CHAPTER TWO

Basic Mechanisms Generating Inequality of Educational Opportunity

The preceding chapter serves mainly to present methodology, even though it brings up some interesting and paradoxical sociological results. The basic idea of the model described there is that the social status individuals achieve is the result of a two-stage filtering process. In the first stage they go from a given social background to a given educational level. In the second stage they go from educational level to achieved status. In both cases, the filtering process has been assumed to be inequalitarian.

Although this basic model is kept throughout the book, one of the assumptions of Chapter 1 needs to be reformulated—the assumption that both the educational and the social structures are given, that is, determined by exogenous factors. This premise is realistic so far as the social structure is concerned. It is likely that the structure of available social positions at a given time is indeed determined by exogenous factors. In other words, a candidate may have the aptitude for filling a certain type of job and consequently that for achieving a certain social status. But for him to actually fill such a job, this job must exist. Neither the aptitude nor the will of the candidate can create it.

A different situation surrounds the educational structure. In the model as described, we supposed that educational levels, exactly as social positions, are determined by exogenous factors. This is to some extent the case in the school systems of eastern Europe, where the number of openings available at certain levels of the educational curriculum may be fixed bureaucratically. In Western societies, however, an individual cannot create a job just because he wants it, but he can go to college if he wants to, provided he is qualified. Thus, although the social structure may be realistically thought of as being determined by exogenous factors, the educational structure may not be so considered.

The results of the previous chapter are not invalidated by our assumption that the educational structure is predetermined. As soon as we become interested in the problem of change, however, that assumption must be abandoned. If we want to analyze the change over time in educational distribution, as well as changes in the relation between education and mobility, we must make an educational distribution an effect of individual will, even though this is most certainly determined by social factors.[1]

In Chapters 2 through 6, which are devoted to this problem, we review the main findings from survey research as well as from school bookkeeping

and attempt to devise a model that includes these findings either in its axioms or in its consequences. Chapters 2 and 3 present a sketchy review of data and theories relating to the following points:

- Basic IEO-generating mechanisms (Chapter 2)
- Changes in IEO rates in Western societies (Chapter 3)
- Changes in level of educational attainment (Chapter 3)

This review leads to a model that is developed in Chapters 4 to 6. The first function of the model is to clarify the IEO problem by integrating into a general framework the various data produced by sociological surveys and by school bookkeeping. Its second function is to provide an essential part of the final, more general model dealing with social mobility and including IEO and level of educational attainment changes as basic factors.

MICROSOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES ON IEO GENERATION

It is impossible and, in any event, beyond the scope of this book to present a complete review of the extensive literature dealing with IEO. The following brief examination of the most important theories and data pertaining to this problem furnishes sufficient background.

1. Among the various theories that have been proposed to explain IEO, one is particularly important because it has been presented by many writers. According to this theory, the main factor responsible for IEO is the existence of different systems of values among the various social classes. We call this the "value theory."

In a well-known paper, for example, Hyman (1953) shows that the job expectations of youngsters vary according to their social background. Whereas upper- and middle-class youngsters pay a great deal of attention to whether a job meets their deep personal interests, lower-class youth are more concerned with monetary rewards, job security, and similar aspects of employment. Accordingly, reaching a higher level of education is perceived by the former as a major condition of achievement. By contrast, achievement is conceived by the latter as depending more on such factors as luck, finding the proper position, and knowing influential people.

According to Hyman's theory, people's evaluations of what social achievement means and of what might be considered efficient routes toward achieving it vary as a function of their social backgrounds. Consequently, people of different social classes attach different values to education.[2]

2. A second theory, developed partly in reaction to the value interpretation, may be called the "social position" theory. It is most clearly presented by Keller and Zavalloni (1962, 1964).

Weighing Hyman's data, Keller and Zavalloni discovered that although it is true that lower-class youngsters on the average value higher education less than do middle-class youngsters, the deviant cases are numerous and should not be overlooked. In other words, a significant proportion of lower-class youngsters put a high value on higher education and a significant proportion of middle-class youngsters gave it a low value. Even if a significant proportion does not mean a majority, its very existence makes the "value interpretation" presented by Hyman questionable. We must ask why an important minority would deviate from the basic value pattern associated with each social class.

Keller and Zavalloni's contention is that a much more comprehensive interpretation of Hyman's results is reached by bearing in mind that the social status an individual wants to achieve must be related to his origins. Suppose that two youngsters, one of lower-class background, the other from a middle-class family, both want to become lawyers. Although both want to reach a similar point on the social scale, this does not mean that both have the same level of aspiration. It indicates, rather, that lower-class youth has a higher aspirational level, since he wants to travel a longer social distance.

