Status Attainment Theory: the State of the Art

by

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Status attainment theory is a highly specialized area of knowledge. All of its current expressions are at least partly fragmentary and some, even of the better ones, are very much so. Nonetheless, it is quite coherent by current standards of social science theory. A great deal of its coherence is a consequence of its having emerged from a moderately consistent theoretical tradition regarding social stratification. We shall call it "status analysis" to distinguish it from another tradition in stratification thought which could be called "class analysis." This position grows out of early work by Max Weber (Gerth and Mills, 1946; Parsons, ,) and Pitirim Sorokin (1926) and has its most precise current restatements in Svalastoga (1965), Duncan (1968), Haller (1970), and Haller and Saraiva (unpublished, 1973). Briefly, it holds that the major variables, status content dimensions, describing differential access to the resources sometimes employed in competitive struggles and at other times distributed as rewards for performance in cooperative ventures are summed up as power (influence, authority, coersion, political status), wealth (income, earnings, real estate, stocks and bonds, accumulated goods, economic status, monetary status), prestige (social honor, deference, fame), and information (educational attainment, skill, learning). Status analysis lends itself quite neatly to modern statistical theory. Indeed, this lies behind another reason why status attainment theory is relatively coherent: a special set of multiple regression techniques called "path analysis" (together with some extensions incorporating factor analysis and canonical correlations) have been found to be especially appropriate tools for research in this area. The theoretic tradition provides a conceptual framework that the theorist may use to generate new ideas, and the statistical methods show how these may be couched in the form of testable hypotheses.

Much of status attainment theory is also informed by an additional tradition, a form of social psychology based partly on thinking of Kurt Lewin ( ), Fritz Heider ( ), and partly on G. H. Mead ( ). The status attainment version holds that, even before assuming their eventual statuses, persons develop status-specific concepts of themselves and of other persons in their psychological environments; that one's own status-specific self concept (or "level of aspiration" as it is usually called) is determined partly by imitation or adopting for oneself the statuses illustrated by models, partly by self-reflexive observation of one's performances in status-related arenas of behavior, and perhaps mostly

by acquiescing in the status conceptions others attribute to one. It holds, too, that once formed, such status-specific conceptions of oneself are extremely resistant to change. Embedded in a mass of consistent and mutually reinforcing cognitions almost constantly communicated to the person by others and by himself, they come to have an inertia of their own. Resistant to change, these conceptions show themselves in performances. Constantly, if subtly, signalled by the person to himself and others, they guide his selection among status opportunities he encounters and they provide information used by status "gate-keepers": (employment officers, school personnel, money lending agencies, political "pros," etc.) to determine one's fitness for a given status, and by status "sentinels" (parents, relatives, friends, teachers, informal counselors, etc.) who help him to identify potential opportunities and to prepare himself to take advantage of them. Thus one's status-specific aspirations exert an influence on the statuses he comes to occupy. Later on status aspirations combine with statuses, such as education, obtained earlier in the life cycle to jointly to influence the other statuses, such as income that are attained during the middle and later years of the life cycle.

It is important to note that the social psychological theoretic position is not in conflict with the status analysis position. The two can easily work together, even though models are often written using only the relationships among status variables. As Portes and I (1973) have held, status attainment models such as those of Blau and Duncan (1967) or Kelley (1972), or Treiman and Kelley (unpublished) are incomplete precisely in that they lack a theory explaining how statuses are transmitted and otherwise attained.

A decade ago status attainment models came to be sufficiently explicit, clear, and comprehensive so that, for all their limitations, it is quite easy to see whether and how each new offering of research fits into the existing body of knowledge. It no longer takes an extraordinary imagination to see what needs to be done in order to make advances. In a few words, it is a highly accretive thought system.

By the terms "status attainment model" we shall mean any attempt to describe the status attainment processes of defineable set of a population at a given time and place, using any set of status and antecedent variables, which lend themselves to systematic statistical and/or mathematical analysis. A <u>complete</u> status attainment model would have the following

characteristics: 1) Its dependent variables would include valid and reliable measures of each of the four basic status content dimensions. 2) All of the valid and reliable variation in each of the dependent status variables would be attributable, in the statistical sense, to antecedent variables included within the model. 3) Included among the antecedent variables would be performance variables plausibly explaining the causal linkages of dependent status variables to a set of initial independent variables. These would be variables describing the social locations of each persons just before his performances could be observed or conceptions of his potential statuses could be formulated - in other words, before status attainment activities pertaining directly to him had been set in motion.

