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Social Mobility and Sect Transformation:
Testing the Regression-to-the-Mean Hypothesis

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Abstract

Social scientists have long drawn on church-sect theory to explain religious variation and change. One of the theory's key insights is that, over time, sectarian movements tend to be transformed into churches. The most commonly cited factor in this process is upward intergenerational mobility. For years, social scientists believed that the primary cause of this upward mobility was the sectarian lifestyle itself, but Stark and Bainbridge (1985) have argued that a substantial amount of upward mobility must occur as a simple matter of regression to the mean, suggesting that sectarian movements should demonstrate more intergenerational mobility than nonsectarian movements do. Using conservative Protestantism as a test case and drawing on log-linear techniques, I put the Stark-Bainbridge hypothesis to a test. Specifically, I compare the intergenerational occupational mobility of conservative Protestants with that of individuals who belong to other religious traditions (or those who report no religious affiliation). I find that conservative Protestants are significantly more likely to demonstrate upward intergenerational mobility than are members of other major religious traditions and American society as a whole. I conclude with suggestions for future research.

The centerpiece of church-sect theory is the proposition that successful sects tend to transform across time into churches, in other words, that religious bodies that are born in a high state of tension with their environment will, as they grow, tend to decrease this tension (Johnson 1957, 1963, 1971; Niebuhr 1929; Stark and Bainbridge 1985, 1987). Many factors are involved in this process, but upward intergenerational social mobility has been the most commonly cited cause (Iannaccone 1988; Niebuhr 1929; Sherkat and Ellison 1999; Stark 2004; Stark and Bainbridge 1985, 1987; Stark and Finke 2000). For decades, sociologists were content to explain this mobility as a consequence of the sectarian lifestyle of diligence, frugality, and moral regeneration (see, e.g., Akers 1977; Wilson 1966). Then Stark and Bainbridge (1985) added the novel hypothesis that a substantial amount of upward mobility must occur as a simple matter of regression to the mean, that is, the statistical tendency for traits that lie far above or below the mean for a population to move (regress) toward the mean.[1] Thus, the IQs of children of extremely low or high IQ parents will, on average, cluster much more closely around the population mean than those of their parents. Similarly, if we were to select a group of parents who scored extremely low on a variety of traits that tend to give power and are not wholly ascriptive, it is likely that their children will, on average, score higher on these traits, such that we should witness a "substantial amount of upward mobility between the first and second generations" (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 155). This suggests that if sectarian groups do disproportionately recruit individuals who are relatively deprived in terms of secular rewards such as wealth, power, and prestige and if their deprived status is due, at least in part, to nonascriptive, power-giving attributes (e.g., IQ), then, everything else being equal, we should observe more upward occupational mobility among sectarians than among nonsectarians.

Greater upward mobility among sectarian groups also suggests that over time, an increasing proportion of the individuals who belong to such groups will have more invested in the status quo. Thus, they become far less willing to bear the costs imposed by radical sectarian beliefs and will seek to alter their group's beliefs and practices in ways that will make them more socially acceptable (Stark and Bainbridge 1985). Moreover, once this process has been set in motion, it tends to become self-perpetuating. As sectarian religious groups lower the tension level between themselves and the surrounding culture, they tend to attract more and more individuals of higher socioeconomic status (SES). This raises the groups' overall SES levels, which brings pressure on the groups to lessen the tension level even more. This attracts individuals of even higher SES, and so the

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[1] Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 154) note that two "assumptions must be met for regression to the mean to occur. First, the trait or traits of interest must tend to cluster around the population mean. Second, there must be variability in the trait or traits either over time or from one generation to the next."

process continues until the groups have been transformed from otherworldly sects into this-worldly churches. However, as sectarian groups increasingly accommodate their beliefs and practices to those of the surrounding society, new sectarian movements rise up in their place, thereby ensuring that the church-sect cycle continues (Sherkat and Ellison 1999; Stark and Bainbridge 1985; Stark and Finke 2000).

