Blau P M & Duncan O D (with the collaboration of Tyree A). *The American occupational structure*. New York: Wiley, 1967. 520 p.
[University of Chicago, IL and University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI]

This is an analysis of the first national survey of social stratification and mobility in the US. The main topics are the flow of manpower and historical trends in the occupational structure, effects of background and education on success, ethnic differences in occupational opportunities, influences of family of origin and marriage on careers, and mobility and fertility. [The *SSCI®* indicates that this book has been cited in over 1,500 publications.]

Path Analysis of Occupational Mobility

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By the late 1950s, several nationwide surveys of social mobility were in progress or already completed in Europe, but none had even been started in the US. This is ironic, since large-scale quantitative social research is more prevalent and esteemed here than in other countries. The late David Glass, who chaired the research committee on stratification of the International Sociological Association, suggested to me that an economical way to conduct such a study here would be to ask the US Bureau of the Census to add to their monthly survey of the labor force a single question, on father's occupation, which would expand their data enough to analyze social mobility, and which they may be able to do at no extra cost. Years later, in March 1962, after much preliminary work, the Bureau of the Census did collect the data for our study, but it involved a supplementary questionnaire, not just one question, and their subcontract was consequently far from costless.

Since I had no experience with large-scale research and its statistical analysis, I asked Otis Dudley Duncan, a colleague at the University of Chicago whose experience as a demographer and ecologist entailed great skill in the quantitative analysis of census data,

to join me in the mobility study, and he agreed. This was an excellent choice of collaborator, since Duncan's methodological contribution played a major role in the success of the book.

He suggested that the primary research procedure be regression analysis, as well as a refinement of it that was then virtually unknown in social research—path analysis. I was at first opposed, because I had very little experience with parametric methods, having in my previous research largely used cross-tabulations and percentage comparisons. But he convinced me that regression procedures would be superior. Indeed, Dudley completely converted me to the use of parametric procedures, and, ever since, I have used regression and path analysis in my own empirical work (e.g., introducing it into organizational research[1]).

Path analysis (structural equation models) was initially used by S. Wright in genetic research,[2] but Duncan's adaptation of it for social research was original. To be sure, he had predecessors in using regression in causal models, notably H.A. Simon[3] and H.M. Blalock.[4] There is a difference, however. Whereas their models infer the causal order from the multiple regression, path analysis traces direct and indirect influences under a given assumption of causal order. By providing a suitable method for dissecting influences on status attainment, path analysis greatly stimulated research on stratification and mobility by W.H. Sewell, R.M. Hauser, D.L. Featherman, C. Jencks, and many others. It also became widely used in other specialties. Sociology journals in the 1970s were filled with path diagrams refining models of status attainment and tracing the influences on other outcomes. A major follow-up study by Featherman and Hauser focused on trends in mobility.[5]

Recently, new methods have partly superseded path analysis, but many of them are derived from it. This is the case for the use of unobserved variables inferred from observed ones (introduced in our book) and the models of confirmatory factor analysis and LISREL, developed by K.G. Jöreskog.[6]

As a pioneering study of the American occupational structure and the mobility in it, based on innovative procedures of social research, the book became a standard reference and baseline for future research, which is undoubtedly the reason for its being often cited. It received the Sorokin Award of the American Sociological Association in 1968.

1. **Blau P M.** A formal theory of differentiation in organizations. *Amer. Sociol. Rev.* 35:201-18, 1970. (Cited 235 times.)
[See also: **Blau P M.** Citation Classic. (Smelser N J, comp.) *Contemporary classics in the social and behavioral sciences.* Philadelphia: ISI Press, 1987. p. 290.]
2. **Wright S.** The method of path coefficients. *Ann. Math. Stat.* 5:161-215, 1934. (Cited 190 times since 1966.)
3. **Simon H A.** *Models of man.* New York: Wiley, 1957. 287 p. (Cited 1,020 times since 1966.)
4. **Blalock H M.** *Causal inferences in nonexperimental research.* Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, 1964. 200 p. (Cited 645 times since 1966.)
5. **Featherman D L & Hauser R M.** *Opportunity and change.* New York: Academic Press, 1978. 572 p. (Cited 245 times.)
6. **Jöreskog K G.** A general method for analysis of covariance structures. *Biometrika* 57:239-51, 1970.