In other words, a complete model would explain differential status attainment fully, using independent variables ~~where~~ whose values would be measured before the individual's status attainment behaviors began, and employing intervening variables providing a theoretically consistent, plausible, and complete explanation of the mechanisms by which the initial independent variables resulted in the final status of the dependent variables. Naturally, the independent variables would not have

to be restricted to status variables, though they would doubtless at least be included. By now, incidentally, abundant evidence makes it clear that initial or, at least, parental statuses had relatively little affect on a person's later statuses: the component of a person's statuses which is transmitted to him from his parents' statuses is rather modest.

No one has yet presented a complete model. The so-called "basic model" of Blau and Duncan (1967) is indeed developed sufficiently so that it has served well as reference against which to assess others which proposed. But it is quite incomplete. It lacks indicators of wealth and power. It has no mechanism at all by which to explain the transformation of antecedent variables into dependent statuses. Its independent variables include only fathers' occupational and educational status, thus it is a status transmission model. Finally, explaining half or less of the variance in attained status, it is also incomplete in that it is weak. It is thus fragmentary because it lacks indicators of perhaps the two most important status content dimensions, because it lacks a causal theory, because it lacks effective initial variables, and because it leaves a great deal of the variance in educational and occupational

statuses unexplained. If I understand their current work correctly, Treiman and Kelley are performing quite similar analyses, and their models, too, are fragmentary for the same reasons as the Blau-Duncan "basic" model. From time to time, variations on the Blau-Duncan models are offered which add one or two dependent variables (e.g., Featherman, 1971), or which clear up previous analyses, clearing up the estimates of parameters (e.g., Kelley's (1972) use of reliability coefficients to correct Featherman's estimates of path coefficients). Indeed, in recent models income, an indicator of the wealth dimension, has been added in quite regularly (e.g., Sewell and Hauser, 1974) both as an initial status variable and as a dependent status variable; and following Kelley's lead, others (e.g., Otto, 1973) have been correcting parameter estimates for attenuation due to instrument unreliability.

A social psychological view.

Models by Sewell and Haller and their colleagues (Duncan, Haller, and Portes, 1968; Gasson, Haller, and Sewell, 1972; Haller and Spenner, 1977 (unpublished); Otto and Haller, 1977 (forthcoming); Sewell, Haller, and Ohlendorf, 1970; Sewell, Haller, and Portes, 1969; Sewell and Hauser, 1975; Woelfel and Haller, 1971) together with an attempt at replication

by Alexander, Eckland, and Griffin (1975) provide perhaps the main attempts systematically to apply social psychological constructs to explain the transmitted component of attained statuses and to add non-transmitted components to the total attained status variance accounted for. Those of Sewell and Hauser (1975) and Otto (1973) are probably the most nearly complete to date. We shall return to them after inquiring in greater detail about the elements and structure of a model which would make full use of the existing theory of status analysis and of the social psychology of status attainment.

In 1973 Portes and I published a more general model, which incorporates both status analysis and the "Wisconsin" efforts to provide social psychological components. The 1973 model could not then and cannot today be tested because no one has yet measured all of the variables it calls for. But it is, we believe, more than idle speculation. Some of its most important parts come from the social psychological position sketched above. Parts had been worked out on data previously published; these seem to agree with the predictions which can be drawn from the social psychological theory we employ. Other parts for which no data exist are based upon a rationale identical to this last and in any case are directly

analogous to those for which data exist. Still other parts, those employing the reference concept and learning by imitating models.

Two other contributions come from status analysis. The first of these (following the spirit of Haller, unpublished, 1976; Haller and Saraiva, 1973; Haller, 1970; Duncan, 1968; Svalastoga, 1965) concerns the content dimensions of status. On the sets of variables describing hierarchically ordered differences among persons (or other small units, such as households) within bounded interaction networks (which some call "communities" [Haller and Saraiva, unpublished, 1973] but which subsum everything from small hamlets to whole societies) concerning wealth, power, prestige, and informational status. In actual status attainment research operations, however, power has not been studied, and no one has yet tried to employ status variables which fully cover any of the other three dimensions. This deserves further comment. The fact is that the question as to which status content indicator variables to use has never been attacked seriously with hard data, although Curtis and Jackson (1976) and a few others (see Haller, unpublished, 1976) have come close. As a result no one really knows for sure. Even so, researchers use certain status indicators constantly. These are: years of education

