

# OCCUPATIONAL CHOICES AND MOBILITY ORIENTATION AMONG LEBANESE COLLEGE STUDENTS

GEORGE H. WEIGHTMAN  
and  
SIHAM F. ADHAM

## Summary

American research has indicated that the occupational choice and mobility orientation of a study group are closely associated with the group's socio-economic background, value orientations, and personality characteristics. In order to provide insights into the socio-psychological factors underlying occupational choices and mobility orientations in a cross-cultural context, a modified version of an American schedule was administered to a sample of one hundred twenty-two Lebanese male students at the American University of Beirut. The findings, with one notable exception, paralleled the findings of an earlier American study. Parental economic status and educational background as well as the respondents' value orientations and personality characteristics were found to have a significant influence on the pattern of occupational choice and mobility expectation in the sample group.

## Introduction

THIS STUDY SOUGHT TO TEST THE HYPOTHESIS THAT occupational choice and mobility orientation of Lebanese college students at the American University of Beirut are closely associated with their socio-economic background and their socio-cultural values.<sup>1</sup> For a verification of this hypothesis, data were collected by an interview schedule administered to a random sample of one hundred twenty-two male Lebanese students at the American University of Beirut in the spring of 1960.

From the methodological and theoretical points of view, the significance of this study lies in the attempt at a modified replication in the Lebanese cultural context of a similar analysis undertaken in America and analyzed by Morris Rosenberg.<sup>2</sup> The interview schedule used in the Lebanese study

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<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgements for reading and offering generous advice are due V. Goldkind and C. Heller.

<sup>2</sup> Morris Rosenberg, *Occupations and Values* (Glencoe, Free Press, 1957). Rosenberg's typologies and analysis provided the foundation for our own research and analysis.

constituted a modified version of the questionnaire used in the American study. For a considerable part of the conceptual framework, this present research is indebted to the formulations of Rosenberg. Throughout this analysis, repeated parallels and comparisons will be made with his findings.

### Universe and Sample

The universe for this study consisted of all the Lebanese male students who had had at least two years of college education at the American University of Beirut during the academic year 1959-60. The total number of cases in the universe was 447, distributed among the six schools of the University. (The entire student population of this coeducational and quite ethnically heterogeneous university in 1950-60 was 2,661. Lebanese nationals constitute less than a third of the total enrollment.) Though it is important to note that this universe of college students cannot be regarded as representative of all of Lebanese society, this group—given the structure of Lebanese society—will occupy many of the socially prestigious positions in the future and will considerably shape the expectations and values of other elements in Lebanon.

A random sample modified to allow for adequate statistical comparison was selected from this universe. The interview period extended for eight weeks. There was no loss in the original selection of one hundred twenty-two cases. All interviews were conducted by one of the investigators, Miss Siham Faik Adham, in English.

In the sample, there were 107 Arab Lebanese and 15 Lebanese of Armenian origins. In the religious breakdown, there were 83 Christians (chiefly Orthodox and Catholic) and 39 non-Christians (i.e., Sunnites, Shiites, and Druze). Although the American University of Beirut is regarded as a "rich man's school," many of the sample group acknowledge a relatively low financial position—even by urban Lebanese standards.<sup>3</sup>

### Family Socio-Economic Background and Occupational Choice, Mobility, and Motivation

Given the familistic orientation of Lebanese society, one may expect family socio-economic background to influence the pattern of occupational choice and desire for mobility in the sample group. We hypothesized that

<sup>3</sup> The specific breakdown of reported income of father:

8 under 4,800 Lebanese pounds  
31 between 4,800 and 9,600  
38 between 9,600 and 15,000  
24 between 15,000 and 25,000  
14 between 25,000 and 40,000  
7 more than 40,000

At the time of our study 3.12 Lebanese pounds equalled one dollar.

the higher the socio-economic status of the respondent's family, the more likely is the respondent to choose high status occupations. In the study, occupational and desire for mobility expectations were related to such indices of socio-economic status as stated yearly income of father and the educational attainment of both parents.

