The Transmission of Socioeconomic Status and Prestige in Great Britain and the United States

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We analyze male occupational attainment using separate models in which occupational level is measured by indigenous socioeconomic index (SEI) scales, indigenous prestige scales, and a common prestige scale. Other than some consistent societal differences, the SEI scales produce highly similar results in both societies. In sharp contrast, both indigenous and common prestige scales indicate a stronger relative effect of origin (compared with education) on occupation in Great Britain. The dimensions of prestige and socioeconomic status thus seem to tap different aspects of the social mobility process, and the societies differ in the transmission of prestige but not socioeconomic status.

KEY WORDS: status; prestige; social mobility; comparative; stratification.

INTRODUCTION

A persistent finding in comparative studies of social mobility has been the striking similarity in the amount of intergenerational circulation mobility found in a range of capitalist industrial societies. Such similarity has been reported in studies of as many as 16 societies using relatively crude definitions of stratification levels (e.g., Grusky and Hauser, 1984) as well as in studies of fewer societies using more refined definitions of stratification levels

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(e.g., Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1985; Kerckhoff *et al.,* 1985). While capitalist industrial societies differ in the marginal distributions of occupational groups, they are highly similar in their patterns of intergenerational mobility within those marginal constraints.

Studies of the process of social mobility have also produced highly similar results in these same societies. Not only is the pattern of movement from origin to destination very much the same, but the relative roles of family background and educational attainment in producing the patterns of movement are more uniform than many of us had at first assumed. Such studies are rarer, but their findings are consistent with the conclusion that there are only minor differences across capitalist industrial societies (Treiman and Terrell, 1975; Hauser and Featherman, 1977: chap. 1).

Comparative research analyzing the processes of social mobility presents significant methodological challenges. Scales of occupational levels have not been constructed for many societies, and there are seldom parallel measures of origin and educational attainment available for comparable national samples. Even when the requisite types of measures are available, they may be founded on different schemes of occupational classification or use different dimensions of scaling. In addition, institutional differences often make it impossible to adopt a single measure of educational attainment across societies. While years of schooling may be an adequate measure of attainment in one society, it may not be in another. While one society may have a complex set of educational qualifications that have occupational relevance, another may not. Comparability of measurement is thus problematic in the comparative study of social mobility processes.

This paper presents a comparative analysis of the process of social mobility in Great Britain and the United States. Previous literature has provided strong evidence of the similarity in social mobility patterns and processes in those two societies, but the earlier research has not had as solid a data base as used here. The previous literature has also raised some methodological issues that the present study is designed to explore. One of these concerns the way in which the occupational levels in the stratification system are measured. Two particular scalar dimensions — prestige and socioeconomic status — are compared in the analysis. Second, previous researchers have disagreed about whether intersocietal comparisons require the use of a *common* scale of measurement or whether it is better to use indigenous scales based on local standards. Both types of scales are used here.

WHY EXPECT BRITISH-AMERICAN DIFFERENCES?

In the usual conceptualization of the social mobility process, using a status attainment model, four ordered classes of variables are included: social origin, educational attainments, first occupational position, and later

occupational position. There is a literature suggesting that, at each stage in the attainment process, there should be stronger effects of social origins in Great Britain (Hope, 1972; Treiman and Terrell, 1975). The "class-bound" nature of British society is widely assumed, and Lipset (1963) presents evidence of a stronger emphasis on ascription in Great Britain and a stronger emphasis on achievement in the United States. Robinson and Bell (1978) also report a greater commitment to egalitarian attitudes in the United States than in Great Britain, and Turner (1966) presents evidence of a greater tolerance for "irregular" mobility in the United States. The ascriptive emphasis in Great Britain would lead us to expect a stronger link between social origins and later position in the stratification system there than in the United States.

Turner's (1960) discussion of differences in mobility norms and in the educational systems in the two societies has also been taken to mean that the British system should tend to perpetuate social position from generation to generation. Turner argues that the British "sponsor" those who perform well in the first few years of school by providing them with a superior form of educational program. It is reasonable to expect that family influences would be greatest during the first school years (Clausen, 1968). Early selection for the kind of educational sponsorship Turner describes would thus increase the likelihood of continuity of educational attainment across the generations. Educational continuity, in turn, would provide a basis for continuity of occupational level. While the British educational system has changed in many ways during the past two decades, the system described by Turner was the one experienced by the men included in the British sample used in this research.

These same sources provide a basis for expecting greater career mobility in the United States and a greater stability of position in the world of work in Great Britain. At the same time, there are reasons to question that expectation. The school system in Greater Britain is organized in ways that lead the majority of the students to leave secondary school at the minimum age (currently 16, but 14 or 15 at the time the subjects of this study were in school). Few of these early leavers obtain any further full-time education, and they enter the labor force at earlier ages than their American counterparts. Many of the early leavers obtain part-time training, however, often associated with their jobs (Raffe, 1979). Because of their early labor force entry and changing credentials, their first jobs may be a poor index of their ultimate position in the stratification system.

WHAT DIMENSION OF SOCIAL MOBILITY
SHOULD BE STUDIED?

Much of the social mobility literature defines the stratification system in terms of occupational positions organized into a hierarchical order. So-

cial mobility is then defined in terms of movement from one occupational
level to another in that structure. There are various ways, however, in which
one can conceptualize the hierarchical dimension of the structure. A major
distinction is made between the prestige of occupations and the socioeco-
nomic status of occupations. There are disagreements among students of so-
cial stratification regarding which of these two hierarchical dimensions should
be adopted.

