

## SOCIAL MOBILITY AND FERTILITY WITHIN AN ELITE GROUP

E. DIGBY BALTZELL<sup>1</sup>

THE existence of an inverse relationship between social class and fertility in the more industrialized nations of Western civilization has been regarded as a confirmed sociological fact for some decades (1). Within the social structure as a whole, parents with more education, higher incomes, and various other indices of "high" socio-economic status tend to have smaller families than parents in less fortunate circumstances. In the nineteen-thirties, however, the findings of empirical research, both in this country and in Europe, indicated that this inverse relationship was reversed at the higher socio-economic levels (2). The topmost socio-economic groups, for example, were shown to have similar and/or higher fertility rates than those immediately below them. With each successive study reaffirming these relationships, the question of "why" has become more pertinent. The evidence of the Indianapolis Study, for example, has raised many questions concerning the reasons why social-class position persistently colors all other associations between various social and psychological variables and fertility.

In interpreting this relationship between fertility and socio-economic position, differential social mobility and its various social and psychological consequences may be an important intervening variable. Westoff, for example, has emphasized the hypothesis that the *process* of achieving a given class-position may exert equal if not greater influence on family size than the sociological consequences of the position itself (3). In other words, fertility declines as one ascends the social-class hierarchy mainly because the requirements of a more expensive pattern of consumption militate against having children and partly because of the internationalization of small-family norms already existing in the cultural defi-

<sup>1</sup> From the Department of Sociology, University of Pennsylvania.

nitions of the class of destination. Consequently, fertility should be expected to decline at successively higher levels in the social-class hierarchy partly because those persons in higher positions are, on the average, more mobile than those below them. On the other hand, as the top of the hierarchy is approached, this inverse differential may be reversed precisely because, in contrast to those immediately below them, social mobility may be less characteristic of persons at the top levels. The following analysis of the fertility patterns of a small group of persons of high socio-economic status in Philadelphia should be conceived of as an exploratory attempt to test the existence of an inverse relationship between upward social mobility and family size.

In 1940, 770 residents of Philadelphia were listed in WHO'S WHO IN AMERICA.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of selected criteria of social mobility, this comparatively homogeneous Philadelphia elite will be divided into various sub-groups in order to test the hypothesis that the less mobile parents have the largest families. There are, of course, both advantages and limitations in using these WHO'S WHO biographies to test this relationship. In the first place, the fact that persons listed in WHO'S WHO are, from the standpoint of society as a whole, a relatively homogeneous socio-economic group is a decided advantage. On the other hand, the inferential nature of the various indices of social mobility used below is, of necessity, a limiting factor. The fertility data, in addition, suffer from omissions which are characteristic of WHO'S WHO biographies (*see below*). As a result of these and other considerations, the present analysis is intended more to suggest the potential value of the fertility/mobility hypothesis than presuming to confirm or reject it.

In most societies, there are people at the top of the class pyramid who, coming from "old family" backgrounds and

<sup>2</sup> WHO'S WHO IN AMERICA, Volume 21, 1940-1941. Chicago, The A. N. Marquis Company, 1940. This paper is part of a more complete analysis of the biographies of the 770 Philadelphians listed in WHO'S WHO in 1940. *See* Baltzell, E. Digby: *The Elite and the Upper Class in Metropolitan America: A Study of Stratification in Philadelphia*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1952.)

