

Foreword by Haller

Inequality and Social Mobility In Brazil

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Foreword

So far as is known, every society large enough to be worthy of the name has been stratified in terms of power, economic status, and social status. Over the centuries considerable objective scholarship has been devoted to attempts to explain why this is so and to describe the exact forms stratification systems take.

In relative terms, however, only a small part of the concern generated by stratification has been dispassionately analytical. Much of it has been devoted to peoples' impassioned attempts to change the stratification systems of societies or to change the position of one group or another within them. Those who initiate such actions may be convinced that they know what they are doing, and to some extent they might. But stratification systems and the changes they undergo are too abstract, too complex for most people to understand very well.

To assert that they are complex and that to date the actors within them may have only a vague understanding of them does not imply that they are chaotic. Presumably their structures and the variations they may undergo are orderly. Given adequate data and careful theoretic work it might well be possible to identify concepts elucidating their implicit order.

Beginning at least as far back as the Athenian philosophers to whom we in the West attribute the origins of our scientific theorizing, many serious students of social behavioral phenomena have attempted to explicate the structure and variations of such systems. Yet down to the present day, such efforts have been only partially successful. Upon reflection, it is easy to understand why this has been so. To be valid, theories always require a comprehensive and detailed knowledge of the phenomena to which they are addressed. The kinds of observations this requires simply could not be obtained until recently. Empirically valid theory of stratification is almost wholly a product of this century. Its most general aims are: 1. to measure the structural variations of stratification systems under all the circumstances in which they are found—that is, across time and place—and to measure the positions people occupy within these systems; 2. to determine what happens to other aspects of society as a result of variations in stratification systems and to individual people as a result of variations in their positions in such systems; and 3. to determine the factors that lead to variations in stratification systems and in the positions people hold within them.

If some answers could be provided to questions posed by such aims they might help people to determine whether, when, and how to try to modify stratification systems. Surprising as it may seem, people tamper with the stratification systems of their societies all the time—and sometimes with those of other societies. On rare occasions this is done deliberately, sometimes in struggles that assume titanic proportions, as in the Russian Revolution early in the century and in the revolution in China from 1948 to Mao's death. More frequently, the changes that occur are less dramatic and more or less accidental. Still, stratification phenomena matter a great deal to those implicated in them. It seems self-evident that with a realistic understanding of these phenomena, people will be more successful in avoiding their more sanguinary consequences.

By the end of the 1960s the concepts and methods of stratification research had become sufficiently well developed to permit stratification systems to be described in ways which are at once panoramic, precise, and concise. This, a viable descriptive theory of stratification, was the work of countless thinkers from several thought domains. Techniques by which to elicit observations had to be developed to obtain data on samples of persons such that valid estimates could be made of the parameters of the populations from which the data were drawn. This in turn required an infrastructure consisting of survey research establishments and the trained personnel they employ. These began to appear less than 50 years ago. A logic by which specific classes of valid observations on persons could be conceived as comprising variables measuring similarities and differences among them had to be devised. This is the logic of measuring human behavior. It began to appear about the turn of the century, but only within the past generation has it come to be rather fully elaborated. Various aspects of mathematical statistics had to be developed and their application to human phenomena had to be worked out. Mainly, this involves two kinds of thinking, the theory of statistical sampling and the theory of statistical estimates of effects. This work began over a century ago and is still going on. But only since World War II have we learned how to identify and contact samples of human beings in ways that permit probabilistic estimates of parameters. Statistical methods by which to estimate the effects of sets of variables began to appear around 1920. But these did not come into wide use until high speed computers became generally available, largely in the 1960s. Finally, specialists in stratification had to learn to think about their phenomena in terms of measurable variables describing the "content dimensions" of economic status, power, and social status, and in terms of over-arching variables—"structural dimensions"—which describe the possible variations of whole stratification systems.

Each of the above lines of thought is still being elaborated. Even so, as the situation stands today, stratification researchers have learned which content

dimensions must be measured, and they now have the capacity to measure several—perhaps most—of the variables encompassed by them. Among these, the best understood are differences in social status and economic status, especially the former. There is widely shared consensus that people's social status may be validly and reliably measured by numerical scores assigned to their occupations, either in terms of prestige (the average relative evaluation of each occupation) or in terms of socioeconomic status (as determined by the average income, and often education, of the incumbents of each occupation). Effective measures of economic status, especially income, have lagged a bit, but are now more or less readily available. Power differentials have been much more difficult to measure. Dr. Pastore's book deals with occupational status, which is the main variable researchers consider when studying social status.