By the same token, the tendency of lower-class youngsters to expect lower status does not imply that their level of aspiration is lower. It simply means that the distance they have to travel to reach a given social status will be different from the distance covered by middle-class youngsters. In other words, Keller and Zavalloni suggest that it is not necessary to assume that the different social classes attach different values to achievement or to the role of higher education in achievement. A much simpler interpretation of Hyman's data is gained if we are prepared to accept that reaching a given educational level or a given status means being exposed to costs and benefits that are going to differ according to social background.[3]

As we shall see, these very simple ideas are worthy of systematic development. They are, in my opinion, crucial for any IEO theory.

3. The "value theory" was popular chiefly in the 1950s. In the following decade, when more data had been gathered on IEO, another theory became predominant. We may use the term "cultural theory" to designate the notion that IEO is generated mainly by the differences in cultural opportunities afforded by families according to their social background. When lower-class boys and girls go to school, they must learn values and develop skills for which their family life has not prepared them. On the other hand, there is a high degree of consonance between the aptitudes and attitudes that are positively valued and taught by middle-class families on their part, and by school on the other.

The foregoing relationship has been accepted for a long time. But it was believed that one of the main functions of schooling was precisely to

neutralize these inequalities and, moreover, that education could actually be effective in this respect. However, when data pertaining to the problem began to accumulate, it became apparent to sociologists and, further, to policymakers that schooling was not able to fulfill this function adequately. As recent American and other studies show, it is very difficult to conceive of a school system that could erase the inequalities for which differences in family cultural background are responsible.[4] Low school achievers are very likely to remain low achievers, and high achievers stay high achievers. Since school achievement is already related to social class in the first grades, the school is unable to overcome the effects of social stratification.

4. Other studies have pointed to other factors that may also account for IEO. One study shows that when other factors are controlled for, permissive interpersonal relationships between children and parents tend to be related to a higher level of aspiration.[5] Now permissive relationships are more frequent in the middle class than in the lower class. Other studies indicate that on the average the first-born sons or daughters, or youngsters from one-child families, achieve better at school than do later-born children.[6] It is revealing to consider in this light that fertility is generally greater in the lower than in the middle class.[7]

A number of other factors could be mentioned. But we need not go beyond this brief overview of the current literature, which is sufficient with respect to the following developments.

CONFRONTATION OF PREVIOUS THEORIES WITH DATA

It was noted earlier that in the 1950s, when we knew much less about schools than we do now, the prevailing theory—the value theory—related IEO to the stratification system. Now the effects of the stratification system tend to be left aside, while the incapacity of the school systems to cope with IEO is emphasized. To reach a satisfactory theory of IEO, however, it seems necessary to take into account the effects both of the stratification system and of the school system. Only a theory that would include the main variables that enter into the IEO-generating process can tell us what may be the future of IEO, or rather of EO.

In this section, the previously considered theories are confronted with a series of tables indicating that neither the value theory nor the cultural theory gives a complete picture of the effects of social stratification.

Table 2.1 is drawn from a well-known study by Kahl (1961). Using a sample of high-school seniors, it gives the proportions of those who intend to go to college, as a function of IQ and of father's occupational status. The

Table 2.1 Percentage of Boys Who Expected to Go to College by IQ and Father's Occupation. Boston area, 1950

Father's Occupation	IQ (Quintiles)[a] 1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)	All Quintiles
1. Major white collar	56%	72%	79%	82%	89%	80%
2. Middle white collar	28%	36%	47%	53%	76%	52%
3. Minor white collar	12%	20%	22%	29%	55%	26%
4. Skilled labor and service	4%	15%	19%	22%	40%	19%
5. Other labor and service	9%	6%	10%	14%	29%	12%
All occupations	11%	17%	24%	30%	52%	27%

[a] $N = 3348$.
Source: Kahl (1961).

structure of this table is quite interesting. It shows first that the higher the IQ, the more likely is the intention of going to college, irrespective of father's occupational status. Also, the number of college candidates grows with increase of father's occupational status, whatever the IQ. But perhaps the most interesting feature of the table is that as father's occupational status increases, the effect of IQ on the level of aspiration decreases. Thus the first row of the table indicates that 56% of the low-IQ upper-class youngsters want to go to college, as opposed to 89% of the high-IQ group. Among youngsters whose fathers are in skilled manual occupations, the figures are 4% for those with low IQ, and 40% for those with high IQ. However, the difference is smaller (29% vs. 9%) when fathers are in unskilled manual occupations.

