

STATUS ATTAINMENT IN THE POST-COMMUNIST TRANSITION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE*

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This paper examines the changes in the relationships between social status components almost ten years after the fall of the communism in Central and Eastern Europe. Communist regimes have altered the relationships in the status attainment process, producing divergences from patterns usually encountered in Western capitalist countries. Due to the influence of the communist ideology and policy and to the characteristics of the command economy, the influence of social origins on status attainment was reduced, the effects of education and occupation on income were weakened, and the relationship between education and occupation was generally higher in state socialist societies compared to Western capitalist societies. With the fall of the communism, some of the constraints that communist regimes have placed on social stratification have been removed. This process is expected to trigger changes in the status attainment process. The paper also explores the extent to which the transitions to post-communism have brought the social stratification in Central and Eastern European countries closer to the model in Western capitalist countries, and to what degree communist patterns of social stratification are preserved after the fall of the communism.

Keywords: *status attainment, Central and Eastern Europe, socialist stratification and inequality, post-communist stratification and inequality.*

INTRODUCTION

The fall of the communism in Central and Eastern Europe has meant not only a transformation of these societies' political and economic systems, but also a transformation of the criteria of social stratification and, possibly, a change in the relationships among the main components of social status – social origin, education, occupation, and income. While the dual political and economic transitions in these countries have well specified goals – democracy and a market economy –, the third

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transition involving the processes of stratification is less well defined in terms of 'transition towards what?'

Social stratification after the fall of the communism in Central and Eastern Europe is less under the direct influence of government policies and political ideologies, and more under the influence of emerging institutions and market mechanisms. Although the state has been retreating from regulating the economic sector, and private sector employment is rising, the transition economies are mixed economies characterized by both market and redistributive elements (Nee, 1996: 917). Thus, although economies and political systems in Central and Eastern Europe may be converging to the capitalist model in the West, there are still elements differentiating them from settled capitalist systems.

In the context of the transition to democracy and to a market economy, social stratification in Central and Eastern Europe might, in time, become increasingly similar to social stratification in Western capitalist countries. On the other hand, the differences in economic systems and in the role of the state between former communist countries and Western capitalist countries may lead to different stratification outcomes in the two regions. Furthermore, unique local histories and cultures may produce differences between social stratification types within the group of former communist countries.

The experiments in de-stratification in Eastern Europe are believed to have produced a common type of social stratification in these societies, with notable divergences from the social stratification type in Western capitalist societies (Haller et al., 1990: 191). With the fall of the communism and the removal of the rules of the command economy, some constraints on social stratification have been lifted. In this context, supporters of convergence theories believe that social stratification in former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe will begin to resemble the Western capitalist social stratification. Analyzing the transformations in the Polish social structure after the fall of the communism, Domanski (1994) describes a phenomenon of 'recomposition of social structure' that is affecting the correlation between different social status components and, at the same time, is bringing the Polish social structure closer to the model in Western capitalist countries.

By contrast, theories that focus more on the continual importance of cultural and historical legacies argue that "there is no single simple model of socialism in Eastern Europe" (Haller et al., 1990: 154). According to these theories, at the end of the communist period, each of the Central and Eastern European societies had unique characteristics, and thus started the transition process with different resources. "If by the 1980s, the societies of Eastern Europe were decidedly not systems organized around a single logic, they are not likely in the post-socialist epoch to become ... societies with a single system identity" (Stark, 1996: 995).

An alternative hypothesis to the convergence theory begins from the assumption that societies in Central and Eastern Europe have experienced socialism differently, causing dissimilarities between their social structures. The transition process is then introducing changes into social structures that are already dissimilar. Since the transition itself has different characteristics across the former communist

countries, the resulting patterns of social stratification in Central and Eastern Europe will have unique characteristics for each of these societies. In turn, capitalist societies are characterized by a multitude of stratification patterns. The absence of a common model of social stratification characterizing either communist or capitalist societies makes it difficult to talk about similarities or differences in social stratification between former communist societies, on one hand and capitalist societies, on the other. The non-convergence hypothesis would predict that several new types of social stratification, all different from the Western capitalist types, would emerge in Central and Eastern Europe as a consequence of its communist and transition legacy.