Conservative Protestantism (CP) provides an ideal test of the Stark-Bainbridge "regression to the mean" hypothesis.[2] CP was born in a high state of tension with its surrounding environment (Niebuhr 1929; Smith et al. 1998; Stark and Bainbridge 1985), but over time, it has begun to accommodate its beliefs and practices with regard to a number of issues, such as abortion, gender roles, and civil rights (Davis and Robinson 1996a, 1996b; Hoffman and Miller 1997; Miller and Hoffmann 1999; Williams 1997). If the Stark-Bainbridge hypothesis is correct, we should expect also to find that contemporary conservative Protestants exhibit far more intergenerational upward mobility than do American society as a whole and major religious groups in particular. Indeed, preliminary evidence suggests that this intergenerational upward mobility has taken place (Goodstein and Kirkpatrick 2005; Smith et al. 1998).

DATA, MEASURES, AND METHODS

To test the hypothesis outlined above, I analyze the National Opinion Research Center's 1991–2000 General Social Surveys (GSS) (Davis and Smith 1998), which are cross-sectional surveys of a sample of noninstitutionalized individuals residing in the United States. I restrict my analysis to the 1991–2000 GSS to minimize any potential period effects. The oldest respondents in this dataset were born in 1902, which means that they would have been between 8 and 13 years of age when *The Fundamentals* were published and would have just entered the workforce at the time of the Scopes trial. Therefore, it is highly likely that those who identify themselves as belonging to a conservative Protestant denomination represent second-generation or later members. Following traditional analyses of

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[2] Following Smith (2000: 15–16), I use the term *conservative Protestant* to refer to all conservative Protestants (i.e., evangelical, fundamentalist, and Pentecostal) while reserving the use of the term *evangelical Protestant* to refer to the subset of conservative Protestants that split from fundamentalism during and after the 1940s. Some may object that that these groups should be disaggregated from one another, but this is easier said than done. For example, many denominations that scholars would identify as "evangelical" today would have been considered "fundamentalist" a generation ago. Classification of those denominations as "conservative Protestant" is based on the appendix to Steensland et al. (2000: 314–315), which lists over 80 groups. Over 80% of the respondents included in this classification belong to the following groups: Southern Baptist, Baptist, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Churches of Christ, Church of God, Assemblies of God, Christian, Church of the Nazarene, Pentecostal, Other Baptist, and nondenominational churches.

mobility tables (Hout 1984, 1986), I limit my analysis to male respondents.[3] Also, to avoid the confounding effects of race on occupational mobility, I analyze only white respondents. In total, I analyze 3,229 cases, which are summarized by religious tradition in Appendix A below.

Using the classification scheme developed by Steensland and colleagues (2000), my analysis focuses on the respondents who have remained in the same broad religious tradition (e.g., Conservative Protestant, Mainline Protestant) in which they were raised. One could object that because those who leave or join a faith community as adults also affect the faith community's SES, these individuals should also be included in the analysis. However, because I am seeking to identify intergenerational mobility within the same broad religious tradition, it makes little sense to include religious switchers.[4] I initially grouped respondents into six broad religious traditions (Mainline Protestant, Conservative Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Other, and Nonreligious[5]) and then collapsed the final three categories into a single "Other or Unaffiliated" category.

Finally, as I noted above, preliminary evidence suggests that contemporary CPs exhibit far more intergenerational upward mobility than does American society as a whole (Goodstein and Kirkpatrick 2005; Smith et al. 1998). However, although researchers often draw on log-linear models to measure and compare occupational mobility among groups (see, e.g., Hauser 1978; Hout 1983, 1984, 1986, 1988), to my knowledge, no one has used such methods to compare the occupational mobility of CPs with other Americans. In this article, I begin to fill this gap in the literature. Specifically, I utilize log-linear methods to compare the occupational mobility of CPs with individuals belonging to other religious traditions, cross-classifying sons' and fathers' occupations into the five occupational groups that are typically used for this type of analysis: upper nonmanual, lower nonmanual, upper manual, lower manual, and farm and forestry (see, e.g., Erikson and Goldthorpe 1985, 1992; Erikson, Goldthorpe, and Portocarero 1979, 1983; Hout 1983, 1986). The combination of the five occupational categories of the fathers and sons with the four religious traditions yields 100 (5 × 5 × 4) cells.

