"Accessibility, Usability & Embeddedness": Social Capital and the Status Attainment Process for Men in the Netherlands

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Abstract

This study addresses the status attainment process and the associated mobility between generations for men in Dutch society in 2000. It does so by integrating the social resources theory (Lai et al., 1998) with the classic status attainment model of Blau and Duncan (1967). We try to answer the research question; *How does social capital contribute to the transfer of status from father to son in The Netherlands?* To answer this research question, we use the Dutch Social Networks Survey. The most important result, based on a labor force sample of 471 respondents aged between 18 and 65, was that prestige as social capital is inherited and has a significant effect on one's status. However, when including social capital in the status attainment model, education is the most important predictor of one's status. Furthermore, the higher the status of the person who helps the ego to get a job, the higher the status of the attained job. Contradictory to the theory, we found no evidence of tie strength in the status attainment process.

Keywords: Status Attainment; Social Capital; Prestige; Intergenerational; Transfer

Introduction

To what extent is Dutch society a meritocracy? A meritocracy is desirable, since more (intergenerational) mobility leads to greater happiness among citizens (Collins et al., 2008). Who does not want to organize their lives according to their own capabilities? Heemskerk and Fennema (2009) observed that high status jobs circulate among the same people in The Netherlands. How does one reach these networks; through education or with a little help from his father? This leads to the following question: Do ascribed attributes, such as family background, stand in the way of a society where everybody has the same chance to reach their true potential?

This study addresses the status attainment process and the associated mobility between generations for men in Dutch society in 2000. We use the status attainment model of Blau and Duncan (1967), which states that a higher status of the father leads to a higher status of his son (with a direct effect on status, as well as an indirect effect through education). This model will be complemented with the social resources theory (Lai et al., 1998), which holds that occupational prestige of the father not only has an indirect effect on status of the son through education, but also through social capital of the son, and education also has an indirect effect on status through social capital (Lai et al., 1998). The social resources theory implies that the more social capital you have in your network (e.g., the more people you have in your network that potentially can help you to reach a higher status job) the more likely you are to reach a high status position. In short, more social support from people in your network leads to a better job search outcome.

We are interested in learning whether this integrated model can explain the status attainment process better than the classic model of Blau and Duncan (1967) and the

social capital theory separately. Hence, we will examine if social capital plays a vital role in the status transfer from father to son, or if education is still more important when taking social capital into account. This leads to the main question of this study:

> *How does social capital contribute to the status attainment process in The Netherlands?*

We will try to unravel the different mechanisms explaining the effects of social capital in the status attainment process of the son. Lai et al. (1998) incorporated different theoretical assumptions of social capital into the status attainment process. They studied the effect of how well you know the alters (Granovetter, 1974; Lin et al., 1982), the effect of the prestige of all the alters in the network, and the effect of prestige of the alter who helped a person to find a job (Flap & De Graaf, 1988), but not for The Netherlands. In The Netherlands, Flap & De Graaf (1988) only incorporated social capital into the status attainment model in terms of the prestige of the alter one uses to find a job. We examine the different dimensions of social capital in the status attainment process for The Netherlands, which has not been done before. We do so by using structural equation modeling to test and compare our models.
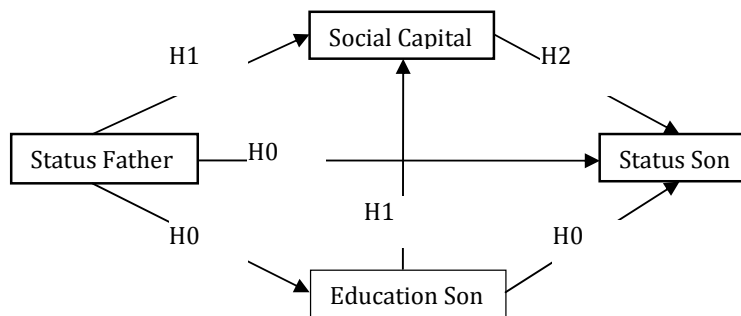
The research question will be explored with the use of the Social Survey of the Networks of the Dutch (SSND) from 1999/2000 (Flap, Snijders, Völker, van der Gaag, 2000). The SSND is the most recent and extensive data set available concerning social capital in The Netherlands.

First, we will give a brief overview of the classic model by Blau and Duncan (1967). Then, we will, on the basis of Lin (2001), divide social capital into three elements; *accessibility*, *usability* and *embeddedness*, before proceeding to discuss these different dimensions of social capital and the hypotheses we can derive from them. Next, we will describe the data and the different constructs of variables we use in this study and see whether validity and generalizability is of concern. This is followed by an elaboration on the method of analysis and the results of the different models. To conclude this research, we will discuss the implications of its results.

Theoretical Framework

The integration of the model of Blau and Duncan (1967) and the social resources theory of Lin et al. (1981) leads to the model shown in figure 1. In the following sections, we discuss the hypotheses shown there, and explain the underlying mechanisms.

Figure 1. *Theoretical framework of present study*

Source: Blau & Duncan (1967), Flap & De Graaf (1988), Lin et al. (1981) & Lai et al. (1998)

Status Attainment Model

First, we address the paths that were part of the model of Blau and Duncan (1967) and the logical inference for the integrated model presented in this article. The status of the father has a direct positive effect and an indirect positive effect (i.e., through education) on the status of his son (Blau and Duncan, 1967).