successfully completed, for informational status; occupational prestige or occupational socioeconomic status (Duncan and Reiss, 1961), for prestige or social status; and income or earnings, for wealth. Power variables have not yet been employed because no one yet knows how validly and reliably to measure them outside the laboratory. Factor analyses of multiple indicators of each of the content dimensions would probably answer the question as to what status variables would be best in status attainment research. This would require obtaining such indicators for political influence and other power variables, of course. In itself this opens a research program which will take a long t to bring to fruition. In the meantime the best practical solution may be to do just about what we're doing now: use educational attainment, occupational prestige, and income or earnings as single-variable measures of their respective content dimensions, and work out at least one equally defensible measure for the power dimension. Saraiva and I (1972) have done this in Brazil, and a Wisconsin team is now working on the problem for use in the United States.

The second of the contributions from status analysis, following much the same literature, concerns <u>structural</u>, as opposed to <u>content</u>,

dimensions of status (Haller, 1970). These describe differences among status systems of different communities (including societies) or of a given community from time to time. We shall not discuss these dimensions much (see Haller and Portes, 1973, which applies them to status attainment; and Haller, 1970, and Haller and Saraiva, 1973, where they are more fully elaborated). Two, though, are especially important - status dispersion and status crystallization. Status attainment models will doubtless work best where each status content variable has a large dispersion - where, that is, inequality is great. Status crystallization is the degree of the correlation among status content variables. In communities where it is low, separate causal models will be required to explain attainment variation in each status content variable. Each model may be relatively simple. Where crystallization is high, only one model will be needed and will be relatively simple; status will be attained on different variables at different points in the life cycle, but a person who attains a certain level on one which is fixed in life will remain at the same relative level on each later one. In the real world of moderately high crystallization, status attainment models will be relatively complex.

In the long run, status attainment models are intended for use in research in which inter-community (including inter-societal) comparisons will be drawn systematically. As such attempts are made, it will become apparent that the structural dimensions of whole status systems do in fact control the way a general model applies to different status systems. But let us return to the internal structure of the model presented by Haller and Portes.

Figure 1 presents a schematic diagram of four basic status content

Figure 1 about here

variables, the ways they are measured (if they can yet be measured) and the psychological variables which can be derived from them, together with the names which are available for them. In status transmission models, researchers are, at bottom, asking how and to what degree wealth statuses, power statuses, prestige statuses, and informational statuses are passed on from parents to offspring. Status attainment models, though they are addressed to a more general problem, require data on these same variables. As we have already seen, these general dimensions have never yet been measured directly. Instead, researchers have settled upon the more specific measures of income or earnings, occupational prestige, and educational attainment; and power is never

measured. So in the best of current status transmission research one looks at the affect of parents' income or earnings on those of their adult children, at the affect of parents' occupational prestige status on that of their grown offspring, on the educational attainment of parents on that of the children. As written here, these are relationships among corresponding status variables. Naturally researchers also investigate parent-to-offspring transmission of the non-corresponding statuses: income to occupational prestige, and to educational attainment, occupational prestige to income and educational attainment, educational attainment to income and occupational prestige. Today this is done routinely, using each status variable available in any given data set under analysis.

Just as routinely, the social psychologically inclined (especially at Wisconsin through the years: Featherman, Fink, Gasson, Haller, Hauser, Meier, Ohlendorf, Otto, Sewell, and Spenner; see articles written by these researchers singly or in combination) have looked into the inter-relations among the status expectations one's definers hold for one or that one thinks they hold, one's own status aspirations for himself, and one's later status attainments. These are also presented schematically in Figure 1. Again, political influence aspirations and expectations

Figure 1. Status Content Variates and Their Derivatives, For Use in Status Attainment Models