RESULTS

Before turning to the results of the log-linear models, I begin with simple tabular displays that illustrate and provide preliminary support for the Stark-Bainbridge

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[3] As I note in the concluding section, future analyses may include female respondents as well.

[4] Furthermore, Stark and Bainbridge (1985) have already empirically compared the SES of individuals raised within a sectarian tradition with the SES of those who convert to a sectarian religion; there is no point in replicating that aspect of their analysis here.

[5] "Nonreligious" includes respondents who did not answer the question.

hypothesis. Table 1 presents the percentages of fathers who were employed in farming, lower and upper manual, and lower and upper nonmanual occupations. It indicates that prior generations of conservative Protestant males held a disproportionate share of manual and farming occupations in the United States, providing compelling evidence that sectarian movements (or movements on the sectarian side of the church-sect continuum) disproportionately recruit from what Niebuhr (1929) described as the "disinherited."

Table 1: Fathers' Occupations by Religious Tradition, 1991–2000

	Percentage of Fathers Who Were …				
	Farmers	*Lower Manual*	*Upper Manual*	*Lower Nonmanual*	*Upper Nonmanual*
Jewish, Other or Unaffiliated	6.80	16.73	15.63	16.36	44.49
Mainline Protestant	15.16	15.02	15.74	17.17	36.91
Roman Catholic	9.32	21.55	22.52	14.37	32.23
Conservative Protestant	19.04	19.56	25.52	15.06	20.82

Source: General Social Surveys, 1991–2000.
Note: $N = 3,229$ (see Appendix A).

Table 2 presents evidence that provides preliminary support of the Stark-Bainbridge hypothesis. It shows that that the sons of CP farmers were the most likely to climb to the top occupational category (or what I call a "four-step jump" in occupational mobility), with the sons of Roman Catholic fathers not too far behind. By contrast, Mainline Protestants and members of other religious groups (or none at all) were far less likely to make such a jump.

Table 2: Percentage of Farmer's Sons Who Went on to Upper Nonmanual Careers by Religious Tradition, 1991–2000

Religious Tradition	Percentage
Conservative Protestant	27.47
Roman Catholic	26.04
Mainline Protestant	22.64
Jewish, Other of Unaffiliated	16.22

Source: General Social Surveys, 1991–2000.
Note: $N = 3,229$ (see Appendix A).

Table 3 presents the results from a series of estimated log-linear models. All five models are built on the independence model, which accounts for the marginal distributions of both fathers' and sons' occupations along with the religious

traditions to which they belong. Although it makes no assumptions concerning mobility, by controlling for the fathers' occupational distribution, it takes into account and corrects for the (presumably lower) occupational attainment of the parents of conservative respondents.

Model 1 builds on the independence model by including terms that measure occupational immobility.[6] Model 2 adds four measures of upward mobility: where the son's occupational category is one, two, three, or four steps higher than his father's. Model 3 includes terms that measure the interaction between occupational immobility and conservative Protestantism. Model 4 adds terms that measure the interaction between CPs and the four upward mobility terms. Model 5 includes interactions that take into account all of the religious traditions used in this analysis rather than the dichotomous distinction between conservative and non-CPs used in models 3 and 4. Model 5 was built by first adding, in a stepwise manner, the new interactions to the model. Although the stepwise process does not ensure that researchers select the best possible model, in complex models such as the 100-cell cross-classification shown in Table 3, it is a reasonable way to select among all possible interactions (Agresti 1996; Rosenfeld 2001). After this stepwise approach produced a model, I eliminated all statistically insignificant interactions of immobility and upward mobility with non-CPs. In the end, I added only five new terms to the model: the interaction between Roman Catholicism and farm immobility, the interaction between Roman Catholicism and a three-step jump in upward mobility, and the interactions between other (or no) affiliation and two-, three-, and four-step jumps in upward mobility.