The direct effect of the status transfer from father to son can either be through the inheritance of a title or a family business, or the father can directly provide a job for his son. For example, if a boy's father is a farmer, he is more likely to become a farmer as well. He can work on the farm of his father or inherit the family business. This leads to our first hypothesis: *H0.1; Status of the father has a positive direct effect on status of his son.*

Status of the father also has an indirect effect on status of his son through education (Blau & Duncan, 1967). A father can pass his status on to his son using the etiquette and language of the cultural elite. These skills will be passed on to the son in the family environment. The son can use the learned etiquette to his advantage in his education (Dronkers & De Graaf, 1995). Moreover, when a father has a higher social economic position in society, he has more financial means to support the education of his son. If the son has a higher education, he is more likely to attain a better job and therefore a higher position in society (Dronkers & De Graaf, 1995). For example, one who does not attend medical school cannot become a surgeon, even when his father is a surgeon. From this, we derive the second hypothesis: *H0.2; Status of the father has an indirect positive effect on status of the son through education.*

Social Capital

One's father's education is not the only factor that can be helpful in obtaining a higher position in society. Other important factors include one's friends, acquaintances, and family members. This potential social support a person can mobilize is considered to be social capital. Social capital exists next to the traditional forms of capital, such as financial capital (Marx, 1933/ 1849), human capital (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964) and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1980). Social capital, along with the other aforementioned forms of capital, all assume that capital is a surplus value of the individual and an investment with expected returns (Lin, 1999). Yet whereas cultural, financial and human capital only exists within the individual, social capital can only exist between two or more people. Social capital can be defined as the investment in social relationships with alleged reciprocity (Lin, 2001). This means that, when one invests in a relationship (e.g. by providing friendship or giving emotional support) one expects to receive returns from this investment in the future (e.g. this friend can be of help in providing a job).

According to Lin et al. (2001), social capital consists of three elements; *accessibility*, *usability* and *embeddedness*. 'Accessibility' is the extent to which the ego is able to access certain capital within his network (Van der Gaag, 2005). For example, are there contacts in a person's network that potentially can help in obtaining a higher status job? 'Usability' is the extent to which others actually provide the necessary means to reach that higher position (Flap & De Graaf, 1988). In other words, did a person actually receive help from one of his contacts to get a higher status job? 'Embeddedness' deals with the structural position a person has in his network. We will concentrate on the strength of ties between a person and his alters. In other words, are strong ties (i.e. people you know well such as family members and friends) more important or are weak ties (e.g. acquaintances) more important

in attaining a higher status position (Granovetter, 1974)? In the next paragraph, we will discuss the effect of status of the father on the social capital of the son. This will be followed by a further elaboration on the role of the aforementioned elements of social capital in the status attainment process.

Influence of father's status on the social capital of his son. A direct way one's origin has an effect on social capital is the environment where one grows up. Lai et al. (1998) found a positive effect of ascribed social resources (parental characteristics) on the amount of social capital of the son. The underlying mechanism concerning this is if you have a father with a high status, you are more likely to grow up in a good neighborhood where the friends you make are also more likely to achieve high status later in life (Vermeij, 2008). This leads to the following hypothesis: *H1.1; Status of the father has a positive direct effect on the social capital of the son.*

A father also has an indirect effect on his son's social capital through education. As described in section 2.1., the status of the father has a positive effect on his son's education (Blau & Duncan, 1967, Flap & De Graaf, 1981, 1988. Lin et al. 1981). Huang et al. (2009) showed in a meta-analysis that education has a positive effect on social capital. The explanation for this effect is that school is the place where you start to develop your social network. If a father sends his son to a better school, the friends he makes there are also better educated and are more likely to reach better positions later on in life. A social network emerging from such a situation will contain more social capital, because the contacts within it are more likely to have a higher status later in life. So, we expect there to be an indirect effect of the status of the father on social capital through education. This leads to hypothesis *H1.2: Status of a father has a positive effect on the social capital of his son through education.*

Accessed Social Capital. 'Accessed social capital' refers to the total amount of social capital one has in his network, and that could be used to achieve a higher status. This can either be the total amount of people in the network (network size) or the total amount of prestige present in the network (Van der Gaag, 2005). The total amount of social capital in the network consists of the total number of alters in the network combined with the collective resources the alters have to offer (and, in the case of the status attainment process, the total amount of prestige) (Van der Gaag, 2005). Prestige is important, because a higher status contact is more likely to lead to higher status positions (Lin et al., 1981; Flap & De Graaf 1988). Note that social capital can thus be viewed as a '*quantification of an accumulated potential of social resources*' (Degenne et al., 2004). This means that one accounts for the total availability of resources between the ego and his alters. The advantage of accessed social capital is that it is relatively context free. For example, a job recruiter is more likely to hire a person with more social capital, thanks to one's assured trustworthiness gained from having high prestige contacts (Lin, 2001). Also, people who have more high-prestige contacts have a higher chance to have the right contact in their network that can help them to reach a higher status position. Following from this theory, our next hypothesis can be formulated: *H2.1; when the total amount of prestige in one's network is higher, one is more likely to have a higher status.*

Embedded Social Capital. Embedded social capital refers to the structural position a person has in a network. Like Lin et al. (1981), we will focus on 'tie strength' of the contacts. Lin et al. use the theory of Granovetter (1974) to describe the diffusion of information through weak tie networks. A weak tie, as opposed to a strong tie (e.g.

family or friends), is a contact which you do not know very well (e.g. an acquaintance), but that you do know well enough for a conversation in which you can exchange information. Weak ties can either provide an informational advantage or help directly in the process of job attainment by putting in a good word for you. Strong tie networks as opposed to weak tie networks are often more homogenous. This means that people in strong tie networks share the same information. Lin et al. (1981) argue that weak ties are more important to attain a higher status, because they are not part of your strong tie network and provide you with extensive reach and a higher likelihood to actually find people who can help you attain a higher status. The underlying assumption here is that everyone actually wants to achieve a higher status in society.

