

Status Attainment Processes*

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Recent research on stratification has moved away from traditional concerns with description of mobility rates and toward explanation of the processes by which educational and occupational positions are attained. This paper presents and compares the two main theoretical models emerging from this line of research. The Blau-Duncan and Wisconsin models of status attainment are similar in the causal ordering of positional variables and yield similar empirical estimates of paths of influence, despite being based on different samples. The main focus of the Blau-Duncan model is on the structure of status transmission while the Wisconsin model focuses on social psychological dynamics mediating interpersonal influences on individual attainment. Different aspects of this mediation are discussed on the basis of completed Wisconsin research. Practical implications of the two attainment models are examined. A paradigm for future research in this area is presented.

Introduction

STATUSES ARE INEQUALITIES among social units, such as persons or families, which are more or less institutionalized within the larger social system. These inequalities occur in most societies along a plurality of basic dimensions. Three such dimensions come closest to being regarded universally as bases for status systems: wealth, power, and prestige (Runciman, 1968; Haller, 1970). Abstract hierarchies represented by these dimensions are operationalized

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in social life by a broader set of specific status variables. They include, among others, income and property, political influence, prestige in the occupational domain, and generalized esteem in the community. Of these, for reasons explained below, the variable most commonly focused upon is occupation and, more specifically, occupational prestige (Duncan, Featherman, and Duncan, 1972; Hodge, Siegel, and Rossi, 1966). Also employed as status indicators, though less frequently than occupation, are income (Miller, 1966), general wealth (Lampman, 1962), and reputational prestige and influence in the community (Warner and Lunt, 1941; Lehman, 1969; Walton, 1971). Education has been proposed as a fourth basic status dimension (Svalastoga, 1965). Education, however, seems to lack the abstractness and universality of the first three hierarchies, its formal importance being limited to relatively modern societies (Haller, 1970). Concern for education in the study of stratification systems seems better justified by its increasingly important role as determinant of positions in subsequent variables directly representing differences in wealth, power, and prestige (Rosen, Crockett, and Nunn, 1969).

Among many study areas to which the permanent fact of social inequality has given rise, the problem of "movement" along status dimensions has few rivals in the amount of interest it has elicited. Two focal points of concern have been the extent to which ascriptive factors at birth determine subsequent levels of achievement and the extent to which initial positions of individuals in the stratification system influence their positions at later points in time. The initial impetus provided by Sorokin's (1927) plea for empirical research instead of speculation in this area was followed by nearly three decades in which the above issues were approached under the labels inter- and intra-generational mobility, respectively.

Research on mobility has been useful in providing descriptions of the extent and direction of population movements along different status dimensions in particular societies. Comparing rates of upward and downward mobility between different societies has given rise in turn to insightful theorizing about societal causes of static versus changing inequalities and the social and political consequences of these alternative situations (Lipset and Bendix, 1959).

However, for the most part there is a paucity of causal explanations of mobility at the individual level. The magnetism exercised on researchers by the mobility problem has meant almost exclusive concentration on description—analysis of conventional mobility matrices *per se*—to the neglect of explanation—study of the possible determinants of observed status movements. Analysis of the causes and consequences of mobility within a society has been

measures are available. The relationship of occupational status to these specific dimensions, for the most part, is straightforward—educational attainment being regarded as primarily a determinant, and income level as primarily a consequence, of occupation.

While study of status attainment focuses on individual change sequences, it should not be forgotten that these processes occur within status systems which are themselves subject to change. Though the evidence at present points to a marked stability of occupational prestige rankings in the U.S. over a period of several decades (cf. Hodge, Siegel and Rossi, 1966), this fact is by no means a necessity.

A theory of status attainment, therefore, must draw from other areas of stratification research to take into account possible changes occurring in the structure of status systems. Elsewhere the distinction has been drawn between the Weberian (Weber, 1946; Runciman, 1968) *content* dimensions of status (wealth, power, and prestige) and *structural* dimensions (Haller, 1970) which describe states of the content dimensions. Two structural dimensions seem especially relevant to the problem of status attainment: dispersion, or the degree to which social units are differentiated along each of the three basic content dimensions, and crystallization (Landecker, 1970), or the degree to which content dimensions themselves are inter-correlated. Dispersion is important because when the variance in status is large, status attainment processes are likely to be delineated sharply. Crystallization is important because of the inter-dimensional predictability in status which it implies. Different models of status attainment would be required were each status dimension to have low correlations with the others. This is why the degree to which occupational status safely can be assumed to be representative of other status dimensions is contingent upon the level of crystallization.

Dispersion and crystallization of status systems—for which empirical measures might be developed without great difficulty—may prove worthwhile as integral parts of future status attainment research since they delineate the general framework within which individual processes take place: dispersion indicating the quantity of status variation to be explained, crystallization the qualitative nature of this variation. Yet to date, neither variable has been taken into account as a parameter affecting status attainment.

In sum, the place of status attainment research in the study of social stratification lies in the effort to specify the causal sequence through which individuals reach their positions in status hierarchies. Status attainment research seeks to identify those basic factors describing the persons and their situations which account for whatever status locations they come to occupy. Knowledge of these causal inputs may allow prediction of eventual status out-

comes for different categories of individuals. While a plurality of social hierarchies offers alternative foci for the study of attainment, it is occupation, among readily measured status variables, which is most strategic and which is best known. Finally, study of individual attainment must take into account the changing structure of status systems within which these processes take place.