Status Content Dimensions	Status Content Variable (actually in use or feasible in the near future) [S]	Psychological Isomorphs of Status Content Variables: Derivative Variates	
		Status Aspiration Variables[1] (These are held by one for oneself; they guide one's status attainment behaviors) [A]	Status Expectation Variables[2] (These are by one's definers, those who "rate" one what his aspirations should be) [X]
Wealth [W]	Income or earnings: Reported annual income or earnings [YS]	Income Aspiration Level [NOT YET AVAILABLE][f] [YA]	Income Expectation Level[a] [NOT YET AVAILABLE][f,n] [YX]
Power [P]	Political Influence [NOT YET AVAILABLE][a] [PS]	Political Influence Aspiration Level [NOT YET AVAILABLE][f] [PA]	Political Influence Expectation Level [NOT YET AVAILABLE][f,n] [PX]
Prestige [R]	Occupational Prestige:[b] [NORC ratings, SEI[d] scores, SIOP[e] scores [RS]	Occupational Aspiration Level: NORC, SEI, SIOP ratings of responses to open-ended questions; Occupational Aspiration Scale Scores[g] [RA]	Occupational Expectation Level: Occupational Expectation Elicitor[i] [RX]
Informational Status [I]	Educational Status: Years of formal education successfully completed [IS]	Educational Aspiration Level: Responses to open-ended questions concerning hopes and plans for future educational attainments [IA]	Educational Expectation Level: Educational Expectation Elicitor[i] [IX]

[1] Status aspirations are social psychological variables. They are psychological because they describe similarities and differences in the cognitive structure of persons. They are social psychological because each status aspiration variable takes its ordered structure from the consensually defined status hierarchy appropriate to it: the educational hierarchy, the occupational prestige hierarchy, etc.

[2] Status expectations are also social psychological variables. They are psychological because they are parts of persons' cognitive structures. In this case of the cognitive structures of those "significant others" who define a person's status orientations for him. They are social psychological for two reasons: first, they take their form from exactly the same consensually defined status hierarchies as do status aspirations; second, as expectations held by one person for another, they describe a kind of interpersonal relationship.

[a] Preliminary Brazilian versions have been used by Haller and Saraiva (1972, 1973). Others are now being tested at the University of Wisconsin for use in the United States.

[b] Techniques are also available for measuring personal esteem in small face-to-face communities, but because status attainment research is normally concerned with large scale (national, state, or regional) status systems, those are not presented here.

[c] NORC (National Opinion Research Center) ratings: see Siegel (1971); also called "North-Hatt" scores.

[d] SEI (Socio Economic Index) scores: see Duncan (1961) and Featherman and Hauser (1975).

[e] SIOP (Standard International Occupational Prestige) scores: see Treiman (forthcoming).

[f] Preliminary United States versions are now being tested at the University of Wisconsin.

[g] Haller and Miller (1971); Haller, Otto, Meier and Ohlendorf (1975).

[h] Keys to determine the names of the individuals (definers) who tell one what is appropriate for him or her are being worked out at the University of Wisconsin.

[i] See Haller, Woelfel and Fink (1969), Woelfel and Haller (1971); Haller and Woelfel (1972). These writings also present methods for eliciting the names of occupational and educational others.

have not yet been successfully measured (although we are now trying to do so) and no one seems ever to have attempted to measure any other power aspiration or expectation variable. Moreover, no one has ever introduced measures of income (or earnings) aspirations or expectations into a status attainment analysis. Thus seven of the 12 derivatives of status variables have actually been used in one status attainment project or another. These are the educational and occupational statuses, aspirations and expectations, plus income (or earnings) status. The other five have not, simply because we do not yet know how to measure them. A given project may include status measures for one to three of the objective status variables, and may do so for either the respondent, or his parents, or both. So with four feasible objective status variables for the respondent, four for his parents, four aspiration variables for the respondent, and four expectation variables for his parents, there are 16 possible status-derivative variables. Relations between any pair of them could be determined.

But of course none of the political influence variables have yet been used in status attainment research. Neither have either of the two psychological isomorphs of income. So among all the studies done to

date, of the 16 different classes of status-derived variables which it is at least feasible to consider, data are available by which to assess relationships among only ten. But actually, no one project includes all even of these. The most comprehensive longitudinal analyses to date, by Sewell and Hauser (1975), Alexander, Eckland, and Griffin (1975), and Otto and Haller (1977) employ nine; they either do not have or do not use measures definers' occupational prestige expectations. Those with data collected at only one point in time, or with data collected too early to assess educational and/or occupational attainments include fewer variables. But before saying anything about evidence, let's go into the problem.

The letters in brackets of Figure 1 at the bottom of each cell identify the two constructs, one a dimension and the other a derivative, which are combined to form a derivative status variate. Thus, WS is wealth Status, WA wealth aspirations, etc. Underlying the psychological argument of the Haller-Portes paper is the cognitive proximity principle, which postulates that, ceteris paribus, the closer to each other two objects are in cognitive space, the greater the influence they will have on each other. Thus, take three variables, X for expectation, A for aspiration, S for attainment status.