There is the additional debate regarding whether the word *prestige* is
appropriate. Goldthorpe and Hope prefer to call most prestige scales meas-
ures of "general desirability" since the scales are not based on ratings of *pres-
tige,* defined as "the position of an individual or group within a structure
of relations of deference, acceptance and derogation" (1974:5). More gener-
ally, they note that popular ratings of occupations on various dimensions (e.g.,
"value to society" or "standard of living") may lead to very different rank-
ings. We have retained the term *prestige* here for consistency with previous
literature, although the measures used here are clearly measures of general
desirability.

Hauser and Featherman (1977) conducted a detailed comparison of so-
cial mobility in Australia and the United States using both prestige and so-
cioeconomic status scales, and they concluded by taking a strong position
in favor of a socioeconomic status definition of occupational levels:

> We propose that the fundamental core of occupational inequality in the United States
> and other capitalist, industrial societies is socioeconomic status, and not occupation-
> al prestige. Furthermore, across capitalist industrial (and possibly other) societies,
> the *common* structure of social mobility is occupational socioeconomic status. (48)

This conclusion rests largely on their finding that the socioeconomic status
scale both explains more of the variance in men's adult positions in the labor
force and shows greater similarity between the two societies being compared.
The latter is the reason for their emphasis on the word *common* in the above
quotation. Treas and Tyree (1979) take the same position regarding the su-
periority of the socioeconomic status scale.

In contrast, Treiman (1977) argued for a differentiation of levels of
occupational prestige. He made no claims, however, for the essential superi-
ority of a prestige scale:

> What, then, are the appropriate criteria for choice between prestige and socioeco-
> nomic scales of occupational status...? I would suggest that in our present state of
> knowledge the answer is not at all obvious. We simply do not know enough about
> how people acquire jobs or how the sort of work they do affects their lives to be
> able definitively to decide among alternative occupational scaling schemes. In this
> circumstance, the best strategy is to code occupations in alternative ways and to in-
> vestigate the differences in the results obtained. (211)

The present investigation is guided by a view closer to Treiman's than
to Hauser and Featherman's. We prefer to remain agnostic regarding the su-

periority of either of the concepts. Rather, we view them as two different dimensions of occupations, and our study is designed to assess the degree of similarity in intergenerational transmission of position in Great Britain and the United States when occupational positions are defined in these two ways.

If we view these two dimensions as having different meanings rather than as more or less adequate measures of the same thing, we become aware of an important feature of the previous literature that suggests the hypothesis that Great Britain and the United States should exhibit different processes of intergenerational mobility. Most of that literature seems to use a prestige conceptualization of social stratification. It reports studies of what is "fair," what is "desirable," what is "acceptable," and what is "important" in differentiating among levels of position in society. These kinds of public judgments are the basis of occupational prestige scales. In contrast, the fundamental data upon which socioeconomic scales are constructed are the education and income levels of incumbents of occupational positions.

Whereas prestige scales are essentially subjective assessments of the relative merit or desirability of occupations, socioeconomic scales are summary records of the tangible credentials and economic rewards associated with occupations. Previous research has found that capitalist industrial societies have highly similar social mobility processes when mobility is defined in terms of socioeconomic status. But some of that same research has suggested that they may have less similar mobility processes when mobility is defined in terms of prestige. A central purpose of this paper is to look more closely at that difference in outcome. Is it the case that there is more prestige mobility in the United States than in Great Britain, even though there is little difference in their patterns of socioeconomic status mobility?

It is reasonable to expect that what members of a society say is desirable or meritorious and what the society actually rewards should be related, but there is no reason to expect a perfect association. Most studies that have included both prestige and socioeconomic status scales have found correlations between the scales ranging from .70 to .85. In noting the less than perfect correlation between prestige and socioeconomic status scales, Hauser and Featherman referred to prestige scales as "fallible indicators of socioeconomic status" (1977:26). We prefer to see the two types of scales as representing two different (though highly correlated) dimensions of social stratification, and our analysis is designed to observe the differences in the intergenerational transmission of position using the two dimensions.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE BASIS OF THE SCALE?

Whatever dimension of occupational levels is used, there is another methodological issue that must be faced. Both Treiman and Hauser and

Featherman take the position that the scale used to classify occupations in comparative studies should be the *same* scale in all societies being compared. One of Treiman's major contributions, in fact, is the construction of an international occupational prestige scale. Hauser and Featherman also insist that the same scale must be used in comparative studies. In the publication in which they take the strongest position on the merits of a socioeconomic scale of occupations, they use Duncan's socioeconomic index (SEI) scale to classify occupations in both Australia and the United States, and they argue that this is better than using two different scales as Jones (1971) did in comparing those two societies. Thus, although Treiman disagrees with Hauser and Featherman regarding the relative merits of socioeconomic and prestige scales, these authors agree about the need to use the *same* scale for all societies being compared.

Not everyone accepts that position, however. For instance, Burawoy (1977) has taken issue with the use of an international prestige scale because, by its very nature, it may filter out just those intersocial differences comparative research is designed to investigate. He argues that if two societies view an occupation as being at different prestige levels, any study that forces it to be at the same level in both societies is bound to make the societies appear more similar than they actually are. In fact, it has been shown that there are some systematic differences in occupational prestige ratings between capitalist and communist societies (Hodge *et al.,* 1985). It remains to be seen if such differences exist across societies within either of these groups.