This paper analyzes the degree of similarity existing in 1999 between the social stratification of four of the former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania) and a Western capitalist society (U.S.A.), by comparing the pattern and intensity of relationships among the main components of social status (social origin, education, occupation and income) in these societies. The time point chosen for the analysis – 1999 – is suitable for exploring the hypothesis that the post-communist period social stratification is characterized by a mix of new and old, inherited patterns of stratification. Because of the choice of countries, the empirical analysis cannot reveal how close or far the social structures in former communist countries are from ‘the capitalist model of social stratification’. The U.S. is representative of only one type of capitalist social stratification, and other capitalist countries might be characterized by different patterns than the U.S. The U.S. social stratification might be viewed as one determined by a highly market-driven society and highly developed economy. From this point of view, it theoretically constitutes a diametrically opposed example of social stratification from the one generally developed under communist systems. While the theoretical framework will sometimes join several types of capitalist social stratification under the ‘capitalist’ label, the empirical analysis is limited to the comparison of several types of social stratification in Central and Eastern Europe, and a particular type of capitalist social stratification – that of the U.S.

When examining the relationships among social status components only ten years after the fall of communism, some changes may be more easily observable in the relationships characterizing the youngest age group, while other transformations may be more visible in the oldest age group. For example, changes in the importance of social origins are more likely to affect the status attainment process for younger people, who are still pursuing their education or are at the beginning of their work careers. Changes in the relationships between education, occupation, and income may be more visible for older people, since in the youngest group the lack of work experience keeps the correlations between these status components at lower levels.

Since only cross-sectional data is used in this study, the ability to analyze the transformations taking place during the post-communist transition is limited. However, based on previous empirical findings and theories about social stratification in communist and capitalist systems before the fall of communism, some inferences regarding the transformation and convergence processes are suggested.

The paper will first discuss some previous theoretical views and empirical results pertaining to social stratification and status attainment processes in capitalist, communist, and post-communist societies, followed by a description of the status attainment model employed here and accompanied by a presentation of the hypotheses being tested. The last part of the paper presents and discusses the results of this model and attempts to draw the most important conclusions emerging from this analysis.

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN COMMUNIST AND CAPITALIST SOCIETIES

Previous empirical studies have found that social structures during communism, in Central and Eastern Europe were, in fact, different from social structures in Western capitalist countries: the effect of social origins on occupational attainment was weaker, the effects of education and occupation on income were also weaker, and the effect of education on occupational attainment was stronger in socialist countries (Meyer et al., 1979; Simkus, 1982; Slomczynski, 1986). Slomczynski (1986: 79) finds a weaker correlation between father's status and son's status in Poland, compared to Western European countries and the United States, and states that "in Poland the balance between ascription and achievement has already been changed". "Most studies comparing Poland and another Western country find a smaller association between social origin and education and between social origin and occupation in Poland and a stronger association between education and occupation in Poland" (Mach and Peschar, 1990: 96-97). However, the same authors, when comparing a status attainment model for Poland and the Netherlands, conclude that, while some of the results confirm these hypotheses, others do not, and the empirical distinctions are not as clear-cut as the theory suggests.

A high degree of similarity in the social structures in capitalist and post-communist societies might be viewed as support for the convergence hypothesis. On the other hand, communism and the fall of communism are not the only factors influencing the social structures of Central and Eastern European countries. The former communist countries selected for this empirical analysis (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania) have been characterized by different levels of economic development, different marketization levels, and different industrialization levels. These differences might also have a significant impact on the pattern of relationships between social status components in these societies.

Scholars have disagreed regarding whether state socialism was, in fact, responsible for the differences between the social structures of communist and capitalist countries. Some suggest that in Central and Eastern Europe social structures have always been different, even before the emergence of communism: "the transition to socialism occurred in countries at very different levels of development and with quite different former social structures" (Haller, 1990: xviii).

Others argue that state socialism “came ... as part of a greater package, including not only socialism but also war losses, postwar reconstruction, and postwar migration, so the effects of different factors are rather difficult to isolate” (Mach and Peschar, 1990: 98). The lower levels of development in the Central and Eastern European societies at the beginning of the communist period might also be responsible for the differences between social structures in this region and in Western capitalist countries. According to these theories, it is impossible to differentiate between the World War II impact, the influence of a generally low level of economic development in Central and Eastern Europe, and the impact of communism on the social structure during the 1940s (Mach and Peschar, 1990: 98). However, it is generally accepted that communist ideology and the policies introduced under state socialism kept social structures in Central and Eastern Europe different from those in Western capitalist countries.