We assume that the casual order is this: X⟶A⟶S. In temporal ordering: X⟶S > X⟶A and X⟶S > A⟶S. In other words the distance bewteen X and S is greater than that between either X and A or A and S. Ceteris paribus, this predicts that the correlation between measures of X and A or A and S would be greater than correlations between X and S. Now take four other variables: IX for the means informational status expectation level (educational expectations) definers hold for a person, RX for the mean occupational prestige expectations definers hold for him; IA for the educational aspiration level the person holds for himself; and RA for the occupational aspiration level he holds for himself. In cognitive space, different aspects of education such as IX and IA, are rather close to each other because they both treat education (I). So are objects containing occupational prestige, such as RX and RA. So too are the different aspirations a person may hold for himself, IA and RA. Or the different expectations others hold for him, IX and RX. Now, then, look at the whole set RX, RA, IX, IA. In cognitive space, ceteris paribus, four conceptual relationsips are rather close and would yield relatively high correlations—RX x RA, RX x IX, RA x IA, and IX x IA. Each of these pairs shares a common element, the first pair an R, the

second an X, the third an A, and the fourth an I. But by the same reasoning, the two remaining relationships would be rather more distant and would yield relatively low correlations—RX x IA and RA x IX. Here we have generated hypotheses based only on conceptual similarity. Unless we make additional assumptions, there are no other possibilities, since there are only six possible pairs of correlations among the four variables - RX, RA, IX, and IA.

In fact, additional assumptions can be made. We could take all three of X, A, and S, plus at least two status concepts such as R and I, and by combining the information from two types of cognitive proximity (temporal proximity and conceptual similarity) we could, ceteris paribus, generate even more precise predictions about the order of relative magnitude of the correlations among variables. Without going into detail here, the reasoning is this: if X⟶A⟶S, then in psychological distance, as we have seen, X⟶S > X⟶A and X⟶S > A⟶S. Now combine these with R and I:

RX⟶RA⟶RS
IX⟶IA⟶IS.

Since likes are closer than unlikes: RX x IX is closer than

RX x IA or IX x RA, etc. In correlational terms: $r_{RX,IX} > r_{RA,IX}$; $r_{RX,RA} > r_{RX,RS}$; $r_{RX,IX} > r_{RX,IA}$; etc.

Over the years we have observed the patterns of these correlations. The most useful cases can be seen in relationships between the various expectation and aspiration variables employed in studies inwhich all are measured with reliable instruments. The independent status variables (panels) are less useful because their influences are not merely cognitive they sometimes provide material resources, too. As a dependent variable, occupational status is less useful for a different reason. The theory not only says that RX ⟶ RA ⟶ RS, but also that educational attainment (itself influenced by a cognitive chain, IX ⟶ IA ⟶ IS) is influenced by educational attainment: IS ⟶ RS. So the comparison of effects involving the dependent status variables is made less clear because the status attainment theory predicts this: IX ⟶ IA ⟶ IS ⟶ RS, RX ⟶ RX ⟶ RS.

The point is that some sets of variables in the social psychological theory of status attainment are, for theoretical and technical reasons, more appropriate than others for testing hypotheses concerning the impact of differences in cognitive proximity. We have gone back to our earlier work to identify existing data which would provide the most adequate test of the hypothesis that the cognitively more proximal variables are more highly associated with each other than cognitively more distal variables. We have drawn upon multiple regression coefficents for this purpose, concentrating on relations among educational and occupational expectations of significant others for the person and the corresponding aspiration variables of the persons himself. Because there were only two dependent variables and these were aspirations, these data do not permit an assessment of the partial regressions where the expectations variables are dependent. These data, collected in West Bend, Wisconsin, are presented in Table 9 and 10 of Haller and Woelfel (1969:422-3). Here all the key variables are conceptually clear and were measured quite well. The partial regression coefficents pertaining to the hypothesis are all statistically significant, at b = +.42, +.29, +.52, and +.41. Except for one theoretically trivial case where a significant b = .21, all the others