Lin et al. (1981) and Lin and Dumin (1986), further argue that the informational advantage of weak ties is more likely to be found among people who grew up in a low status environment. Since strong tie networks are often more homogeneous, it is likely that people with high status have strong ties that can provide equal status jobs as we well as weak ties can. For example, when one is already an executive at a large firm, his strong ties can provide other executives jobs at other firms, as opposed to an office clerk who does not have high status friends (which is why he needs his weak ties to attain a higher status job). Hence, we expect that the effect of tie strength will be non-significant for people with high prestige. From this, we can derive two hypotheses: *H2.2; Weak ties are more important in obtaining a high status job for one who is raised in a low status environment. H2.3; For one who grew up in a high status environment, tie strength does not matter or is equally important in obtaining a high status job.*

Used Social Capital. 'Used social capital,' when compared to accessed social capital,

prevents the bias of social capital which has not been put to use by the ego (Van der Gaag, 2005). If the mechanism underlying the effect of accessed social capital on the status of the son goes through the direct mobilization of an alter, one can expect that the effect of social capital on status of the son will be stronger for people who mentioned an alter that helped them to get their job, than for persons who did not (Flap & De Graaf, 1988; Lin et al., 1981). This leads to hypothesis *H2.4*: *The effect of social capital on an individual's status is stronger for people who actively used their network than for those who did not.*

We will examine this mechanism more closely by focusing on the specific person that helped ego in attaining his status. Lin et al. (1981), Flap and De Graaf (1988), Lin and Bian (1991) and Bian (1997), found that when the person mentioned in the job attainment process (i.e., the person that directly helped one to get a job) has a higher status, the respondent is also more likely to receive a higher status job. This theory leads to the final hypothesis of this study: *H2.5; When the status of the person who helped to get a job is higher, one is more like to obtain a higher status job.*

Data

To construct and test this integrated model and the hypotheses, we will use the "Dutch Social Survey Networks " (SSND) (Flap, Snijders, Völker & Van der Gaag, 2000). This dataset includes questions that measure the general distribution of social capital of the respondents in The Netherlands between 1999 and 2000. The dataset is specifically designed to measure the different forms of social capital one possesses, and consists of different measurement items of social capital. This is desirable, because we can perform analyses using different operationalizations of social capital.

Table 1. *Comparison Between SSND labor force and national labor force statistics of The Netherlands for men in 2000 (in %)*

		National labor force (45% of total)	SSND-labor force sample (471)
Education	Primary education	4.4	1.9
	Lower general secondary education	12.4	8.9
	Higher general secondary education/ pre- university education	32.2	6.4
	Lower vocational education	-	14.9
	Intermediate vocational education	18.7	24.6
	Higher vocational education	8.2	25.7
	University	5.5	17.6
Status*	Single	44.4	23.5
	Married	44.8	70.9
	Divorced	5.5	4.7
	Widowed	5.4	0.8

* = Marital status statistics are from total Dutch population statistics.

Source: *Social Survey of the Networks of the Dutch (Flap, Snijders, Völker, van der Gaag, 2000). National figures from the central bureau for statistics and are for the year of 1999/2000 (CBS).*

The data for the SSND were gathered between 1999 and 2000 and represent the first wave of data (second wave is to follow). Two samples of the SSND were created: a labor force sample and a population sample. For this study, the labor force sample was used, since status is linked to having a job. The sample consisted of 1007 randomly selected respondents between the ages of 18 and 65 that represent the Dutch labor force. These individuals were randomly selected from forty municipalities in The Netherlands, where the neighborhoods and the addresses were randomly selected on the basis of zip codes. Therefore, 4016 addresses were selected, of which 1498 could not be used (i.e. because of no telephone or an incorrect address). The non-response rate in the SSND therefore was 37.3%. The number of individuals who were reached was 2518. The response rate for people who were reached was 1007 (40%).

Variables

Dependent variable

Status of the ego. Occupations in the SSND are coded according to the international standard classification for occupations, the 1988 ISCO (ILO, 1990). These occupational codes are linked to both the International Socioeconomic Index (ISEI; Ganzeboom et

al., 1992) and Ultee and Sixma's (1984) occupational prestige measures. Each measure has a different interpretation when it comes to status, while prestige measures refer more to *'social rewards people can expect in human interactions.'* Socioeconomic indices are more linked to human resources and economic rewards (Ganzeboom & Treiman, 2003; Van der Gaag et al., 2008). Both measures focus on different aspects of status. The Ultee and Sixma measure focuses on occupational prestige rather than

socioeconomic status (Van der Gaag et al., 2008). This is more relevant for this study, which addresses the link between social resources and prestige instead of socioeconomic status. Therefore, we will use the Ultee and Sixma measure as our dependent variable (i.e., occupational status of the ego). However, both measures are strongly correlated with one another ($r = .81$; $p \leq .000$). The descriptors of this dependent variable, as for all the other variables, are shown in table 2.

Table 2. *Descriptors of variables used in the analyses*

		Min.	Max.	Mean	S.D.
	Status Son	15	86	52.38	16.4
	Status father	15	86	46.1	17.9
	Education	1	5	3.3	1.1
Position Generator	Total Accessed Prestige	51	1522	840.9	312.1
	Strong Ties Prestige	0	1298	477.3	230.2
	Weak Ties Prestige	0	1099	293.8	243.4
Name Generator	Total Accessed Prestige	24	1872	523	252.8
	Status Person Mentioned	0	86	47.9	27.4
		Low Status	High Status		
	Youth Environment	78.40%	21.60%		

Independent variables

Status of the father. We measure the status of the father also through the prestige measure as mentioned in the dependent variable description. The prestige score of the father in the SSND corresponds with the job code (in case of unemployment the job code of the father equals the previous job)

Education of son. Education of the respondent in our analysis is measured by the Dutch Standard Classification of Education (Standaard Onderwijs Indeling; SOI) (CBS, 2006). The SOI is based on the UNESCO

International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) (1997), but represents a good fit for the Dutch educational system. For example, the distinction in higher education between Dutch Advanced Vocational Education (Hoger Beroeps Onderwijs) and University Education is not clear within the ISCED, but is clear for the SOI (CBS, 2006). Therefore, the SOI is appropriate for gauging educational attainment in The Netherlands. The original SOI is a seven-point scale, ranging from education for toddlers to a doctoral degree. With the data available in the SSND, we are able to recode a five-point scale based on the SOI, since education for

toddlers and a doctoral degree is not included in the SSND questionnaire.