This interaction effect of IQ and social status on level of aspiration is still more noticeable if we examine the differences in aspiration between the third and the fifth IQ quintiles. Among higher-status youngsters, the difference is very weak: 79% in the third quintile want to go to college as against 89% in the fifth. Among lower-status youngsters, the difference is much stronger: at occupational level 4 (skilled manual), 19% in the third quintile want to go to college as against 40% in the fifth; at occupational level 5 (unskilled manual), the figures are 10% in the third and 29% in the fifth.

In summary, the sensitivity of the aspiration level with respect to IQ is roughly greater, the lower the social status. This interaction effect appears still more clearly when ratios rather than differences are used (see note 8).

Before drawing any conclusions from Table 2.1, let us verify that its basic finding is not determined by the definition of the independent variables or of the dependent variable used by Kahl, nor by the national context in which the sample was drawn.

Table 2.2, like the first tabulation, is drawn from an American study. It differs from the first by the definition of one of the independent variables. Whereas Kahl used IQ, Table 2.2 uses a measure of school achievement; it also differs in the definition of the dependent variable: Kahl tested for intention of going to college, but Table 2.2 is concerned with behavior (percentage of high-school seniors at year t enrolled in college at $t + 1$).

It is readily apparent that in spite of these differences, Table 2.2 has the same structure as Table 2.1. Both school achievement and father's occupational status have an independent effect on level of educational attainment. Here, too, the sensitivity of the dependent variable with respect to school achievement increases when father's status is lower.

The next two tables are drawn respectively from a French and a Danish study. In Table 2.3 the independent variables are a measure of school achievement on the one hand and of parents' level of educational attainment on the other. The dependent variable gauges the prestige of the occupation that the sampled youngsters would choose. The youngsters were attending school in France at the equivalent of the American tenth grade level.

We observe again a structure similar to that of Tables 2.1 and 2.2. Among students whose parents have attained a high educational level, school achievement is not a very sensitive indicator of aspiration level. The lower the educational level of the parents (hence the lower, on the average, the social status), the greater the sensitivity of the aspiration level with respect

Table 2.2 Percent of High-School Graduates Going to College the Following Year, by Academic Aptitude and Socioeconomic Background. Boys, 1960

Father's Socio-economic Status	Academic Aptitude					
	1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)	All
1 (low)	10	14	30	44	69	24
2	13	23	35	51	73	40
3	15	30	46	59	81	53
4	25	35	54	69	86	65
5 (high)	40	57	67	83	91	81
All	14	27	46	63	85	49

Source: Jencks and Riesman (1968)

Table 2.3 Percentages Choosing Occupations of Various Prestige Levels as a Parents' Educational Level and of School Achievement

Prestige of Anticipated Occupation	Parents' Level of Education Index								
	1 (High)			2			3 (Low)		
	School Achievement			*School Achievement*			*School Achievement*		
	1 (High)	2	3 (Low)	1 (High)	2	3 (Low)	1 (High)	2	3 (Low)
1(high)	71.5	59.0	74.0	66.5	44.0	38.0	64.0	31.5	27.5
2	20.0	30.5	15.0	24.5	47.5	47.5	28.0	52.5	45.0
3 (low)	8.5	10.5	11.0	9.0	8.5	14.5	8.0	16.0	27.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	(35)	(144)	(27)	(45)	(391)	(55)	(25)	(212)	(40)
	17.0%	70.0%	13.0%	9.0%	79.5%	11.0%	9.0%	76.5%	14.5%

Source: Boudon and Bourricaud (1967).

to school achievement. Another interesting feature is that the distribution of students as a function of school achievement does not vary greatly with social background (see last row of table).

Table 2.4, the last of this series, is drawn from a Danish survey. One of the independent variables is again father's occupational (family social) status. The other is a measure of achievement in a verbal test. The dependent variable is the percentage in high-school general sections (*realafdelingen*).

Once more the same structure is observed. The figures in brackets have been computed based on small numbers and thus are not reliable. Therefore, let us compare columns 4 and 6: we can see immediately that the effect on the dependent variable of verbal achievement (which is certainly related to school achievement) is greater, the lower the family social status.

What do we learn from these tables?