The structural dimensions of stratification are less widely understood, although by 1970 several had been identified. One is the average level of a variable which taps a content dimension. Another is the degree of dispersion of that variable around its own average, often called the degree of inequality. Still another consists of the rate of movement of persons from level to level of a given content variable over time. In general, this is called mobility, and movement from level to level within an occupational hierarchy is called "social mobility." The obverse of mobility would be immobility; the degree of immobility is sometimes called the "degree of status inheritance." A fourth structural dimension, called "crystallization," is the degree to which the variables measuring the different content dimensions are correlated with each other. Sometimes called the "rigidity of inequality," this measures the average degree to which the various statuses of each person are similar to each other within a given society. Other structural dimensions have been proposed but have received relatively little attention to date. Dr. Pastore's book is a study of social mobility in a society where the degree of inequality is unusually high.

Definitive empirical research on social mobility is of course a product of the last 20 or 30 years, especially the last decade. For reasons sketched above, only recently have the various capacities required for such work come into being. Such studies are still few in number. Most have been conducted in industrialized nations such as Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Hungary, Japan, West Germany, Poland, and the United States. They show the degree to which people rise and fall within their stratification systems. The portion of a society's mobility that is due to a general rise in the occupational structure of society may be called "structural mobility." The portion that is due to other factors may be called "circulation mobility." It is widely believed that industrialization promotes a high degree of upward structural mobility. One would think, then, that the most industrialized countries would have a high degree of social mobility, and indeed research has shown that a certain degree of such mobility does in fact exist. Whether this degree is "high" or not is something

that will only be known after suitable comparisons have been made with less industrialized nations. For countries with a high degree of inequality, upward structural mobility would presumably offset most of the resentment that might otherwise be felt by or for those at the bottom of societies. This too remains to be seen. Presumably, too, more egalitarian societies would have especially high degrees of circulation mobility. Thus, one would think that industrialized socialist societies should show particularly high levels of upward structural mobility and circulation. This also remains to be seen.

The present book breaks new ground in the study of social mobility. It is a report of a massive study of the occupational mobility of Brazilian heads of families of 20 through 64 years of age. The data were collected by means of a multistage probability sample of households, in ways that permit generalization to Brazil as a whole and to its various regions (except for the remote, inaccessible, and sparsely settled lands in the Amazon valley). The data were collected and transferred to magnetic tape for computer analysis by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, the nation's central statistical agency, an organization which has regularized its capacity to obtain and process large amounts of high quality data from standardized personal interviews in households selected by scientific sampling methods.

A few words about Brazil may be useful. The nation's territory occupies about one-half of South America, and is roughly the same size as Australia, Canada, China, or the United States. In 1970 its population was 95 million and by 1980 had increased to 121 million. In 1970 about 90% lived on the two-fifths of the land surface that, for about 400 miles inland, parallels the southern 2,500 miles of the Atlantic coast. The remaining 10% lived in the interior and northern three-fifths, mostly in and near half-a-dozen widely scattered cities. One-fifth of the population live in the northeastern part of the country, an area long noted for its widespread poverty and largely devoted to agriculture. The bulk of the people, about 60%, live in the South, where both agriculture and manufacturing are rather highly developed. For many years Brazil's rural-urban population balance has been shifting, and the industrial and commercial sectors of the economy have been expanding. For example, in 1950 only 36% of Brazil's 52 million people were classed as urban. Yet only 20 years later, 56% of the nation's 95 million people were so classed.

Since 1964 the nation has followed a development strategy that encourages rapid economic growth and in which questions about the distribution of income have mostly been ignored. So an income distribution which was already quite unequal by world standards has become even more unequal. This is not to say that most of the poor have become even poorer. Indeed there has been a long debate among Brazilian economists as to whether this is true. As of today, the general consensus seems to be that the economic standing of most of the poor

is probably improving slightly while, at the same time, the degree of inequality is increasing. The present book has probably contributed to this opinion.

This book presents statistical data concerning the status of each male head of family as his standing is manifested in the average income of all the people employed in his occupation. Thus on the average, carpenters earn more than sharecroppers, and medical doctors earn more than store clerks. Index scores are used to describe the order of the average income differences among occupations. These differences are rather durable, despite effects of regional differences in pay scales, inflation, etc. So it is safe to assert that, on the average, medical doctors who are sons of store clerks are better off economically than their fathers. Similarly, most carpenters who are sons of sharecroppers are better off than their fathers. Thus while incomes may vary among individuals in the same occupation and for the same individual over time, the strategy followed herein provides a reasonably interpretable overview of the main patterns of upward and downward mobility. The book thus contributes to the debate on economic growth and the distribution of income in Brazil. In a few words it shows that Brazil's occupational structure has shifted upward as its economy has industrialized. Some have risen and others have fallen as this vast process of industrialization and urbanization has proceeded. While it is true that many have fallen and that only a relative few have risen dramatically, the great bulk have apparently experienced small but real increases in occupational status.