The sections below present, in summary fashion, what is known on the basis of empirical research of causal sequences through which status attainment takes place. Discussion is limited to American society because it is here that the main research has been conducted. Two such models exist today. We shall call one the "Wisconsin model" and the other the "Blau-Duncan model." One, the Blau-Duncan model, is most precisely concerned with status transmission. Both are grounded solidly in careful research using extensive samples. The following discussion will aim at clarifying:

- (1) The dissimilar theoretical orientations but eventual complementarity of the two basic models presented;
- (2) The relative usefulness of each as analysis is focused on general objective determinants or on more specific psychological factors;
- (3) The limitations of both approaches and, by extension, lines of viable research for the future.

Models of Status Attainment

Research on status attainment processes in the U.S. has been conducted along different theoretical paths. The two models outlined in this section are not the only ones developed, but they are representative of the two main orientations which sociological thought has followed. Both are based on large data sets and both have employed path analysis as a form of presentation.

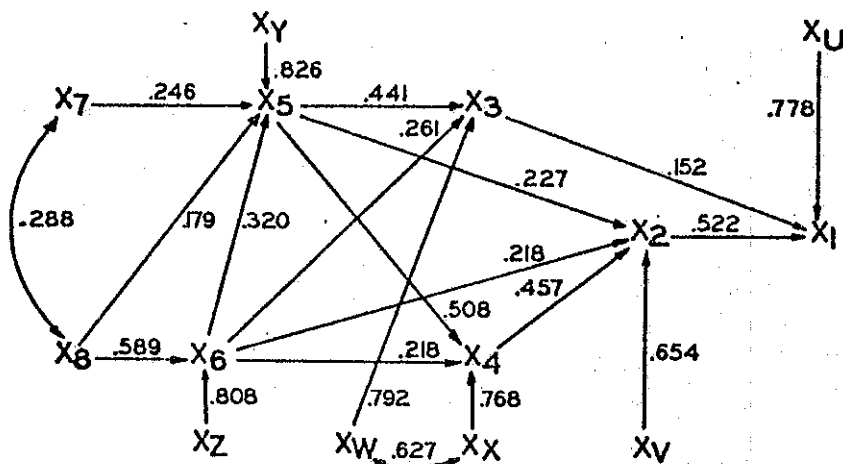
Best known among causal theories of status attainment is Blau and Duncan's (1967) model. It is based on data collected from a single cross-sectional sample of the American adult male population as part of the Bureau of Census' "Current Population Survey" of March, 1962. Strictly speaking, the concern of the model is status transmission, or the extent to which ascribed positions relate to subsequent attainment. As such, Blau and Duncan's model essentially is an attempt to reconceptualize classic questions of mobility research within a more useful analytic framework. That is, they focus upon:

- (1) The extent to which inherited status determines the social fate of individuals.
- (2) The extent to which earlier positions in status hierarchies affect later levels of attainment.

original results were specific to the farm population (Sewell, Haller, and Ohlendorf, 1970). This test supported the initial model with slight modifications. The final model is presented in Diagram 2. Path coefficients (beta weights) for each residential area are presented in Table 2. As these results show, the causal model applies in similar fashion across different residential categories. The model is parsimonious, involving thirteen of the possible twenty-six paths among variables arranged in this causal order. Evidence in support of this restriction is provided by comparing variation in dependent variables accounted for by the model (R^2 s) versus that explained when all possible paths are included. The two sets of figures—for each residential area and the total sample—are presented in Table 2. As can be seen, increases in explained variation due to these additional paths are, in almost all cases, of little consequence.

Total explained variation in early occupational attainment (X_1) is forty per cent and in educational attainment (X_2) fifty-seven per cent. These figures compare with thirty-three per cent of

DIAGRAM 2: THE WISCONSIN MODEL OF EDUCATIONAL AND EARLY OCCUPATIONAL ATTAINMENT



- X_1 - OCCUPATIONAL ATTAINMENT
 X_2 - EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
 X_3 - LEVEL OF OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATION
 X_4 - LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATION
 X_5 - SIGNIFICANT OTHERS' INFLUENCE
 X_6 - ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
 X_7 - SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS
 X_8 - MENTAL ABILITY

TABLE 2
Path Coefficients and Coefficients of Determination for Final Wisconsin Model and for That Including All Possible Paths. Five Residence Categories and Total Sample

