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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the model of the family which permeates stratification literature, introduces a modified way of conceptualizing the family which takes into account its changing nature and subjects the reformulation to a limited empirical test. The data used to test this reformulation were drawn from a longitudinal research project on 779 undergraduates. Research variables consisted of occupational status of parents, parents' educational level, family's social class distribution, and occupational-status discrepancies. The results consistently support the resource model, suggesting that persons do take into account family members, other than the father, when they are asked to assess their family's social status. (Author)

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THE WOMAN'S CONTRIBUTION TO FAMILY SOCIAL STATUS<sup>1</sup>

Almost invariably in stratification theory and research the family is considered to be a homogeneous unit, characterized by a division of labor in which the male, through his occupational role, confers social status on all family members. This approach assumes an intact household with an employed male member and a wife whose occupational or educational resources are insignificant in the assignment of family social status. Recent changes in family composition, including a substantial minority of female-headed households, and in the traditional division of labor in the family raise doubts as to the adequacy of these assumptions.

This paper examines the model of the family which permeates stratification literature, introduces a modified way of conceptualizing the family which takes into account its changing nature and subjects the reformulation to a limited empirical test.

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<sup>1</sup>The author is particularly indebted to Dr. Robert A. Ellis and to other faculty and students at the University of Oregon who listened critically.

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## STRATIFICATION ASSUMPTIONS CONCERNING FAMILY SOCIAL STATUS

## Theoretical Approaches

Underpinning the analysis of social stratification is a set of critical assumptions concerning the family as a social system. This is especially the case in the writings of those identified as functional theorists.<sup>2</sup>

They contend that:

1. The family is a homogeneous unit in which all members share equal social status (Davis, 1949; Shumpeter, 1951; Barber, 1957).<sup>3</sup>
2. The family social status derives solely from the adult male head of household by virtue of his occupational position (Davis and Moore, 1945; Davis, 1949; Parsons, 1955; Barber, 1957).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Since functionalism is the most widely accepted theoretical framework in stratification (Roach et al., 1969:13) and makes the most explicit statements concerning the family, a major portion of the analysis will be devoted to a critical examination of the assumptions put forward by the functionalists.

<sup>3</sup>Other stratification theorists, not so clearly committed to the functionalist position, have also recognized the solidarity of the nuclear family (e.g., Mayer, 1955; Kahl, 1957).

<sup>4</sup>Functionalists, believing stratification to be a universal phenomenon, have developed a general theory applicable to all cultures. "A society (it  
(footnote 4 continued on next page)

3. Effective family functioning requires a division of labor in which the husband-father is primarily concerned with instrumental activities and his wife with her expressive role.<sup>5</sup> This allows the wife to concentrate on the socialization of the children and the psychological well-being of all family members, two of the remaining functions which still devolve upon the family (Ogburn, 1938; Barber, 1957; Davis, 1949; Parsons, 1955; Williams, 1960).

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(footnote 4 continued) is argued) must distribute its individuals in the positions of the social structure and induce them to perform the duties of these positions " (Davis and Moore, 1945:242). In an industrial, technological society such as the United States the functionally significant positions are promised to be those connected with the occupational structure (Barber, 1957:75; Davis and Moore, 1945:242-249; Parsons, 1955:13).

<sup>5</sup>This view of the family has been advanced by several well-known anthropologists. Murdock (1949), for example, in his influential work on Social Structure asserted that the nuclear family is a universal human grouping responsible cross-culturally for the four functions fundamental to the development and continuation of human social life; reproduction, education of the young, sexual regulation and economic production based on a division of labor between the sexes. While such a categorical assertion has frequently invited disclaimers (Spiro, 1954; Levy, 1955; Cough, 1959; Levy and Fallers, 1959; Zelditch, 1964; Reiss, 1965; Smith, 1968), it has continued to have a strong influence on the functionalists (e.g., Parsons and Bales, 1955; Barber, 1957).

In contrast to the functionalists, who have developed a model of societal and family functioning that relies on stability and inter-dependence among members, conflict theorists assume the inevitability of conflict within the society and among members of individual families. Thus, Marx and Engels (1957) see the same potential for class conflict inhering in the family as in the society at large. The husband's obligation to earn a living and support the family is depicted as giving him a capitalist-like position of supremacy, so that, within the family, he is the bourgeois and his wife the proletariat (Engels, 1942).<sup>6</sup>

While the existence and consequences of status inconsistency within the family are clearly suggested in the writings of Marx and Engels, the theoretical implications have never been systematically explored by those whose analyses have been carried out from a Marxian perspective (cf., Centers, 1949; 1950; 1951).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Engels (1942) comments on the attenuation of the wife's contribution to the family's economic status when production moved out of the home and into the factory. He argues that her liberation necessitates her active involvement in industrial production outside the home.

Veblen (1953), although not identified with the conflict theorists, shares similar views concerning the wife as the property of the male and the necessity of her economic involvement outside the home to liberate her from this position.

<sup>7</sup>Lenski's (1954) study, although concerned with status inconsistency, does not explore status inconsistency within the family. Rather, he accepts unquestioningly the functionalists' assumption of family homogeneity. Watson and Barth's (1964) work appears to stand alone in suggesting some of the  
(footnote 7 continued on next page)

### Empirical Approaches

The same exclusive concentration on the husband's contribution to family status prevails in the empirical literature on stratification. This is readily apparent in those community stratification studies that have relied on prestige ratings of local inhabitants (cf., Ellis, 1960; Warner, 1960). Generally, the family is conceived to be a homogeneous system in which the father, by means of his social position in the community, confers status on other family members.<sup>8</sup>

This perspective of family status arrangements has also influenced the nature of the stratification indices developed for use beyond the confines of a single community. Warner's Index of Status Characteristics (ISC), Hollingshead's Index of Social Position (ISP), and Ellis's Index of Class Position (ICP) all rely almost exclusively on the resources of the male adult head of household.<sup>9</sup>

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(footnote 7 continued) interesting possibilities opened up when family status consistency is taken as an empirical question rather than as a given.

<sup>8</sup>While community researchers recognize the contribution of other family members to the family's social status (e.g., various members' participation in community activities, and their "moral" attitudes and behavior - Chapin, 1928; Kaufmann, 1944; West, 1945; Duncan and Artis, 1951; Warner, 1960; Hollingshead, 1961) the father's occupation is regarded, in some fundamental sense, as making possible these expressions of a particular style of life.