The first permissible conclusion is that value theory (i.e., that which relates IEO to the postulate that value systems differ according to social class), even if it has some relevance to IEO analysis, does not explain the data contained in Tables 2.1 through 2.4. Indeed, the tables indicate that both educational aspirations and status aspirations vary greatly within the same social class, as a function of IQ, school achievement, and other variables. The value theory could account for the sensitivity, at each level of school achievement or IQ, of the level of aspiration to social background. But this explains neither the variation of the level of aspiration as a function

Table 2.4 Percentage Attending General Sections (*Realafdelingen*) in Denmark as a Function of Family's Social Status and of Achievement in a Verbal Test

Family's Social Status	Achievement in a Verbal Test							
	1 (Low)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (High)	All
1 (low)	(0)	2	9	28	59	(69)	—	25
2	(0)	5	10	36	72	93	(100)	39
3	(0)	2	17	46	68	93	(100)	49
4	(0)	(0)	(22)	61	82	95	(100)	70
5 (high)	—	(0)	(8)	74	96	97	—	81
All	0	3	13	41	75	92	(100)	44

Source: Ørum (1971).

of school achievement, IQ, and so on, nor the interaction effect of social status and school achievement on the dependent variable. Indeed, can we perhaps explain the variations in the level of aspiration for a given level of, say, school achievement, without introducing at all the notion that social classes differ with respect to their systems of values? Keller-Zavalloni's suggestion that level of aspiration should be measured not absolutely but relative to social-class position, may provide a more comprehensive, simpler interpretation.

The second conclusion is that the cultural inequalities generated by differences in family background account for only a part of IEO generation. Table 2.3 (the French data) is particularly well worth considering in this respect. Recall that at the stage in the youngsters' schooling chosen for this research, differences in school achievement as a function of social class can hardly be observed. However, the subjects' levels of aspiration are strongly affected by their social backgrounds. In other words, the effects of stratification are not limited to the generation of cultural inequalities. In later chapters, I try to attribute to these secondary effects of stratification degrees of responsibility for the differences in levels of educational attainment between social classes. I want to demonstrate that they are probably more important than what we might call its primary effects—the cultural inequalities. Analysis of Tables 2.1 to 2.4 leads us to conclude that it is not difficult to produce survey data

- that can be observed in a variety of contexts and thus can be considered to be fundamental
- that are adequately accounted for neither by the "value theory" nor by the "cultural theory."

A SIMPLE THEORETICAL SCHEME

I now propose a very simple theoretical scheme to account for the findings contained in the foregoing tables, as well as others to follow. This scheme is nothing more than an extension of Keller-Zavalloni's ideas.

1. We assume that stratification generates and actually describes a number of differences between people. The lower the social status, the poorer the cultural background—hence the lower the school achievement, and so on. These are what we have called the primary effects of stratification.
2. The primary effects of stratification may be represented in a Cartesian space. Indeed, let us assume that one of the dimensions of this space is achievement at the elementary school level and that a second is age upon reaching high school. The list could be continued. We can visualize the primary effects of stratification by noting that two subpopulations of, say, higher- and lower-class children sampled at the end of elementary school are distributed quite differently. Lower-class children tend to be located in one "corner" of the Cartesian space (low school achievement, older age at the end of elementary school, etc.). Conversely, upper-class children are more likely to be located at the opposite "corner" (high achievement, etc.).
3. Let us now assume that two children, one from a middle-class and one from a lower-class family, are located at the same point of the Cartesian space. In other words, although middle- and lower-class children are not as a whole distributed in the Cartesian space in the same way, we are assuming that our two children are located at the same point. Thus we assume that for one reason or another the primary effects of stratification have not played any role in the case of these two children.
4. Let us further suppose that at some stage these children have to choose between, say, a general and a vocational course or between staying in school and leaving school. We can assume that their decision will be affected by their social background. For the upper-class child to choose the vocational curriculum would mean exposure to a high probability of social demotion, whereas the lower-class child might have good reason to expect promotion even if he chooses the vocational course.
5. This effect will probably be reinforced if not only the youngsters but also the family take part in the decision process. The expected benefit which is perceived as attached to a given course will probably be differently evaluated by the families, exactly as the issue is likely to be differently evaluated by the youngsters. Generally, let us assume that youngsters and families must at some time choose between alternative *a* and alternative *b*—*a* being more likely to lead to a higher social status. Then we may say that the expected *benefit* of choosing *a* rather than *b* is an increasing function of

the family's social status. The higher the social status, the higher the anticipated benefit associated with *a*.

6. Let us now consider the *costs* associated with choosing *a* rather than *b*. These costs may be monetary, but they can also be social.[9] Thus not choosing a prestigious curriculum may represent a high social cost for a youngster from a middle-class family if most of his friends have chosen it; but choosing the same course may represent a high cost for a lower-class youngster if most of his friends have not. Also, a given decision may have different returns from the viewpoint of family solidarity. Following a prestigious curriculum may serve to reinforce family solidarity for a middle-class youngster and to weaken it for a lower-class youth.

