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The Socio-Economic Origin of São Paulo

University Students

Bertram Hutchinson

*A origem sócio-econô-  
mica dos universitários  
de São Paulo*

In the course of another study concerned with the social prestige of occupations, there arose the opportunity to collect certain data concerning the socio-economic background of São Paulo University students. The results seem sufficiently interesting as to justify their separate analysis.

The general sampling method employed in the inquiry has been described in an earlier article (1). It will suffice on this occasion to mention merely that a main systematic random sample of 500 first-year undergraduates of all Faculties of the University was selected from a total (in August, 1955) of some 1,800. This sample was subsequently interviewed, either at home or at the University itself. In those respects with which we are concerned here the course of the interview was simple, involving merely the recording of the informant's country of birth, and of the birthplace of his parents and grandparents; the language which the informant normally spoke in his home; his place of permanent residence; his father's occupation; whether or not the informant had paid-employment in addition to his University studies; how many social classes he thought to exist in São Paulo, what their names were, and to which social class he considered that he himself belonged. It is with the analysis of this data that the present discussion is concerned. In view of the method of selecting informants (2) which was adopted it seems

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(1) Some preliminary results of this study have already appeared in Educação e Ciências Sociais, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1956.

(2) Dr. Otavio da Costa Eduardo, of the Escola de Sociologia e Política de São Paulo, undertook the responsibility of organising the field interviewing in accordance with this sampling method, and I wish to thank him for his assistance.



probable that the results which follow can be assumed to be true (within small limits of error) of the entire first-year student population of the University of São Paulo.

### National Origin

The majority of students (95.4 per cent.), as might be expected, were born in Brazil, although, as we shall see, many of them were in varying degrees of foreign origin. On the other hand, it seems that this proportion was rather lower than the proportion of Brazilian-born persons who were present in the general population of São Paulo, according to the Census figures for the year 1950. The age-groups employed by the Conselho Nacional de Estatística were slightly different from those used in the present inquiry, with the result that we did not have figures which were directly comparable to our own. A basis for comparison may be constructed, however, by computing from the Census data the proportion of Brazilian-born in the age-group 15-24, an age-group which includes the majority of first-year students (Table 1).

TABLE 1

Proportion of Brazilian - and Foreign - born persons present among 1st year University students, and in the general population of the City of São Paulo.

	<u>Brazilian- born</u> %	<u>Foreign- born</u> %
First-year University students	95.4	4.6
General population: City of São Paulo(1950):		
age 15-19 years	98.7	1.3
age 20-24 years	97.1	2.9
age 15-24 years	97.8	2.2

It seems fairly clear that there existed a tendency for the University to attract an abnormally high proportion of the foreign-born. Naturally in many Universities outside Brazil University populations display a greater foreign element than the population of the cities in



which the Universities are situated; but this phenomenon arises, to a considerable degree, from the presence of foreign students who, not being immigrants, normally return to their country of origin. In São Paulo this is rarely the case. Slightly less than half of one per cent. of the students interviewed possessed permanent homes abroad. It must be supposed, therefore, that the foreign-born children of immigrants are rather more likely to undertake studies at the University than are children born in Brazil. In the absence of other data specifically related to this phenomenon we are left to surmise what the explanation may be. It is possible that foreign immigrants bring with them an inclination for university studies that is greater than exists among the Brazilian born. It may be that immigrants seize the opportunity of university education for their children because they look upon it as an important means of achieving economic and social success in a new national environment. It is possible also that poverty among the general population of the city of São Paulo serves to restrain the number of Brazilian born adolescents attending the University, an assumption which carries with it the corollary either that immigrant parents tend to have a noticeably higher average income than the Brazilian born, or that, while their incomes are no greater, immigrant parents are more willing to make a temporary economic sacrifice in order that their children may ultimately enter more highly-paid occupations through the means of a higher education.