I measure the fit of the various models using two methods: the likelihood-ratio test (LRT) and the BIC criterion. The BIC criterion, in which models with a BIC of less than zero are preferred to the saturated model, is easier to satisfy than the LRT. By this criterion, all of the models in Table 1, except the first, fit reasonably well. The likelihood-ratio test (LRT), however, indicates that only the final four models provide a reasonably good fit. The best-fitting model, according to BIC, is Model 2; according to the LRT, it is Model 5. Model 5 possesses an advantage over Model 2 because it provides information on the interaction between religious tradition and measures of immobility and upward mobility. It also significantly improves on the fit of Model 2 ($?^2 = 31.91$, $p = .004$).Therefore, I base most of my conclusions on Model 5's parameter estimates.

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[6] As Hout (1983:18) notes, the first place to look for barriers to mobility is along the diagonal of the mobility table, where the son's occupational category is the same as the father's.

Table 3: Parameter Estimates of Occupational Mobility by Religious Tradition, 1991–2000

	Model				
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
Model goodness-of-fit chi-square (G^2)	118.78	65.70	64.48	54.47	33.79
Model goodness-of-fit *df*	59	55	50	46	41
LRT model *p*	0.00	0.15	0.08	0.18	0.78
BIC	(357.64)	(378.70)	(339.52)	(317.21)	(297.49)
Immobility:					
Upper nonmanual	.89***	.13	.17	−.06	−.11
Lower nonmanual	.36**	.23+	.21	.17	.17
Upper manual	.28**	.15	.16	.11	.11
Lower manual	.30**	−.22	−.25+	−.40*	−.45*
Farm	3.30***	2.53***	2.49***	2.24***	1.74***
Upward mobility:					
One step		−.47**	−.48**	−.66**	−.70***
Two steps		−.93***	−.94**	−1.20***	−1.16***
Three steps		−1.54***	−1.55***	−1.97***	−1.53***
Four steps		−1.93***	−1.95***	−2.65***	−2.51***
Interactions #1:					
*Religious tradition * Immobility*					
*Conservative Protestant * Upper nonmanual*			−.19	.59+	.64+
*Conservative Protestant * Lower nonmanual*			.07	.31	.31
*Conservative Protestant * Upper manual*			−.03	.13	.13
*Conservative Protestant * Lower manual*			.08	.57+	.62*
*Conservative Protestant * Farm*			.12	.90	1.40*
*Roman Catholic * Farm*					2.14*
Interactions #2:					
*Religious tradition * Upward mobility*					
*Conservative Protestant * One step*				.66*	.69*

*Conservative Protestant * Two steps*	.89*	.86*
*Conservative Protestant * Three steps*	1.43*	.99$^+$
*Conservative Protestant * Four steps*	2.19**	2.04**
Roman Catholic * Three-steps		−.62**
Other * Two steps		−.38*
Other * Three steps		−1.05***
Other * Four steps		−1.16**

Source: General Social Surveys, 1991–2000.
Note: *N* = 3,229.
$^+$ *p* < .10; * *p* < .05; ** *p* < .01; *** *p* < .001 (one-tailed test).

Consistent with prior research (Hout 1983, 1984, 1986), Model 1 indicates that there is more immobility than would be expected under a model of perfect mobility. The estimated log odds indicate that immobility is greatest in the farm category (3.30), followed by the upper nonmanual (.89), lower nonmanual (.36), lower manual (.30), and upper manual (.28) categories. The parameter estimates change as additional terms are added to the model, only the log odds of the lower manual and farm categories remaining statistically significant. The estimated log odds of farm immobility decrease steadily from the second to the fifth model, the fifth model indicating that sons of farmers are almost six times as likely ($e^{1.74}$ = 5.70) than are the sons of nonfarmers to remain in their fathers' occupation. Interestingly, the estimated log odds for lower manual immobility switch direction beginning with the second model and grow larger as more terms are added. By the fifth model, the parameter estimate indicates that the sons of fathers who worked in lower manual occupations are about 40% ($e^{-.45}$ = .64) less likely to work in lower manual occupations than are sons whose fathers did not.