often possessing inherited wealth, may be considered of high *ascribed* social-class position. In Philadelphia, the SOCIAL REGISTER is a convenient listing of families whose members, on the whole, possess these attributes of high ascribed position.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, there are the so-called "self-made men" who presumably have *achieved* their high occupational status largely through their own efforts and sacrifices. (4) In order to test the fertility/mobility hypothesis, the 770 Philadelphians who were listed in WHO'S WHO in 1940 may be divided into two groups—the 226 persons who were also listed in the SOCIAL REGISTER in that year and the 544 persons who were not so listed.<sup>4</sup> While both of these groups within the Philadelphia elite were composed of persons with high occupational, educational, and income positions in the City, the 226 listed also in the SOCIAL REGISTER were more likely, on the whole, to have been of high ascribed position (less mobile), whereas the high positions of the remaining 544 were more likely to have been achieved (more mobile). For example, it is reasonable to infer that a private, secondary school education, Protestant religious affiliation, and the ties of place and tradition are, among other things, useful indices of high ascribed social class position in America; the evidence in Table 1 indicates that persons also listed in the SOCIAL REGISTER are more likely to possess these attributes than the remaining persons listed only in WHO'S WHO.<sup>5</sup>

The 770 Philadelphians listed in WHO'S WHO in 1940 were

<sup>3</sup> The SOCIAL REGISTER, first published in New York City in 1888, is currently published, in November of each year, by the Social Register Association for the following large cities in America: New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Baltimore, Boston, St. Louis, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Cincinnati-Dayton, San Francisco, and Washington, D. C. See my dissertation for a more thorough analysis of the SOCIAL REGISTER as an index of high ascribed social class position in America.

<sup>4</sup> As there is no demographic or biographical information available for persons listed in the SOCIAL REGISTER but not in WHO'S WHO, this paper must, of necessity, be limited to an analysis of the 770 Philadelphians in WHO'S WHO.

<sup>5</sup> Chi squares were computed to test the statistical significance of the relationships between these attributes of social mobility and SOCIAL REGISTER affiliation (Table 1). The tests revealed that all the relationships, except "Protestant Religion", were significant. The values for P were .001 for "Private Secondary Schooling", "Born on Eastern Seaboard", and "Born in Philadelphia"; .01 for "Born in the United States"; and .10 for "Protestant Religion".

INFERRED INDICES OF HIGH ASCRIED STATUS	SOCIAL REGISTER AFFILIATION	NON SOCIAL REGISTER AFFILIATION
	Per Cent	Per Cent
Private Secondary Schooling*	41	15
Protestant Religion	64**	58**
Born in the United States	97	91
Born on the Eastern Seaboard***	87	64
Born in Philadelphia	52	29
TOTAL NUMBER	226	544

Table 1. Philadelphians listed in WHO'S WHO in 1940: Schooling, religious affiliation, and birthplace by SOCIAL REGISTER affiliation.

\* Private Schooling does not include the Catholic Parochial School.

\*\* As these figures include those not reporting on religion, it is pertinent to note that, of the 513 persons reporting on religious affiliation, 99 per cent of the SOCIAL REGISTER group, in contrast to 86 per cent of those listed only in WHO'S WHO, were Protestant.

\*\*\* Eastern Seaboard includes the Middle Atlantic, New England, and South Atlantic Census areas.

older men and women. Of those reporting age (719 or 94 per cent), all were over thirty-six years of age in 1940, a large majority (83 per cent) were over fifty, and their mean age in 1940 was 61.6 years. Those persons listed in the SOCIAL REGISTER were somewhat older (mean age in 1940: SOCIAL REGISTER group, 64.3; non SOCIAL REGISTER group, 60.5). Thus, assuming that wives tend, on the whole, to be only slightly younger than their husbands, most families in this study have passed through the child-bearing period. As females constituted only a small proportion (7 per cent) of the Philadelphians listed in WHO'S WHO in 1940, they will be discussed separately below.<sup>6</sup>

What are the marital and family characteristics of the two groups of males within this listing of distinguished Philadelphians? In the first place, while 92 per cent of the total report ever having been married, those also listed in the SOCIAL REGISTER are more likely to report marriage (95 per cent ever mar-

