

# This Week's Citation Classic

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**Lenski G E.** Status crystallization: a non-vertical dimension of social status. *Amer. Sociol. Rev.* 19:405-13, 1954. [University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI]

Individuals whose relative status in terms of income, education, occupation, and ethnicity varied substantially were more likely to favor liberal causes and vote Democratic than one would predict from a simple additive model in a random sample of Detroiters. [The *Social Sciences Citation Index*<sup>®</sup> (SSCI<sup>®</sup>) indicates that this paper has been cited in over 240 publications since 1966.]

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"This paper grew from an interest in social stratification that had its origins in military service in World War II. I became interested in the impact of the military rank system on behavior, and especially in the responses of individuals to discrepancies between prior civilian status and military status.

"Later, on entering graduate school, I discovered that there was a specialty within sociology devoted to the study of stratification and quickly gravitated toward it. One thing that disturbed me, however, was the unidimensional nature of the major paradigms. They seemed to be oversimplifying the real world.

"After moving to Michigan, I met others who

were thinking along the same line, especially Werner Landecker. Soon thereafter, Ronald Freedman obtained funding for the Detroit Area Study and Landecker and I were invited to participate.

"Landecker and I collaborated on the design of a part of the first survey and I assumed we would publish our results jointly. However, because Landecker's interests were much more structural than mine at this point, we decided on a division of labor. I focused on the social psychological problem of 'status' crystallization, while he tackled the structural problem of 'class' crystallization.<sup>1</sup>

"The frequency of citation of this paper probably reflects three things: 1) a recognition of the inadequacy of the unidimensional model, 2) the ease with which the concept of status crystallization could be tested with existing data, and 3) the ambiguity of later findings (partly due to the failure of later researchers to replicate strictly).

"My chief disappointment with subsequent research has been the failure of others to pick up on the idea that multiple responses are possible to the stress generated by status inconsistency and that tests should check out *simultaneously* as many of them as possible and not base conclusions on any one alone. I have also been disappointed by the failure of many to pick up on the early finding that inconsistencies between ascribed and achieved ranks are especially potent."

1. Landecker W S. *Class crystallization*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1981. 255 p.