If the proportion of students who were themselves born abroad was small, there were many more who were of foreign origin. Only 21.8 per cent. of all first-year students had both parents and all grandparents who were of Brazilian birth (Table 2). It will be noticed that, at the other extreme, a quarter of the students were of an entirely foreign-born family, though we have no data available which enables us to say how far this differs, if at all, from the São Paulo average. Between the extremes we have referred to there was a wide variety of combinations of foreign-born relatives (Table 3); but if we wish to determine, however approximately, the extent of the foreign influence to which the student has been subjected in his home some method of scoring seems desirable. A variety of scoring methods were attempted, designed to take into account possible differences of significance in having, for example, a foreign-born father as compared with a foreign-born grandmother.



TABLE 2

The proportion of students having relatives (i.e., parents or grandparents) who were born outside Brazil.

<u>Number of Relatives born abroad</u>	<u>Proportion of Students</u> % (n=500)
0	21.8
1	7.2
2	12.6
3	6.8
4	14.6
5	12.4
6	24.6
	<u>100.00</u> =====

TABLE 3

The proportion of students having specified combinations of relatives who were born abroad.

<u>Combinations of Relatives who were born abroad</u>	<u>Proportion of Students</u> % (n=500)
None	21.8
Both parents and all grandparents	24.6
All grandparents	12.2
Father and all grandparents	10.0
Both maternal grandparents	6.6
Both paternal grandparents	4.8
Maternal grandfather	2.8
Mother and all grandparents	2.4
Paternal grandfather	2.2
Mother and both maternal grandparents	2.0
Father and both paternal grandparents	1.4
Father, both paternal grandparents and maternal grandfather	1.4
Both paternal grandparents and maternal grandfather	1.2
Paternal grandmother	1.0
Other combinations of relatives	5.0
Insufficient information	0.6
	<u>100.0</u> =====



None of these methods was wholly satisfactory, however, and the best approach to a single measure of degree of foreign origin appeared to be the calculation of the mean number of foreign-born relatives ( of whatever relationship) within the student's family. This figure was calculated for all first-year students, and in Table 4 a comparison has been made with the equivalent figure for each of the Faculties.

TABLE 4

The mean number of foreign-born relatives possessed by first-year students, according to University Faculty.

<u>Faculty</u>	<u>Mean Number of foreign-born relatives per student</u>
Arquitetura	2.46
Direito	2.84
Medicina	3.11
Filosofia	3.23
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Ciências Econômicas	3.50
Politécnica	3.52
Farmácia	3.54
Higiene	3.77
Veterinária	3.80
<u>TOTAL (all Faculties)</u>	<u>3.20</u>

The horizontal line drawn in Table 4 separates those Faculties whose students had an average, or smaller than average, number of relatives of foreign birth from those Faculties with a greater than average number. The resulting picture is fairly clearly defined. While in all Faculties there existed a large number of students of non-Brazilian background, there was nevertheless a tendency for those of more purely Brazilian origin to favour the older Faculties which are traditional in Brazilian seats of learning. The newer, and in a sense, the more technical, Faculties (such as Politécnica, Farmácia, etc.) seemed to attract students who were of a more foreign family origin. This suggests that children of foreign origin (though not themselves



necessarily of foreign birth) are more willing to take advantage of the new occupational opportunities which are arising from the processes of economic development which São Paulo in particular is undergoing. But it must be borne in mind also that the Faculties of Law and Medicine in Brazil confer something of a special social prestige upon those attending them - a prestige which the less fully-assimilated child of foreign parentage may find it easier than the "pure" Brazilian to forego.

TABLE 5

Birthplace of Student, and of his Relatives

BIRTHPLACE	STUDENT (n=500).	R E L A T I V E					
		Father (n=500)	Mother (n=500)	Paternal Grand- father (n=500.)	Paternal Grand- mother (n=500)	Maternal Grand- father (n=500)	Maternal Grand- mother (n=500)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brazil	95.4	62.7	70.2	36.8	39.0	34.2	38.6
Portugal	0.6	5.7	3.4	9.6	7.4	8.2	5.6
Italy	0.4	7.2	4.4	22.6	22.0	26.6	26.6
Spain	0.2	2.6	1.8	4.2	4.2	3.4	4.2
Germany	0.2	1.4	1.4	2.2	2.4	2.6	2.2
Japan	1.2	7.4	7.2	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4
Middle East	0.2	4.8	2.6	6.4	6.2	6.2	5.4
Other Countries	1.6	9.6	8.4	10.5	11.2	11.2	10.0
No information	-	-	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.2	