Social Capital: Position Generator. The SSND uses several approaches to measure social capital, among them position and name generator. The position generator, as a measure for social capital which is included in the SSND, was used first by Lin and Dumin (1986) in their Albany study (Van der Gaag, 2005). The position generator was constructed as a measure in which the respondent is asked if he knows someone with a specific occupation. Since the position generator measures access to positions, without mentioning alter names, it is content free and role neutral (Lin, 1998), which makes it highly suitable for operationalizing social capital. In the SSND data set, this is established by asking the respondent if he knows alters in 30 different occupations in his network. The 30 occupations represented are linked to the related prestige scores. For example; Do you have a barber in your network? Or; Do you have a scientist in your network? This measurement is useful for our analysis, because it is theoretically consistent with the general concepts of social capital, such as range of prestige in ego's network, highest level of prestige in ego's network, and the number of different positions in ego's network (size) (Lin & Dumin, 1986; Lin, Fu, and Hsung, 2001).

The first measure of the position generator we use is the '*total accessed prestige*' a respondent has. According to Van der Gaag (2005) this is the most general operationalization of social capital. Also, within the position generator measure, this is the construct which is most normally distributed (Van der Gaag, 2005). All the positions of the position generator in the SSND data set are linked to a specific prestige score. The total accessed prestige measure is constructed by adding up the specific prestige scores of the alters that the ego knows. Thus, the newly constructed variable becomes an interaction variable. The product of knowing a person with a specific occupation, multiplied by the prestige linked to that occupation.

In order to test the weak ties theory (Granovetter, 1974), we constructed two dummy variables within the position generator: a total prestige in weak ties variable and a total prestige in strong ties variable. For the weak ties variable, an acquaintance scores 1 (a weak tie), friends and family score a 0, and 'do not know that person' is a missing parameter. For the strong ties variable, friends and family score a 1 (a strong tie), an acquaintance scores a 0, and 'do not know that person' is a missing parameter. It is interesting to see that people know an average of 6.7 strong ties and an average of 5.6 weak ties. In both variables, the prestige of the strong or weak tie are added up in order to create the newly constructed variable.

Social Capital: Name Generator. As a different measure for social capital, we will use the name generator (McCallister & Fischer 1978), which is also included in the SSND data set. Both as a robustness check for our analyses and to perform an analysis with a slightly different operationalization of social capital. Name generating involves asking respondents for contact names in their network. This allows us to derive detailed information about the network characteristics from the respondents. However, there are a number of problems related to the name generator measure. The distribution of this measure is affected by the role and number of names. Because of this, the name generator measure tends to show stronger ties or ties in close geographic limits only (Lin, 1999; Campbell & Lee, 1991). Therefore, the position generator is a better measurement, and we use this measure primarily as a robustness check. However, the name generator does allow us to take a look at the person who helped the ego to get a job.

Social Capital: Person Mentioned. The third measurement of social capital is a variable in the name generator which is linked to directly activated social capital, namely; 'Which person helped you find your current or last job?'. From the males in the SSND data set ($n = 582$) $n = 142$ respondents had an alter who helped them get a job. So, 24.6% of the male respondents in the SSND directly used their social capital to get a job.

In order to test whether it matters if one directly uses his social capital in getting their job, we constructed a dummy variable which whether or not one has used an alter in getting a job. In order to test whether the status of the person who directly helped the respondent getting their job matters, we constructed a variable which is the prestige score of the person who helped the respondent to get their job. People who did not have an alter who helped them to get a job are filtered as missing in these particular analyses.

Youth Environment. In order to determine if strong or weak ties matter in getting a job when looking at the status of the environment where one grew up, we constructed a new variable '*youth environment'*. This newly constructed variable is a dummy variable stating that one grew up in a low status environment if the prestige score of the father (when the respondent was 16) is below 61 and that one grew up in a high status environment if the prestige score of the father (when the respondent was 16) is above 60. We thus created a dummy variable which indicates whether one comes from a high status environment or a low status environment.

Method of Analysis

We use Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) for the analyses of this study. SEM is a statistical technique used for estimating and testing causal relationships, combining both empirical data and theoretical causal assumptions among variables of interest (Pearl, 1998). The use of SEM is desirable to test a path model using a number of variables which are dependent on one another (Spirtes et al., 1998). SEM allows the testing of models as a whole, as well as the comparison of models with each other. In this way, it is possible to find the most parsimonious model to explain the status attainment process for men in The Netherlands. SEM requires a sample size of at least 100 to 150 (Ding et al., 1995), a requirement which is met in our analyses.

Another assumption is the assumption of multivariate normality, which states that all the variables of our models should be normally distributed in relation to one another (Boomsma, 2000). This assumption is not violated for our analyses. Table 3 shows the univariate skewness and kurtosis of each variable in our most standard model, as well as the multivariate kurtosis. When looking at table 3., one can see that both the univariate skewness and kurtosis are in between 2.0 and -2.0 for all the variables in our most standard model and therefore, do not violate the normality assumption of our model (Gao et al., 2008; Muthén & Kaplan, 1985). The multivariate kurtosis is in between 1.0 and 5.0 and does not heavily violate the normality assumption of our most standard model (Gao et al., 2008; Muthén & Kaplan, 1985).

