Blau and Duncan’s Status Attainment Research

A Test of the Meritocratic (or not) Nature of the American Stratification System
General Considerations

• The hypothesized causal sequence
  ➢ Hr: Dad’s education → dad’s job status (and that these, in turn) → kid’s education → both kid’s 1st job status and → kid’s job status down the line
  ➢ Null: There is no relationship between father’s education/SES and where his child winds up in the stratification (“allocation”) system
  ➢ What’s Missing?
    ➢ Um. Mom!!???
Correlation analysis

- To Ascertain
  - Association between/among variables
  - Strength & Direction of association

- **Strength** (determined by Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient, aka *Pearson’s R*)
  - Value ranges from 0 (no relationship) to 1.0 (always related)
    - Never find a 1.0
    - Deliriously happy to find a .6 or, even more so, a .7

- **Direction**: Positive or Negative
  - Positive: Either high or low values on both variables
Correlation analysis

- Years of education and socio-economic status, e.g.
  - Negative: High value on one variable accompanied by low value on the other (or vice versa)
- Poverty and educational achievement

- Correlation is not causation: just establishes that the variables are related
  - First step in causal explanation, BUT:
    - $X \rightarrow Y$
    - $Y \rightarrow X$
    - Or $Z \rightarrow$ both $X$ and $Y$
Blau & Duncan’s Status Attainment Path Model

Dad’s Job Status

Kid’s Education

Kid’s 1962 Job

Dad’s Education

Kid’s 1st Job

Dad’s Job Status → Kid’s Education

Kid’s Education → Kid’s 1962 Job

Kid’s Education → Kid’s 1st Job

Dad’s Job Status → Kid’s 1962 Job

Dad’s Job Status → Kid’s 1st Job

Kid’s 1962 Job → Kid’s 1st Job

Kid’s 1962 Job

Dad’s Education

Kid’s 1st Job

0.115

0.279

0.310

0.394

0.281

0.310

0.440

0.224
Findings

• Dad’s Education & Job Status & Kid’s Education and Job Status
  ▫ Associated?
    • Direction?
    • Strength?

• Kid’s Education
  ▫ Intervening variable, meaning?

• Does This Explain Everything?
  ▫ Blau and Duncan: 58% of the variation in kid’s ultimate job status is unexplained

• SO WHO’S “RIGHT”?