As shown in Table I, students whose fathers are said to have a high annual income level (by Lebanese standards) tend to select occupations which are generally regarded (at least in Lebanese society) as highly lucrative. These occupations include medicine, engineering and government service. On the other hand, a much larger proportion (48%) of the lower economic levels tend to select less lucrative occupations such as agriculture, teaching, or business which includes many clerical posts. Chi square tests indicate that the association between father's income and son's choice of occupation is not likely a result of mere chance. The computation of Yule's Q (.673) also supports such a conclusion. Thus, we may infer that those of more limited family means have more limited socio-economic expectations. This finding is in agreement with Rosenberg's conclusions on the same subject.<sup>4</sup> However, it must be pointed out and, indeed, stressed that the Lebanese sample viewed government service in a very different light than the American sample. (Undoubtedly this reflects different societal views of the functions and nature of government service.)

TABLE I  
FATHER'S INCOME AND STUDENT'S CHOICE OF OCCUPATION

Student's Choice of Occupation	Father's Income			
	Up to 15,000 Lebanese £		Over 15,000 Lebanese £	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
(High Status-Lucrative Position)				
Medicine, Engineering and Government Service	43	52	33	85
(Low Status—Limited Position)				
Agriculture, Teaching, and Business	40	48	6	15
Total	83	100	39	100

$$\text{dif.} = 1 \quad x^2 = 12.19$$

$$N = 122 \quad P < .001$$

$$\text{Yule's Q.} = .673$$

<sup>4</sup> Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

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As indicated in Table II, family educational background is significantly related to respondent's expectation of occupational choice. It is important moreover to observe that mother's educational background (Gamma = .5846) seems to be more crucial in patterning the occupational choice of the son than is that of the father's (Gamma = .4166). Given the patriarchal, patrilineal nature of Lebanese society, mothers are closer to their children than the fathers who generally spend the largest part of their time in activities outside the home. In addition, the educational attainment of one's mother may be a more effective single indicator of socio-economic status. In the Middle Eastern context, only the higher status groups educated their women until very recently. Indeed, in rural Lebanon, especially among the Muslims, such a pattern is still quite marked.

TABLE II  
PARENTAL EDUCATION AND STUDENT'S CHOICE OF OCCUPATION

<i>Student's Choice</i>	Father's Education						Mother's Education					
	Elementary		High School		College		Elementary		High School		College	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
(High Status—Lucrative)												
Medicine, Engineering and Government Service	16	44	26	63	34	76	24	43	39	76	13	87
(Low Status—Limited)												
Agriculture, Teaching, Business	20	56	15	37	11	24	32	57	12	24	2	13
Total	36	100	41	100	45	100	56	100	51	100	15	100
	d.f. = 2		x <sup>2</sup> = 8.1				d.f. = 2		x <sup>2</sup> = 17.05			
	N. = 122		P < .02				N. = 122		P < .001			
	Gamma = .4166						Gamma = .5846					

In order to analyze the economic expectations of the study group, it is appropriate to consider mobility not only with reference to some general societal standard, irrespective of where the respondent started, but also in terms of the expectations of surpassing one's own father. Thus, two dimensions of mobility have been taken into consideration. The first relates mobility to an absolute standard of income. The second relates mobility expectations to the economic position of the respondent's family—whether higher or lower than that of the father. Reflecting similar findings of Ro-

senberg,<sup>5</sup> Table III indicates that if mobility is defined in terms of the expectation to acquire a great deal of money in terms of some absolute social standard (Part A), then the wealthier students have greater mobility expectations. However, if mobility is defined in terms of an expectation of surpassing one's family (Part B), then the poorer students have greater mobility expectations.

