

## PILOT STUDY ON SOCIAL MOBILITY AND ITS ASSOCIATION WITH FERTILITY IN WEST BENGAL IN 1956

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*Introduction* : Students of human fertility have long suspected some relationship between social mobility and reproduction. This hypothesis has been associated with the name of Aresene Dumont<sup>1</sup> for over fifty years, but not until recently has it been studied inductively. Most of the investigations during the last fifty years have taken what may be called a 'static' approach to the problem. Having defined the social status of a family in some way, it was usual to assess the fertility in terms of birth rates or average family size of a group of families enjoying a similar social status. It is obvious, however, that people who find themselves in a particular grade or class at the time of enquiry, may have arrived there in a number of ways. Some of them were born in a lower social class and had moved up the social ladder, others might have come down, and yet others might have remained static. Can the direction of this movement, i.e. social promotion or demotion, be associated with the number of children born to the families concerned? Again, some persons change their occupational grade during their working life and are subject to what may be called 'personal' social mobility. The effect on fertility of such changes as these is certainly worth investigating.

This dynamic approach to the problem of class differential fertility has received comparatively little attention until recently<sup>2,3</sup> with the result that practically no statistical evidence exists on the basis of which any valid deduction can be drawn. There are two recent empirical studies of European population which have yielded some information about the relationship of social mobility to size of family. Out of these two studies, one by Marcel Bresard<sup>4</sup> is based on data collected from a national sample of about 3,000 males in France. The research concentrated primarily on job-changes and comparisons of grandfathers', fathers', and sons' occupational and educational levels. The data collected on size of family were restricted to information about only the actual number of children in the different families, i.e. no information was obtained on the extent of fertility planning, and birth control practices.

The other major study, by Jerzy Berent, based on nearly 2,000 marriages taken from a nation-wide sample of 10,000 cases which were collected by the Social Survey in England and Wales in 1949<sup>5</sup>, also analysed the relationship between fertility and inter-generational and personal social mobility. In this investigation also no attempts were made to collect

*Note*: References are given at the end of this article.