<sup>6</sup> It is of interest to note that Kiser and Schacter found that "women comprise only about 6 per cent of all persons listed in the last edition (1948-1949) of WHO'S WHO." Clyde V. Kiser and Nathalie L. Schacter, *Demographic Characteristics of Women in WHO'S WHO*, Reprinted from *The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, xxvii, No. 4, October 1949, p. 395.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN	SOCIAL REGISTER AFFILIATION	NON SOCIAL REGISTER AFFILIATION
	Per Cent	Per Cent
1 Child	14	21
2 Children	30	36
3 Children	31	21
4 or more Children	25	22
Number of Male Parents	149	352
Children Per 100 Male Parents	280	262

Table 2. Philadelphians listed in WHO's WHO in 1940: Family size of male parents by SOCIAL REGISTER affiliation.

ried) than the remainder (90 per cent ever married). This differential in the proportion married is the first clue to the more familistic nature of the former, less mobile group.

As the under-reporting of children in WHO's WHO biographies makes any estimate of the number of childless marriages in this sample extremely hazardous, the fertility patterns of *parents*, rather than married couples, will be analyzed below. From other sources, there is some evidence that, if anything, there are fewer childless couples within the SOCIAL REGISTER group. For example, it was found that at least six "Social Registerite" fathers in this study (all with more than three children) failed to report the names of their children in WHO's WHO.

The fertility rates of 501 male parents are presented in Table 2. The parents also listed in the SOCIAL REGISTER tend to have larger families, and are less likely to have only children and more likely to have large families (three or more children), than the remaining parents listed only in WHO's WHO.<sup>7</sup> Here, then, are two groups of male parents of high socio-economic status in Philadelphia; those parents who have been apparently less mobile than the rest are more likely to report large families.

<sup>7</sup> A comparison of the distributions in Table 2 by Chi Square analysis indicates a statistically significant degree of association between family size and SOCIAL REGISTER affiliation ( $P = .02-.05$ ).

SECONDARY SCHOOLING OF MALE PARENTS	SOCIAL REGISTER AFFILIATION		NON SOCIAL REGISTER AFFILIATION	
	Number of Male Parents	Children Per 100 Male Parents	Number of Male Parents	Children Per 100 Male Parents
Private Schooling*	66	300	51	300
No Private Schooling	83	264	301	255
TOTAL	149	280	352	262

Table 3. Philadelphians listed in WHO's WHO in 1940: Fertility of male parents by SOCIAL REGISTER affiliation and secondary schooling.

\* Private Schooling does not include the Catholic Parochial School.

As an additional test of the fertility/mobility hypothesis, education, religious affiliation, and birthplace of parent—presumed indices of ascribed status and mobility—will now be viewed in relation to differences in family size.

In the first place, perhaps a private secondary school education, which depends almost entirely on the socio-economic position of one's parents, may be an even more valid index of high ascribed social-class position than SOCIAL REGISTER affiliation. If this is true, privately educated parents, regardless of SOCIAL REGISTER affiliation, should be expected to have more children than those parents without the advantages of this start in life and all that it implies in the way of wealth and social contacts.<sup>8</sup> The inverse relationship between fertility and social mobility is suggested once again in Table 3 which indicates that privately educated parents tend to have the largest families. Moreover, family size remains the same within the group of privately educated parents, regardless of SOCIAL REGISTER affiliation.

In America, Protestants, on the whole, tend to have higher

<sup>8</sup> There is, of course, no way of ascertaining the differences in inherited wealth between these various sub-groups in WHO's WHO. There is reason to believe, however, that inherited wealth, perhaps more than wealth *per se*, is an important variable in fertility differentials within the higher socio-economic stratum. This factor may be especially important where professional education demands sacrifices during the child-bearing period.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF MALE PARENTS	SOCIAL REGISTER AFFILIATION		NON SOCIAL REGISTER AFFILIATION	
	Number of Male Parents	Children Per 100 Male Parents	Number of Male Parents	Children Per 100 Male Parents
Episcopalian	70	304	53	263
Other Protestant	36	258	177	261
Catholic-Jewish	1*	—	30	293
No Religion Reported	42	256	92	246
TOTAL	149	280	352	262

Table 4. Philadelphians listed in WHO'S WHO in 1940: Fertility of male parents by SOCIAL REGISTER and religious affiliation.