7. In summary, there is considerable empirical evidence to suggest that given two possible educational alternatives *a* and *b* (where *a* is associated with higher social expectations), the anticipated cost of *a* generally will be greater, the lower the social status of the family. In short, we can reasonably assume that the cost of choosing *a* over *b* will be a decreasing function of family status.

8. Let us now acknowledge that the *utility* of choosing *a* rather than *b* is greater, the lower the cost and the greater the benefit. It then follows that the utility of choosing *a* rather than *b* will be an increasing function of family social status. If we assume that the probability that an individual will choose *a* rather than *b* is an increasing function of the utility of choosing *a* rather than *b*, the probability that an individual will choose *a* rather than *b* becomes an increasing function of his family's social status. The higher this status, the greater the probability that a youngster will choose *a* over *b*.

9. Therefore, even if two youngsters are located at the same point of the Cartesian space described earlier, the probabilities that they will choose *a* rather than *b* are likely to differ. Inasmuch as the youngsters are by assumption located at the same point of the Cartesian space, they do not differ with respect to the primary effects of stratification, but they do differ with respect to its secondary effects.

10. In the first stage of the two-stage process just described, the primary effects of stratification cause the youngsters to be differently distributed as a function of their family status in the Cartesian space, which includes such dimensions as school achievement and age at a given school grade. Then the secondary effects of stratification have the result that the probabilities of choosing *a* rather than *b*, which are associated with each point in this space, will be greater, the higher the social status.[10]

This theoretical scheme may be considered to be somewhat trivial. The formalization it introduces, morevoer, is rather crude. Finally, although an attempt is made to introduce precise concepts such as *benefit*, *cost*, and *utility*, it is unlikely that we will be able to associate quantitative measures

with these concepts. Nevertheless, it seems to me that our scheme may have two kinds of uses, namely:

1. Even if we are not able to associate empirical quantitative measures with the concepts it introduces, we may derive from it, as we shall see, a useful simulation model whose consequences can be confronted with a number of data.

2. From a theoretical standpoint, it shows that the "cultural theory" accounts for only a particular source of IEO. The model developed in the following chapters tells us which of the primary (cultural) and secondary effects of the stratification system should be considered to be the most important with respect to IEO. Finally, as an alternative to the "value theory," it has the advantage of explaining data that are unaccounted for by the value theory.

FURTHER EVIDENCE

It is obvious that the theoretical scheme just developed is compatible with the data presented in the section dealing with previous theories. Actually, the structure of these data may be directly derived from the propositions of the scheme, except for the interaction effect of status and school achievement on level of aspiration. This interaction effect could easily be generated by introducing a slight complication of the theoretical scheme.[11] I shall refrain from doing this, however, since such a complication would be of no use in the subsequent development.

We conclude this chapter with a consideration of two pieces of data that bring additional empirical support to the theoretical scheme. They are derived from a study conducted by Girard and Clerc (1964) on a sample of French boys. The sample was drawn from the population of boys who had completed elementary school in June 1962. The authors of the study were mainly concerned with analyzing the factors accounting for course choice (*lycée* vs. *collége d'enseignement général*; i.e., longer vs. shorter secondary education).

Table 2.5 gives the joint distribution of age and school achievement of the sample as a function of family background. For the sake of saving space, I have selected three types of family background. This table allows us to visualize the idea that the distribution of the youngsters in the Cartesian space *age* × *school achievement* differs as a function of social background. Workers' sons are more likely to be located in the less favorable "corner" of the space (low achievement, older age) than clerks' sons, and clerks' sons are more likely to be unfavorably placed than managers' and executives' sons.

Table 2.6 gives the proportion of those taking a general course as a function of age, school achievement, and social background; again for the

Table 2.5 Distribution of Age and School Achievement of a Sample of French Students as a Function of Family Background

Father's Occupation	School Achievement	Age on December 31, 1962: Less Than 11	11	12	13	14 or Older	Total
Worker	1 (high)	2.4	16.4	13.9	2.4	0.1	35.2
	2	0.5	11.7	16.7	5.7	0.6	35.2
	3 (low)	0.1	4.6	14.7	8.5	1.7	29.6
	Total	3.0	32.7	45.3	16.6	2.4	100.0
Clerk	1	6.1	24.2	12.7	2.1	0.1	45.2
	2	1.6	12.5	16.3	3.3	0.5	34.2
	3	0.3	3.7	10.2	5.1	1.3	20.6
	Total	8.0	40.4	39.2	10.5	1.9	100.0
Executive or manager	1	20.2	32.7	7.9	1.0	—	61.8
	2	5.0	13.3	8.1	1.6	0.3	28.3
	3	0.7	4.1	3.4	1.3	0.4	9.9
	Total	25.9	50.1	19.4	3.9	0.7	100.0