A fundamental question, therefore, is whether a "standard" or "common" scale should be preferred because it avoids problems of measurement comparability or whether parallel indigenous scales are preferable because they more fully reflect the specific societies' own ratings of occupational positions. This issue arises whether one opts for a prestige or a socioeconomic status definition of occupational level.

To provide at least an initial basis for dealing with this issue, we have included both common and indigenous measures in our analysis. It is not possible to do this for the socioeconomic status dimension, but we are able to compare indigenous and common scales on the prestige dimension. One of the questions to be considered, therefore, is whether the British–American comparison appears any different depending on which of these bases of measurement is used.

Three questions guided the research reported here: Are Great Britain and the United States similar in their processes of socioeconomic status mobility as previous research suggests? Is there greater prestige mobility in the United States than in Great Britain as a number of theoretical discussions suggest? Are intersocietal differences in social mobility processes greater when indigenous scales are used than when a common scale is used in the analysis?

METHODS

The data used for the present research come from two national surveys of social stratisfication and mobility conducted in the early 1970s. The familiar Occupational Change in a Generation II (OCG-II) survey, which formed the basis of Featherman and Hauser's (1978) detailed analysis of the 1973 American male labor force, was paralleled by the 1972 Oxford Social Survey of the British male labor force. The British study provided the basis for two important publications: Goldthorpe (1980) and Halsey *et al.* (1980). The methodologies of both surveys are described in some detail in those volumes and need not be discussed here. Suffice it to say that both appear superior bases for the study of male occupational attainment and mobility in the two societies.

Although both surveys include men of a somewhat wider age range, the present analysis is restricted to men 25–64 years of age. The United States sample requires weighting and adjustment for departure from simple random sampling. See Featherman and Hauser (1978: Appendix F) for details. The British sample does not require weighting for departure from simple random sampling (Goldthorpe, 1980: Appendix). Thus our analysis of the British data is based on the unweighted sample.

We have used the fullest possible information to construct parallel attainment models in the two societies in which both first job and current (1972/1973) job are used as dependent variables. Each model is computed three times in each society using a different measure of occupational position each time. In each analysis, father's occupation is measured in the same way as the son's occupation. We are thus able to see both differences between parallel models in the two societies and differences both within and across societies as a function of using different occupational measures.

The measures of occupational level used for the United States are the 1970 version of Duncan's SEI scale (Duncan, 1961; Hauser and Featherman, 1977: Appendix B), Siegel's prestige scale (Seigel, 1971), and Treiman's international prestige scale (Treiman, 1977). For Great Britain a newly constructed SEI scale, the Hope–Goldthorpe scale (Goldthorpe and Hope, 1974), and Treiman's international prestige scale are used. Treiman's scale is the "standard" or "common" prestige measure in this analysis. The Hope–Goldthorpe and Siegel scales are indigenous prestige scales. Both are founded on popular ratings of occupations obtained in as systematic and comprehensive a manner as any known prestige scales. Although the methods used in their construction were not exactly the same, the evaluative criteria used to place occupations in a hierarchy are very similar.

The two SEI scales are also indigenous, although there are differences in the methods used in their construction. In the original construction of the

American SEI scale, Duncan (1961) regressed the North–Hatt prestige scores of 45 occupations on the education and income levels of the incumbents in those occupations. He then used the regression coefficients to generate scores for "all" other occupations based on the education and income levels of their incumbents.

A similar set of SEI scores did not exist for Britain, nor are published data adequate to construct them by the method Duncan used. We used the data from the Oxford Social Survey to estimate SEI scores for our British sample. Since we had data on the education and income levels of all of the men in the British sample, we were able to use those sample data as estimates of the population data, such as Duncan used. In place of the North–Hatt prestige scores used by Duncan, we used Hope–Goldthorpe scores. We regressed the Hope–Goldthorpe scores of 92 occupations for which we had at least 25 cases in our sample on the proportion of the individuals who had an annual income of £2,250 or more and the proportion who stayed in school beyond the minimum leaving age. The resulting equation was then used to produce SEI scores for all occupations held by at least 10 of the men in the Oxford sample. Because there were many occupations with fewer than 10 representatives in the sample, we also combined some highly similar occupations (e.g., types of laborers) in order to increase the coverage of the scale. It was not possible to assign SEI scores to all men in the sample, because a number of occupations (59 out of 220 occupations in the British classification system) had too few representatives in the sample; however, 94.3% of the men in the sample had current occupations for which scores could be assigned. (A fuller account of the construction of the British SEI scale is presented in the appendix.)

The limitations of this SEI scale need to be acknowledged. Given the relatively small numbers on which the occupation-specific scores are computed, it is likely that the scores are subject to more sample variability than is desirable. Also, since not all of the sample could be assigned scores, the analyses using the British SEI scores are biased to some unknown degree. This is more of a problem for fathers' than for sons' scores. Some of the low-frequency occupations for which SEI scores could not be computed were more common for the fathers and for sons' first jobs than for the sons' current jobs. Since the scores were based on data from the sons' current jobs (income data were not available for the fathers or for sons' first jobs), more cases were lost because of missing father data than missing son data.

Despite these limitations, the scale performs as would be expected. Analyses in which missing cases on independent variables (including father's occupation) are recovered by "plugging" missing values and controlling for this with a dummy variable (see Cohen and Cohen, 1983: chap. 8) do not differ in significant ways from the analyses reported below.