TABLE III

## A. FATHER'S INCOME AND STUDENT'S FUTURE EARNINGS EXPECTATIONS

<i>Student's Expected Earnings in Ten Years</i>	Father's Income			
	Up to 15,000		Over 15,000	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Over 15,000	31	37	35	90
Up to 15,000	52	63	4	10
Total	83	100	39	100
	N. = 122		$\chi^2 = 29.32$	
	d.f. = 1		P < .001	

## B. FATHER'S INCOME AND STUDENT'S EXPECTED STANDARD OF LIVING

<i>Expectations Compared with Family's</i>	Father's Income			
	Up to 15,000		Over 15,000	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Higher	63	76	8	21
About Same	20	24	24	61
Lower	....	....	7	18
Total	83	100	39	100
	d.f. = 2		$\chi^2 = 39.32$	
	N. = 122		P < .001	

When mobility expectations are related to parental educational background (Table IV), the pattern previously described persists. It appears that the wealthier students are more likely to expect to be upwardly mobile in an absolute monetary sense (Part A), but when students were asked how they expect their own future standard of living to compare with that of their families of orientation (Part B), students from the poorer families tend to expect to surpass their families' standard of living, whereas those from wealthier families do not. Thus, the richer expect to do better, but relative to the high standards already maintained by their parents, the expectations will not markedly represent a departure from the pattern already achieved by their parents. These data highlight the importance of specifying clearly the base upon which mobility expectations derive. Moreover,

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53-4 and 60.

Table IV again notes that the mother's educational background is even a more crucial indicator of status differences than that of the father's.

It can be seen from Tables V and VI that not only are the students from the higher socio-economic status groups more likely to expect to earn a good deal of money, but more of them are likely to possess values that emphasize extrinsic rewards. Similarly, the higher status students are more likely than the lower status students to stress status and prestige as important occupational values. In other words, as with the American findings of Rosenberg,<sup>6</sup> there is a marked relationship between family socio-economic

TABLE IV

A. PARENTAL EDUCATION AND STUDENT'S EXPECTED INCOME

Student's Expected Income in Ten Years	Father's Education						Mother's Education					
	Elemen- tary		High School		College		Elemen- tary		High School		College	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Over 15,000	10	28	27	66	29	64	21	37	32	63	13	86
Up to 15,000	26	72	14	34	16	36	35	63	19	37	2	14
Total	36	100	41	100	45	100	56	100	51	100	15	100
	d. f. = 2			x <sup>2</sup> = 14.23			d. f. = 2			x <sup>2</sup> = 14.12		
	N. = 122			P. < .001			N. = 122			P. < .01		

B. PARENTAL EDUCATION AND STUDENT'S EXPECTED STANDARD OF LIVING

Expectation Compared With Family's	Father's Education						Mother's Education					
	Elemen- tary		High School		College		Elemen- tary		High School		College	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Higher	29	81	29	71	13	29	40	71	29	57	2	13
About Same	7	19	9	22	28	62	16	29	19	37	9	60
Lower	....	....	3	7	4	9	....	....	3	6	4	27
Total	36	100	41	100	45	100	56	100	51	100	13	100
	d. f. = 4			x <sup>2</sup> = 27.39			d. f. = 4			x <sup>2</sup> = 28.38		
	N. = 122						N. = 122					

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.58.

TABLE V

## FATHER'S INCOME AND STUDENT'S OCCUPATIONAL VALUES

<i>Occupational Values</i>	Father's Income			
	Up to 15,000		Over 15,000	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Money:				
Number Ranked High	22	26	29	74
Number Ranked Medium or Low	61	74	10	26
Total	83	100	39	100
	d. f. = 1		x <sup>2</sup> = 24.92	
	N. = 122		L <sup>s</sup> < .001	

<i>Status:</i>	Father's Income			
	Up to 15,000		Over 15,000	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Number Ranked High	26	31	23	59
Number Ranked Medium or Low	57	69	16	41
Total	83	100	39	100
	d. f. = 1		x <sup>2</sup> = 8.43	
	N. = 122		L <sup>s</sup> < .01	

position and the respondent's desire for economic advancement. Again, in Table VI, we see that the educational attainment of the mother provides a more significant contrast in the patterns of the status groups than does the educational attainment of the father.