Source: Girard and Clerc (1964).

sake of brevity, only the data pertaining to the three above-mentioned categories are presented. This material has the same structure as Tables 2.1 through 2.4, although being a four-dimensional table, it is more complicated. It shows clearly that the probability of taking a general course for a youngster located in a given portion of the Cartesian space *achievement* × *age* differs according to social background. Generally, the table suggests the existence of indifference curves in the Cartesian space: when age increases, achievement must be better for the probability of taking a general course to be constant. But of course the probabilities attached to these indifference curves differ with social bakcground.

Figure 2.1 summarizes graphically the two types of effects of the stratification system. Figure 2.1*a* presents the fictitious distribution of a sample of youngsters in the Cartesian space *achievement* × *age* as a function of social background. Figure 2.1*b* shows fictitious systems of indifference curves attached to three types of family status.

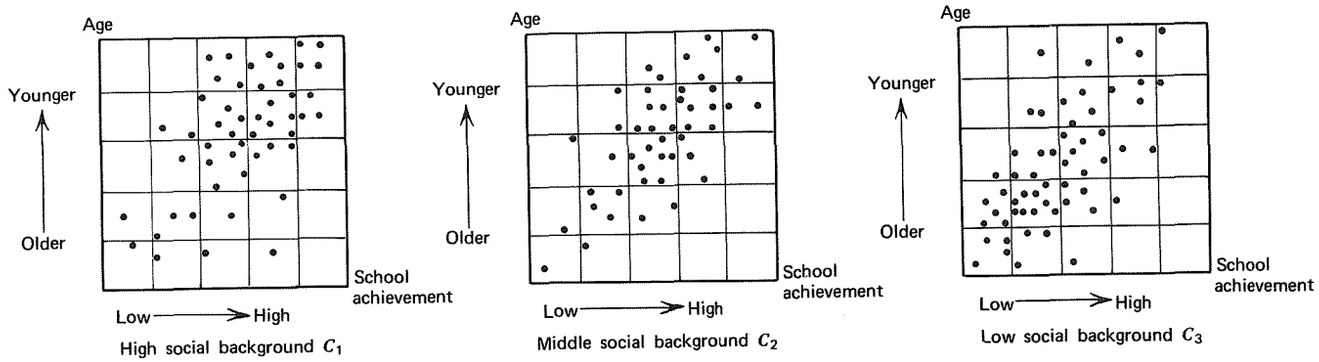
CONCLUSION

The very general scheme developed in this chapter represents an attempt to describe the basic mechanisms of the IEO-generating process. The scheme

Table 2.6 Percentage Taking a General Course as a Function of Father's Occupation, School Achievement and Age, Same Sample as in Table 2.5

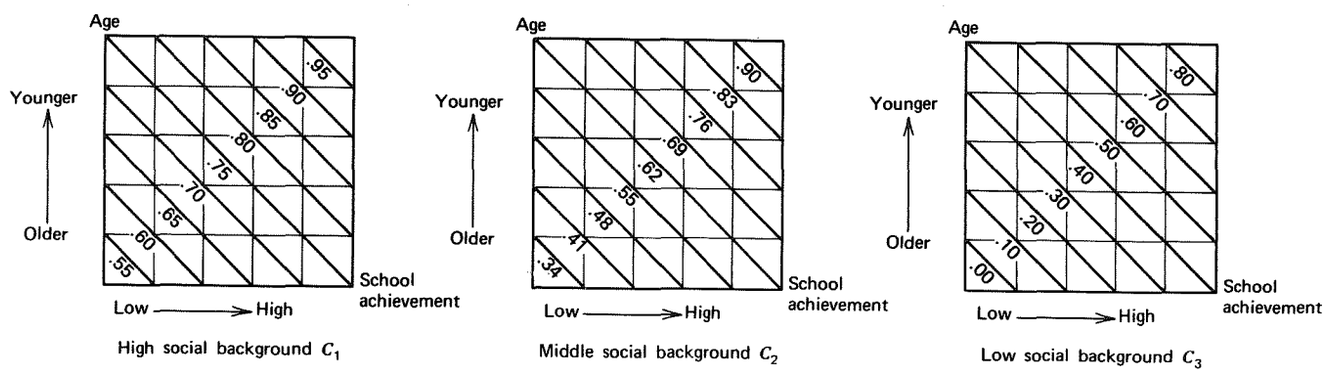
Father's Occupation	School Achievement: 1 (High) Age <11	11	12	13	≥14	2 Age <11	11	12	13	≥14	3 (Low) Age <11	11	12	13	≥14
Worker	79	90	79	45	—	69	57	45	11	14	—	81	9	3	8
Clerk	95	96	91	63	—	90	78	59	33	27	—	45	15	10	8
Executive or manager	98	99	98	(69)	—	90	99	90	(86)	—	—	85	52	(59)	—

Source: Girard and Clerc (1964).