Keeping in mind that (a) the political and economic system are not the only factors differentiating between social structures, and that (b) the group of former communist countries from Central and Eastern Europe is a heterogeneous one, characterized by different levels of industrialization and marketization, helps explain differences that may have arisen within this group after the fall of the communism. I expect that the analysis will reveal both differences and similarities within the group of former communist countries, and that some of these countries will be closer to the Western capitalist model than others. The factors mentioned above might help to explain these patterns. Even though political ideologies and economic systems were based on similar principles in all these countries during communism, each of the societies implemented and experienced state socialism in a different manner. While Hungary and Poland, during communism, were characterized by higher levels of marketization, and the Czech part of Czechoslovakia was known for its high degree of urbanization and industrialization, Romania followed more closely than did the other societies the original socialist policies regarding public ownership of businesses. Romania was also characterized by a high percentage of the rural population working in agriculture. Among the Central and Eastern European countries, Poland was also characterized by a high percentage of population working in agriculture. The main difference was the fact that while the agricultural sector in Romania was collectivized, in Poland it contained mainly peasant smallholders.

There is also an important distinction between the goals of the communist ideology regarding social stratification and the actual achieved transformations in the social structure during communism. The primary communist goal related to social stratification was achieving a more equalitarian distribution of individuals in the social structures. While wage equality did increase, some authors suggest that communist systems in Central and Eastern Europe have been characterized by more inequality than previously thought, especially inequality based on political privileges. After initially stating that, despite a number of failures, Marxist regimes have achieved “a substantial reduction in the degree of income inequality in their

societies” (Lenski, 1978: 369), Lenski revised his statement, arguing that these successes were offset by the enormous political inequalities in these societies and the failure to achieve the human transformations predicted by Marx to follow the abolition of private property (Lenski, 2001: 78). Also, the policies aimed at reducing inequality by facilitating the access of underprivileged groups to education are thought to have been less effective than intended: “it is probably an illusion to believe that the life chances of children from various backgrounds can easily be regulated by centrally governed policies. Even in situations calling for extreme measures, people will always try to find a way to provide their children with a good education” (Ganzeboom and Nieuwbeerta, 1999: 342).

Despite the extraordinary material privileges experienced by the communist political elite in Central and Eastern Europe, “it still appears that the level of economic inequality in Marxist societies never equaled the level found in Japan and most of the Western democracies” (Lenski, 2001: 78), and that educational policies did increase the material chances of children coming from previously underprivileged families.

The communist ideology condemned any form of inequality, but in reality a new criterion of stratification was born under this regime – political capital. A relatively small political elite had access to opportunities and life styles inaccessible to the masses. Because of this, communism, capitalism, and transition to post-communism have been described as systems characterized by different criteria of stratification. According to this classification, economic capital is the most important criterion of stratification in capitalist systems. Communist systems are stratified based on political capital, and the transition to post-communism is hypothesized to bring to the forefront human capital as a criterion of stratification (Eyal et al., 1998). The reshuffling in the social structure after the fall of the communism is generated by the devaluation of political capital and the emergence of new rules of elite recruitment and status attainment. This theory fueled the heated debate on the ability of the former political elites to convert their political capital into other resources with increased value under the new system.

Leaving aside the unique privileges enjoyed by the political elite under communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, the systems partially succeeded in their goal of diminishing material inequality at the level of the masses. Nevertheless, inequality outside the political elite continued to exist. For example, a study using life history data for Poland in 1972 found that the sons of professionals had a seven times greater chance of attaining a professional position than the sons of skilled workers (Pohoski, 1986: 55). The examination of mobility rates presented in Pohoski’s article paints a picture that is far from the ‘equality of opportunity’ scenario, and the analysis implies that the importance of social origins could not be completely eliminated by the socialist ideology.

While the ideal of ‘de-stratification’ was never fully achieved in state socialist countries, the political and economic regime had some important consequences for

social stratification. One aspect of this impact is the ‘decomposition of social status’. The rules of the command economy produced a weakening of the relationship between education and income and occupation and income. During communism, “it was assumed, for individuals as units of analysis, the relationship among basic status characteristics such as education, authority, income, and prestige would weaken over time, as a consequence of state policies” (Slomczynski and Krauze, 1986: 5).

According to convergence theories, the logic of social stratification determines high correlations among educational achievement, occupational status, and income, as well as high correlations among social status, attitudes, and values. By imposing rules of income distribution, and by promoting ideological principles of social selection, the communist regimes loosened the links between occupation and income and education and income. Thus, the overall consequence for social stratification was a blurring of differences in social status (Domanski, 1994).

Based on political ideology, certain policies were created in order to promote the ideal of a classless society:

“One of the explicit aims of the former communist regimes was to reverse the major forms of social stratification and forcefully impose an equalized distribution of societal rewards. To this end, the communist regimes abolished private ownership of means of production and prevented the accumulation of material and financial capital in private hands. The government instituted negative discrimination of traditionally privileged social groups (bourgeois), positive discrimination of traditionally underprivileged social groups (in particular manual workers), and strict control of migration, both within and between countries” (Ganzeboom and Nieuwbeerta, 1999: 340).