\* One Catholic with two children.

social origins than non-Protestants. As shown in Table 4, for example, there is only one non-Protestant parent in the SOCIAL REGISTER group. Within this Philadelphia elite, Episcopalians have the highest ascribed social class positions.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, it is pertinent to note that (*see* Table 4) the Episcopalian parents tend to have larger families than the other Protestant parents.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the Episcopalian parents who are also listed in the SOCIAL REGISTER, presumably the least mobile parents, have larger families than even the non-Protestants. In other words, using religious affiliation as an index of differential mobility, Table 4 indicates that, at least within the Protestant group, fertility is inversely related to social mobility.

Upward social mobility often coincides with horizontal mobility. Especially in the small town, one rarely "crosses the tracks" within the same community where everyone knows

<sup>9</sup> Episcopalian religious affiliation as an index of high ascribed social class position in Philadelphia is thoroughly documented elsewhere. *See* my unpublished dissertation. Research in this area has found that Episcopalians tend to have a high socio-economic rating. *See*, for example, Pope, Liston: Religion and the Class Structure. The *Annals* of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 256, March, 1948, pp. 84-91; and Freedman, Ronald and Whelpton, P. K.: Social and Psychological Factors Affecting Fertility. x. Fertility Planning and Fertility Rates by Religious Interest and Denomination. The *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, July 1950, xxviii, No. 3, p. 319 (Reprint p. 442.)

<sup>10</sup> The relatively high fertility of the "Other Protestant" parents who are not listed in the SOCIAL REGISTER (Table 4) is partially explained by the presence of three Swedeborgian parents who report eight, ten, and twelve children respectively.

BIRTHPLACE OF MALE PARENTS	SOCIAL REGISTER AFFILIATION		NON SOCIAL REGISTER AFFILIATION	
	Number of Male Parents	Children Per 100 Male Parents	Number of Male Parents	Children Per 100 Male Parents
Philadelphia	73	290	97	272
All other Areas	76	270	255	257
TOTAL	149	280	352	262

Table 5. Philadelphians listed in WHO's WHO in 1940: Fertility of male parents by SOCIAL REGISTER affiliation and birthplace.

"who" one is. On the contrary, one must move out, and usually to the large city, in order to escape previous social definitions. In Philadelphia in 1940, almost two-thirds (64 per cent) of the persons listed in WHO's WHO were born outside the metropolitan area. Thus persons who have achieved success in the City are presumably more mobile than the residents of Philadelphia as a whole. It has been shown that members of the SOCIAL REGISTER group are less horizontally mobile than the remaining persons listed only in WHO's WHO (Table 1). In Table 5, there is apparently a consistent inverse relationship between horizontal mobility, which may imply upward mobility, and family size.

To some extent, of course, SOCIAL REGISTER affiliation is achievable. In order to ascertain the hard core of "Old Family" Philadelphians, the 226 persons who were listed in both WHO's WHO and the SOCIAL REGISTER in 1940 were traced back to the turn of the century. It was found that, of the 149 male parents listed in the SOCIAL REGISTER in 1940, only forty-five were listed, or had parents who were listed, in the Philadelphia SOCIAL REGISTER as of 1900. These forty-five parents, the hard core of "Old Family" Philadelphians and as such neither horizontally or vertically mobile, should be expected to have larger families than any other group in WHO's WHO. That these "Proper Philadelphia" parents, many of them descendents of Philadelphia's Colonial aristocracy, reported an average of over