(a)

Figure 2.1*a* Distribution of a fictitious sample of students at the end of grade school as a function of family status, age, and school achievement.



(b)

Figure 2.1*b* Fictitious indifference curves describing the probability of choosing alternative *a* rather than *b* (e.g., general vs. vocational course) as a function of family status, age, and school achievement.

was derived from the confrontation of several leading theories with findings drawn from survey research. The scheme is crude in that it deliberately neglects a number of factors which, according to survey research findings, have an influence on IEO; however, it may be considered to be a step toward a general IEO theory. Most theories dealing with this problem tend to take into exclusive account particular pieces of data. This is the case with some of the theories very sketchily alluded to earlier—such as the "cultural" theory or the "value" theory.[12] My contention is that we may gain more insight into, or at least a new perspective on, the IEO problem (and, furthermore, additional light on the problem of the influence of IEO on social mobility), if we try to devise a theory accounting for a wider range of data.

Even if the theory is crude, it might help in clarifying some problems of great sociological and political relevance. To pursue this point, let us assume that we did have a very clear knowledge of the factors responsible for the existence of cultural inequalities. This still would not tell us whether reducing cultural inequalities would have a pronounced or a weak effect on IEO. And if we knew the answer to the latter question, we would remain ignorant of the effect that reducing IEO is likely to have on ISO (inequality of social opportunity).

We emphasized in this chapter that IEO is generated by a two-component process. One component is related mainly to the cultural effects of the stratification system. The other introduces the assumption that even with other factors being equal, people will make different choices according to their position in the stratification system. In other words, it is assumed (1) that people behave rationally in the economic sense of this concept (i.e., they attempt to maximize the utility of their decisions), but that (2) they also behave within decisional fields whose parameters are a function of their position in the stratification system.[13]

The next chapter presents a brief overview of the information provided by school bookkeeping regarding change over time in IEO, as well as in level of educational attainment. Following this, I return to the scheme outlined in this chapter and attempt to build a general model that also accounts for these over-time data.

NOTES

1. Social structure is also determined to some extent by individual will. Thus the decision to create a new plant will obviously affect the job structure. But job seekers are generally unable to influence the job structure. In most cases they fill vacancies whose structure is independent of their will. Since the opposition between the *endogenous* determination of the educational structure and the *exogenous* determination of the social structure in Western societies plays a considerable role throughout this volume, a brief comment is supplied at this point. One of the main consequences of the foregoing postulate is that the educational structure has no reason whatsoever to match the social structure. This does not exclude the possibility of change in the social structure exerting an influence on the educational structure, nor of change in the educational structure having an effect on the social structure. Lewis (1955) and others have argued, for instance, that over-supply of educated people relative to jobs presses the "overeducated" to innovate—that is, to create new types of jobs and businesses. This is true, as it is certainly true that change in the job structure contributes to changing the overall demand for education. But as both the theory and the empirical data presented in this monograph show, these reciprocal effects of the social structure on the educational structure and vice versa are unable to ensure a matching of the two structures in a system where the demand for education is essentially regulated by market-type mechanisms.

2. This "value theory" can be found in many works. See, for instance, Chinoy (1952), Kahl (1961), as well as the numerous references given in Hyman (1953). See also Parsons (1949, 1953, 1970) and Porter (1968).

3. These concepts of "costs" and "benefits" are mine rather than Keller's and Zavalloni's. On the concept of social position, see also Bourdieu (1966).

4. See, for instance, Coleman (1966), Jencks (1972), Mosteller and Moynihan (1972); polemical works belonging to critical sociology include Bourdieu and Passeron (1964, 1970), Baudelot and Establet (1971), as well as the remarkable review of the latter book by Treanton (1972). Mitchell (1956), Sampson (1956), and Bernstein (1961), among others, provide evidence on the impact of social background on verbal and nonverbal achievement at a very young age.