Table 3. *Assumption of univariate and multivariate normally distributed variables*

Variables	Min.	Max.	Skewness	C.R.	Kurtosis	C.R.
Prestige Father	15	86	.101	.991	-.823	-4.055
Prestige Son	15	86	-.334	-3.289	-.478	-2.355
Total Accessed Prestige	51	1522	-.079	-.779	-.582	-2.866
Education Son	1	5	.041	.404	-.93	-4.577
Age	18	65	-.16	-1.577	-.81	-3.99
Multivariate					-3.427	-4.941

Results

In this section, concerning the results of this study, we will address the results of accessed social capital, embedded social capital and used social capital.
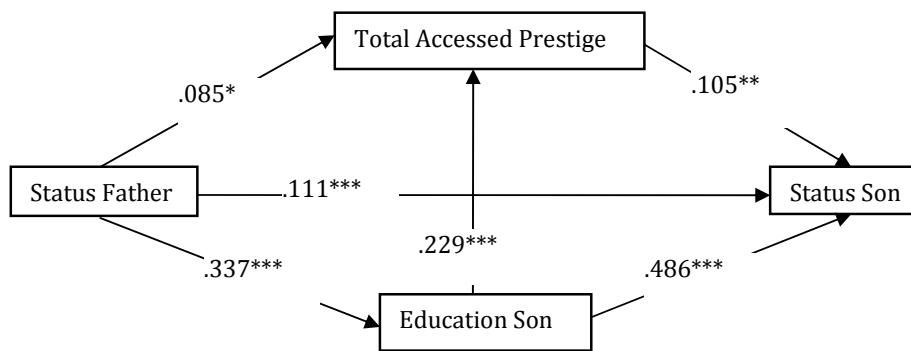
Accessed Social Capital
Accessed social capital is the total amount of prestige in one's network (Van der Gaag, 2005). As described in section 2.2.2., this includes most general mechanisms which can be ascribed to social capital. Therefore, we will use this to test our most general model.

First, we address the two hypotheses derived from the classic status attainment model (Blau & Duncan, 1967): *H0.1; Status of the father has a positive direct effect on status of the son* and *H0.2; Status of the father has an indirect positive effect on status of the son through education*.

Figure 2. *Model including total accessed prestige as social capital*

$$*** = p \leq .000; ** = p \leq .005; * = p \leq .05; (n = 582)$$

Controlled for age, where the effect of age is significant on total accesses prestige ($p \leq .05$)
Model-fit: $\chi^2 = 1.26$; $df = 2$; CFI = .999; RMSEA = .021

In figure 2, one can see the estimates regarding the accessed social capital model. Taking the relationships of the classic status attainment model into account, one can see that all these relationships are significant. The direct effect of the prestige of the father on the prestige of the son is a positive effect (B = .111; $p \leq .000$). Hypothesis *H0.1* can be accepted, according to this result; status of the father has a direct positive effect on the status of the son. The prestige of the father has a positive indirect effect through education on the prestige of the son (B = .164; $p \leq .05$). Therefore, hypothesis *H0.2* can be accepted; status of the father has an indirect effect on status of the son through education.[1, 2] Since both these hypotheses are accepted, it is likely to state that the classic status attainment model still fits for Dutch men in 2000.

Because the classic status attainment model is not the only important factor in the status transfer from father to son, the model might improve by adding status transfer through social capital. To see if this is true, we first examine the effect of the father on accessed social capital. Lai et al. (1998) found a positive effect of ascribed social resources (parental characteristics) on social capital in the son's network and Huang et al. (2009) showed that education has a positive effect on social capital. The father also has a positive indirect effect on the amount of social capital through education. These relationships are addressed in the following hypotheses: *H1.1; Status of the father has a positive direct effect on social capital of the son. H1.2; Status father has a positive effect on social capital of the son through education.*

Figure 2 shows that prestige of the father has a direct positive effect on the total amount of prestige in the network of his son (B = .085; $p \leq .05$). Hypothesis *H1.1* can therefore be accepted. Also prestige of the father has an indirect positive effect through education on social capital (B = .077). Due to data restraints, we cannot estimate the *p*-value of this coefficient, but since both the effect of father's status on education and education on network status are significant ($p \leq .000$), it is very likely that this effect is also significant. Thus, hypothesis *H1.2* can also be accepted; status of the father has a positive effect through education on social capital of his son.

A higher status contact is more likely to lead to higher status position than a lower status alter (Lin, 1981). Therefore, the more high status alters one has, the higher the chance that one of the alters can provide a higher status job. The total amount of prestige in the network (accessed social capital) has a positive direct effect on prestige of the son (B = .105; $p \leq .005$). Therefore, hypothesis *H2.1* can be accepted; when one has more social capital, one is more likely to have a higher status.[3, 4]

The estimates suggest that the model for status attainment for men in The Netherlands is more accurate when including the direct effects of the father's status and education on social capital of the son. When we look at the differences in model-fit, the Chi-Square (χ^2), the Comparative-Fit-Index (CFI) and the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA), this is true. The model of Blau & Duncan (1967), controlled for total amount of prestige in network, has an erroneous fit with the data ($\chi^2 \leq .05$; CFI = .883; RMSEA = .134). However, when adding the relations prestige of the father to social capital and education of the ego to social capital, the model fit becomes significantly better ($\chi^2 \geq .05$; CFI = .999; RMSEA = .021). Our assumption for a parsimonious and integrated model is therefore justified.