Turning now to the specific countries in which the students and their relatives were born (Table 5) it can be seen that Japan, Italy and Portugal are those which, apart from Brazil itself, have contributed most to the University population (3). This is largely in accordance with

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(3) It is interesting to compare the figures arrived at by A. Almeida Jr.: "O Concurso Vestibular de 1954" Rev. Bras. Est. Pedagog. XXii, 1954, p.5, which differ from those offered here. They were, however, based upon an analysis of surnames of candidates for University entrance. Figures referring to the national origin of 2,076 São Paulo students may be seen in the article by Carolinã Martuscelli: "Uma pesquisa sôbre aceitação de grupos nacionais, grupos 'raciais' e grupos regionais, em São Paulo", Boletim CXIX (Psicologia No.3) da Faculdade de Filosofia Ciências e Letras da Universidade de São Paulo, 1950, p.60. Dr. Martuscelli's figures show a close similarity to those offered in the present article.

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trends in immigration, although the small number of students of Spanish origin is disproportionate to what might be expected, bearing in mind the large number of Spanish immigrants among the general population. It is interesting to note the degree of national endogamy which is evident in the data set out in Table 5. This has been summarised in a more convenient form in Table 6, which shows, for each country, the number of married women of a given national origin for every 100 married men of the same origin. Thus, if every man had married a woman of the same national origin, this figure would be 100, representing complete endogamy within this national group. An "endogamy rate" of less than 100 indicates that men have married women of other national origins, while the converse is true of "endogamy rate" greater than 100 - that is, women of given national origin have married outside their group (Column (a)).

TABLE 6

The number of married women (students' relatives) of each national origin for each 100 married men of similar origin (Column (a)); and the number of international marriages per 100 marriages (Column (b)).

COUNTRY OF BIRTH	FATHERS AND MOTHERS OF STUDENTS		GRANDFATHERS AND GRAND-MOTHERS OF STUDENTS	
	(a) Endogamy Rate	(b) Exogamy Rate, both sexes	(a) Endogamy Rate	(b) Exogamy Rate, both sexes
Brazil	113.5	13.5	109.2	9.2
Portugal	68.0	32.0	73.8	26.2
Italy	61.1	38.9	98.4	1.6
Spain	69.3	30.7	110.5	10.5
Germany	100.0	00.0	95.8	4.2
Japan	97.2	2.8	100.0	00.0
Middle East	58.3	41.7	93.5	6.5
Other Countries	89.5	10.5	97.2	2.8



The gradual process of adaptation, as between the first generation and the second, to the country of adoption is illustrated here by the striking increase in the proportion of, exogamous (or international) marriages in the parental generation. With the single exception of persons of German Origin, there have been many more exogamous marriages among the parents of students than there were among their grandparents; and it is possible that this process will be continued by the third generation - that is, by the students themselves. On the other hand, the degree of endogamy among all national groups, which is particularly marked among the Germans and the Japanese, is noteworthy, suggesting, as it does, the persistence of cultural patterns from abroad, and a resistance on the part of immigrants to full assimilation to Brazilian life. It may be assumed, therefore, that many University students, though Brazilian-born themselves, come from a domestic background in which non-Brazilian cultural patterns continue to receive at least some recognition at the expense of purely Brazilian beliefs and behaviour.

#### Language Spoken

On the other hand, all but an inconsiderable proportion of the students stated that Portuguese was the normal language of conversation in their homes, which suggests that in this respect at least cultural assimilation to Brazil is largely complete.