#### Value Orientations and the Choice of Occupation

The process of weighing various occupational alternatives involves the elimination of some occupations which are deemed inappropriate for an individual of a certain social class or of a certain personality type. In addition, some occupations are unsuited for individuals who hold certain value orientations. It is of interest to find out to what extent these "value effects" might manifest themselves in the occupational choices of the sample group.

As in the Rosenberg study, the socio-cultural values were those which stressed: (1) interpersonal relations, (2) self expression, or (3) extrinsic reward, i.e., monetary rewards. Table VII indicates that the same proportion (46%) of those expressing interest in medicine and teaching stressed interpersonal values. Similar findings by Rosenberg<sup>7</sup> led him to group

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

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TABLE VI  
PARENTAL EDUCATIONAL AND STUDENT'S OCCUPATIONAL VALUES

Occupational Values	Father's Education						Mother's Education					
	Elemen- tary		High School		College		Elemen- tary		High School		College	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Money:												
Number Ranked High	9	25	16	39	26	58	14	25	27	53	10	67
Number Ranked Medium or Low	27	75	25	61	19	42	42	95	24	47	5	33
Total	36	100	41	100	45	100	56	100	51	100	15	100
	d. f. = 2 $\chi^2 = 9.00$						d. f. = 2 $\chi^2 = 12.89$					
	N. = 122						N. = 122					

Status:	Father's Education						Mother's Education					
	Elemen- tary		High School		College		Elemen- tary		High School		College	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number Ranked High	13	36	14	34	22	49	16	29	25	49	8	53
Number Ranked Medium or Low	23	74	27	66	23	51	40	71	26	51	7	47
Total	36	100	41	100	45	100	56	100	51	100	15	100
	d. f. = 2 $\chi^2 = 2.28$						d. f. = 2 $\chi^2 = 5.85$					
	N. = 122						N. = 122					

teaching and medicine in the same set of occupations. However, Table VII and Rosenberg's own findings<sup>8</sup> indicate a marked contrast among those who prefer medicine and those who prefer teaching with respect to emphasis on self-expression (about the same proportion as for interpersonal relations among future teachers) and an extrinsic reward (a very poor third among those expressing an interest in teaching). Therefore, they will be considered separately in a later discussion of personality types and occupation choice. (See Table VIII.)

Government service, medicine, and engineering are generally regarded in the Lebanese society as productive sources of monetary reward. Most of the students (73%) who chose the field of government work, and more

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

than a third (35%) of those students expressing interest in medicine or engineering, stressed extrinsic rewards as a major occupational value. Significantly, the American study of Rosenberg did not observe this marked association between choice of government service and concern with monetary rewards.<sup>9</sup> The unusually high association between selection of government service and emphasis on extrinsic rewards undoubtedly results from the pervasive theme in the Lebanese culture which confers high status upon those occupying positions in government work. This pattern of great expectations for security, high prestige, and lucrative rewards, so pervasive in the Lebanese culture today can be dated back into the Turkish and French colonial traditions.

Another manner in which occupational values tend to delimit or channel the occupational choice of the sample group is revealed by the observation that a majority (54%) of both those choosing the fields of agriculture and engineering stress the value of self-expression as a major reward to be derived from one's occupation. Almost as many (47%) of those choosing teaching express a similar preference. The fields of engineering, agriculture, and teaching are generally believed to provide an opportunity for considerable self-expression. In general, these findings emphasize the close association between occupational choices of the sample group and the socio-cultural values held by this group. It is apparent that different occupations have structural qualities which enhance the satisfaction of certain values.