Residence Category and Dependent Variable	Independent Variables								Coefficient of Determination (All Paths)	
	X_5 EdAtt	X_6 LOA	X_7 LEA	X_8 SOI	X_4 AP	X_7 SES	X_8 MA	Coefficient of Determination (Final Model)	R^2	R^2
Farm N = 857										
X_1 -OccAtt	.553	.139						.415	.433	.433
X_2 -EdAtt			.434	.202	.240			.519	.539	.539
X_3 -LOA				.576	.275			.315	.333	.333
X_4 -LEA				.432	.234			.338	.352	.352
X_5 -SOI					.388	.174	.106	.263	.263	.263
X_6 -AP							.680	.397	.397	.397
Village N = 816										
X_1 -OccAtt								.404	.410	.410
X_2 -EdAtt				.193	.237			.563	.569	.569
X_3 -LOA			.458	.414	.314			.394	.403	.403
X_4 -LEA				.497	.253			.432	.445	.445
X_5 -SOI					.367	.247	.070	.292	.292	.292
X_6 -AP							.673	.453	.458	.458
Small City N = 1094										
X_1 -OccAtt	.508	.096						.328	.340	.340
X_2 -EdAtt			.476	.204	.232			.602	.628	.628
X_3 -LOA				.304	.304			.365	.388	.388
X_4 -LEA				.497	.260			.441	.463	.463
X_5 -SOI					.300	.256	.217	.341	.341	.341
X_6 -AP							.602	.363	.366	.366

scores of Duncan's (1961) socioeconomic index for all occupations (SEI). Education variables (U and X_2) are conceptually the same—years of formal schooling completed—though Blau and Duncan utilized the continuous distribution of the variable while in the Wisconsin data it is coded into four broad educational attainment categories (Sewell, Haller, and Ohlendorf, 1970) and refers only to college attainment.

Concern of Blau and Duncan with status transmission led them to employ only father's occupation and education as exogenous variables and examine their effects separately. Concern of Wisconsin researchers with the dynamics of status attainment led them to posit parental socioeconomic status as a single exogenous variable formed by father's occupation and education, mother's education, and family's income level. This operational difference may be overcome partially by combining father's occupation and education in Blau-Duncan's research as an approximation to the Wisconsin socioeconomic status index (X_7). The question then is: how do relationships between these three status variables compare across the two studies?

Correlations of socioeconomic status with educational and early occupational attainment in Blau-Duncan's data are estimated by taking simple averages of the correlations of father's education (V) and father's occupation (X) with the other status variables. Intercorrelations between parental status, educational and early occupational attainment in the two studies are presented in Table 3.

As can be seen, despite differences in variable measurement, sample selection, and time and place of data collection, the two sets of coefficients are quite similar. In no case do correlations between the same two variables differ by more than eight points. Differences between the same coefficients across the two studies are consistently smaller than differences between coefficients within each set. Both studies rank the correlations in the same order, parental status and early occupation displaying the weakest rela-

TABLE 3

Correlations between Status Variables: Blau-Duncan and Wisconsin Models

Correlation	Blau-Duncan	Wisconsin
r_{12}	.538	.618
r_{13}	.374	.331
r_{23}	.445	.417
$R_{1,23}$	.560	.623

 X_1 : Early Occupational Attainment. X_2 : Education. X_3 : Parental Socioeconomic Status.

tionship and educational and occupational attainment the strongest.

As seen above, if both models were restricted to these three variables, they would hypothesize the same causal order, with early occupation defined as a function of educational attainment and parental status. Thus, it is also possible to compare multiple correlations, with early occupation as the dependent variable. Not surprisingly, coefficients are quite similar. As shown in Table 3, multiple correlation in Blau-Duncan is .56, in the Wisconsin study, .62. Squaring available coefficients makes possible a final comparison in terms of relative contribution to explained variation in early occupational attainment. More than specific coefficients, this exercise illustrates how both studies would yield identical conclusions if restricted to objective status variables. We may start by considering the total effect (r^2) of the earlier causal variable—parental status—on occupational attainment and then the additional contribution made by education. This yields the following figures:

	Blau-Duncan	Wisconsin
Gross Parental Status Effect (I)	.14	.11
Additional Education Effect (II)	.17	.28
Total Variation Explained ($R^2 = I + II$)	.31	.39

In both cases, even when total parental status effects—direct effect plus that due to its inter-correlation with education—are considered, education exercises a stronger additional effect on occupational attainment. This trend is especially marked in Wisconsin results where the additional impact of education is more than twice that due to gross parental effects. Nevertheless, both sets of results yield identical conclusion: There is a significant gross effect of parental status on early occupational attainment but a still larger additional effect of education.

Next, we may consider results from the opposite perspective: first, total effect of the more immediate determinant of occupational attainment—education; second, additional effect of the more remote variable—parental status. For each model:

	Blau-Duncan	Wisconsin
Gross Education Effect (I)	.29	.38
Additional Parental Status Effect (II)	.02	.01
Total Variation Explained ($R^2 = I + II$)	.31	.39

Academic performance (X_6) came, as mental ability, from school records in the form of student's rank in his high school class. Assessment of current occupation and educational level in 1964-65 seems straightforward. The former was coded from Duncan's Socio-economic Index, employed by a number of other studies as the most valid available measure of occupational prestige. Inter-correlation between attainment variables as well as its similarity with correlations reported by other studies suggest reliability levels not inferior to those reached by the best currently available research. This leaves measurement of aspirations and significant others' influence as problematic. It will suffice to note at present that hypothesized relationships between these variables derive strong support from an independent research program designed precisely to examine these aspects of the status attainment process (Woelfel and Haller, 1971). Results from this study are summarized in the next section.