#### Permanent Home

We have already had occasion to refer to the small degree to which the University of São Paulo, as yet, fulfils the role of an international centre of learning insofar as the provenance of students is concerned. If we look at the figures more closely it becomes clear that this University has something of the character of a municipal educational centre. The permanent home of 76 per cent. of the first-year students studied was in the City of São Paulo itself, and in the case of a further 20 per cent. their permanent home was in the interior of the State of São Paulo. The proportion of students coming to the University from other states of Brazil was small (slightly more than 3 per cent.), while students whose permanent homes were abroad made up rather less than half of one per cent. of the



whole. It would be interesting to compare these figures with similar data referring to other universities in Brazil; but in any case there seems room here for measures designed to encourage inter-state exchange of University students. Both University and students seem likely to benefit from the interchange of ideas, and increased understanding of country and people, which would follow the establishment of a tradition of geographical mobility among teachers and taught.

There appears to be some variation as between one Faculty and another in the proportion of students whose homes lie outside the City itself. The Faculties of Medicine, Philosophy and Polit cnica appear to contain a proportion of students from outside the City which is greater than the average for all Faculties, while the Faculty of Law (though otherwise drawing the majority of its students from within the City) has a much higher than average proportion of students from other States of Brazil. Certain other Faculties (Ci ncias Econ micas, Higiene, Arquitetura, Farm cia and Direito) are notable in the contrary sense that they have a higher than average proportion of students living permanently within the City. While the reasons for such differences are not clear, there is some justification for believing that it is the more recently established Faculties which draw a greater part of their students from the urban area of the City, in contrast with the older, traditional Faculties whose students come more frequently from the interior of the State, from other States or from abroad.

#### Class Origin of Students

Theoretically the University of S o Paulo is an educational institution which is ouverte aux talents. It is a "free" University for which the students, or the student's parents, have to pay tuition fee, the sole financial obligation being a small "taxa" which can be waived if the student can show economic need. On the other hand, the number of places which fall vacant each year is limited, and an entry examination is employed to select entrants from among the list of applicants. It is at this point that it may appear that a certain class bias has influenced the selection of University entrants. In general it is only the graduate of the secondary schools who is permitted to sit for the entrance examination, a condition which excludes automatically the majority of the population, irrespective of



their intelligence and of their real (as distinct from formal) level of education. The basic process of selection for the University therefore takes place at a stage, earlier than the actual entrance examination, where a parent must decide whether he can afford the direct and the indirect costs (through, foregoing earning-power) of sending his child to a secondary school. For those who have passed through the secondary schools, another selective process occurs when parents must make up their minds whether or not they can afford to postpone further the enjoyment of their children's earning power. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the outcome it is the child of comparatively wealthy parents who attends the University, and rarely the child of the poor. In these circumstances it is a matter for speculation how far the number of new applicants for University entrance would be affected by the introduction of tuition fees. It seems likely that the effect would be small.

The completion of the entire research project (of which this is a part) will provide detailed information concerning the social and educational background of the student and his family. At this stage, however, we have available some preliminary data which, although limited in its scope, is of interest. In Table 7 are shown the occupational groups from which the father of first-year University students came, with an analysis made according to the Faculty in which the students was studying. The bias towards the selection of University students from among the middle and the upper classes, and away from students of lower class origin is quite apparent.



TABLE 7

Occupational groups (\*) of the fathers of first-year University students, according to the University Faculty of the student

UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF STUDENT	OCCUPATIONAL GROUP OF FATHER				
	1. Profissões liberais; altos car- gos adm., gerencia e direção	Altas po- sições de supervisão inspeção, etc.	Posições mais bai- xas de supervi- são, ins- peção etc.	Posições manuais especiali- zadas e cargos de rotina não manu- ais.	Ocupações manuais se- mi-especial e não espe- cializadas.
Direito (n=66) %	37.8	30.3	25.7	4.5	1.5
Politécnica (n=51) %	43.1	37.2	7.8	11.8	-
Medicina (n=24) %	29.1	50.0	16.7	4.1	-
Filosofia (n=154) %	37.0	33.8	17.5	9.1	2.6
Farmácia (n=40) %	32.5	50.0	12.5	5.0	-
Veterinária (n=4) %	-	-	-	-	-
Higiene (n=13) %	38.5	46.1	7.7	7.7	-
Ciências Econ. (n=16) %	43.7	43.7	-	12.5	-
Arquitetura (n=11) %	54.5	18.2	27.3	-	-
<b>TOTAL (n=379)</b>	<b>38.3</b>	<b>36.4</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>1.6</b>

(\*) These figures refer to the occupations of fathers who were in employment at the time of the interview.