TABLE VII  
VALUE ORIENTATION AND OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE

	Medicine		Engineering		Agriculture		Business		Government Service		Teaching	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Interpersonal Relations	15	46	3	10	5	24	6	38	2	13	7	47
Extrinsic Rewards	12	36	10	36	5	13	5	31	11	74	1	6
Self-Expression	6	18	15	54	8	53	5	31	2	13	7	47
Total	33	100	28	100	15	100	16	100	15	100	15	100

d. f. = 10

$\chi^2 = 28.80$

N. = 122

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

### Personality Characteristics and Occupational Choice

Personality factors operate upon the individual in such a way that they are crucially related to occupation preferences. In this study, personality is defined as the types of behavior an individual manifests in his relations to others. Horney, through her clinical investigations, arrived at a classification of three types: those who "move toward" people; those who "move away" from people; and those who "move against" people. In his study, Rosenberg refers to those who "move toward" as the *compliant type*, those who "move away" as the *detached type*, and those who "move against" as the *aggressive type*.<sup>10</sup> Replicating his analysis in the Lebanese context, we have chosen to utilize his operational concepts.

Table VIII indicates that almost half (40%) of those students choosing the field of medicine show compliant personality characteristics. This is in sharp contrast to those students who choose the field of engineering. Only 10% of prospective engineers may be defined as compliant personality types. In addition, compliant personality traits are characteristic of many students (40%) preferring the field of teaching. However, students choosing the fields of medicine and teaching differ markedly with respect to the distribution among the sample group of aggressive and detached personality characteristics.

The majority (67%) of those students who selected the field of government service as their prospective career tend to show aggressive personality characteristics. Similar patterns on a somewhat reduced scale are represented among those choosing medicine (30%) and engineering (43%). Conversely, students planning to enter the field of agriculture manifest the greatest extent of detached personality characteristics. Not too surprisingly this detached personality type is well represented among those indicating an interest in engineering (47%). Nevertheless, one might question how appropriate such a personality type might be in the teaching profession despite its ample representation (47%).<sup>11</sup> In expressing value preferences, a similar proportion of those interested in teaching emphasized self-expression over interpersonal relations or extrinsic rewards. Is it possible that in Lebanon, and perhaps elsewhere, a personality type is attracted to teaching which may not be compatible with the necessary interpersonal aspects of that career?

### Summary and Conclusion

The present study has focused on the socio-cultural factors underlying occupational choices and mobility orientations of a random sample of male

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> Comparisons with Rosenberg in this area of inquiry are difficult. His published findings do not explicitly enumerate in this area of discussion government service, engineering, or agriculture. In addition, he groups medicine and teaching.

TABLE VIII

## PERSONALITY TYPOLOGY AND THE CHOICE OF OCCUPATIONAL AREA

	Medicine		Engineering		Agriculture		Business		Government Service		Teaching	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Compliant	16	48	3	10	5	24	4	24	3	20	6	40
Aggressive	13	39	12	43	2	13	6	38	10	67	2	13
Detached	4	13	13	47	8	53	6	38	2	13	7	47
Total	33	100	28	100	15	100	16	100	15	100	15	100

d. f. = 10

 $\chi^2 = 30.42$ 

N. = 122

Lebanese students at the American University of Beirut in 1960. Given the familistic orientation of Lebanese society, it was anticipated that family socio-economic background would influence the patterns of occupation choice and desire for mobility in the sample group. It was further hypothesized that the higher the socio-economic status of the respondent's family, the greater would be the respondent's expectations in occupational choice and desire for high status. Chi square tests consistently revealed significant relations supporting this hypothesis. Students coming from superior socio-economic backgrounds tended more to choose high-status lucrative occupations and to expect to be upwardly mobile than those coming from more limited socio-economic backgrounds. However, relative to their families' restricted status, those of humble origin expected some advancement.

As in Rosenberg's earlier study of an American college sample, the findings indicate that certain occupational values and personality characteristics tend to channel or delimit the occupational choices of the sample group. However, in the American study, the marked relation between preference for government service and emphasis on extrinsic rewards was not observed. Such a high association in the Lebanese context graphically depicts the realities of present government operation in the Levant. This pattern enshrined during Turkish and French colonial rule may be changing, but security, prestige, and monetary rewards are still popularly associated with government service.