INDICES OF SOCIAL MOBILITY	NUMBER OF MALE PARENTS	CHILDREN PER 100 MALE PARENTS
(1) Male Parents Listed in WHO'S WHO But Not in the SOCIAL REGISTER	352	262
(2) Male Parents Listed in WHO'S WHO And Also in the SOCIAL REGISTER	149	280
(3) Philadelphia Born Male Parents Listed in WHO'S WHO and SOCIAL REGISTER	73	290
(4) Privately Educated Male Parents Listed in WHO'S WHO and SOCIAL REGISTER	66	300
(5) Episcopalian Male Parents Listed in WHO'S WHO and SOCIAL REGISTER	70	304
(6) "Old Family" Male Parents: Listed in Philadelphia SOCIAL REGISTER in 1900	45	313
All Male Parents in WHO'S WHO	501	267

Table 6. Philadelphians listed in WHO'S WHO in 1940: Fertility of male parents by inferred indices of social mobility.

three children, and that no less than 40 per cent of them reported four or more children, tends to substantiate further the fertility/mobility hypothesis.

In Philadelphia in 1940, there were 770 persons listed in WHO'S WHO IN AMERICA. In terms of several logically inferred indices of upward social mobility, the 501 males who reported the names of their children were divided into various subgroups. A consistent inverse relationship between upward mobility and family size was found to obtain within this Philadelphia elite (Table 6). In a sense, the tabulations in Table 6 may be conceived of as a summary of a series of logically manipulated, "ex post facto" experiments.<sup>11</sup>

Do the fertility patterns of the small number (54) of women listed in WHO'S WHO tend to support the fertility/mobility hypothesis? In the first place, one hardly would expect the "emancipated" or career-oriented women listed in WHO'S

<sup>11</sup> Approximating the experimental model, we have attempted to test an hypothesis in a set of contrasting situations; the variable of "social mobility" was injected, as it were, into a succession of partially controlled situations. See Greenwood, Ernest: *EXPERIMENTAL SOCIOLOGY, A STUDY IN METHOD*. New York, King's Crown Press, 1945, Chapter IV.

WHO to be familistically inclined. These women in the Philadelphia elite, for example, are much less likely to have ever been married than the men; while over 90 per cent of the men report ever having been married, only 44 per cent of the women so report. The women also listed in the SOCIAL REGISTER, however, are more likely to report marriage (64 per cent ever married) than the remaining women (37 per cent ever married). Moreover, the mothers listed in the SOCIAL REGISTER report considerably more children than the rest (266 as against 162 children per 100 mothers). Although this elite contains only a small number of women, the less mobile group, like the men, appear to be more familistic.

Social mobility and the attendant decline in traditional, family values characterize the modern world where there are few fixed landmarks and where most men are "constantly spurred on by a desire to rise and a fear of falling." This paper has attempted to indicate how, within a group of distinguished Philadelphians, fertility tends to be inversely related to upward social mobility. While the evidence is limited quantitatively, the consistent differences in fertility, as between the various sub-groups within this relatively homogeneous elite, provide some insight into the nature of differential fertility. Any conclusions drawn from so limited a source must, of course, remain highly tentative.

#### REFERENCES

1. In America, the pioneer publication in this field appeared in 1930. See Sydenstricker, Edgar and Notestein, Frank W.: Differential Fertility According to Social Class, *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, xxv, Number 169, March 1930, pp. 9-32.
2. See Edin, Karl and Hutchinson, Edward P.: STUDIES OF DIFFERENTIAL FERTILITY IN SWEDEN. London, P. S. King and Son, Orchard House, Westminster, 1935, and Kiser, Clyde V.: GROUP DIFFERENCES IN URBAN FERTILITY, Baltimore, The Williams and Wilkins Company, 1942.
3. Westoff, Charles F.: The Changing Focus of Differential Fertility Research: The Social Mobility Hypothesis. *The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, January, 1953, xxxi, No. 1, pp. 24-38. See also, Berent, Jerzy: Fertility and Social Mobility. *Population Studies*, v, No. 3, March 1952, pp. 244-260.
4. For the classic discussion of "ascribed" and "achieved" status, see Linton, Ralph: THE STUDY OF MAN. New York, D. Appleton-Century Company, 1936.