(3) The longitudinal design of data collection insures a temporal sequence among crucial variables similar to the causal order portrayed by the model. Aspirations and their antecedents were measured in 1957 or earlier; attainments in 1964-65. Among the latter, education preceded occupational attainment. Among 1957 variables, mental ability is not only logically prior to academic performance but was measured when the student was a junior in high school, while academic performance is his relative standing in the senior class. The durability of status positions over time means that parental status naturally should precede other variables. Relationships between academic performance, significant others' influence, and aspirations however, are, problematic. While, for example, academic performance is hypothesized to influence college educational aspirations, the opposite also may be true. Similarly, academic performance should affect significant others' assessment of the child's college potential and hence the nature of their influence, but the opposite also could occur. Such "circles of causality" are particularly difficult to portray on the basis of survey data. In the present case, nonrecursive path models comprising these reciprocal influences can be solved only by imposing implausible assumptions on the data (Woelfel and Haller, 1971b). It is here then that the model seems farthest removed from empirical reality. It remains for future research, based on different data collection designs, to clarify these relationships. Limiting ourselves, for the time being, to recursive paths, those hypothesized by the model seem clearly the most reasonable ones among existing options. As seen above, they yield a close fit to observed correlations.

(4) Tabular analyses of bivariate associations indicate that all relevant relationships are linear (Sewell, Haller, and Portes, 1967).

This, of course, does not rule out the possibility of multivariate nonlinearity or interactive effects. A separate study was undertaken to test these alternative hypotheses in regard to causal effects on educational and occupational attainments (Gasson, Haller, and Sewell, 1972). As results presented below indicate, this research provided no empirical justification for abandoning the assumptions of linearity and additivity underlying the model.

As in the case of Blau and Duncan's theory, the Wisconsin model does not contain any radically new conceptions but rather summarizes in a systematic fashion well-established notions in social psychology and stratification research as they impinge on the process of status attainment. Most important among them: (1) The forceful impact of interpersonal influence on the formation of attitudes and their behavioral enactment. This is portrayed by the strong direct effects of significant others' influence on educational and occupational aspirations and its smaller direct effect on educational attainment. (2) The role of self-reflexive action in the adjustment of status aspirations to more or less conform to perceived ability (Woelfel and Haller, 1971a). (3) The basic role of status aspirations, as antecedents of educational and occupational attainment. These observations are in agreement with results of most past research in the area (Kahl, 1953; Herriott, 1963; Alexander and Campbell, 1964; Duncan, Haller, and Portes, 1968).

It is the last set of variables which constitutes the strategic center of the model. Aspirations mediate most of the influence of antecedent factors on status attainment. Even when educational attainment is taken into account, occupational aspirations still exercise a significant direct effect on occupational attainment.

The execution of occupational and educational aspirations appears to be a central process in early adult status attainment, not only because it represents a clear expressive orientation toward desirable goals but also because it is likely to involve a realistic appraisal of possibilities conveyed to ego by significant others and his own self-evaluations. The hypothesized impact of aspirations on status attainment does not mean that all or most specific goals must be fulfilled but, more generally, that initial plans set limits to the range where eventual attainment levels are likely to be found.

The Wisconsin model thus can be defined as an attempt to clarify the process by which status aspirations are formed and the manner in which they influence subsequent attainment-oriented behavior. Related to each of these aspects, two general hypotheses are advanced:

A. Status aspirations are complex forms of attitudes whose

However, in the aforementioned state-wide data measurement of the relevant variable—significant others' influence—may be less than ideal. This measure has two main shortcomings:

(1) Parents, teachers, and best friends are assumed *a priori* (since no other indicators were available) as the only significant others affecting status aspirations.

(2) Information on their orientations toward ego is obtained from the latter rather than from original sources. Hence, correlations between significant others' influence and status aspirations could be spuriously high due to respondents' selective recall or to perception of influences biased toward harmony with existing aspirations.

To assess these and other possibilities an independent research program was undertaken. Procedures of data collection and results have been discussed in detail elsewhere (Haller, Woelfel, and Fink, 1969; Haller and Woelfel, 1972; Woelfel and Haller, 1971a). It will suffice here to note their bearing on the original theory. A theoretical model was developed on the basis of Kelly's (1952) distinction between significant others who hold expectations for ego and convey them directly to him—"definers"—and those who influence ego indirectly through their own aspirations or their level of attainment—"models." The main task of the study was to develop a reliable instrument for identifying models and definers influencing ego's perception of his relationship to status goals. The Wisconsin Significant Other Battery was developed for this purpose (Haller and Woelfel, with Fink, 1969). As reported in the original study, initial indicators of its internal consistency and reliability over time are quite satisfactory.

On the basis of this instrument, it was possible to locate significant others both in the occupational and educational realms. This was done by interviews with 100 high school students—the entire senior class in a small Wisconsin city. As it turned out, there was considerable overlap between significant others affecting educational and occupational aspirations, the conditional probability of a person named in one area being identified in the other reaching .70. As it also turned out, most significant others were "definers," some were definers and models, but very few were models alone. Mean number of significant others per respondent was 13.5.