Three-quarters of these first-year students come from upper-middle and middle class families, and slightly more than one-sixth from the lower middle class. Less than one-tenth had their origin in the two lowest classes (columns 4 and 5). We are left in no doubt, when we examine these figures, that the series of economic and administrative obstacles to University entrance which we noted above have served effectively to prevent more than a small extension of University education to classes other than that for which it has



for long been a traditional privilege in Brazil, as elsewhere.

While the number of observations upon which the analysis according to Faculty has been made is sometimes small, the material suggests that there may be certain differences in the class origin of the Faculties. In particular it is clear that it is in the Faculties of Polit cnica, Filosofia and Ci ncias Econ micas that there occur the highest proportion of students of lower class (columns 4 and 5) origin. The smallest proportions of students of this status appear to be found in the Faculties of Medicina and Arquitetura. It appears, indeed, that there may be a tendency for students from poorer families to enter the newer departments of the University while the children of the well-to-do prefer the traditional fields of study. On the other hand, it cannot be said that the analysis in Table 7 does more than indicate this as a possibility: the pattern is not fully defined. At the same time there is the objective reason for supposing this difference of choice to exist, in that the successful pursuit of the older liberal professions, such as the law and medicine, depends to a significant extent upon the social influence and associations which the young practitioner can command. The same is probably true of the profession of architecture. In contrast, the technical professions such as engineering and the like, are perhaps less at the mercy of considerations which are not purely professional, and for this reason may appeal more to the student of a comparatively poor, and socially un-influential, family. It is to be hoped that subsequent phases of this inquiry will provide the material upon which more definite conclusions can be based.

To this point we have based our comments concerning the class origin of our sample of first-year students upon the class-status indicated by the father's occupation. The assumption that this is an objective and socially valid measure of status has been largely confirmed by earlier work in the S o Paulo social mobility project (4). But what class status do the students allocate to

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- (4) Cf. Castaldi, C., "Nota s bre a classifica o das ocupa es quanto ao prest gio social entre um grupo de imigrantes italianos e seus descendentes na cidade de S o Paulo.", Educa o e Ci ncias Sociais, Vol. I, No.2, 1956, pp. , and Hutchinson, B., "Classifica o da posi o das ocupa es segundo os estudantes universit rios: notas s bre alguns resultados preliminares", *ibid.*, pp.



themselves? Nearly three-quarters of those who were interviewed considered that there were three, and most of the remainder thought there were four, social classes in the City of São Paulo. They were able to name these classes and to state to which of them they themselves belonged, and while there was considerable diversity in nomenclature, the results could be summarised in the manner shown in Table 8.

TABLE 8

Students' estimate of their own social class affiliation, according to their fathers' occupational groups

OCCUPATIONAL GROUP OF FATHER	CLASS AFFILIATION						
	Alta; rica	Média	Burgue- sia	Profis- sões li- berais, etc.	Pobre; prole- taria, etc.	Outras classes	Sem resposta
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1. Profissões li- berais; altos cargos adminis- trativos; geren- cia e direção (n=149)	4.7	71.1	8.7	6.7	3.4	3.4	2.0
2. Altas posições de supervisão, inspeção, etc. (n=138)	0.7	72.5	8.0	1.4	3.6	8.7	5.1
3. Posições mais baixas de super- visão, inspe- ção, etc. (n=62)	-	87.1	1.6	1.6	3.2	6.4	-
4. Posições manu- ais especiali- zadas e cargos de rotina não manuais (n=29)	-	82.7	3.4	-	-	6.9	6.9
5. Ocupações ma- nuais semi-es- pecializadas e não especializa- das (n=6)	-	66.6	-	-	-	16.7	16.7
Pai não traba- lha (n=48)	4.2	64.6	8.3	-	6.2	8.3	8.3
Pai falecido (n=68)	2.9	70.6	10.3	-	2.9	10.3	2.9
TOTAL (all stu- dents) (n=500)	2.4	73.4	7.4	2.6	3.4	7.0	3.8