So the model-fit improves when taking the indirect effects of social capital into account. What does this mean for the effect of status of the father on that of his son? In table 4, we can see that the total effect of status of the father on status of his son improves (from B = .275 to B= .292) when we take the indirect effect through social capital into account. So, for men in Dutch society, the

status of the father is an important predictor for the status a person will reach in society. However, the total effect of education also improves when social capital is added to the equation (from B = .486 to B = .510). So education is a more important predictor for the status a person will reach in life. Social capital is a small predictor for status of men in Dutch society (B = .105), when compared to the effect of education and prestige of the

father. When interpreting these results, we can state that, in the status attainment process for Dutch men, education is the most important predictor for status of the ego. In other words, ascribed attributes are still important in Dutch society. However, achieved attributes, like education and social capital combined, are more important for predicting the status of men in Dutch society.

Table 4. *Indirect and total effects of general model*

n = 582		Blau & Duncan Indirect Effects	Social Capital Indirect Effects
Prestige Father	Prestige Son (social capital)		.009
Prestige Father	Prestige Son (education)	.164	.164
Prestige Father	Network Social Capital (education)		.077
Prestige Father	Prestige Son (education & social capital)		.008
Education Son	Prestige Son (through social capital)		.024
		Total Effects	Total Effects
Prestige Father	Prestige Son	.275	.292
Education Son	Prestige Son	.486	.510

Embedded Social Capital

Thus, the total amount of prestige in one's network (i.e., accessed social capital) plays a significant role in the status transfer from father to son. In the next section, the focus is on the distribution of prestige in one's network (embeddedness). Does the status transfer occur mostly through weak ties, strong ties or both?

Weak ties are supposed to be more important in reaching a high status, because they give one an information advantage (Granovetter, 1974). The effect of weak ties is more likely to be found among people who grew up in a low status environment (Lin & Dumin, 1986). This is addressed in the following hypotheses: *H2.2; Weak ties are more important in obtaining a high status job*
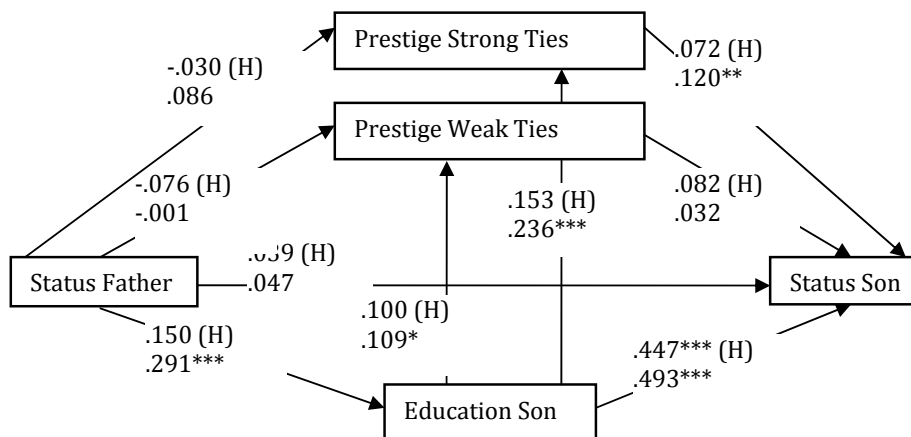
for one who grow up in a low status environment. H2.3; For one who grew up in a high status environment, ties strength does not matter or is equally important in obtaining a high status job. These hypotheses will be discussed in the next model, depicted in figure 3.

The model-fit measurements indicate that this model does not fit appropriately with the sample data. The model-fit shows that this model as a whole is insignificant. This implies that tie strength does not matter in the status transfer from father to son. However, this could be due to all the insignificant effects which are not related to tie strength. Therefore, a closer look at the estimates can give us an insight into whether tie strength might have an effect on prestige of the son, by

looking at specific relationships. In figure 3, growing up in a high status or low status environment is added as a moderator. Men who grew up in a high status environment represent the coefficients in figure 3, and the persons who grew up in a low status environment represent the lower coefficients shown. When looking at figure 3, we see that, for persons who grew up in a low status

environment, there is only an effect of prestige among strong ties on status (B = .120; $p \leq$ .005). Therefore, hypothesis *H2.2* is refuted; it is not confirmed that weak ties are more important than strong ties in obtaining a high status job for one who grew up in a low status environment.

Figure 3. *Model including prestige of strong and weak ties, as mediated by youth environment*

*** = $p \leq$ .000; ** = $p \leq$ .005; * = $p \leq$ .05; H = high prestige youth environment; (*n* = 582)
Model fit: χ^2 = 4.16; *df* = 12; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .076

These results suggest that it rather seems to be the other way around: strong ties are more important to reach a higher status for men who grew up in a low status environment. If we look at figure 3, we see that mobility from a low status environment is mainly mediated by education. Status of the father has a positive effect on education (B = .291; $p \leq$ .000) and education has a positive effect on status (B = .493; $p \leq$ .000). Also education has a significant effect on the amount of prestige among the strong ties (B = .236; $p \leq$ .000). We can interpret this effect in

the following way; the higher one's education, the higher the status of the friends one meets. Those friends, most likely strong ties, can later on in life help you to obtain a higher status job (B = .120; $p \leq$ .005).