Having located individuals holding influential expectations for the respondent, it was possible to interview them directly concerning these expectations. This was done via mailed questionnaires which yielded a 68 per cent rate of return. A crude summary measure of interpersonal influence on status aspirations was obtained by taking the mean level of education or occupation that significant others expected ego to attain. It was then possible

to correlate significant others' influence with ego's own educational and occupational aspirations without:

- (a) Making *a priori* assumptions about number or identity of significant others.
- (b) Depending on ego for report on the nature of these influences.

For the purpose of comparison these correlations are presented in Matrix 1 together with those from the original data on which the model is based. As expected, refined measurement of significant others' influence yields somewhat higher correlations with aspiration variables. That this increase results from more precise measurement of the independent variable is substantiated by the fact that correlation between educational and occupational aspirations (r_{34}) is about the same in both studies and that those between significant others' expectations in one area and ego's aspirations in the other (r_{35b} , r_{45a}) are smaller, being roughly of the same magnitude as those obtained in the original study. Only when relevant expectations are paired with aspirations in each status area do we obtain significant improvement in the strength of associations.

Correlation does not imply causality. Hence, it is possible to argue that while an empirical relationship exists, its causal nature is not portrayed adequately by the model. Congealed status aspirations, if communicated, could have a feedback effect on expectations of significant others. While, as noted above, this seems a likely possibility, it is implausible to assume that the *primary* causal relationship between the variables goes in this direction. In the Haller-Woelfel research (1971a) most significant others

MATRIX 1

Zero Order Correlations between Significant Others' Influence and Educational and Occupational Aspirations in Two Wisconsin Studies *

Variables	X_3	X_4	X_5	X_{5a}	X_{5b}
X_3	...	.77	.57	...	...
X_4	.70	...	.61	...	...
X_5	...	...	...	...	...
X_{5a}	.64	.59	...	...	...
X_{5b}	.55	.66	...	.76	...

X_3 = Level of Occupational Aspiration.

X_4 = Level of Educational Aspiration.

X_5 = Significant Others' Influence (Sewell, Haller, and Ohlendorf, 1970).

X_{5a} = Significant Others' Influence—Occupational Expectations.

X_{5b} = Significant Others' Influence—Educational Expectations.

* The original study (1957-1965) correlations are above diagonal. The Haller-Woelfel study (1969) correlations are below diagonal. Variable labels follow original model, Diagram 2.

representation of the latter two relationships shows a weak tendency toward sigmoid curves within predominant linear patterns (Diagrams 3 and 4; adapted from Gasson, Haller, and Sewell, 1972).

Results, therefore, do not support the hypothesis of non-linearity. Minimal increases of explained variation in status attainment do not justify abandoning the linearity assumption for more operationally cumbersome procedures. Identical results were obtained by Gasson, Haller, and Sewell when other potential facilitators, such as mental ability and parental status, were considered:

Two tests for interaction were performed. The final and most comprehensive one tested interaction without reinstating the assumption of linearity. This was done by identical dummy-variable regressions of status attainments on aspirations within categories of relevant facilitators and vice versa. Interaction would mean that slopes would not be parallel across facilitation categories but would rather accelerate in one direction (monotonic interaction) or run in opposite directions (nonmonotonic interaction).

None of the results presented by Gasson, Haller, and Sewell departs markedly from the pattern of parallel slopes representing additivity. This is certainly the case for relationships between attitudes and facilitators, explicitly posited by the model as determinants of status attainment. As shown in Diagram 3, the

DIAGRAM 3: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATION, SIGNIFICANT OTHERS' INFLUENCE (SOI) CONTROLLED

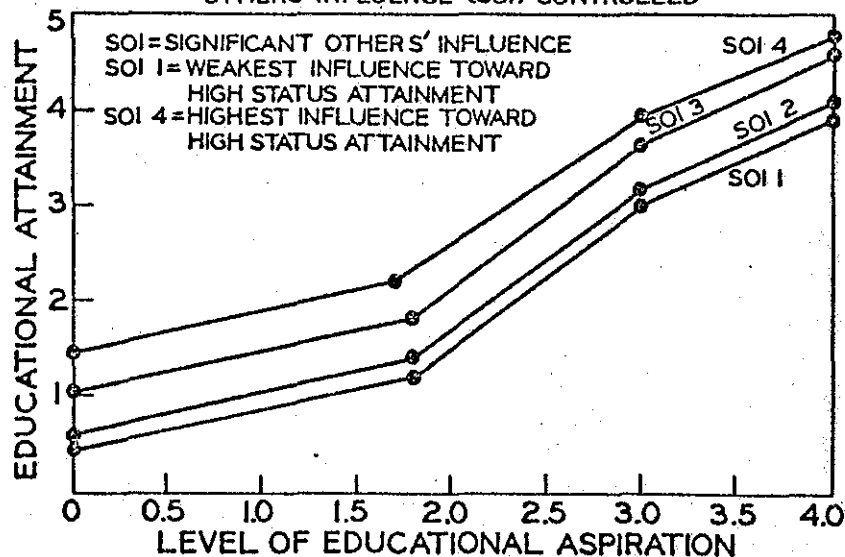
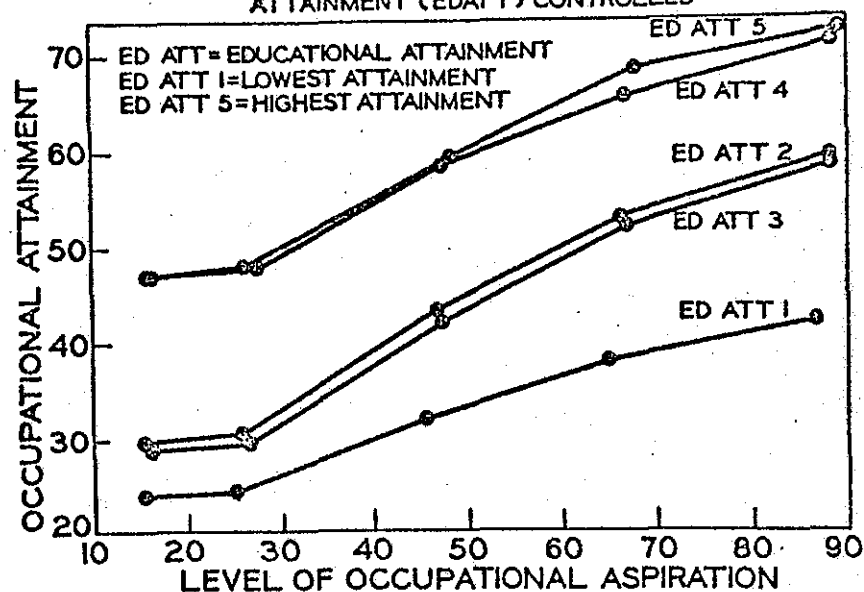