<sup>9</sup>In these indices, Warner gives the father's occupation highest weighting; Hollingshead uses father's occupation and education as major determinants of family's social position; while Ellis combines father's occupation with self-assessed social status.

It is also pertinent that these same assumptions of family homogeneity and patricentrism prevail in much of the survey research that has relied on social class as a research variable. Commonly in these studies one or more attributes of the father ( e.g., occupation or education) is used to represent the socioeconomic status of the family.

#### CHALLENGING THE ASSUMPTIONS CONCERNING FAMILY SOCIAL STATUS

##### 1. The family as a basic homogeneous unit.

While the functionalists' model presumes the presence of both husband and wife in the family unit, there is a substantial minority of families that have only one parent-- usually the mother. In 1971, for example, there were over six million female-headed households (Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1972). For certain groups in the United States, e.g., the urban poor, this may constitute an important subcultural variation. (See e.g., Chilman, 1966: 18; Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1972:38).

Even in families where both husband and wife are present, the sexual division of labor is not as sharply defined as the functionalists' model would suggest. There have been simultaneous trends for a decrease in the participation of males in the labor force and a corresponding increase in the participation of women, particularly married women.<sup>10</sup> This has given

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<sup>10</sup>Watson and Barth (1964) estimated that about one-quarter of the males of labor force age were not employed at the time of their study. Not all of these men were married, but with the trend to early marriage a considerable proportion establish a household before they have finished full-time (foot-note 10 continued on next page)

rise to numerous families in which the male head of the household does not have a full-time occupation (eg., student, unemployed). In addition, there are many other families in which both husband and wife have occupational roles. Thus, a large proportion of families do not fit the functionalists' model of the nuclear family.

Several fundamental questions are raised by such evidence. If the social status of the family is determined by the occupation of the male head, how is one to assign status in cases where there is no employed male head? If one eliminates these cases, a substantial proportion of families is being ignored.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, if in female-headed households one assigns status on the basis of the female head, then it is necessary to explain why the occupational role of this group of women becomes functionally significant when that of the 19 million married women who are working is not.

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(footnote 10 continued) education and have an occupation. In many cases they are wholly or partly dependent on the wife's earnings. At the same time the labor force participation rates of married women have been increasing. Over half of all families (55 percent) with children under 18 and husbands at home have a wife who is gainfully employed (U.S. Bureau of Statistics, 1970).

<sup>11</sup>Watson and Barth (1964) estimate that approximately two-fifths of all families are either females or female-headed households, or husband and wife families in which the husband is retired or otherwise not in the labor force, is unemployed or is working part time.



The functionalists' approach has either been to ignore, or discount the implications of women's occupational roles for the family's social status.<sup>12</sup> It is asserted that the necessity of family solidarity demands that all members share equal status, based solely on the occupation of the male adult head.

Furthermore, the functionalists' analysis requires that women who have young children should be far more concerned with pursuing their expressive role as wives and mothers than in participating in occupational activities. As Parsons (1955) points out, on the basis of 1949 labor force statistics, "the number in the labor force who have small children is still quite small and has not shown a marked tendency to increase" (1955:14).

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<sup>12</sup>Barber, for instance, admits that women may achieve some social mobility through occupational advancement (1957:386) but completely disregards the occupational contribution of women to the family's social status in his treatment of the family (pp. 73-76).

Similarly, Parsons (1955) seems to imply that because women's employment tends to be concentrated in occupations requiring supportive or expressive roles, their occupational status is necessarily inferior to that of the husband. Consequently, it is of no significance for family social status. In fact, household Census data suggest just the contrary. In two-thirds of the cases where husband and wife are employed the wife's status is equal (22 percent) or superior to that of her husband (42 percent) Watson and Barth (1964).

In a more recent work, Parsons (1971) continues to ignore the implications of women's labor force participation for family social status.

While Parsons' statement concerning the labor force participation of mothers with young children had a certain credibility at the time he was writing, his predictions regarding the stability of their labor force participation rates have not been borne out.<sup>13</sup>

Given these negative findings, a modification of the functionalists' approach appears to be in order. One possible alternative is to avoid concentrating on the nuclear family as a group with fixed positions and rigidly defined functions attached to each position. Instead, the focus might be on the "nuclear family relationship complex."<sup>14</sup> This way the emphasis would be on the interaction among roles (e.g., mother-child, husband-wife), but it would not be assumed that the appropriate role behavior is confined to members of the immediate family.

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<sup>13</sup>Between 1950 and 1971 the labor force participation of women with pre-school aged children increased two and one-half times, so that by 1971, three out of ten mothers with small children were employed (Statistical Abstracts of the United States, 1972:220). At the same time, the participation rates of women with school aged children increased rapidly--almost half the mothers being in the labor force in 1971 (Statistical Abstracts: 1972:220).

It is also pertinent to note that participation in the labor force is not restricted to mothers of low socio-economic status (Handbook on Women Workers, 1969:Table 12,33).

<sup>14</sup>Anthropologists have developed and used this approach in their work on families (cf., R. Smith, 1968:301-313).

Instead, these behaviors might be distributed among a number of individuals, groups or agencies that do not themselves constitute an ongoing group. Thus, for example, the female head of household who works is taking on the provider role with respect to the children, a role reserved for the male in the functionalists' model. Similarly, friends, neighbors, and kin may accept the duties and responsibilities of the absent parent in single parent households. Husbands of working wives may likewise participate in the housekeeping role.

With this modification, one can understand behavior in "normal" nuclear families, which serve as the prototype for the functionalists, and in the "atypical" families which do not fit the functionalists' model and are consequently excluded from their analysis.

2. Conferral of status by the male on all family members.

Considerable attention has been paid by professionals and the popular press to the blurring of traditional sex roles<sup>15</sup> (See e.g., Johannis and Rollins, 1959; Rossi, 1964; Blood, 1965; Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Heer, 1963; Rodman, 1967; Fukaya, 1969; Safillio-Rothschild, 1969; Jennings and Langton, 1969; Arnott and Bengston, 1970; Michel, 1970; Heiskanen, 1971; Lipman-Blumen, 1972).