The measures of educational attainment used in the two societies are quite different, due to the differences in the two educational systems. For the United States, a simple two-variable measure, years of graded schooling and years of college, is used. A more complex measure is required for Great Britain based on years of full-time education (including postsecondary), type of primary school attended (a dummy variable representing private primary), type of secondary school attended (dummies differentiating private, grammar, and technical school from secondary modern school), examinations passed in school (0-level and A-level), and qualifications obtained. See Kerckhoff et al. (1982) for further discussion of these variables.

In both societies, the measure of social origins included the following variables: father's occupation, father's education, number of siblings, race, and dummies indicating farm origin, whether the family was intact, and whether the father was self-employed. Father's occupation and education are measured in the same way as son's occupation and education in each analysis.

All of the analyses reported here necessarily use standardized regression coefficients. It is impossible to use metric coefficients because most of the variables used in the analyses are based on different metrics in the two societies. Because of the very different educational systems, the measures of educational attainment are necessarily different in the two societies. And, since the SEI and the indigenous prestige scales are based on different metrics in the two societies, comparisons of metric coefficients are meaningless. Even the origin measures are not wholly comparable in the two societies since they include measures of father's occupation and educational attainment based on different metrics. Thus, throughout, standardized coefficients are reported.

In all of the analyses presented here, the full sets of variables measuring both origin and educational attainment are represented by sheaf coefficients. A sheaf coefficient is a single number representing the impact, in standard form, of two or more variables. See Heise (1972) for a derivation. Sheaf coefficients are numerically equal to the effects of "induced variables" in LISREL and the "beta statistic" in multiple classification analysis. (See Marsden, 1982, for further discusssion.)

Each analysis of the factors influencing the attainment of a man's first or current job in either society is based on a large number of variables, but we have summarized these by using two sheaf coefficients — one for origin and one for educational attainment. Using the sheaf coefficients has two advantages. First, it makes possible a single measure of the multivariate definitions of origin and educational attainment. Second, these measures are in the same standard form for both origin and educational attainment, thus making it possible to examine their relative effects within and across the two societies.

There is also a disadvantage. The sheaf coefficients and standardized coefficients do not permit the use of tests of statistical significance. That is unfortunate, but it must be remembered that the purpose of tests of significance is to provide assurance that the results from an analysis of a sample would probably be found in the larger population. We believe the patterns discussed below are sufficiently clear to justify making that tentative judgment, given the large sizes of the samples involved.

Two things should be noted about the analytic model we use. First, it is not a conventional LISREL model in which the observables are determined by the constructs; the constructs are "induced variables" determined by the indicators. (For further discussion and examples, see Hauser *et al.*, 1983, and Campbell, 1983.) Second, induced variables for social origins and education are determined separately for first and current occupation; there are thus no proportionality constraints involved in this model.

RESULTS

Table I reports the correlations between all pairs of measures of occupational position for fathers and sons. Overall, the correlational structure of the measures is remarkably similar in the two societies. There are some consistent differences between societies, however, that are relevant to the issues investigated here. For instance, although the majority of the American coefficients are larger than the British (25 out of 36), seven out of nine correlations between father's occupation and son's current occupation are larger in Great Britain. This suggests that there is greater intergenerational continuity in Great Britain than in the United States.

More specifically, three correlations between father's and son's current occupation, using the same scale for father and son, differ in the two societies in potentially meaningful ways. The correlations using both of the prestige measures (indigenous and common) are larger in Great Britain, while the correlation using SEI scores is slightly higher in the United States. The difference between the correlations using indigenous prestige scores is especially noteworthy; it is 0.084 larger in Greater Britain. Thus intergenerational continuity in Great Britain is greater along the prestige dimension, especially when it is indigenously measured in both societies.

In contrast, only two of the nine correlations between father's occupation and son's first occupation are larger in Great Britain. And when the three correlations using the same measure are compared, only one of them (the indigenous prestige scale correlation) is slightly larger in Great Britain, whereas that using SEI scores is much larger in the United States. As we will see later, this is largely due to the greater amount of career mobility in Great

Table I. Correlations Among Occupation Measures [Great Britain (BG) Above Diagonal, United States (US) Below][a]

	Father's occupation			First job			Current job		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. FaSEI		0.703	0.765	0.359	0.290	0.292	0.359	0.326	0.322
2. FaPres	0.356		0.781	0.324	0.303	0.300	0.337	0.344	0.331
3. FaTrei	0.758	0.901		0.309	0.278	0.302	0.322	0.312	0.327
4. Job1SEI	0.429	0.304	0.321		0.755	0.767	0.606	0.505	0.527
5. Job1Pres	0.369	0.293	0.301	0.859		0.887	0.488	0.485	0.504
6. Job1Trei	0.367	0.301	0.320	0.872	0.927		0.496	0.479	0.526
7. CJobSEI	0.383	0.268	0.284	0.632	0.552	0.563		0.818	0.870
8. CJobPres	0.323	0.260	0.270	0.577	0.576	0.573	0.854		0.849
9. CJobTrei	0.332	0.261	0.281	0.589	0.574	0.597	0.839	0.907	

[a]Variables: (1) FaSEI, father's SEI score (Duncan's in US, authors' in GB); (2) FaPres, father's prestige score (Siegel in US, Hope–Goldthorpe in GB); (3) FaTrei, father's Treiman international prestige scale score; (4) Job1SEI, son's first job SEI score (Duncan's in US, authors' in GB); (5) Job1Pres, son's first job prestige score (Siegel in US, Hope–Goldthorpe in GB); (6) Job1Trei, son's first job Treiman international prestige scale score; (7) CJobSEI, son's current job SEI score (Duncan's in US, authors' in GB); (8) CJobPres, son's current job prestige score (Siegel in US, Hope–Goldthorpe in GB); (9) CJobTrei, son's current job Treiman international prestige scale score.