DIAGRAM 4: OCCUPATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATION, EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (EDATT) CONTROLLED



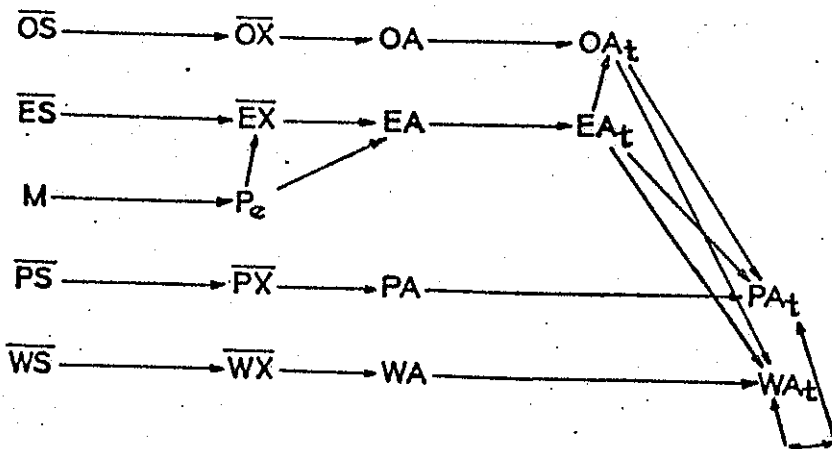
quasi-linear relationship of educational aspirations and attainment follows almost perfectly parallel slopes across four levels of significant others' influence. In Diagram 4, the same is only slightly less true for regressions of occupational attainment on aspirations across five levels of educational attainment.

The strong rhetoric with which many writers have argued for a theory of behavior as an interaction effect of the person and his environment is not supported by these results. Plausible theoretical accounts of why the causal relationship between attitudes and behavior ought to be influenced by its context are not reflected on this research. Instead, the latter emerges as primarily a function of initial aspirations plus direct effects of a few strategic contextual factors.

Support provided by these results to the Wisconsin model is, however, qualified by serious limitations in the data. The data set on which these findings are based is identical to that from which the original model was derived. Thus, both studies are subject to the same error sources. Nor do these data contain measures of all possible facilitators or completely adequate measures of those included.

Rejecting the well-established theory of behavior as a person-context interaction requires more convincing empirical proof than that provided here. Nevertheless, we may conclude that initial

DIAGRAM 6: A STATUS ATTAINMENT MODEL
FOR FOUR STATUS VARIABLES IN A
MODERATELY CRYSTALLIZED STATUS SYSTEM



bles, if the dispersion of a status variable is low, differences in it will be harder to measure reliably and validly and the participants themselves will have more difficulty in making the fine discriminations required in order to have definite status orientations for themselves and others. The greater the dispersion of status variables the easier it will be both for the participants to act