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<sup>15</sup>Jennings and Langton (1969) suggest that in political matters, a traditionally male activity, the mother's influence over the children increases with her education. Consequently, they suggest that the male dominance of political matters in the nuclear family better describes the past (footnote 15 continued on next page)

As an increasingly large number of married women take on instrumental activities outside the home, reliance solely on the male's occupational accomplishments may provide an incomplete picture of the family's social status. Indeed, accumulating evidence suggests that the wife may make a substantial contribution to the family's social position, either through her physical or social attributes (Warner and Abegglen, 1955; Whyte, 1963; Zetterberg, 1966; Hochschild, 1969) or through her educational or occupational status (Geiger, 1969; Fukaya, 1969; Haavio-Mannila, 1969; Coleman and Neugarten, 1971).

3. The Necessity of Family Homogeneity for Successful Family Maintenance.

It is also possible to challenge the functionalists' thesis that family homogeneity is a necessary condition for successful socialization of the children (Davis, 1949; Parsons, 1955; Barber, 1957; Williams, 1960). In drawing this conclusion the functionalists have implicitly, if not explicitly, made the following premises:

- a. The presence of both parents is necessary for adequate socialization of the children.
- b. Successful fulfillment of parental roles requires a sexual division of labor in which the father works outside the home and the

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(footnote 15 continued) than it does the present. (See also Heiskanen, 1971.) A similar statement might possibly be made concerning male dominance of family social status.

mother is responsible for the internal affairs of the household.

- c. Conversely, participation by the wife in the labor force is likely to create the kind of conflict between spouses that would be detrimental to family integration.

The widely held assumption that the presence of both parents is necessary for successful socialization has come under serious scrutiny in recent years. Herzog and Sudia (1968), after reviewing 400 studies concerned with the possible absence of one parent, generally the father, conclude that no firm conclusions can be drawn from existing data on the effects of fatherlessness on children. One reason for this, as the authors point out, is that persons other than the father may be successfully assuming the paternal role.<sup>16</sup>

At the same time, it would appear fallacious to assume that the presence of two parents will necessarily produce successful family maintenance or successful socialization of the children. Nye (1957) finds that the crucial factor in the adjustment of children is the social-psychological success or failure of the family, not whether it is legally or physically broken. This would suggest that the critical

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<sup>16</sup>The fallacy of regarding all one-parent families as unstable is shown by studies of female-headed black households. Many of these families have an interaction network of kin and neighbors that enables them to survive in the face of greatly restricted economic and social support (Herzog, 1966; Billingsley, 1968).

factor is not the presence or absence of a parent, as the functionalists' model premises, but rather the extent to which persons inside or outside the family are able, through their role behaviors, to create a setting conducive to successful family maintenance (See Rheinstein, 1972).

This suggested modification of the functionalists' position also makes it possible to explain disparities between their theoretical model and the empirical findings concerning the necessity of a traditional sexual division of labor, which requires the male to be engaged in the labor force and the wife to be involved in household activities. Recent literature on the employed mother suggests that it is not the mother's presence or absence in the labor force per se which is the important variable. Rather it is the adequacy of family role behavior. Children may be successfully socialized in families in which the mother works provided they receive adequate mothering from someone (Nye and Hoffman, 1963; Rapaport and Rapaport, 1969). Conversely, children in families with a traditional division of labor may be inadequately socialized if the woman dislikes her role as mother (Hoffman, 1961). Or, in the absence of other interests, the mother is overzealous in her role, stifling the child's normal development (Rossi, 1964). Successful socialization of the children is not guaranteed by having a full-time housewife-mother, nor, apparently, is it prevented by having a working mother.<sup>17</sup>

(footnote 17 on next page)

Finally, the research evidence runs counter to the functionalists' argument that the wife's participation in the labor force leads directly to family stress. Although the findings are varied, the data, in large part, suggest that it is not so much the departure from the traditional division of labor within the family that makes a difference as it is the attitudes towards the wife's employment outside the home. Conflict, as Hoffman (1961) has suggested, may arise where one spouse wants the wife to work and the other does not. Nevertheless, where husband and wife are in agreement, it is possible to come to a viable working arrangement (Blood, 1965; Michel, 1970).<sup>18</sup>

The wife's participation in roles outside the home may also be seen by other family members as beneficial to

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<sup>17</sup>One important facet of childhood socialization, according to the functionalists, is preparation for adult roles. For certain social classes this may involve inculcating aspirations for upward mobility in the children. Contrary to the assertion of the functionalists, however, upward mobility is often stimulated in families characterized by inequalities of status between the parents (cf., McGuire, 1952; Ellis and Lane, 1963; McKinley, 1964; Krauss, 1964; Cohen, 1965; Sardis, 1970).

<sup>18</sup>Goode (1960) speaks of the family as the role budget center in which decisions are made about the members' allocation of time and energies. Where the wife is employed outside the home in a remunerative or volunteer capacity, other family members may help her by spending more of their time engaged in intra-familial household tasks (Blood, 1965).

her and them both materially and psychologically.<sup>19</sup> Billingsley (1968) points out that for black families, including middle- and upper-class, the employment of the mother is often necessary for adequate functioning of the family and making it possible for the children to achieve upward mobility. Rather than leading to family conflict and dissolution, the mother's employment may, in an important way, contribute to family solidarity.

Given the prevailing division of labor within Negro families, Billingsley concludes that the functionalists' instrumental-expressive dichotomy is too simplistic--a conclusion that would appear to have a wider applicability beyond black families.

#### TOWARD A REFORMULATION

It is proposed that a viable model of family social status requires a recognition of the reapportionment of roles which have taken place within the family. Other family members, besides the father, may have important status resources (e.g., occupation, education, income) to contribute, and these resources may change in quality and quantity over time. On this basis, it is possible to develop a number of general propositions concerning the role of the family in the system of stratification.

1. Resources, such as occupation, education and income are individual resources and may be used to rank the person in the system of stratification.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Simmel (1955) long ago pointed out that while external and internal conflicts do arise when a person is involved in a multiplicity of group (footnote 19 continued on next page)



2. Among persons who are identified as members of a group, status transfer takes place. In Benoit-Smullyan's (1944) terms the status of one person "rubs off" on the other members. Consequently, a person's resources may be used to assign status to the group, in this case, the family.<sup>21</sup>
3. During childhood, when he is dependent upon the resources of his parents, the person's social status is largely determined by his family of orientation.<sup>22</sup>
4. Crosscultural and subcultural variations exist in the resources considered appropriate for various family members and the weighting they are given in determining family status.<sup>23</sup>

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(footnote 19 continued) affiliations, these affiliations can, at the same time, strengthen and reinforce the integration of his personality.