non-significant; they average $\bar{b} = .05$, disregarding signs. Essentially comparable findings were obtained in another (unpublished) project carried out in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin. They, too, confirm the hypothesis. Even the data which provide less satisfactory tests tend to be consistent with it. We have checked the pertinent 1957-1972 longitudinal data from the Lenawee County, Michigan project, and where the variables are conceptually and technically most adequate, their relationships are also consistent with the hypotheses. We therefore have convincing theoretical and empirical reasons for accepting the principle of cognitive proximity in the psychology of status attainment. Variables which are cognitively proximal are more highly related than are those which cognitively more distal. It would seem that the cognitive proximity principle provides a strong basis for selecting variables to be tested empirically for their theoretical usefulness in status attainment research. Although the procedure of selecting variables for possible inclusion according to the principle of cognitive proximity is not widely known and may not yet have been articulated this way previously, social psychological status attainment researchers use it quite regularly. Examples go back many years. It would be impossible to identify the first such instance because the principle itself emerged slowly. I think Sewell glimpsed

at it in 1948 when he designed some of his early studies of "occupational choice." S.M. Lipset may also have done so, for it seems to appear in his (1955) Rural Sociology article on social mobility. I believe that it appears in each of our publications status attainment which have appeared during the last two decades.

It enters research in many ways, perhaps most frequently in the form of unwritten hypotheses: Educational aspiration will be more highly predictive of educational attainment than will another aspiration variable or indeed any variable which comes into being earlier than educational aspiration. Occupational aspiration will be more highly predictive of occupational attainment than will any other aspiration variable or any variable that emerges before occupational aspirations. Educational and occupational aspiration will be highly related to each other because a large number of people see high educational attainment as necessary for high occupational attainment. Educational expectations of significant others will be more highly productive of educational aspirations than will any other expectation variable or any variable which emerges earlier than it in the life course. Similarly for occupational expectations and occupational aspirations. These examples are drawn from the empirical

research reports presented in the sociological journals by social psychologists active in status attainment research.

There appear to be at least three quite general forms of the cognitive proximity principle. Each is a special case of the general principle itself. It and they are based upon two more fundamental postulates in social psychology. The first that is "that which people define as real is real in its consequences;" to paraphrase W.I. Thomas. In more current terms, people act upon the attributions they construct (cf. Heider 1958), including the cognitions to which they define as related. The second is that those shared cognitions which define entities and events emerge through the symbolic interaction. So consensuses develop concerning the nature of individual objects and the relations among them.

The three general forms of consensusally defined cognitive proximity which appear to recur regularly in status attainment research could be called <u>temporal proximity</u>, <u>conceptual proximity</u>, and <u>means-ends proximity</u>. The first and second of these have already been touched upon and thus need little discussion. The one holds that variables describing temporally more proximal events will be more highly correlated than

those describing temporally more distal events. The other, conceptual proximity, holds that variables describing concepts which are more nearly identical will be more highly correlated than will variables describing concepts which are less nearly identical (Note that this could apply to correlations among variables constructed from concepts bearing purely logical relations such as generality and particularity.)

We have not yet looked at the third. It holds that variables which are conceived to have closer ends-means relationships to each other will be more highly correlated than variables which are conceived to have more distant ends-means relationships. This has four applications. First, when people conceive one class of behaviors or states (a set of "means-behaviors" or "means-states") as necessary to the accomplishment of another class of behaviors ("ends-behaviors" or "ends-states"), variables describing the different levels of each set of the respective behaviors (or states) will be correlated with each other. In other words, variables describing ends behaviors (or states) will be correlated with behaviors describing means behaviors (or states). Second, the cognitive variables describing anticipated ends behaviors (or states) will be correlated with the cognitive variables describing anticipated means

behaviors (or states). In other words, variables describing peoples' aspirations for end-states will be correlated with variables describing their aspirations for means-states. Still more concretely, educational aspirations (or expectations) will be correlated with occupational aspirations (or expectations). Third, variables describing anticipated ends behaviors (or states) will be correlated with variables describing overt means behaviors (or states). In concrete status attainment research, occupational aspirations will affect educational attainment. Finally, variables describing anticipated means states will be correlated with variables describing ends behaviors (or states). Concretely, educational aspirations will affect occupational attainment.

Actually, in status attainment research operations, any or all of the three basic applications of the cognitive proximity principle may apply to any pair of variables. In other words, variables stand in varying degrees of temporal proximity, of conceptual proximity, and of ends-means proximity. Some pairs of variables involve only one of the types of cognitive proximity principles, some involve two, some involve all three.