The addition of the four upward mobility terms in Model 2 indicates that after controlling for immobility and the occupational and religious tradition distributions of fathers and sons, upward mobility remains uncommon. Notably, these effects hold through the fifth model. In Model 3, none of the new interaction terms are statistically significant, and their inclusion actually worsens the model's fit, in terms of both the LRT and the BIC. However, some of the terms become statistically significant with the addition of the upward mobility interaction terms in the fourth and fifth models. The fifth model indicates that, everything else

being equal, conservative Protestant immobility is greatest in the farm category, followed by the upper nonmanual and lower manual categories.

Model 4, which adds the upward mobility by religious tradition interactions, indicates that CPs are significantly more likely than individuals belonging to any of the other religious traditions (or no religious tradition) included in this analysis to make one-, two-, three-, or four-step jumps in occupational mobility. These results lend strong support to the Stark-Bainbridge hypothesis. Furthermore, these effects remain statistically significant through the fifth model, which indicates that CPs are 1.99 ($e^{.69}$) times more likely than are others to make a one-step jump in occupational mobility, 2.36 ($e^{.86}$) more likely than others to make a two-step jump, 2.69 ($e^{.99}$) times more likely than are mainline Protestant and other (or none) religious to make a three-step jump, and an impressive 7.69 ($e^{2.04}$) times more likely than others to make a four-step jump.

The inclusion of five more terms to Model 5 significantly improves on the fit of Model 4 ($x^2 = 20.68$; $p = .0009$) and, more important, provides useful additional information. One is that Roman Catholic sons whose fathers held farm-related occupations are 8.50 ($e^{2.14}$) times more likely also to hold farm-related occupations than are mainline Protestants and other (or none) religious. It is worth noting, however, that only a small percentage of Roman Catholic fathers actually worked in the farming industry (see Table 1 and Appendix A). The other four terms indicate that Roman Catholics are less likely than others to make a three-step jump in occupational mobility and that those who are not affiliated with the three major religious groups analyzed in this article are far less likely than are others to have made two-, three-, or four-step jumps in occupational mobility.

Because Model 5 includes only statistically significant interactions between the various religious traditions and jumps in upward mobility, it compares conservative Protestant upward mobility only to that of the other religious traditions taken together, rather than comparing them separately, and makes it impossible to compare conservative Protestant occupational mobility to that of specific religious groups. Consequently, I estimated a series of models (Models 6a through 6d) that include all of the interactions between religious tradition and upward mobility, regardless of whether or not they are statistically significant.

Table 4 presents the results of these models (with only the interactions between religious tradition and upward mobility shown). The models differ only in that each uses a different reference category for the interaction between upward mobility and religious tradition. In Model 6a, conservative Protestantism serves as the reference category; in Model 6b, it is mainline Protestantism; in Model 6c, it is Roman Catholicism; and in Model 6d, it is Jewish, other, or unaffiliated. Thus, all of the models have the same goodness-of-fit chi-square (32.84), goodness-of-fit degrees of freedom (37), LRT model probability (.66), and BIC (–266.12).[7]

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[7] Models 6a through 6e do not significantly improve on the fit of Model 5 ($x^2 = 7.53$, $p = .675$).

Table 4: Parameter Estimates of Occupational Mobility by Religious Tradition Relative to Other Religious Traditions, 1991–2000