Britain. British men enter the labor force much younger, on average, than American men do, and a man's first job is not as good an index of where he will ultimately be found in the occupational hierarchy in Great Britain as it is in the United States. The societal difference is reflected in the fact that all nine of the son's first-to-current occupation correlations are larger for the United States. (Winfield *et al.,* forthcoming, have explored these different patterns of career mobility in greater detail.)

We considered the possibility that the difference between the current and first job correlations might have resulted from different definitions of first job in the two studies. That seems unlikely, however. In the Oxford survey respondents were asked, "What was your *very first full-time* job *after* you finished your full-time education? (By full-time education, I mean a period of continuous full-time education not interrupted by more than two years except for national service.)" In the OCG-II the question was, "Describe the FIRST FULL-TIME CIVILIAN JOB you had *AFTER* you completed your highest grade in school. DO NOT COUNT military service." Thus the items differ only by reference to a two-year hiatus in schooling in the British survey. It is difficult to see how that could produce the differences in our findings.

It is also important to note the intercorrelations of the prestige and socioeconomic scale scores for the same set of occupations (father's, son's first, or son's current job). They range from 0.703 to 0.927. In five of six comparisons, the highest correlation is between the common and indigenous

Table II. Effects of Antecedents on First Job and Current Job[a]

Dependent variable	United States				Great Britain			
	Origin[b]	Education[b]	First job	R^2	Origin[b]	Education[b]	First job	R^2
First job								
SEI	0.157	0.670	—	0.565	0.144	0.617	—	0.477
H-G/Siegel[c]	0.109	0.659	—	0.503	0.123	0.561	—	0.392
Treiman	0.108	0.659	—	0.500	0.163	0.563	—	0.410
Current job								
SEI	0.179	0.561	—	0.432	0.164	0.598	—	0.466
H-G/Siegel	0.131	0.563	—	0.385	0.184	0.507	—	0.376
Treiman	0.136	0.567	—	0.397	0.156	0.549	—	0.400
Current job								
SEI	0.128	0.336	0.342	0.483	0.125	0.419	0.302	0.513
H-G/Siegel	0.102	0.366	0.279	0.430	0.164	0.402	0.199	0.400
Treiman	0.103	0.350	0.333	0.452	0.129	0.418	0.243	0.435

[a]All coefficients are standardized.
[b]Sheaf coefficients.
[c]H-G, Hope–Goldthorpe.

prestige scores. Similarly, in five of six comparisons, the lowest correlation is between the indigenous prestige scores and the indigenous SEI scores. Thus, in both societies, the two indigenous scales of prestige and SEI are the most dissimilar.

The multivariate analysis of the social mobility process involved regressing each measure of son's occupational position, both first and current job, on the induced variables representing the multiple measures of social origin and educational attainment. We then regressed each measure of current job on the measures of origin, educational attainment, and the level of first job. Table II provides a summary of the results. It reports the sheaf coefficients for origin and educational attainment, and where appropriate, the path coefficient for first job. The R^2s are also reported.

The presentation of the findings is organized into two sections. We first focus on a comparison between the societies, commenting about only those similarities and differences found using all of the measures. We then shift our focus to comparisons of the findings produced by the several measures of occupational position.

Societal Comparisons

There is a general similarity of the results in the two societies in that in the equations for first job and in the reduced form equations for current job the education coefficient is much larger than the origin coefficient. Even in the full equation for current job, which includes a measure of first job

level, the direct effect of educational attainment on current job is much larger than the direct effect of origin in both socieites.

There are also some clear societal differences: First, with respect to the explanation of first job (the top panel of Table II), more of the variance is explained in the United States, whatever measure of occupational position is used.

Second, in all cases, the effect of educational attainment on first job is stronger in the United States.

Third, in contrast to the first job analysis, in the reduced form analysis of current job (the middle panel of Table II), there is no consistent societal difference. There are only small differences in explained variance in the comparable analyses, and although the sizes of the path coefficients vary, there is no consistent intersocietal difference.

Fourth, when first job is included in the explanation of current job (bottom panel of Table II), there are only small and inconsistent differences in the amount of variance explained, but there are some consistent differences in the sources of the explained variance. The effects of educational attainment are stronger in Great Britain while the effects of first job are stronger in the United States.

Finally, while the R^2s are consistently larger in the United States with respect to first job, there are no differences with respect to current job in either the reduced form or the full equations.

How do these findings relate to the earlier discussion of the social mobility processes in these two societies? First, they do not provide consistent evidence of a greater effect of origin on destination in Great Britain. While there is some tendency for origin to have stronger effects in some of the British analyses (which we will discuss more fully below), there are reversals. Two other patterns are much clearer. One is for educational attainment to have stronger effects on first job in the United States. The other is for first job to have stronger effects and educational attainment to have weaker effects on current job in the United States.