Before this book, the common wisdom of academic people held that there is no social mobility in developing societies—that immobility is part of a larger picture of inequality. Indeed, Brazil has one of the most unequal income distributions in the world. Hardly anybody would have thought that mobility could exist within such a sharply unequal system. This book shows beyond doubt that there is quite a substantial amount of mobility in Brazil. In numerical terms, of course, most of it could be described as small upward intergenerational mobility out of the lowest agricultural stratum into the urban working class. But there is a surprising rate of long-distance upward mobility as well. Some of it is from the bottom into the higher levels of the Brazilian elite stratum. The latter moves are especially interesting; while only about 1% of those at the bottom actually get to the very top, the elite stratum itself is rather heavily populated with people from the bottom. This top group is expanding as time passes. But its ranks are more than replenished, not only by the sons of the old elites, but also by those from all other strata, including the lowest. In addition to all this, a surprising number of sons of the older elites find themselves in lower positions than their fathers.

For quite a few years the South of Brazil—especially the states of São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, Rio de Janeiro, and Minas Gerais—has experienced a

particular fast economic growth rate. The growth of manufacturing and of a high technology agriculture whose products are sent to foreign markets are especially impressive. The notoriously poor Northeast has also gained economically, although it lags far behind the South. As a result, people are flooding out of agriculture everywhere and into manufacturing and services. Jobs are the magnets which draw them to the cities of the South.

In a few words, this book shows that Brazil's vigorous economic growth is transforming most of the population, generally if slowly raising the whole occupational structure.

The author of the book is Dr. José Pastore. A native of the City of São Paulo, he studied at the University of São Paulo and at the Foundation School of Sociology and Political Science before conducting his doctoral studies at the University of Wisconsin. He completed the Ph.D. degree in 1968. In the years since then, he advanced from Assistant Professor to Professor of Sociology at the University of São Paulo. Most of his present activity with the university is conducted through the Foundation Institute of Economic Research. From the beginning of his career he has been active in research and in policy formation. In the early 1970s he headed Brazil's Commission for Technology Transfer. During the mid-1970s he served as a key advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture and in this capacity designed the new organization of Brazil's federal agricultural research and extension services. At present he is a key advisor to the Ministry of Labor. Through all of this time he has carried on a vigorous program of research during which he has published several books dealing with research on education, income differentials, adaptation of migrants, and agricultural policy.

Results of his research activity have also appeared in technical journals in Brazil, Mexico, and the United States. A substantial portion of his research, including analyses performed as a part of the present book, has been conducted in collaboration with stratification researchers at the University of Wisconsin.

It is a special pleasure to introduce this book by José Pastore, a friend and collaborator of many years.

Archibald O. Haller

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Acknowledgments

This study is the result of the good will and collective efforts of various people and institutions. The primary material—the data—was provided by the Fundação IBGE (IBGE Foundation) which is efficiently carrying out the Pesquisas Nacionais por Amostra de Domicílios—PNAD (National Household Research—PNAD). The PNAD is a huge task which is being carried out at an extremely high level of quality. The Fundação IBGE recently entered a very productive period in which it encourages researchers to use its scientific data. For this we wish to congratulate Drs. Isaac Kerstenesky and Speridião Faissol and express our gratitude for the support they provided. We also extend our gratitude to the technicians of the Grupo de Indicadores Sociais (Social Indicators Group) of the Fundação IBGE, who contributed a great deal to putting this project into operation.

New stimulus has also come from the Secretaria de Emprego e Salário do Ministério do Trabalho (Secretariat of Employment and Wages of the Ministry of Labor) which, also entering a new phase, has demonstrated a sincere interest in obtaining an objective view of what is happening in the Brazilian labor market. There is an obvious determination in that agency to base its programs on scientific analysis and accurate data. For this, in particular, Professor F. Menna Barreto deserves our sincere thanks.

A piece of work as difficult and controversial as this one demands several tests of its quality. We are grateful for the care and the competence of various colleagues of the University of São Paulo, of the FIPE—Fundação Instituto de Pesquisas Econômicas (Institute of Economic Research Foundation), and of other research institutions, who patiently offered their comments and suggestions at various stages of this work. Those who deserve explicit mention include Drs. Nelson do Valle Silva, Aparecida J. Gouveia, Adroaldo Moura da Silva, Archie O. Haller, Ramonaval A. Costa, Clovis de A. Peres, Gláucio A. D. Soares and Manoel Cabral de Castro. They have done all they could to purge this work of its gravest errors. If any persist, they do so only because of the author's stubbornness.

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