DIAGRAM 7: STATUS ATTAINMENT MODELS FOR
FOUR STATUS VARIABLES IN A HYPOTHETICALLY
UNCRYSTALLIZED STATUS SYSTEM

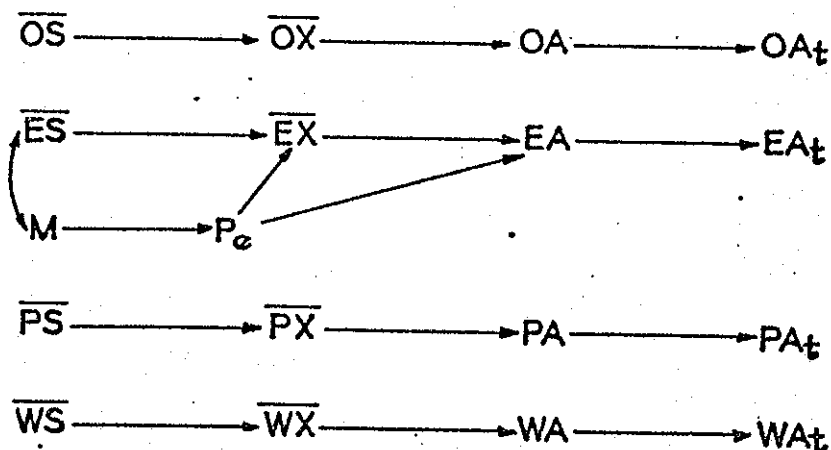
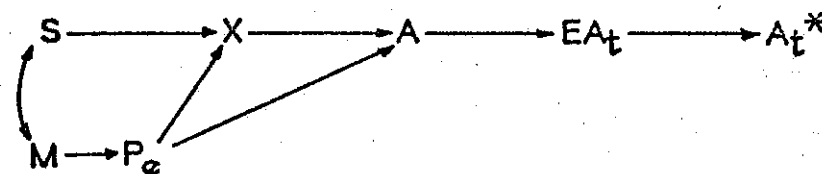


DIAGRAM 8: A STATUS ATTAINMENT MODEL
FOR FOUR STATUS VARIABLES IN A
HIGHLY CRYSTALLIZED STATUS SYSTEM



* HERE, A_t REFERS ONLY TO PRESTIGE, POWER, AND WEALTH

upon them and for the researchers to measure them. Hence it is more likely that clear status attainment models can be applied successfully to status system with large dispersions than to those with small dispersions.

Second is the question of experimental evidence. Actually, most of the process is probably experimentally intractable. The part that most requires it and may be most amenable to it is that of significant others' (SO) influence on aspirations and attainments. We imply the existence of networks of significant others' influence. These consist of a variable number of SOs each of whom may have different expectation levels for the focal person. For status stratification systems which are crystallized imperfectly we also assume (Woelfel and Haller, 1971a) that a person's SOs for attainment with respect to one social hierarchy (e.g., education) may not be identical to his SOs for attainment with respect to another (e.g., occupational prestige). It may be both scientifically and ethically feasible to design field research in which SO composition and SO expectation levels with respect to a social hierarchy are varied experimentally and observations of the subsequent changes, if any, in the corresponding aspirations of focal persons are recorded. Careful experiments on the effect of intellectual ability or performance in school on SO expectations or on the aspirations of focal persons are less tractable, although Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) have made efforts in this direction.

Third is the question of critical stages in the status attainment process. We surmise that one such point exists when a person reaches the age at which regular remunerative work is possible. Some people will leave school and take a job, others will continue their education, usually moving to a different physical location to do so. Either way, some SOs will lose their salience for the person, and he will take on new SOs. Those who leave school

are four key status content variables: prestige (occupational prestige in the United States), wealth (for which income is a good proxy in the United States), power (which has not yet been measured well anywhere), and education (which can be measured almost anywhere by assessing the highest year in school successfully completed). In the Diagram, *O* stands for occupation, *E* for education, *P* for power, and *W* for wealth. (We are aware that power may be less constant over time for any given person than are the other variables. We include it because no status attainment model could be complete without it.) We further assume that there are four "manifestations" of any status variable: the status levels a person's significant others occupy in the system, the expectation levels his significant others hold for him, the aspiration levels he holds for himself, and the level he ultimately attains. The first is the main set of independent variables and the last the main set of dependent variables—although some of the last are prior to others. The other two are intervening variables. In the Diagram *S* stands for the mean *status* of the person's significant others, *X* for their mean *expectation* levels for him, *A* for his aspiration level for himself, and *A*, for his attainment level. The reader will note that each of these four "manifestations" is possible for each of the four status variables. We also include two other variables which are nonstatus: mental ability (*M*) and academic performance (*P_e*) as measured by grades in school. In the subsequent diagrams, a bar over the letters standing for a manifestation of a status variable indicates a mean average for his several significant others. Thus \overline{OS} means the average occupational prestige status levels of all of ego's significant others; or again, \overline{EX} means the average educational levels ego's several significant others hold for him. Each focal person will have a mean value of his significant others' expectations or their statuses for each status dimension. Also, we remind the reader that by "expectations" we mean that which another demands of, desires for, wishes for, hopes for, a focal person or "ego," and that by "aspirations" we mean that which a focal person demands of, wishes for, hopes for, himself. Both concepts have "realistic" and "idealistic" levels and both have long and short future time spans (Haller and Miller, 1971:7-11, 60-61).

In Diagrams 5-8 we assume that the parents are not the only people whose statuses are transmitted to the person. A large body of literature calls attention to the fact that people are responsive to some but not all with whom they interact and that they are responsive to some groups with whom they do not interact. This is what the whole question of "reference groups" (Hyman and Singer, 1968) is all about. In this context the concept "significant

others" may be substituted for "reference groups." This model hypothesizes that average statuses of a person's significant others are transmitted to his attainment. Furthermore, this transmission occurs first through the impact of average status of significant others on their average expectations for ego, and these averages affect ego's aspiration levels. The shift from the status of parents (one important set of significant others) to the average status of significant others whoever they are is one of the two unique aspects of this model. (The other is its inclusion of each of the Weberian status dimensions.)