While the strong effect of education on first job may be viewed as evidence of the greater "openness" of the American stratification system, the current job analysis makes such an interpretation questionable. The total effect of education on current job (in the middle panel of Table II) is highly similar in both societies. It is only the indirect effect of education via first job that differs. The British men experience more movement from first job to current job (indicated by the correlations in Table I and the first job path coefficients in the bottom panel of Table II), but they end up in job levels equally explainable by their origins and educational attainments. This is further evidence of the greater career mobility in Great Britain, a result of the British men's earlier entry into full-time work.

Scale Comparisons

When the results in Table II using the several types of measures of oc-
cupational position are compared, other patterns are also discernible. There
are consistent and sizable differences between the results using either of the
prestige scales, on the one hand, and using the SEI scales, on the other. Most
striking are the consistently larger R^2s produced using SEI scales in both so-
cieties (from 3 to 11 percentage points larger). This is wholly consistent with
the findings reported by Hauser and Featherman (1977) in their comparison
of Australian and American data. They found that prestige scores produced
smaller R^2s than socioeconomic scores in both societies.

Other patterned SEI–prestige differences are also found in Table II,
but they involve an interaction between society and scale type. That is, the
societal comparison differs depending on the type of scale used in the analy-
sis. Part of this pattern can be seen in the first two panels of Table II. Note
that the three education coefficients in the American first job analyses are
very similar, and the three education coefficients for the American reduced
form analysis of current job (middle panel) are also very similar. In con-
trast, in both sets of American analyses, the SEI origin coefficient is larger
than the origin coefficient using either prestige scale. In the British analyses,
the opposite is found. The British SEI education coefficient is larger than
the education coefficients using either prestige scale, and there is no patterned
difference in the origin coefficients.

These contrasting patterns result in societal differences in the relative
contributions of origin and educational attainment when prestige scales are
used in the analysis, but little or no societal difference when the socioeco-
nomic scales are used. Table III makes this point more clearly. It reports
the ratios of education coefficients to the origin coefficients in the first job
and the reduced form current job analyses. [For instance, for the United States
in the first row of Table II, the education coefficient (0.670) is 4.27 times

Table III. Ratios of Education Coefficients to Origin
Coefficients

Dependent variables	United States	Great Britain
First job		
SEI	4.27	4.28
H-G/Siegel	6.05	4.56
Treiman	6.10	3.45
Current job		
SEI	3.13	3.65
H-G/Siegel	4.30	2.76
Treiman	4.17	3.52

as large as the origin coefficient (0.157), as reported in the first cell of Table III.] There is a consistently larger relative effect of education in the United States in both analyses using prestige scales. In contrast, there is no consistent pattern in the British analyses.

Thus, if the two societies are compared using SEI scales, there would be little to choose between them in the relative importance of origin and education in affecting occupational outcomes. The process of social mobility is highly similar in both societies. This supports the view that social mobility processes are essentially the same in capitalist industrial societies.

If the societies are compared using prestige scores (of either type), however, we would conclude that education was relatively more important in the United States. And conversely, we would conclude that origin was relatively more important in Great Britain. An analysis of social mobility in terms of prestige could therefore lead to the view that Great Britain is less "open" than the United States, but no such conclusion could be reached from an analysis of mobility in terms of socioeconomic status.

Before attempting to interpret these interscale differences, however, it is well to remember that the origin coefficients presented in Table II and used to compute the ratios in Table III represent the direct effects of origin. Origin also affects occupational outcomes through its effect on educational attainment and first job. The results presented thus far might lead us to conclude that origin has a relatively stronger effect on occupational attainment in Great Britain, but only when attainment is defined in terms of occupational prestige. However, if there are different patterns of indirect effects using the two kinds of scales, that conclusion might be unwarranted.

Table IV presents the decomposition of the origin effects in the analysis of current job scores. The pattern of effects is quite clear. There are es-

Table IV. Decomposition of Origin Effects on Current Job

Dependent variable	Society	Total effect	Indirect effect via		Direct effect
			Education	First job	
SEI	US	0.459	0.280	—	0.179
	GB	0.461	0.297	—	0.164
	US	0.459	0.277	0.054	0.128
	GB	0.461	0.292	0.044	0.125
H-G/Siegel	US	0.393	0.262	—	0.131
	GB	0.438	0.254	—	0.184
	US	0.393	0.251	0.030	0.102
	GB	0.438	0.248	0.026	0.164
Treiman	US	0.405	0.269	—	0.136
	GB	0.436	0.280	—	0.156
	US	0.405	0.266	0.036	0.103
	GB	0.436	0.266	0.041	0.129

sentially no societal differences in the SEI analyses. The two societies are indistinguishable in the total, direct, and indirect effects of origin on current job socioeconomic status, whether the reduced form or the full equations are considered. In sharp contrast, in both of the prestige scale comparisons, the total effects of origin are greater in Great Britain, all British origin direct effects are larger, and there are no consistent indirect effects differences. Thus, to the extent these data support the idea that there is a greater origin effect on occupational placement in Great Britain, they show the societal difference to be wholly accounted for by a direct effect difference and to affect the prestige but not the socioeconomic status of a man's occupational position.

DISCUSSION

Two kinds of conclusions may be reached from the foregoing analyses — some relating to general societal differences, others relating to the difference between prestige and socioeconomic status. The major societal differences are due to the stronger indirect effect of educational attainment on current job via first job in the United States. Education has a more immediate and lasting effect on occupational placement in the United States. The British men experience more mobility between first and current job, but they end up in jobs that are equally predictable from information about origin and educational attainment as are the jobs of the American men.

