

Sewell W H, Haller A O & Portes A. The educational and early occupational status attainment process. *Amer. Sociol. Rev.* 34:82-92, 1969; and **Sewell W H, Haller A O & Ohlendorf G W.** The educational and early occupational status attainment process: replication and revision. *Amer. Sociol. Rev.* 35:1014-27, 1970. [Univ. Wisconsin, Madison, WI]

A social psychological model for explaining the relationship between social origins and later educational and occupational achievements is presented, tested, and revised using samples of young men from various community size categories. The 'Wisconsin Model' has since been replicated and modified by scholars in the US and abroad. [The Social Sciences Citation Index® (SSCI®) indicates that these papers have been cited in over 170 and 185 publications respectively.]

William H. Sewell
Department of Sociology
University of Wisconsin
Madison, WI 53706

October 28, 1982

"These articles are from a long series of publications based on a longitudinal study,¹ begun over 25 years ago, with the continuous support of NIMH, which examines the influence of social psychological factors on the educational and occupational aspirations and achievements of a large sample (10,000) of Wisconsin high school seniors. The earlier papers focused on the influence of community, neighborhood, and school contexts and of significant others (parents, teachers, and peers) on aspirations and achievements, while holding constant sex, intelligence, and socioeconomic status. In the first papers, building on the influential work of Blau and Duncan,² my colleagues and I developed a social psychological model to elaborate and explain the effects of socioeconomic background and ability on the educational and occupational achievements of a subsample of farm males. The model posited that background influences are mediated by academic

achievements in high school, significant others' encouragement, and by educational and occupational aspirations. The second paper further tested and modified this model using men from a wide range of community size categories.

"The model, commonly called the 'Wisconsin Model,' has since been replicated in a number of studies here and abroad. It also has stimulated critical comment and attempts at modification and improvement. Our own subsequent work has resulted in the disaggregation of the indexes of socioeconomic status and significant others' influence;³ the inclusion of other background, social structural, and achievement variables;³ and the application of these more complex models to explain differences between the mid-career achievements of the sexes.⁴ Most recently, in as yet unpublished research, a still more complex model has been developed that takes into account the effects of measurement error. The results of this analysis further indicate the essential soundness of the ideas that were the basis of the original model. We now have information from interviews with a large sample of the siblings of our original informants and are currently examining the educational, occupational, and family formation processes of same and opposite sex pairs of siblings. This will permit us to measure and interpret the total effects of family background, not merely of socioeconomic origins, on these processes.

"Why have these papers been cited so often? Possibly, because they appeared soon after the Blau and Duncan book which had demonstrated the potential usefulness of linear causal models in explaining socioeconomic achievements. Possibly, because our model was based on longitudinal rather than cross-sectional data, thus making causal inferences more plausible. But more probably, it was because the model established and explicated the crucial mediating role of social psychological variables in the complex process by which social origins affect later socioeconomic achievements."

1. Sewell W H & Hanser R M. The Wisconsin longitudinal study of social and psychological factors in aspirations and achievements. (Kerckhoff A C, ed.) *Research in sociology of education and socialization*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1980. Vol. 1. p. 59-99.
2. Blau P M & Duncan O D. *The American occupational structure*. New York: Wiley, 1967. 520 p.
3. Sewell W H & Hanser R M. *Education, occupation and earnings: achievement in the early career*. New York: Academic Press, 1975. 237 p.
4. Sewell W H, Hanser R M & Wolf W C. Sex, schooling and occupational status. *Amer. J. Sociol.* 86:551-83, 1980.