There was a general concordance between the students' own estimate of their social class and that suggested by the occupation of the father, although there was a tendency for the students to assume middle class status more often than would be justified by the latter criterion. It is possible, of course, that students consider that attendance at the University in itself justifies their claiming middle-class status irrespective of their origin. The fact that students from the two lowest occupational groups (4 and 5) claim middle-class affiliation seems to lend support to this hypothesis. Indeed, it appears that informants from the lower occupational groups displayed a tendency to claim middle class status more frequently than those from other groups. It is also particularly noticeable that claims to affiliation to the "pobres" or the "proletária" came only from the three upper occupational groups, and never from those in groups 4 and 5, whose "real" class origin would seem to suggest a de facto affiliation to this class. Students from groups 4 and 5, if they did not claim middle-class status, preferred either to use a nomenclature for social classes which was different from the usual, or refused to make any estimate of their personal class status. In either case the purpose may have been to conceal their real belief that they were of a lower class origin. In contrast, those middle - and upper-class students who claimed affiliation to the "pobres" or the "proletária" may have done so largely from intellectual bravado. However this may be, the general purport of Table 8 is to confirm with subjective data the upper-and middle-class character of the University student population which was established more objectively by the analysis which was made according to the father's occupation.

#### Student Employment

One significant characteristic of the first-year student population studied (one which is shared, in other forms, by the Brazilian population at large) is indicated by the considerable numbers who were in paid employment in addition to following their University studies. Of the men 53 per cent., and of the women 33 per cent., had such employment, although this proportion varied according to the occupational group of the father (Table 9).



TABLE 9

The Proportion of first-year students having paid employment in addition to their university studies, according to the occupational group of their fathers

OCCUPATIONAL GROUP OF STUDENT'S FATHER	Proportion of Students in paid employment
	%
1. Profissões liberais, altos cargos administrativos; gerência e direção (n=149)	32.8
2. Altas posições de supervisão, inspeção etc. (n= 138)	43.5
3. Posições mais baixas de supervisão, inspeção, etc. (n=62)	43.5
4. Posições manuais especializadas e cargos de rotina não manuais (n=29)	41.4
5. Ocupações manuais semi-especializadas e não especializadas (n=6)	83.3
Father deceased (n=68)	80.9
Father not working (n=48)	58.3

The financial importance of paid employment to many of the students is made manifest when we observe that the smallest proportion of employed students occurs among those whose fathers' occupations are in group 1, while among those in group 5 (as among those students whose fathers are no longer alive) the proportion is more than doubled. It therefore seems fairly certain that for many students paid part-time employment is an economic necessity - and an unfortunate one, since it must of necessity reduce the value of the years which they spend at the University.

#### Summary

1. From data obtained from a sample of first-year students at the University of São Paulo, it is possible to conclude that the



University attracts a higher proportion of foreign-born persons than is present among the general population of the city. There is evidence also that certain Faculties attract a greater proportion of students of foreign background than others: there were more of such students in the newer Faculties, while the traditional Faculties appeared to be preferred by students of a more predominantly Brazilian background.

2. The majority of the first-year students had their permanent home within the city of São Paulo, and of the remainder the majority lived within the State of São Paulo. The proportion of students coming from other states of Brazil was very small, and the proportion of foreign students (in the sense of students who had their permanent homes abroad) was negligible.

3. From an analysis of the occupations of students' fathers the degree to which the student population was of a predominantly upper-middle and middle class origin became clear. Of the five social-occupational classes postulated, the two lowest accounted for less than ten per cent. of first-year University students, while only 3.5 per cent. of the students themselves claimed a "poor" or "proletarian" origin. There appeared to be some differences between Faculties in the social origin of students, the highest proportions of students of the two lowest classes occurring in the Faculties of Politécnica, Ciências Econômicas and Filosofia.

4. More than half the male students, and a third of the women, had paid employment in addition to their University studies, the proportion varying according to the social class of the father. Students whose fathers were of lower class origin (or whose fathers were already dead) were much more frequently in employment than others.