While these general patterns are found irrespective of the measures of occupational position used, there are other important patterns in the results produced by the three kinds of scales. The most obvious result is the consistently higher R^2s using the SEI scales. That this is consistently found in both societies is especially noteworthy given the limited basis for constructing the British SEI scale.

From an interpretive perspective, however, the differences across scales in the relative contributions of origin and education to the overall explained variance are the most challenging findings. If we compare the two societies using SEI scales, we would conclude that, except for the stronger indirect effect of education on current job via first job in the United States, the two societies exhibit almost identical processes of occupational attainment. In the reduced form equations for current job, there are no notable differences. This finding provides additional support for the Hauser and Featherman claim that socioeconomic status constitutes the common core of social mobility in capitalist industrial societies.

In clear contrast, using either the indigenous or the common prestige scales, consistent societal differences appear. Education is relatively more

important than origin in determining the prestige level of both first and current job in the United States than it is in Great Britain. This difference in relative effects is due to the fact that the total effects of origin on occupational prestige of the current job are greater in Great Britain, and these greater effects are clearly direct effects. Thus, in the attainment of occupational prestige, origin is relatively more important in Great Britain than in the United States.

The earlier investigators who have reported differences in outcome using SEI and prestige scales have attributed those differences to inadequacies in the prestige scales. The most prominent piece of evidence presented in support of this interpretation has been the weaker associations resulting when prestige scores rather than SEI scores are used in research. After careful analyses of American data using the Treiman and Duncan scales, Treas and Tyree (1979) conclude, as Hauser and Featherman did before them, that the results are distorted by the use of the "weaker" Treiman scale. They argue that this involves more than just a lower level of variance explained; it leads to different interpretations of the mobility process. "The mobility is much more open, that is, determined by factors other than those measured here, in the [Treiman] estimates than in the SEI ones. Also, the role of education in the process is relatively greater when occupations are scored by the [Treiman] scale than with SEI" (1979:209).

That conclusion would also be reached from the American analyses presented here, as the ratios of origin and education coefficients in Table III indicate. Using both Treiman and Siegel scores, the relative effect of education on current job is much greater in the United States than when SEI scores are used. However, this is *not* found when results using prestige and SEI scores are compared in Great Britain. On the contrary, if anything, the relative size of the education effect is *smaller* when using prestige scores rather than SEI scores in Great Britain. The results using the two kinds of scales lead to different interpretations in both societies, but the differences are exactly reversed.

The societal contrast using the two types of scales is due to the fact that the degree of continuity of prestige is similar to the degree of continuity of socioeconomic status in Great Britain, but in the United States there is less continuity of prestige than there is of status. Both the total effects and the direct effects of origin on current job in Table IV are higher similar using prestige and status scales in Great Britain, but those effects are weaker for prestige than for status in the United States. The correlations between father's occupation and current job in Table I also show the same pattern. The three British correlations, using the different scales, are all very similar (they range from 0.326 to 0.359). However, the American SEI correlation is 0.429 while the two prestige correlations are 0.260 and 0.281. Thus, whether

we use the sheaf coefficients for origin or the single father's occupation meas-
ure, continuity of status is greater than continuity of prestige in the United
States, while there is no notable difference in Great Britain.

   The two types of scales appear to measure different dimensions of oc-
cupations and to tap different aspects of the social mobility process. We are
thus not convinced that it is wholly accurate to refer to prestige scales as
"fallible indicators of socioeconomic status" (Hauser and Featherman,
1977:26). That analyses using indexes of socioeconomic status and prestige
differ in systematic ways provides a basis for further understanding of stratifi-
cation processes. Prestige is a different kind of index, not just an error-prone
approximation of socioeconomic status. Our results are consistent with the
view that SEI more fully taps the common basis of social mobility across
capitalist industrial societies. The different relative results using the prestige
and SEI scales in these two societies suggest, however, that there is more
involved in those differences than scaling errors.

   One possible explanation of our findings was suggested by an earlier
critic. Since farmers receive much lower scores on SEI than on prestige scales,
and since the United States has had many more farmers that Great Britain,
the weaker associations found in the United States may be due to the larger
proportion of American men whose fathers were farmers but who had moved
out of farming. Two pieces of internal evidence cast doubt on that explana-
tion. One is that the interscale correlations are not weaker in the United States
than in Great Britain. If the greater proportion of father farmers were the
source of the greater weakness of intergenerational transmission of prestige
in the United States, we would expect that the SEI–prestige correlations
would be higher in the father generation in Great Britain, and they are not.
Second, the analyses conducted by Hauser and Featherman and by Treas
and Tyree, in which they restricted the American sample to nonfarm men,
produced results that differ from the British analyses in the same way as those
presented here.

   The present analysis is not an adequate basis upon which to build a
wholly convincing interpretation of the findings, but if SEI and prestige scales
are viewed as measuring two different dimensions rather than as competing
approximations of the same dimension, at least two explanations of the find-
ings are worth considering.

   First, it might be that British society is organized so as to provide fuller
public recognition to those occupations that score highly on an SEI scale.
Prestige, as measured by either the Hope–Goldthorpe indigenous or the Trei-
man common scale, may be more in tune with the objective qualities of jobs,
indexed by levels of incumbents' education and earnings. Yet if this were
the case, there should be higher correlations between SEI and prestige scores
in Great Britain, and Table I does not report such correlations. In fact, four
of six comparisons show higher correlations in the United States.