Hypothesis *H2.3* can cautiously be accepted; for one who grew up in a high status environment, tie strength does not matter for the status of job one attains. In figure 3, we can see that both the amount of prestige in the weak ties and the amount of prestige in the strong ties do not have a significant effect on prestige of the son ($p \geq$
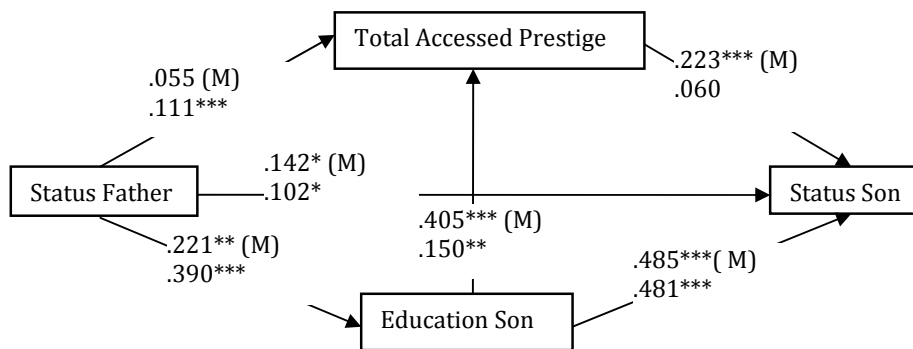
.05). It should be noted that the respondents who grew up in a higher status environment (21,6%) do not have a lot of variance left in the analysis regarding obtaining a higher status. This could contribute to the insignificant results. However, we can state on the basis of these results that adding tie strength as social capital to the status attainment process does not significantly improve the integrated status attainment model. Status of the father does not have a significant effect on prestige of the son's strong ties or weak ties. This applies for both persons who grew up in a high status environment as well as for person who grew up in a low status environment. We found no evidence that tie strength matters in the status attainment process.

Used Social Capital

We can state that the effect of ties is very weak for the status attainment process in The Netherlands. Maybe there is an effect of social capital on the status of the son by the direct mobilization of an alter. In other words, a person who directly helps you get a job (used social capital) is more important than the total prestige your network (accessed social capital) or how well you know that person (embedded social capital). Flap and de Graaf (1988) found that approximately one-third of their sample used a contact to attain a job, and this is consistent with our findings. In this section, we will see if used social capital, in contrary to embedded social capital, can explain the status attainment process more adequately. If used social capital plays a more important role, we can expect that the effect of social capital on the status of the son is stronger for men who mentioned an alter that helped them to get a job than for persons who did not. This is addressed in *H2.4: The effect of social capital on the respondent's status is stronger for people who actively used their network than for those who did not.* This hypothesis will be tested with the model shown in figure 4.

Figure 4. *Results for person mentioned versus no-person mentioned*

*** = $p \leq .000$; ** = $p \leq .005$; * = $p \leq .05$; M = coefficient for person mentioned; ($n = 582$)
Model Fit: $\chi^2 = .1.70$; *df* = 6 CFI = .992; RMSEA = .035

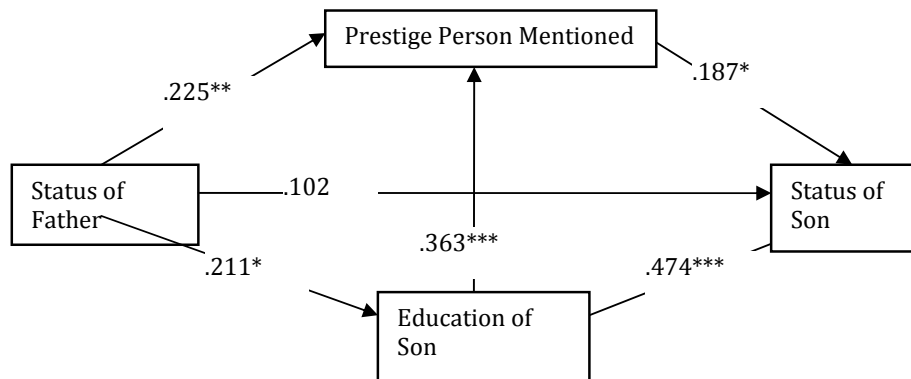The model-fit measurements indicate that the model with total accessed prestige and person mentioned as a moderator has a correct fit with the sample data. Figure 4 shows the

results for this model. The effect of total accessed prestige on the prestige of the son is only significant for men that did mention an alter who helped them get their current or last job (B = .223; $p \leq .000$). Therefore, hypothesis *H2.4* can be accepted: the effect of social capital on respondent status is stronger for those who actively used their network than for people who did not. It is peculiar that the prestige of the father has a significant effect on social capital for egos that did not mention a person who helped them get their job (B = .111; $p \leq .05$), but not for ego's that did mention a person who helped them get their current or last job ($p \geq .05$). However, the effect of education on total amount of social capital is much stronger for egos that did mention an alter who helped them get their current or last job (B = .405; $p \leq .000$) and the effect of the father's status on education is significant for this group as well (B = .221; p

$\leq .05$). Thus, for people who mentioned an alter that helped them to get a job, the father has an indirect effect on social capital through education (B=.090 $p \leq .005$). So, for this group, there is a status transfer from father to son that is mediated by education and social capital (B = .020 $p \leq .005$), and which represents a rather small effect.

We will examine this mechanism more closely by examining the specific person that helped ego in attaining his status. Lin et al. (1981) and Flap and De Graaf (1988), found that, when the person mentioned in the job attainment process has a higher status, the respondent is also more likely to receive a higher status job. This is addressed in hypothesis *H2.5; When the status of the person who helped to get a job is higher, one is more like to obtain a higher status job.* This hypothesis will be tested in the last model, shown in figure 5.