	Model			
	6a	*6b*	*6c*	*6d*
Model goodness-of-fit chi-square (G^2)	32.84	32.84	32.84	32.84
Model goodness-of-fit *df*	37	37	37	37
LRT model *p*	0.66	0.66	0.66	0.66
BIC	(266.12)	(266.12)	(266.12)	(266.12)
Immobility	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Upward mobility	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interactions #1: Religious tradition * Immobility	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interactions #2: Religious tradition * Upward mobility				
Conservative Protestant * One step	—	.65*	.68*	.78*
Conservative Protestant * Two steps	—	.77$^+$	.88*	1.30**
Conservative Protestant * Three steps	—	.94$^+$	1.60*	2.12**
Conservative Protestant * Four steps	—	2.08*	1.94*	3.32***
Mainline Protestant * One step	−.65*	—	.04	.13
Mainline Protestant * Two steps	−.77$^+$	—	.11	.53*
Mainline Protestant * Three steps	−.94$^+$	—	.66*	1.18**
Mainline Protestant * Four steps	−2.08*	—	−.13	1.24*
Roman Catholic * Two steps	−.88*	−.11	—	.42$^+$
Roman Catholic * Three steps	−1.60*	−.66*	—	.53$^+$
Roman Catholic * Four steps	−1.94*	.13	—	1.38*
Other * One step	−.78*	−.13	−.09	—
Other * Two steps	−1.30**	−.53*	−.42$^+$	—
Other * Three steps	−2.12**	−1.18**	−.53$^+$	—
Other * Four steps	−3.32***	−1.24*	−1.38*	—

Source: General Social Surveys, 1991–2000.

Note: *N* = 3,229.

$^+ p < .10$; $* p < .05$; $** p < .01$; $*** p < .001$ (one-tailed test).

Table 4 indicates that CPs are significantly more likely than are members of other groups to make intergenerational upward mobility jumps of one, two, three, and four steps. Indeed, as the jumps grow in size, so do the odds that it is CPs making them. CPs are approximately two times more likely than mainline Protestants ($e^{.65} = 1.91$), Roman Catholics ($e^{.68} = 1.97$), and other/unaffiliated individuals ($e^{.78} = 2.18$) to make a one-step jump in intergenerational occupational

mobility. They are about two times more likely than mainline Protestants ($e^{.77} = 2.16$), two-and-a-half times more likely than Roman Catholics ($e^{.88} = 2.41$), and three-and-a-half times more likely than other/unaffiliated individuals ($e^{1.30} = 3.67$) to make a two-step jump in intergenerational occupational mobility. CPs are two-and-a-half times more likely than mainline Protestants ($e^{.94} = 2.56$), five times more likely than Roman Catholics ($e^{1.60} = 4.95$), and eight times more likely than other/unaffiliated individuals ($e^{2.12} = 8.33$) to make a three-step occupational mobility jump. They are eight times more likely than mainline Protestants ($e^{2.08} = 8.00$), seven times more likely than Roman Catholics ($e^{1.94} = 6.96$), and a phenomenal twenty-seven-and-a-half times more likely than other/unaffiliated individuals ($e^{3.32} = 27.66$) to make a four-step jump.

Figure 1 graphically illustrates these results. It plots the odds that CP males will have made a one-, two-, three-, or four-step jump in occupational mobility compared to males from the other three broad religious groupings used in this analysis (the higher the bar, the greater the odds). Clearly, CP males have made gains compared to all of the other four groups at all levels of occupational mobility. Their biggest gains have come in the jump from farming to upper nonmanual occupations and primarily compared to those who are not affiliated with the three major religious traditions. Nevertheless, their occupational gains in relation to mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics are impressive as well, lending strong empir ical support to the Stark-Bainbridge hypothesis.