A more challenging interpretation of the present results can be founded on the possibility that the process of transmission of social position differs in these two societies. The findings suggest that neither socioeconomic status nor prestige wholly captures the process of transmission in either society, but prestige assumes greater importance in Great Britain than it does in the United States. Public perceptions of occupational positions contribute more to the degree of continuity between fathers and sons in Great Britain.

This is wholly consistent with the earlier theoretical discussions of British–American differences. The stronger ascriptive emphasis in Great Britain (Lipset, 1963) should lead to public perceptions of "appropriate" outcomes for the sons of men occupying different levels of occupational prestige. To the extent that the American population is more committed to egalitarian attitudes (Robinson and Bell, 1978) and more tolerant of "irregular" mobility (Turner, 1966), we would expect greater openness in the American stratification system. This has been the basis for expecting different patterns of social mobility in Great Britain and the United States for decades.

In light of this earlier theorizing, the surprising findings have been the *lack* of differences between the two societies' social mobility processes. Research that has demonstrated the two societies' great similarity is not to be questioned on the basis of the findings reported here, but that research has not systematically compared the two dimensions of prestige and socioeconomic status across the two societies. Now that we have done that, it seems reasonable to entertain the possibility that the societies differ along one dimension but not the other. The present findings suggest that the British intergenerational mobility process is more sensitive to public definitions of the general desirability of occupations and of the acceptability of various patterns of mobility than is the American mobility process.

These findings also suggest another possibility that runs counter to some of the earlier theorizing. Some earlier discussions of the expected differences between the mobility processes in the two societies (e.g., Turner, 1960) were based on the presumed role of the educational systems in the two societies' mobility processes. They suggested a lower level of mobility in Great Britain because of the tendency of the British school system to perpetuate social prestige levels. The results of the present research suggest that the societal difference may lie elsewhere.

Our finding that, along the dimension of prestige, origins have a stronger effect in Great Britain is consistent with the previous theorizing. But our findings do not support the idea that the source of the stronger effect of origins in Great Britain is the educational system. The greater origin effect on current occupation in Great Britain is direct, not indirect via education. The indirect effects of origin via education in Table IV do not differ appreciably either between societies or across measures of occupational level. Only the

direct effects differ, and the difference is greatest when the indigenous prestige scales (Siegel and Hope–Goldthorpe) are used.

The educational systems of the two societies do not seem to have different total effects on the social mobility process, whether we measure that process along the dimension of socioeconomic status or prestige. This suggest that the differences in the transmission of prestige in the United States and Great Britain lie in the processes by which men obtain returns to education and negotiate career mobility. It would take a more detailed analysis of the occupational attainment process than is presented here to test that hypothesis, but it is a promising lead to a further clarification of the mobility processes in capitalist industrial societies.

APPENDIX

Construction of an SEI Scale for Great Britain

The Duncan SEI scale was originally constructed by regressing North–Hatt prestige scores on two variables — the proportion of persons in a particular occupation with 12 or more years of schooling and the proportion with income of more than $3000 per year. These cut points were roughly at the median for each variable. The predictors were first standardized on a uniform age distribution. The information was from the 1950 census. The availability of occupation-specific census data on education and income meant that these variables were subject to very little sampling error, although they were not immune to other kinds of survey errors.

We tried to replicate Duncan's procedures as closely as possible. We did not have occupation-specific census data on education and income, but we were able to estimate proportions of persons above specific cut points on education and income from the survey data available to us, although income was only available in categories. One income category had an upper limit of £2250 corresponding roughly to the 50th percentile in the marginal distribution. This figure was quite close to Duncan's choice of $3000 as the median of the American income distribution in 1950. Rather than standardize for age using Duncan's demographic approach, we simply ran our regression controlling for the proportion of persons in equivalent groups. The regressions were weighted by the number of persons in each occupation.

Those occupations for which we had data on at least 25 respondents were used in the analysis. That figure was chosen after looking at standard

errors on each of the variables within occupations as a function of sample size. It was clear that standard errors "settled down," and were both sufficiently small and showed an empirical straight linear decrease with n above a sample size of 25. Ninety-two occupations had at least 25 incumbents. One could argue that this procedure excludes those occupations near the top of the prestige distribution given the usual pyramidal distribution of the British occupational structure. To an extent this is true. We have every reason to believe, however, that the regression of prestige on occupation-specific education and income is linear, and thus censoring at the upper end should not matter. Furthermore, a sufficient number of high-level occupations were available to make estimation reasonable. We experimented with analyses based on larger sample sizes with little effect.

Education in Great Britain can be assessed in terms of many more variables than in the United States. Although it would have been possible to use all of them in constructing an SEI, we wanted to stay as close to Duncan's procedures as possible. After experimenting with three measures of education — school-leaving age, number of O- and A-level examinations passed, and obtained qualifications — we concluded that our regression results did not change very much regardless of the measure used. The standardized regression coefficient for education was almost the same, and the metric coefficient for income did not depend on the education measure used in the equation. On the basis of a slightly higher R^2 using school-leaving age, we chose that variable as our single measure of education. The division was between those who did and those who did not remain in school past the minimum leaving age.

The R^2 for the regression of the Hope–Goldthorpe prestige measure on the occupation-specific education and income values is remarkably similar to that obtained by Duncan and subsequent researchers. We get a value of 0.83 for the sample of 92 occupations when using years of schooling. Duncan also got an R^2 of 0.83 and other researchers have reported very similar results. These findings and other ancillary analyses not reported here convince us that our SEI measure behaves as one would expect.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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