This reasoning suggests a whole series of hypotheses which would seem to follow logically. We offer them tentatively because they have not yet been thoroughly checked. A pair of variables which are relatively close to each other by <u>one</u> of the criteria of proximity will be more highly correlated with each other than will a pair which are distal on the criterion. A pair of variables which share <u>two</u> criteria of proximity will be more highly correlated than variables which are proximal on one criterion and distal on another, and the latter will be more highly correlated than will variables which are distal on two criteria and proximal on none. Similarly, a pair of variables which are proximal on three criteria will be more highly correlated than those that are more proximal on two and distal on one. In turn these will be more highly correlated than variables which are proximal on one and distal on two. The latter, of course will be more highly correlated than those which are distal on three and proximal on none.[1/]

<u>Models of Status Transmission and Status Attainment: Theoretical Conclusions</u>. In a few words all existing models of status transmission

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[1/] These hypotheses are subject to the condition that all other things are equal. In addition, various criteria of proximity may in reality be differently weighted. This would require modifying the application of hypotheses to conform to the weights. Finally, some of the criteria may have several subclasses, such as partially overlapping or multiple logical categories. Where this holds, other modifications would have to be made.

are straightforward but fragmentary application of the concepts of the status analysis tradition. They are fragmentary in that none have yet included measures drawn from the power dimension of states; none have ever seriously attempted to cover the entire range of variables implied by the four general status content dimensions, or even attempted to find out what their factor structure would look like; and they have no mechanism to explain how statuses are transmitted. Those available to date are, in other words, models of the degree to which educational and occupational prestige, and sometimes income statuses are transmitted from parent to offspring.

Non-psychological status attainment models might be at least imaginable. Indeed one could argue that Wilson and Portes (1975) are moving in that direction. I would not try to make such a case. The individual's conception of his ability as well as his status aspirations could be dropped from a given model (if the evidence warranted doing so, which it does not) without its being any less psychological. To shift to the status allocational consequences made by impersonal evaluators would not at all imply the abandonment of psychological status attainment mechanisms. It would merely shift the focus to the structural locations

of the allocators, the psychological mechanisms by which they distribute the "allocatees," and to the mechanisms by which the latter respond. This is, I believe, the thrust of Wilson and Portes. If so, then it seems safe to say that as yet no one has proposed a non-psychological model. This is not really surprizing. Even models of economic behavior at least make psychological assumptions.

But with the possible exception of Wilson and Portes, the only available models containing plausible, if partial, explanations of the mechanisms of status transmission and status attainment are those which explicitly draw upon individuals' status aspirations and their significant others' status expectations, and which at least implicitly draw upon the principle of cognitive proximity. For the most part, these are the various representations of the "Wisconsin model." (Notably Haller and Portes, 1973; Sewell and Hauser, 1975; Alexander, Eckland, and Griffin, 1975; Otto and Haller, 1977).

Status attainment models must of necessity be more comprehensive than the types of status transmission models available today. This is for two reasons. First, even if they were merely descriptive, they would be more ambitious than status transmission models, for their

aim is to maximize the proportion of status variability which can be explained. Status transmission models are intended only to account for the portion of status variability that one obtains from his forebears, a rather small part of the total, at least in the United States. Second, these models are intended to provide empirically defensible and plausible theoretical explanations of the status variability. Today's status transmission models go little beyond measuring the amount of status transmission, only so far as to assess the impact of different status variables on each other. In attempting to explain status attainment, the psychologized models thus invoke hypotheses concerning more variables than do the corrresponding status transmission models.

Yet those to which data have been applied are also fragmentary. First, like the empirical status transmission models, they lack complete coverage of the exogenous status variables and of the dependent status variables. They, draw upon precisely the same single indicators—education, occupational prestige, and income or earnings—of unmapped but potentially more complex status dimensions as do the existing status transmission models. Again, like the latter, none have yet included any indicators of power. Second, it is almost certain either that non-status exogenous

determinants greatly influence status attainment. Or if status variables are in fact the only exogenous variables, researchers have not yet learned how to conceptualize them so as to make use of this fact. To repeat, relatively little of the variance in dependent status variables—probably no more than 25 to 35 percent—can be explained by parental status variables. So far as can be seen, only Haller and Portes (1973) have suggested that a new look at status origin statuses might show that all status attainment is really status transmission. They wonder whether in modern society it might be more useful to think of origin statuses as being lodged in all the significant others, one has, both definers and models, rather than conceiving origin statuses as located in parents alone. This would be consistent with a widely held sociological tradition which locates the origin of one's identities, beliefs, and attitudes in one's reference groups (Merton, 1968; Hyman and Singer, 1968). But this hypothesis has not been tested, and even if it were found to add to our ability to explain status attainment, the possibility remains that it too might not provide a full exogenous explanation of the endogenous causal systems.

