers' kit of concepts and explanations. It appears not to occur to them that, as Parkin (1973: Ch. 2) sees it, some degree of mobility in capitalist societies not only assures the infusion of talent when needed but also serves to legitimate the existing set of relations by reinforcing the belief in the rise of merit regardless of origins.

Both Parkin (1973: Ch. 1) and Anderson (1974: 121-122) criticize the use of the "multidimensional" framework for the analysis of social class common not only to stratification theorists in general, but to those cited here. When wealth, status and power are treated as separate variables with little relationship to one another, or at least, with some disjunctions, attention is drawn away from what is the major societal underpinning in capitalist systems: control of productive property. Anderson argues that property classes or ownership must occupy the first and central part of any theory of stratification, as was held by Marx and Weber, and that from the fact of property other dimensions of stratification can then be examined in proper context. He goes beyond Parkin's view that the occupational order is the "backbone" of the class structure and reward system in modern western societies, stating that occupation has always been an important and usually only source of sustenance for the masses;

the shift from self-employment to salaried employment is due not to the demise but to the "increasing preponderance of property in shaping industrial society" (:122; his emphasis).

Anderson also argues that what is at issue is not the operation of the mobility system but "why such a stepladder society exists in the first place and how and why it is perpetuated." (:140). Mobility researchers have been obsessed with establishing the rate of mobility, and with the existence of stratification systems almost (if not completely) universally as an important fact--but one may ask whether it is the fact of stratification which is the important concern of research once the fact is established, or whether it ought to be the basis of stratification, its underpinnings, and its meaning. This venture has not gone far enough, and the reason it has not within "mainstream" sociology appears due to the limitations imposed by theory and behind that, of an ideological inclination which impedes it.

Strauss (1971: 1) has concluded that sociological theory is "shot through with rhetoric and ideological commitment"--he has found from an analysis of clusters of images in American stratification literature that the dominant themes of the frontiers as "seedbeds of democracy," the honest workman, the "rugged individualist," the emphasis on personal character, "destiny and civilization" and the "just rewards" of social mobility contained in social theories about industrialization "reflect and are virtually inseparable from their views about social mobility." (:105).

The conviction that American stratification literature has been dominated by notions of "evolutionary liberalism" and functionalism has also been expressed by Pease, Form and Rytina (1970). They trace dominant themes and assumptions in the research to the present, and find that in the postwar period, despite the critique of functionalism and the discovery of some merit in the theories particularly of Weber (and to a lesser extent Marx), only a perfunctory nod has been made in their direction. Social mobility researchers have trivialized Weber's work by separating out status from its theoretical brothers; by the 1950's interest evolved into a concern for "mass middle-class society" with consumption patterns of more importance than income patterns.

The authors give three reasons why stratification research seems to have steered clear of hard-hitting issues: the dominant American ideology of individualism which has seeped into sociological theory despite the sociological perspective on "social" explanations for phenomena; the public ideology which conceives of any theoretical debt to Marx as implying Marxism; and the struggle of sociology to achieve scientific status, hence its emphasis on improving quantification procedures and choosing variables like status which are easier to operationalize than power (:132-133).

In summary, the sociological enterprise as it is represented in the vast majority of North American stratification and mobility

studies is aptly characterized by Pease, Form and Rytina thus:

"Sociologists who view stratification as a matter of individual occurrences rather than social structure, who study consumption to the neglect of distribution and production, who study the labor market but not the credit and commodity markets, who emphasize status, oversimplify class, neglect wealth, define power as being outside stratification, and who fail to see 'race relations,' minority status, and poverty in the context of stratification confirm Robert Lynd's observation that when it comes to matters of class stratification, 'the social sciences tiptoe evasively around the problem'." (:134).

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