Figure 1: Upward Mobility Odds of Conservative Protestant Males Compared to Males of Various Religious Traditions
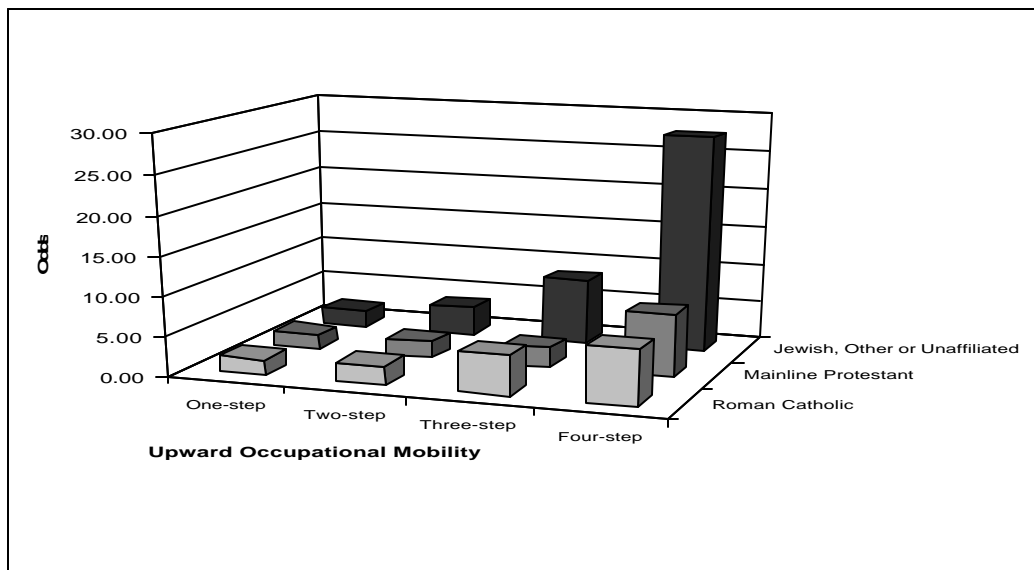
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Some social scientists criticize the use of mobility tables to measure social mobility on a number of counts (see, e.g., Kerbo 2000). A common objection is that mobility tables primarily measure occupational prestige while ignoring other indicators of social class such as power (authority) and the ownership of the means of production. Another common critique is that because only small numbers of individuals belong to the corporate and upper classes, mobility tables do not adequately capture these classes' level of mobility (or immobility) . Those who argue that class analysis (and, by extension, mobility research) is dead raise a more problematic issue (Clark and Lipset 1991; Pahl 1993; Pakulski 1993). If occupations are no longer adequate measures of social stratification, then analyses of occupational mobility tables are of little more than intellectual interest. Still, there is enough evidence to suggest that class analysis based on occupational groupings still has merit (Goldthorpe and Marshall 1992; Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1993). Furthermore, as Grusky and Sorensen (1998: 1198) note, occupations remain the "fundamental sources of identity for a great number of workers, especially those in the professional, technical, craft and service sectors." While these criticisms highlight the limitations of mobility table (and class) analysis and should encourage us to interpret results with caution, they should not lead us to discard them altogether. As Hout (1984, 1986 1988) has demonstrated, log-linear analyses of mobility tables can and often do yield informative results.

These criticisms aside, this study lends strong support to the Stark-Bainbridge hypothesis that, over time, members of sectarian movements, such as conservative Protestantism, will demonstrate greater upward intergenerational mobility than will individuals who do not belong to sectarian groups. I found that conservative Protestant males are significantly more likely than are members of other religious traditions to make intergenerational jumps in upward occupational mobility of one, two, three, and four steps. The fact that they are more likely than are members of any of the other groups to make a four-step jump is particularly striking. Some may point out, of course, that all this indicates is that earlier generations of CPs were disproportionately represented in farming occupations, and they would be right. That is precisely the point. CPs should demonstrate more upward occupational mobility because sectarian movements recruit disproportionately from the ranks of the dispossessed.

One could object that these results are compatible with other interpretations of the data, such as the fact that certain forms of conservative religion encourage attitudes and practices (e.g., honesty and hard work) that are conducive to upward occupational mobility. While I (and I suspect many others) would be surprised to find that the attitudes and behavior encouraged by some forms of conservative religion did not have a positive effect on upward occupational mobility, nowhere

do I claim that regression to the mean is the *only* factor lying behind the upward intergenerational mobility of conservative Protestants. Perhaps more relevant to the potential objection raised here, however, is that we must always keep in mind the connection between theory and research. As social scientists, we are called to confront theories with empirical tests of their predictions (Stark and Finke 2004). That is what I have done here, and as one reviewer noted, the Stark-Bainbridge hypothesis has survived this initial collision with data.