The last three diagrams (6, 7, and 8) use the above nomenclature to present a model of the status attainment process. The model's applicability to any given social system is a function of the degree of dispersion around the mean of each status indicator; assuming its general validity for the moment, the greater the variance the more appropriate the model. It also assumes that the degree of crystallization of the status system affects the complexity and exact form of the model.

Diagram 6 is the most complex. It sketches a four-dimensional model for a moderately crystallized status system. For simplicity we have left out arrows describing the correlations among the exogenous variables and those describing the residuals, whether correlated or uncorrelated, except for the presumably correlated residuals of the ultimate dependent variables, power and wealth attainments. It should be understood, however, that these residuals belong in the model. If the model is identifiable, it might be described by presenting the partial correlations among the residuals. Alternatively, extending a suggestion in Model 4 of Duncan, Haller, and Portes (1968) it might be useful to fit a principal component or factor to the common correlation among the set of status content variables for each of the set of antecedent variables. Presumably there exist: (1) a status aspiration factor commonly accounting for the correlation among all four aspiration variables, as well as a component specific to each; (2) a significant others' mean status expectation factor common to all expectation variables, as well as a component specific to each; and (3) a significant others' mean status factor common to each significant other insert variable, as well as a component specific to each. Still a third alternative would be to infer reciprocal paths among all content variables at a given point in the causal experience (see Duncan, Haller, and Portes, 1969, esp. Model 2). (We are a bit skeptical of this last because we do not see any social psychological justification for inferring them.)

In brief the model contains several hypotheses not already advanced. (1) The main effects of any given significant others'

occupation on individual educational attainment. The latter, in turn, has a strong influence on initial occupation; this variable plus education is the main determinant of final occupational attainment. Direct effects of father's occupation on initial and final occupational attainment are, after education has been taken into account, minor.

At the level of social psychological variables, a research program initiated at the University of Wisconsin by William H. Sewell and pursued by several other researchers has envisioned educational and occupational attainment as the outcome of two related processes: those by which status aspirations are formed and those by which they are enacted. Aspirations are formed as the consequence of two related sets of influences: those brought to bear on the individual by his significant others and those brought to bear by the person himself as he assesses his potentialities on the basis of past performance. While crystallized aspirations exercise primary influence on status attainment, other contextual variables act as significant facilitators of the process. Encouragement by others and previous educational attainment are such variables.

Further Wisconsin research has supported initial tenets of the model concerning the decisive impact of interpersonal influence on development of status aspirations and the additivity and linearity of aspirational and contextual effects on status attainment.

No finality is attached to either model. Both can in fact be viewed as pioneering efforts in a research field bound to yield more refined and accurate theories. It seems unlikely, however, that future studies will prove either model "wrong" in the sense of containing spurious relationships or of having overlooked crucial variables. At its own level of abstraction, each theory seems fairly exhaustive of causally relevant variables in status attainment, having examined and discarded other likely factors. Further refinement, we believe, will tend to occur along lines of greater accuracy in hypothesized causal relationships, specification of still finer mediating mechanisms, and more compelling empirical support. The models in Diagrams 5, 6, 7, and 8 may help to achieve this goal.

Research advances are generally coupled with increasing practical implications. Above, we have noted possibilities of the Blau-Duncan and Wisconsin models on this count. Causal models departing from the former's orientation may prove useful in diagnosing the general occupational state of society while those ensuing from the latter's may serve to isolate particular variables responsible for different attainment levels among specific subgroups.

Perhaps the most important, and at the same time controversial, feature of this last attainment theory is the causal role assigned to family's socioeconomic position in the process. As seen above, Wisconsin results indicate that practically all the effect of family's position on educational and occupational attainments is due to its impact on the formation of status aspirations and significant others' encouragement of their enactment. Once these variables are controlled, family's position has no direct effect as a facilitator of status attainment.

This runs contrary to a widespread imagery of ambitions, especially among lower-class groups, frustrated by lack of means. Inheritance of poverty has often been blamed less on psychological than on economic limitations. In contrast, findings presented above seem to emphasize the importance of psychological formations and their consistent support from those the youth considers important.

It is here that the usual request for more research in this area acquires a particularly urgent connotation. Reported results are based on a sample of Wisconsin students. Even in the larger urban areas of Wisconsin, field research may not have located the abysmal poverty levels necessary to render economic, as well as psychological conditions, crucial direct determinants of status attainment. Alternatively, such levels may not have been located in sufficient numbers to alter overall correlations. Studies specifically designed to examine this causal sequence among sharply contrasting socioeconomic groups may uncover direct paths of influence from parental status to attainment even after aspirations are controlled.

It is not implausible, however, that the opposite may prove true. In a society with a relatively broad range of opportunity, the parental role in the status fate of youth may well hinge more on the psychological than on the economic support they are able to provide. Yet to ideologues of the opposite conviction who may find comfort translating these findings into "will is might," we say that neither "will" emerges at random nor are individuals to be blamed for its absence, an outcome profoundly dependent—as results also show—on the social context to which birth has destined them.

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