<sup>20</sup>It is commonplace to use a man's occupation to assign him his social status. It is rare, however, that a woman's occupation is used to identify her social status. Svalastoga (1959) is one of the few exceptions. He assigned the wife the same status as the husband unless her occupation was higher, in which case he used hers.

<sup>21</sup>Similarly, it is customary to use the man's resources to identify the group. Little has been done to evaluate status transfer from the woman. Among those who have attempted to assess the women's contribution are Billingsley (1968), Coleman and Neugarten (1971), Rossi (1972).

<sup>22</sup>The social standing of the family may be influenced by the children's occupational and educational plans. Later, it may be further modified up or down by the children's success or failure.

<sup>23</sup>Rodman (1967) has suggested a "theory of resources in cultural context." In the American upper middle-class where there is an expectation  
(footnote 23 continued on next page)

5. Status inconsistency exists within the family when the quality of resources of one member (usually an adult) differ significantly from those of another adult member. Intrafamilial status inconsistency will have its greatest effect where the resources of the wife are superior to those of the husband.

This reformulation generates hypotheses somewhat at variance with those of the functionalists. According to the functionalists' argument the social status of the father should (a) reflect the prestige attached to his occupational position and (b) be transferred to all members of his immediate family. Furthermore, except for cases of ignorance and error, there should be a one-to-one correspondence between the father's occupation and the member's evaluation of his family's social status.<sup>24</sup> When cases of ignorance and error do occur, their effect should be random.<sup>25</sup> If this is so, then the family's social status should not in any way reflect the resources of other family members besides those of the father.

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(footnote 23 continued) that the husband will be the provider, the wife's participation in community activities may be her most valuable resource. For poorer families, on the other hand, the wife's occupation and education may be regarded as her most salient resources. (See e.g., Billingsley, 1968).

<sup>24</sup>In order to rely on self-evaluations of family status it is necessary to invoke a Cooley-like notion of the looking glass self. That is, it is assumed that the prestige that one accords oneself, or one's family, reflects the evaluation of their position by other members of the community at large. A precedent for this assumption is provided by Ellis, Lane and Olesen (1963).

(footnote 25 on next page)

If, however, one takes the alternative position outlined by the propositions above, a different set of hypotheses can be generated. Specifically, these hypotheses and the propositions from which they are derived are as follows:

1. The resources of the mother as well as the father are taken into account when a person is asked to evaluate his or her family's social class position.<sup>26</sup>

(Propositions 2, 3)

2. In that substantial number of cases where the mother's and father's resources are relatively equal, it will do no violation to use the father's resources to represent the family.
3. When there is a significant discrepancy between the resources of mother and father, this discrepancy will be taken into account by the respondent in his subjective evaluation of his family.

(Propositions 2, 3, 5)

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<sup>25</sup>As the functionalists' model is premised on a view of man as knowledgeable and rational, there is, logically, no place in their system for ignorance and error. The fallibility of this assumption is suggested by Ellis and Keedy's research (1960).

<sup>26</sup>It is recognized that members outside the immediate family (e.g., grandfather, uncle) may, in certain cases, make an effective contribution to the family social status. Nevertheless, the focus of the present research will be restricted to the nuclear family inasmuch as this is the functionalists' unit of analysis.

4. The effect of any discrepancy on a respondent's status evaluation will be most marked where the resources of the mother are superior to those of the father.

(Propositions 4, 5)

#### RESEARCH DESIGN AND ANALYSIS

The data used to test this reformulation were drawn from a longitudinal research project on undergraduates at the University of Oregon.<sup>27</sup> The research project formed part of a larger study on social mobility.

From the larger study data were available from two separate samples of Oregon students:

1. A 20 percent systematic sample, with random entry in each interval, of freshmen entering the University in the fall of 1961.<sup>28</sup> Three hundred and ninety-three (393) students, (95.3 percent of the initial sample) filled out the questionnaire from which the present data are drawn. Of this group, 184 were males, 209 females.
2. Honors College sample. A complete enumeration of three consecutive groups of freshmen entering in the fall of

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<sup>27</sup>The University of Oregon is a state-supported college which had an undergraduate enrollment of 8,500 at the inception of the study. Students come predominantly from middle-class backgrounds, with few students from either extreme of the class hierarchy.

<sup>28</sup>To focus on the "typical" college freshman the sample frame consisted of all full-time, first-year, unmarried freshmen who were white, native born and were between 17 and 20. These restrictions eliminated less than five percent of the population.

1961, 1962, 1963 was taken to ensure a "sample" large enough for analysis. Ninety-nine (99) percent of the students eligible to take the questionnaire actually did so. Of the 386 students in the Honors College sample, 193 were males and 193, females. For purposes of analysis, the two samples were combined.

### Research Variables

#### Occupational Status of Parents

On the basis of 15 questions presented to the student, the father's occupation was classified into one of seven status levels using Hollingshead's (1957) occupational scale.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>The student was asked to describe in some detail his father's occupational title; the requirements of his job; whether he was self-employed; the name and location of the organization for which he worked; the length of time he had been employed in the present occupation--and the nature of his prior occupation; and the number of persons working under him. See Ellis, Lane and Olesen (1963) for the rationale underlying this approach. Twenty-eight (28) percent of the fathers had positions as higher executives, major professionals (Status level 1); 19 percent were employed as business managers, medium-size proprietors, and lesser professionals (Status level 2); administrative personnel, owners of small businesses and semi-professionals accounted for 24 percent (Level 3). Of the remaining 29 percent, 11 percent were involved in clerical and sales work or were technicians, or owners of little businesses (Level 4); were skilled manual employees 10 percent (Level 5); machine operators or semi-skilled 6 percent (Level 6); or were unskilled employees 2 percent (Level 7). (footnote 29 continued on next page)

For the mother, initial questions determined whether she worked and if she were working, whether her work was full time, part time or part year. Then, a series of questions similar in nature to those concerning the father but modified to be appropriate for women's employment, were asked to elicit information on the nature of the mother's occupation.