This study suggests a number of possible avenues for future research. Researchers might wish to disaggregate the five occupational and/or the five religious categories used in this analysis. That would allow them to make more subtle comparisons in the occupational mobility of various religious traditions. Possible occupational schemes include the sevenfold and ninefold schemes identified by Erikson, Goldthorpe, and Portocarero (1983); the twelve-category scheme identified by Wright (1985); or the seventeen-category scheme used by Blau and Duncan (1967) and Featherman and Hauser (1978).[8] Similarly, the number of religious traditions could be expanded from the four used in this analysis to the sevenfold scheme of Steensland and colleagues (2000) or the eleven used by Sherkat (2001) in his analysis of religious switching.

In the future, researchers will certainly want to include female respondents in their comparative analysis of conservative Protestant occupational mobility. Comparing their current occupational category to those of either parent will undoubtedly offer interesting and perhaps provocative results. Not only is there considerable evidence that contemporary conservative Protestant women regularly participate in the workforce (Denton 2004; Gallagher and Smith 1999), but also other studies have found that female occupational mobility patterns differ substantially from those of men (Hout 1988).Therefore, it would not be surprising to discover that the intergenerational upward mobility of CP women is even greater than that of CP men. If this is indeed the case, then the upward intergenerational mobility of CPs might be even more pronounced that this study's results suggest. Similarly, researchers will want to include nonwhite respondents in future analyses. It goes without saying that Black Protestants have suffered from structural injustices that conservative Protestants have not (Fischer et al. 1996).

Finally, in addition to occupational mobility, researchers might want to explore the intergenerational educational mobility of CPs. Here again, research to date indicates that CPs have made significant gains with respect to education when compared to other religious groups (Smith et al. 1998). And although educational and occupational mobility tend to be strongly correlated, there are

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[8] Hout (1988) modified the latter into a fourteen-category scheme for his analysis of American occupational mobility in the 1980s using the General Social Surveys.

differences between the two, and educational mobility might prove to be a better predictor of cultural accommodation than is occupational mobility.

Appendix A: Data Used in Analysis

Conservative Protestants

Father's Occupation	Son's Occupation					
	Upper Nonmanual	*Lower Nonmanual*	*Upper Manual*	*Lower Manual*	*Farm*	*Total*
Upper Nonmanual	100	20	39	40	0	199
Lower Nonmanual	55	30	33	25	1	144
Upper Manual	68	30	81	63	2	244
Lower Manual	43	25	58	60	1	187
Farm	50	22	39	45	26	182
Total	316	127	250	233	30	956

Mainline Protestants

Father's Occupation	Son's Occupation					
	Upper Nonmanual	*Lower Nonmanual*	*Upper Manual*	*Lower Manual*	*Farm*	*Total*
Upper Nonmanual	160	28	40	30	0	258
Lower Nonmanual	57	25	19	16	3	120
Upper Manual	41	13	30	25	1	110
Lower Manual	43	14	26	19	3	105
Farm	24	16	25	20	21	106
Total	325	96	140	110	28	699

Roman Catholics

Father's Occupation	Son's Occupation					
	Upper Nonmanual	*Lower Nonmanual*	*Upper Manual*	*Lower Manual*	*Farm*	*Total*
Upper Nonmanual	182	49	66	35	0	332
Lower Nonmanual	60	32	34	22	0	148
Upper Manual	80	26	83	43	0	232
Lower Manual	56	34	73	58	1	222
Farm	25	9	22	27	13	96
Total	403	150	278	185	14	1,030

Jewish, Other Religion or No Affiliation

Father's Occupation	Son's Occupation					
	Upper Nonmanual	*Lower Nonmanual*	*Upper Manual*	*Lower Manual*	*Farm*	*Total*
Upper Nonmanual	159	37	23	23	0	242
Lower Nonmanual	42	19	16	12	0	89
Upper Manual	32	10	28	14	1	85
Lower Manual	23	10	31	25	2	91
Farm	6	5	9	12	5	37
Total	262	81	107	86	8	544

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