Status attainment models and social mobility. From the foregoing presentation of status attainment theory it can be concluded that the

topic encompasses status transmission research and goes much farther. The latter draws only upon the concepts of the status analysis tradition and is descriptive. The former draws upon status analysis and goes on to invoke a social psychological theory of causal mechanisms. Though all empirical models profferred to date are fragmentary, the promise of status attainment research is that it may one day yield a conceptually parsimonious, yet complete and empirically valid theory capable of generating models which account quite precisely for the differences in status attained by persons or other small omits in any community.

Now in general there are two different kinds of social mobility research, one at the individual level and the other at the community (societal) level. At the individual level the main aim is to determine the amount of mobility experienced by the small units (persons) in a community over time, and to develop an explanation for it. At the community level, the aim is to determine the bases of differences among communities in the rates of mobility experienced by the small units within them.

Research on the intra-community mobility of small units is essentially the same research topic as status transmission research. Since the

publication of the Blau-Duncan volume (1967:194-199), it has been clear that the search for scores by which to measure "mobility"—T_1-T_2 differences—is fruitless and unnecessary. The basic problem here is to learn how much status mobility or turnover exists and to explain it. Status mobility is the obverse of status transmission. So, in variance terms, the amount of status mobility can be seen as the difference between the total status variance at T_2 and the amount of status transmitted for T_1 to T_2, or $1 - R^2$. This gets a bit more complicated when dealing with batteries of status variables at T_1 and T_2. And, of course, there individual "mobility" is affected by changes in the structure of status. Hauser and his colleagues (1975a, 1975) and Kenneth I. Spenner (1977) have begun to cope with these problems. Indeed, by means of an adaptation of canonical correlation it may be possible to summarize net mobility in a single figure analogous to $1 - R^2$.

Basically the form of mobility (or its obverse) most often attacked by means of status transmission models could be called "flux" or "circulation mobility." But there is another kind. It is usually called "structural mobility." It consists of a net rise or net fall in the central tendency of a status system. When, for example, most individuals get more money

because there is more money available per capita, a portion of the total mobility would be called "structural" because more persons would shift upwards than would be expected in the ordinary up-and-down exchanges of position which would occur if the per capita amounts did not change and if the shape of the distribution also remained unchanged.

This takes us to the problem of inter-community mobility rates. During the 1950s there was considerable research on "social mobility"—which appears to have had a political motive (e.g., Lipset and Bendix, 1959). Evidently it was widely believed at that time that internal political stability and democracy were promoted by high rates of mobility. Hence there was a spate of publications on the topic. It was found, however, at least with methods then available, that all industrialized nations had about the same mobility rates. But we should not make too much of these reports. The methods may not have been precise enough to obtain valid measures of national mobility rates. Besides, the "theory" itself is suspect. On a purely speculative level, one can make a convincing case that high mobility rates promote instability. We really do not know the relationship between varying degrees of mobility—immobility, democracy—authoritarianism, and stability—instability.

Changes in the structure of status systems. In general there are at least six important changes that the status system of a community (or nation) may undergo (Haller, 1970). Four of these are important enough to enumerate. They are: 1) an increase or decrease in the central tendency of any or all status dimensions, or "structural mobility;" 2) an increase or decrease in the dispersion of any or all status dimensions (or a rise or fall in the degree of equality); 3) an increase or decrease in the rate of status transmission (or, obversely, "circulation mobility;" and 4) an increase or decrease in the status crystallization of the status system (or perhaps more generally, changes in the factor structures of the variables measuring the content dimensions of status. All of these would be needed to provide a fully developed description of changes in the structure of a community's status system, or even to fully understand the changes in social mobility of a nation.[2/]

[2/] Occupational mobility studies would be concerned with 1) the changes in the states of the structural dimension of status within and among occupations in a given community; 2) with the formation, growth, and disappearance of specific occupations within a community; or 3) the occupational career shifts of individuals.