The mother's full-time or part-time occupation was classified in the same way as that of the father using Hollingshead's occupational prestige scale, thus assuring comparability between the ratings of the two parents.<sup>30,31</sup>

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(footnote 29 continued) Twelve cases were excluded as no information was available on the father's occupation.

<sup>30</sup>An interesting question, beyond the scope of this paper, is whether the occupation of a woman enjoys the same prestige as that of a male in the same occupation, and consequently, whether it should be classified in the same way.

<sup>31</sup>Of the 230 mothers working full time, one percent were employed in Status level 1 positions; 40 percent at Level 2; 12 percent at Level 3; 35 percent at Level 4; 3 percent at Level 5; 6 percent at Level 6; and 3 percent at Level 7. Occupational information was not available for three employed mothers.

Part-time employment was pursued by a further 117 mothers. The occupational status distribution was as follows: zero percent in Level 1; 17 percent at Level 2; 12 percent at Level 3; 55 percent at Level 4; 3 percent at Level 5; 9 percent at Level 6; and 4 percent at Level 7. Six cases were excluded as there was insufficient information on the mother's part-time occupation.

### Parents' Educational Level

From a series of questions on parents' education a nine-point scale was derived to classify the highest level of education attained by the student's father and mother.<sup>32</sup>

### Family's Social Class Distribution

Kahl and Davis's (1955) modification of Centers's question on class identification was used, yielding a six-point classification. Five (5) percent of the students assigned themselves to the upper-class; 33 percent

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<sup>32</sup>The three educational levels of grade school, high school and college were subdivided into graduation and attendance for a period less than graduation. Due, both to the nature of the study and to the educational attainments of the parents, more detailed information was obtained on those who had attended college, particularly the extent of their post-graduate training, rather than those who had not gone beyond 12th grade. The distributions were as follows:

Fathers. Ph.D., M.D., or equivalent 12 percent; M.A., M.S., or equivalent 6 percent; college graduate work beyond the bachelor's, but no degree 2 percent; university graduation 19 percent; partial college training 17 percent; high school graduation 29 percent; partial high school 7 percent; 7 to 9 years' schooling 8 percent; less than 7 years' schooling less than one percent. Fifteen cases were excluded due to insufficient information.

Mothers. Ph.D. or equivalent less than one percent; M.A., M.S., or equivalent 3 percent; college graduate work, but no degree 4 percent; university graduation 20 percent; partial college training 26 percent; high school graduation 38 percent; partial high school 4 percent; 7 to 9 years' schooling 3 percent; less than 7 years' school one percent. Two cases were excluded due to insufficient information.

to the upper-middle-class; and 35 percent to the middle-middle-class. Of the remainder, 10 percent saw themselves as lower-middle-class; 16 percent as working class and one percent as lower-class.<sup>33</sup>

#### Occupation-Status-Discrepancy

For purposes of analysis it was necessary to classify discrepancies between the father's occupational status and the family's social class position as perceived by the student.<sup>34</sup> Table 1 provides a way of categorizing these "Occupation-Status-Discrepancies" unambiguously. It is possible to range students along a continuum according to the degree (major or minor), and the direction (underestimate, overestimate) of

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<sup>33</sup>As very few students identified their families as lower-class, working and lower-class were combined. Seven (7) students did not give sufficient information to identify their "subjective" social class.

<sup>34</sup>The means devised for classifying status discrepancies needed to meet several criteria:

1. Minor differences between subjective and objective status that are substantively and theoretically insignificant should be ignored, and thus, not treated as discrepancies.
2. Discrepancies in which the student's evaluation of the family's status level is higher than that which would be assigned on the basis of the father's occupation alone should be distinguished from discrepancies occurring in the opposite direction.
3. There should be a basis for differentiating major and minor discrepancies.



their "Occupation-Status-Discrepancy." At one extreme are those who make a major overestimate of their social status, followed by those whose overestimate is only minor. Consistent cases occupy a middle position. Minor underestimates are followed by major overestimates which form the other extreme of the continuum.

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Table 1 about here

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### FINDINGS

#### Relationship Between Father's Occupational Status and Student's Social Class Identification

A comparison between the father's occupational status and the student's estimation of his family's social class indicates a high degree of correlation ( $r = .78$ ). Table 2. At the same time, it is not as close as one would predict from the functionalists' model.<sup>35</sup> Approximately one in four

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Table 2 about here

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(26 percent) of the students assign their family to a social class inconsistent with the one expected on the basis of their father's occupation. Of these, 9 percent appear to overestimate their families' social class assigning themselves to the upper status levels, although their fathers are employed in manual or minor white collar occupations. The remaining 17 percent, on

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<sup>35</sup>Rossi (1972) in a recent study in which he presented family vignettes to 100 Baltimore men and women found that the father's contribution, while marked, was not the sole resource determining the family's social status. The husband's occupation accounted for 50 percent of the family's social standing, the wife's occupation 25 percent. The remaining 25 percent was attributable to the education of both husband and wife.

TABLE 1. MEASURE OF OCCUPATION-STATUS-  
DISCREPANCY (O-S-D)<sup>a</sup>

Father's Occupational Status <sup>b</sup>	Student's Social Class Identification <sup>c</sup>					
	Upper	Upper Middle	Middle Middle	Lower Middle	Working	Lower
Higher exec., large proprietor, major professional	C	C	U-min	U-maj	U-maj	U-maj
Business manager, medium proprietor, lesser professional	C	C	C	U-min	U-maj	U-maj
Admins. personnel, small owner, semi-professional	C	C	C	C	U-min	U-min
Clerical and sales, technician	O-min	O-min	C	C	U-min	U-min
Skilled manual	O-min	O-min	O-min	C	C	C
Machine operator, semi-skilled	O-maj	O-maj	O-min	O-min	C	C
Unskilled	O-maj	O-maj	O-maj	O-min	C	C

<sup>a</sup>Key to Occupation-Status-Discrepancy Levels: O-maj = social class identification (SCI) is much higher than father's occupation; O-min = SCI is somewhat higher than father's occupation; C = SCI is consistent with father's occupation; U-min = SCI is somewhat lower than father's occupation; U-maj = SCI is much lower than father's occupation.