5. Elder (1965).

6. See, for instance, Girard (1962).

7. On this point, see Wrong (1966).

8. The sources are Boudon and Bourricaud (1968) for Table 2.3 and Ørum (1971) for Table 2.4. The reader will have noted that the interpretation of Table 2.1 raises a methodological problem. The supposition that aspiration level tends to be more sensitive to IQ, achievement, and so on, the lower the social status, is only *roughly* valid when using differences as measures and much more clearly true when using ratios. For instance, in Table 2.1, when IQ is low, the difference in level of aspiration between highest and lowest social background groups is $56 - 9 = 47$ and still higher when IQ is high ($89 - 29 = 60$). However, the "odds ratios" are $56/9 = 6.2$ and $80/29 = 2.7$ when IQ is, respectively, low and high. In other words, the inequalitarian effect of social background on aspiration is lower, the higher the IQ.

Clearly, measuring inequality by ratios is more "natural"—closer to the meaning of the notion of "equality"—than is measuring it by differences. This suggests measuring the effect of IQ by ratios rather than differences: a high IQ makes upper-class people $89/56 = 1.6$ and lower-class people $29/9 = 3.2$ times higher in their aspiration level. Thus a higher IQ is of more benefit to lower- than to higher-class youngsters. However, using ratios raises obvious mathematical difficulties. Suffice it to say, without going further in this methodological discussion,

that *interaction* effect is still visible, although in a more cloudy way, if we use differences rather than ratios.

9. An important literature has been devoted to the problem of the psychological and sociopsychological consequences of social mobility. See, for instance, Greenblum and Pearlin (1953), Blau (1956), Janowitz (1956), Hollingshead (1958), Lipset and Bendix (1959), Seeman and Silberstein (1959), Wilensky (1961), Kleiner and Parker (1963), Breed (1963), Smelser and Lipset (1966), Stacey (1967), Lopreato (1971), and, for a very useful survey of the literature pertaining to this problem, Kessin (1972). Since the choice of a curriculum is in most cases related to anticipated mobility, the empirical evidence that mobility represents a cost for the individual is relevant to our problem. Direct evidence of the costs to a lower-class family in choosing a prestigious curriculum or to a higher-class family in choosing a vocational curriculum may be found in Hollingshead (1949). See also Kahl (1961).

10. It is important to note that the sensitivity of decision-making processes to social background can be empirically observed at any stage of the school curriculum. Studies made in France by Bourdieu and Passeron (1964, 1970), Girard (1967), and Bisseret (1968a, 1968b), show that choice of a college field is very sensitive to social background. An American Study by Rosenberg (1957) indicates that the effect of social background persists beyond college: college students are more likely to have higher social expectations if their family background is higher, even when they have chosen the same field and have the same level of school achievement as students from lower backgrounds. For other references in the abundant literature dealing with college students' aspirations, a classical source is Halsey, Floud, and Anderson (1961).

11. We can assume that for higher-class families the benefit of choosing *a* (the more prestigious curriculum) rather than *b* is perceived as very high if choosing *b* is associated with a high probability of demotion. Thus even if costs are high—as they will be if, for instance, the school achievement of the child is low—the utility of the youngster's choosing *a* is likely to be higher than the utility of his choosing *b*. By contrast, if a youngster from a lower-class family is a low achiever, the utility of his choosing *b* is likely to be greater than the utility of his choosing *a*.

12. It is made clear below that I do not contend that values play no role in the IEO–ISO generating process, but only that they should be considered as *intermediary* rather than *independent* variables. It is shown (mainly in Chapters 6 and 9) that over-time change in the social composition of the student population and other factors generate changing values and attitudes toward school and schooling. In particular the negativistic attitudes toward school which have developed in Western societies in the sixties will be explained by the effects on *individual* expectations of the *collective* increase of the demand for education. It is true that sociological theories using values as independent variables are sometimes tautologous and unable to account for social change. On the other hand, however, ignoring values as intermediary variables leads to partial and inadequate sociological theories. As far as a general statement can be issued on this difficult and controversial point, I feel that dealing with values as intermediary variables seems to provide a more acceptable paradigm than treating them either as basically independent (as in some forms of functionalism) or as basically dependent (as in some forms of Marxism). This "intermediary" paradigm is illustrated in contemporary sociology by Lipset's work, for instance, wherein values are almost systematically treated both as explanatory and as generated by social and historical processes.

13. That is, differences in behavior may be explained by differences in utilities: if X chooses *a*, while Y chooses *b*, this means, according to our scheme, that the utility of *a* is greater for X and smaller for Y. The "value theory" says that the values people are committed to may cause them to behave against their interest (e.g., by not attending college, although college enhances the probability of promotion). The present scheme, however, says that people behave according to the utilities attached to alternatives as a function of their position in the stratification system.