Figure 5. *Results including prestige of person mentioned*

*** = $p \leq .000$; ** = $p \leq .005$; * = $p \leq .05$; ($n = 142$)
Model Fit: $\chi^2 = 1.90$; *df* = 2; CFI = .985; RMSEA = .074

The model-fit measurements indicate that the model with the prestige of the person who helped the ego to get a job has a correct fit with the sample data. The results of this model are shown in figure 5. The model

shows that the status of the person who helped ego get his job matters (B = .187; $p \leq .05$). This leads to the acceptance of hypothesis *H2.5*; when the status of the person who helped to get a job is higher, one

is more likely to obtain a high status job. Moreover, the direct effect of status of the father on status of the son does not seem to matter for this group ($p \geq .05$). Supposedly, this effect diminishes when one directly activates his higher status friend when looking for a high status job. The status of the father does, however, have a positive effect on the prestige of the alter that helped obtain a job (B = .225; $p \leq .05$). Furthermore, the direct effect of education on prestige of the person mentioned is still high (B = .363; $p \leq .000$). When one has a higher level of education, the person who helps one get their current or last job is more likely to be of an higher status. To conclude, the effect of education on status is still high for this group (B = .474; $p \leq .000$), and an alter can help in obtaining a high status job, but one must also have the skills to be able to do that job.

Conclusion

The results of this study of the role of social capital in the status attainment process for Dutch men in 2000 can be summarized as follows. First, the classic status attainment model of Blau and Duncan (1967) still fits. By adding social capital, the status attainment process can be explained better. Both father's status as well as a person's education have a significant direct and indirect effect on one's status. However, the total effects of status of the father are subordinate to the total effects of education on the status of his son. In other words, ascribed attributes, such as status of one's father, are important in Dutch society, but the achieved attributes of education and social capital are more important for predicting the status of men in Dutch society. After we pointed out that social capital plays a vital part in the status attainment process, we examined the mechanisms underlying the effect of social capital on status.

For accessed social capital, we found that the total amount of prestige in the

network has a significant effect on the status of the son. Our model indicates that high prestige of the father has a positive effect on the amount of prestige in the network of his son. But we also find that education is a more adequate predictor in comparison to social capital. This could be because you can meet your friends at school. The disadvantage of the measurement that represents general social capital, such as the total amount of prestige in the network, is that it contains the "noise" of unused social capital. This does not prevent the bias of social capital which has not been put to use by the ego (Van der Gaag, 2005). Therefore, the assumption of causality cannot be guaranteed. In other words, whether a person had a lot of social capital, and with use of that capital reached a higher position, or instead acquired his social capital because he had a high status job with high status colleagues, cannot be determined. To solve this problem, we used *used social capital* in our analysis.

In order to tackle this problem of causality, we examined social capital that actually has been put to use. If a person helped you to get a job, then you had to know him before you obtained the job. And the higher the status of the contact that is used, the higher the status of the job he helps you to obtain. We also examined how important this mechanism was in terms of the effect of total amount of prestige (accessed social capital). The men in our analysis that actually used a contact person in their network to get their current job showed a significantly higher effect of social capital on their status than respondents who did not mention a person that helped them to obtain a job. For the latter group, the effect of accessed social capital on status was not significant. Thanks to these results, we can cautiously state that social capital works by the direct mobilization of a contact person. This brings us back to the research question of this study:

How does social capital contribute to the status attainment process in The Netherlands?

Based on the above-mentioned information, we can answer this research question. Social capital strengthens the effect of the father's status and education on status of the son and thus fits in the classic status attainment model of Blau and Duncan. Social capital works mostly by a direct mobilization of a high status alter in the network.

When analyzing the embedded social capital (i.e., weak and strong ties) of the ego, we found no evidence that weak ties provide higher status jobs than strong ties for people who grew up in a lower status environment. Moreover, strong ties proved to be important for people who grew up in a low status environment to reach a high status in society. When one grew up in a high status environment, weak or strong ties did not seem to matter in reaching a higher status. This is consistent with our hypothesis. However, it has to be noted that, due to a lack of variance in the analysis for respondents who grew up in a high status environment, our results could be biased due to a low number of respondents in that group as well. The mobility of people from a low status background could be explained by the direct effect of education on status and the indirect effect, via social capital, on status. This happens mostly through strong ties, because the friends you make in school are likely to be strong ties. So, in contrast to Granovetter's theory (1974), we found no evidence for weak ties being more important in attaining a high status job.

Although we exercised care in conducting our research, our operationalization of embeddedness could be improved upon in future research. In addition, tie strength isn't the only component of embeddedness in one's network. So is the position one has in his network (Burt 1992). In order to examine this theory, one needs to know the position of the ego in his complete network, which was not available in the SSND data set.

This study addressed the status attainment model of Blau and Duncan. However, in contrast to Blau and Duncan's model, we were not able to implement the education of the father into the model, since this variable was not available in the SSND data set. Also, the first job of the son could have a positive effect on status of the son and mediates the effect of status of the father and education (Flap & De Graaf, 1988). This variable also was not available in the SSND data set. Adding both first job of the son and education of the father to the model would have improved our model statistically, since the degrees of freedom of our models would then have been higher.

This study tried to complement the status attainment process in The Netherlands. We showed that the situation in The Netherlands in the year 2000 represented an improvement in terms of its meritocratic features, but also that the inheritance of status by a son from his father must not be underestimated. Is the status attainment process as researched in this study the same for women as for men? This might be an interesting question for future research.

Notes

1. Also for the model with person mentioned as moderator all of Blau and Duncan's assumed relationships are significant ($p \leq .05$).
2. When looking at the effect of education on status of the ego, it is significant for all the further models ($p \leq .000$).

3. All models are controlled for age in years as a logical factor which can influence ego's status. When one gets older, it is likely to assume that one gets a higher status. However, in all the models this control variable does not have a significant effect on status ($p \geq .05$).
4. When performing the analysis with the name generator measure for accessed social capital, all of the results are in the same direction and also significant ($p \leq .005$).

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