<sup>b</sup>Based on Hollingshead's (1957) occupational status scale.

<sup>c</sup>Based on modified version of Centers' question on class identification (Kahl and Davis, 1955).

TABLE 2. FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF FATHER'S OCCUPATIONAL STATUS LEVEL AND STUDENT'S SOCIAL CLASS IDENTIFICATION<sup>a, b</sup>

Father's Occupational Status Level <sup>c</sup>	Student's Social Class Identification <sup>d</sup>				
	Upper (N) <sup>f</sup> (42)	Upper Middle (256)	Middle Middle (264)	Lower Middle (73)	Working Lower <sup>e</sup> (125)
Higher exec., large proprietor, major professional	26	122	52*	12*	04*
Business manager, medium proprietor, lesser professional	12	56	60	7*	09*
Admins. personnel small owner, semi-professional	03	49	84	25	20*
Clerical and sales, technician	00	16*	33	10	25*
Skilled manual	00	08*	21*	14	37
Machine operator, semi-skilled	01*	03*	13*	05*	22
Unskilled	00	02*	01*	00	08

<sup>a</sup>  $r = .78$

<sup>b</sup> Cases of Occupation-Status-Discrepancy (discrepancy between father's occupation and student's class identification) are indicated by asterisks.

<sup>c</sup> Based on Hollingshead's (1957) occupational status scale.

<sup>d</sup> Based on a modified version of Centers' question on class identification (Kahl and Davis, 1955).

<sup>e</sup> Due to the small number of cases in the lowest category, two categories have been combined.

<sup>f</sup> Excludes cases for which information was not available: 12 for occupation, 7 for social class identification.

the other hand, appear to underestimate their families' social class, considering themselves to be of much lower status than is warranted on the basis of their fathers' high occupational status levels.<sup>36</sup>

#### Analysis of Occupation-Status-Discrepancy (O-S-D)

The first stage of the analysis was an examination of these deviant cases to see whether there were significant differentials in parental occupational resources. From the functionalists' viewpoint it would be predicted that where Occupation-Status-Discrepancies exist, the effects of other family members (e.g., the mother) on the family's social status assignment will be random. Alternatively, from the resource model introduced above, we would suggest that the mother will make a contribution over and beyond that of the father. This being the case, it would be predicted that where significant Occupation-Status-Discrepancy is found, we would also find a lack of homogeneity between mother's and father's occupational status. The findings from this analysis are presented in Table 3.<sup>37</sup>

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Table 3 about here

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<sup>36</sup>The differences are directly related to class identification. Almost all (93 percent) of the students who consider themselves to be upper-class have a class identification consonant with their father's occupation. The proportion of consistent responses progressively declines until just over half the students (55 percent) who identify themselves as working or lower-class have fathers whose occupational status level agrees with their class identification.

(footnote 37 on next page)

TABLE 3. ALL DIFFERENTIALS IN PARENTAL OCCUPATIONAL RESOURCES ANALYZED BY O-S-D LEVELS

(Reported in Percentages)<sup>a</sup>

Resource Differentials (N)	O-S-D Levels				
	<u>Overestimate</u>		<u>Consistent</u>	<u>Underestimate</u>	
	Major (5) <sup>b</sup>	Minor (31)	(144)	Minor (30)	Major (10) <sup>b</sup>
Mother's occupation is higher than father's <sup>c</sup>	(5)	74	38	13	(0)
No difference in occupational level	(0)	20	20	20	(1)
Mother's occupation is lower than father's	(0)	06	42	67	(9)

<sup>a</sup> Test of association between variates yields  $\chi$  of .68,  $p < .01$ .

<sup>b</sup> Where the N is 10 or less actual numbers instead of percentages are presented in parentheses.

<sup>c</sup> Mother's occupation is treated as different from the father's if her occupation is 1 or more status levels above or below the father's on Hollingshead's scale (Hollingshead, 1957).

Where a case of overestimation is found, there is a distinct probability that the mother's occupation outranks that of the father. This occurs in three-quarters of the cases of minor overestimation and all five of the cases of major overestimation. The percentage of mothers with superior occupational resources drops off sharply where consistent estimates are found and continues to decrease progressively as one moves along the O-S-D continuum<sup>38</sup> ( $\gamma = .68, p < .01$ ).<sup>39</sup>

Thus, these findings clearly contradict the functionalists' thesis that the mother's occupational resources should not be systematically related to the family's social status.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>In the results the analysis is restricted to mothers with a full-time working position, as these cases are particularly strategic for the hypotheses under consideration. However, neither the strength, nor the direction of the relationship is altered when the employment status of mothers is expanded to include those working part time.

<sup>38</sup>The relationship holds with equal strength when only major differences between the occupational status levels of the parents are considered.

<sup>39</sup>A conservative estimate of the normal deviate,  $z$  for a particular level of  $\gamma$  is used in this and subsequent tables.

$$z = \sqrt{\frac{\text{concordance} + \text{discordance}}{(N) (1 - (\gamma)^2)}}$$

<sup>40</sup>Initially it was planned to make a separate comparison of the mother's influence in intact and broken homes. However, the number of working mothers in the latter category proved to be too small to make this possible. A separate analysis of intact homes shows a clear relationship between mother's resources and student's social class identification (footnote 40 continued on next page)

### Comparison of Occupational Resources and Student's Social Class Identification

Since the analysis supported the existence of a relationship between resource differentials and O-S-D levels, it became germane to ask whether the mother's occupation might not be as closely associated with the student's class identification as the father's is, in families in which both parents are employed full time.

Once again, the functionalists' thesis and the resource model lead to two different sets of predictions. On the basis of the functionalists' argument that the mother's occupational status is generally lower than that of the husband and of no consequence for the family's social class, one would expect little correspondence between the mother's occupation and the student's social class identification.

In contrast, from the standpoint of the resource model, which assumes that the wife's resources may be equal or even superior to those of the husband and contribute significantly to social status, one would predict that a substantial proportion of students will have a class identification consistent with the mother's occupation.

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Table 4 about here

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Table 4 examines the percentage of students whose class identification is consistent with (a) the father's occupation and (b) the mother's occupation. It can be seen that the proportion of students whose class identification is consistent with the mother's full-time occupation (66 percent) is

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(footnote 40 continued) ( $\chi^2 = .6, p < .01$ ). Consequently, one can conclude that the overall findings are not due to the potentially greater influence of mothers in broken homes.

TABLE 4. COMPARISON OF PERCENTAGES OF OCCUPATION-STATUS-DISCREPANCY WHEN FATHER'S OCCUPATION AND MOTHER'S OCCUPATION IS USED AS A BASE

(Reported in Percentages)

Occupation-Status-Discrepancy	(N)	Based on:	
		Father's Occupation (220) <sup>a</sup>	Mother's Occupation Full-time (220)      Part-time (337)
<u>Overestimate</u>			
major		03	03      02
minor		14	11      15
<u>Consistent</u>			
		65	66      65
<u>Underestimate</u>			
minor		14	17      14
major		04	03      03

<sup>a</sup>Based on fathers' occupations in families in which both parents are working full-time.



virtually identical to that of students whose class identification is in agreement with their father's occupation (65 percent).<sup>41</sup> In addition, the proportion who overestimate their family's social class on the basis of their father's occupation (17 percent) is almost the same as those who overestimate when the mother's occupation is used as a base (14 percent). Similarly, the proportion of underestimators is much the same, whether one uses the father's occupation (18 percent) or mother's occupation (20 percent) to establish Occupation-Status-Discrepancy.

The table also indicates that the same relationship holds when mothers who have part-time occupations are included in the analysis.

Thus, while the findings lend no support to the functionalists' argument, they provide clear support for the resource thesis.

#### Parents' Occupational Resources and O-S-D Levels

It is therefore pertinent to ask whether the mother's contribution is limited to cases where O-S-D's occur or whether the mother's resources will, in all instances, be taken into account in the assignment of the family's social status.

Table 5 takes the extensively-used blue collar, white collar dichotomy and examines the additional information on family's social status which is obtained when the mother's occupational resources are considered, as well as the father's. Examination of the table suggests that the mother's

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Table 5 about here

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<sup>41</sup>Comparison between the husband's occupation and the wife's indicates that these results are not attributable to occupational homogamy between the parents.

TABLE 5. COMPARISON OF PARENTS' OCCUPATIONS (WHITE-COLLAR, BLUE-COLLAR) AND STUDENTS' SOCIAL CLASS IDENTIFICATION FOR FAMILIES IN WHICH BOTH PARENTS ARE WORKING AND THOSE IN WHICH THE FATHER ONLY IS EMPLOYED<sup>a</sup>

Social Class Identification <sup>b</sup>	<u>Both parents employed</u>				<u>Father only employed</u>	
	<u>W. Coll. fathers</u>		<u>B. Coll. fathers</u>		W. Coll.	B. Coll.
	W. Coll. Mothers	B. Coll. Mothers	W. Coll. Mothers	B. Coll. Mothers		
(N) <sup>c</sup>	(147)	(14)	(46)	(13)	(464)	(76)
Upper and middle	90	71	63	46	91	43
Working and Lower	10	29	37	54	09	57

<sup>a</sup> White-collar is defined as higher executives, large and medium proprietors, major and lesser professionals, business managers, administrative personnel, owners of little businesses, semi-professionals, clerical and sales workers and technicians. Blue-collar - Skilled manual, machine operators, semi-skilled and unskilled employees. (Hollingshead, 1957).

<sup>b</sup> Based on modified version of Centers' question on class identification (Kahl and Davis, 1955).

<sup>c</sup> Excludes 19 cases where information was not available on occupation or social class identification.

occupation generally contributes to the family's social class, serving both to raise it where she has superior resources and lower it where her occupation is inferior. In cases where the father holds a white collar occupation, the student is more likely to identify himself as upper- or middle-class when the mother also holds a white collar occupation (90 percent) than when the mother has blue collar employment (71 percent). That the mother's differential occupational resources may have the effect of lowering the family's social status is suggested by a comparison where only the father is employed and where he holds a white collar occupation. The percentage who identify their families as upper- or middle-class in this group (91 percent) is virtually identical to that found in families where both parents hold white collar occupations.

Conversely, the mother's superior occupational resources may elevate the family's social class in families in which the father has blue collar employment. Students in these families are much more likely to consider themselves upper- or middle-class when their mother has a white collar occupation (63 percent) than when both are blue collar employees (46 percent) or when the father only is employed and has blue collar status (43 percent).

These findings lend support to the hypotheses developed from the resource model that, where both parents share equal occupational resources it may do no violation to use the father's occupation to represent the family's social class. However, where the resources of the parents are dissimilar, the family's social class will reflect the mother's higher or lower occupational status.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Further evidence of the potential of the mother's occupation to modify the family's social status is suggested by considering those who identify themselves as high social status. In families where only the  
(footnote 42 continued on next page)

Relationship Between Parent's Educational Resources And  
Student's Social Class Identification

The preceding analysis suggests that, at least in families in which both parents are employed, the mother's resources are not ignored when a person is asked to estimate the family's social status. It became pertinent to ask whether another important status resource shared by all mothers viz., education, would be taken into account in the assignment of family social class. The analysis is similar to that for occupational resources; the first part is an examination of comparative educational resources of the parents in families in which O-S-D's occur; the second section examines the parents' education in all families.

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(footnote 42 continued) father is working and where he holds a high-ranking business or professional position, the majority of students (65 percent) not unexpectedly identify their families as high status (upper- or upper-middle-class). However, if the father is in a high business or professional position and his wife is employed, the likelihood that the student will identify the family as upper- or upper-middle-class is sharply reduced, regardless of whether her occupational role is high (36 percent) or not (37 percent).

At the same time, when the father is employed in a medium or low-status position, the mother's superior occupational resources are likely to raise the family's social status (31 percent of the students in this group identify their families with the upper- or upper-middle-class) cf., 18 percent where both hold medium- or low-status positions and 20 percent where only the father is employed.

This suggests the possibility of subcultural variations in the resources considered appropriate for family members. (footnote 42 continued on next page.)

### Analysis of Occupation-Status-Discrepancy

Comparison of resource differentials at each O-S-D level (Table 6) reveals that there is a measure of educational homogamy between the parents (one-third of the students have parents whose education is similar). However, where differences exist, they are in the direction predicted by the resource model. The proportion of mothers with superior educational resources is highest for cases of major overestimate (4 out of 7), slightly less for cases of minor underestimate (55 percent), and shows a progressive decline to 12 percent of students who made a major underestimate.

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Table 6 about here

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When information on occupation and education are combined, as has been done in Table 7, one can better evaluate the contribution of mother's resources to the family's social class. Although the analysis is restricted to major educational or occupational differences between the parents, the same relationship between resource differentials and O-S-D levels is in evidence.

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Table 7 about here

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### Comparison of Parents' Educational Resources and Student's Social Class Identification

An indication of the conditions under which the mother's resources may assume importance for family's social status is provided by the data

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(footnote 42 continued) In the upper-middle-class where there is an expectation that the husband will be the provider, the most valuable resources of the mother might be non-remunerative (e.g., her participation in community activities).

TABLE 6. DIFFERENTIALS IN PARENTAL EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
ANALYZED BY O-S-D LEVELS  
(Reported in Percentages)<sup>a</sup>

Resource Differentials <sup>b</sup>	Overestimate		Consistent (547)	Underestimate	
	Maj (7) <sup>d</sup>	Min (62)		Min (102)	Maj (25)
(N) <sup>c</sup>					
Mother higher than father	(4)	55	25	24	12
Mother equal to father	(1)	32	33	23	32
Mother lower than father	(2)	13	42	53	56

<sup>a</sup> Test of association between variates yields  $\chi^2$  of .32,  $p < .01$ .

<sup>b</sup> Mother's education is defined as superior to father's if it is one or more levels above father's on a 9-point scale.

<sup>c</sup> Excludes cases for which information not available: 19 for O-S-D levels, 17 for education.

<sup>d</sup> Where the N is 10 or less, actual numbers instead of percentages are presented in parentheses.

TABLE 7. MAJOR DIFFERENTIALS IN OCCUPATIONAL AND/OR EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES BETWEEN MOTHER AND FATHER FOR O-S-D LEVELS

(Reported in Percentages)<sup>a</sup>

Resource Differentials <sup>b</sup>	Overestimate		Consistent (561)	Underestimate	
	Maj (7) <sup>d</sup>	Min (63)		Min (104)	Maj (25)
Mother superior to father	(5)	52	22	21	12
Father equal or superior to mother	(2)	48	78	79	88

<sup>a</sup> Test of association between variates yields  $\chi^2 .37$ ,  $p. < .01$ .

<sup>b</sup> Mother's occupation is considered markedly superior to father's if mother has white-collar occupation and father has blue-collar, or if mother has high status occupation (Hollingshead's categories 1 and 2) and father does not (Hollingshead, 1957). Mother's education is considered markedly superior to father's if mother has advanced degree and father has B. A. or less; if mother has B. A., some college or special training beyond high school and father has high school graduation or less; mother has graduated from high school and father has not gone beyond 9th grade.

<sup>c</sup> Excludes 19 cases for which information was not available on O-S-D levels.

<sup>d</sup> Where the N is 10 or less, actual numbers instead of percentages are presented in parentheses.

in Table 8. Results indicate that where the father has college education, the student is unlikely to consider himself working- or lower-class whether his mother is also college educated or has no more than high school education (91 percent). However, when the father does not have college education, the mother's superior educational resources may raise the family's social status. Eighty-three percent identify themselves with the upper- or middle-class when the mother has college education, compared to 64 percent where neither parent has attended college.<sup>43</sup>

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Table 8 about here

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<sup>43</sup>The above finding indicates that in families where the father has low educational status, the mother's superior resources make it less likely that the family will be identified as working- or lower-class. Conversely, the mother's lower educational resources may reduce the likelihood that a family will be identified as high status, even though the father has a college education. The majority of students (58 percent) consider themselves high status (upper- or upper-middle-class) when both parents have attended college, the proportion drops to 38 percent where the mother has not gone beyond high school. In the remaining families where the fathers have a high school education or less, students are unlikely to consider themselves high status. However, they are somewhat more likely to identify themselves as upper- or upper-middle-class if the mother has a college education (29 percent compared to 19 percent when neither parent has gone beyond high school.)



TABLE 8. COMPARISON OF PARENTS' EDUCATION (COLLEGE; NON-COLLEGE)  
AND STUDENTS' SOCIAL CLASS IDENTIFICATION  
(UPPER AND MIDDLE; WORKING AND LOWER)  
(Reported in Percentages)

Social Class Identification <sup>a</sup>	College Fathers <sup>b</sup>		Non-college Fathers	
	College mothers <sup>b</sup> (302)	Non-college mothers (117)	College mothers <sup>b</sup> (103)	Non-college mothers (233)
(N) <sup>c</sup>				
Upper or middle	95	91	83	64
Working or lower	05	09	17	36

<sup>a</sup>Based on a modified version of Centers' question on class identification (Kahl and Davis, 1955).

<sup>b</sup>Includes all persons who have attended college, whether or not they graduated.

<sup>c</sup>Excludes cases for which there was no information: 17 for education, 7 for social class identification.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Comparison was made between "objective" indicators of social class-- occupation and education--and the respondent's "subjective" evaluation of his family's social status. Predictions concerning the agreement between the two measures were generated based on the functionalists' model and on an alternative family resource model. The predictions of the resource model were tested against those of the functionalists using a sample of freshmen undergraduates at the University of Oregon. The findings suggest that the resource model, by allowing for greater variation in family composition, is a better predictor than the functionalists' model. Not only does the resource model account for the cases which are explained by the functionalists' model, but also the substantial number of deviant cases in which the student's social class identification departs from the one expected on the basis of the father's occupation. The status resources of the mother, as well as the father, appear to be important in the assignment of family social status.

The above analysis provides a limited test of the resource model using one specific population of predominantly middle-class university students in the early 60's. Clearly, the resource model should be tested further using other populations.<sup>44</sup>

To the extent that the resource model is found to have general applicability, questions can be raised concerning the adequacy of existing social status indices which are based on the resources of only one member--the father. It is suggested that a more appropriate index of the family's social class might be obtained by combining the contributions of several family members--at least those of the two adult members.

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(footnote 44 on next page)

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<sup>44</sup>The recent resurgence of interest in women's roles, evoked by the Women's Liberation Movement, may have had the effect of making respondents more aware of the women's contribution to the family's social class position.

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