Even if the negative discrimination of traditionally privileged and the positive discrimination of traditionally underprivileged groups might have been more intense in the early communist period, the policies continued to indirectly affect subsequent generations, through the effect they had on parents.

The command economy played an important role in ‘blurring’ social differences: wages for different occupations were kept at similar levels, and enough jobs were created (even if there were jobs with superfluous tasks) to eliminate unemployment. The low occurrence of unemployment and the imposed equality of wages determined similar material returns for persons with different educational and occupational levels. The convergence theories postulate that during the transition period we are witnessing a process of recomposition of social stratification, with a growing correlation between education, occupation, and income (Domanski, 1994).

While the theory advocated by Domanski focuses on the relation between education, income, and occupation, status attainment models introduce social origins in the equation and differentiate between the impacts of communism on achieved and ascribed status. The theories based on examining status attainment models focus less on the equality achieved during communism and more on the impact of communism on the balance between ascribed and achieved inequality. Empirical studies on the relationship between social origin, education, occupation and income found that the communist ideology acted towards reducing both ascribed and achieved status differences in comparison to the levels in the capitalist

Western countries, and at the same time influenced the balance between achieved and ascribed processes in status attainment (Slomczynski, 1986).

First, communism diminished the importance of social origins in the status attainment process, by favoring people coming from farmers' or workers' roots. These were considered 'healthy' social origins and were essential to the advancement of one's career and especially advancement in the political hierarchy. Another policy aimed at reducing ascriptive inequality was the abolition of the right of intergenerational transmission of large scale private property (Ganzeboom and Nieuwbeerta, 1999: 340). Also, educational reforms at the beginning of the communist regime stipulated enrolment quotas for children of farmers and workers, in order to encourage them to get more education, comparable to children coming from different family backgrounds. "Using the educational system as a tool to induce changes in the social structure has been the declared goal of complex, state coordinated social policies undertaken after switching to state socialism" (Mach and Peschar, 1990: 93). Not only were the chances of pursuing education increased for children from underprivileged families, but also the opportunities for children coming from families in high position were decreased (Ganzeboom and Nieuwbeerta, 1999: 340). Coming from parents with low occupational and educational status was no longer a disadvantage. "It was one of the central aims of the socialist revolutions to remove, or at least weaken, ascriptive factors in the process of social reproduction on all their levels" (Haller, 1990: xvi).

While some have concluded that the increased importance of achieved status under the communist regime was a sign of the greater meritocracy present in these systems, others have argued that this meritocracy was more formal than substantive (Mach and Peschar, 1990: 93-94). While the reason and the nature of meritocracy in communist regimes might be debatable, empirical data indicate that the impact of social origins on education, occupation, and income was lower than in capitalist countries (Simkus, 1982).

Secondly, communist ideology and state socialism diminished the social distance between different groups in the society. The distance between wages for different occupational statuses was kept small. Wages of professionals were reduced and those of skilled workers increased. In fact, industrial branch rather than occupational categories became a more important factor in predicting wages, because wages were planned according to industrial branch. For example, doctors working in the mines were paid more than those working in academia and research (Domanski, 2000: 122). During communism, "top managers typically earned at most five times as much as the average manual worker, whereas the same ratio reaches 20:1 or more in the United States" (Brainerd, 2000: 140). Socialist systems never encouraged a reflexively equalitarian wage distribution. Differences in pay were preserved for different occupational achievement levels and bonus rewards for overtime hours were incorporated as an incentive system. However, compared to Western capitalist systems, in Central and Eastern Europe the wage scales were compressed.

Free access to education for everybody encouraged more people to pursue higher education. Compulsory eight to twelve years of schooling reduced variation in

educational levels and higher education brought smaller material rewards than in capitalist countries. There are several empirical studies confirming this hypothesis. Among them, a cohort study in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia, and Slovakia confirms that “on average the advantages of higher levels of education have gradually diminished over the communist period” by approximately one half between 1940 and 1985 (Ganzeboom and Nieuwbeerta, 1999: 352). In addition, the widespread access to jobs with virtually no unemployment ensured a weakening of the correlation between education and income and occupation and income, compared to capitalist countries. Due to the nature of the educational system and of the rules of job distribution, the communist countries were characterized by a stronger correlation between education and occupation than capitalist societies. In comparing data for Poland and the US from 1972–1976, Meyer, Tuma, and Zagorski (1979: 983) find that “the effect of son’s education level on occupational attainment is much higher in Poland” and attribute this finding to the fact that “rules of recruitment to occupational positions which emphasize education, are strictly observed” and the fact that “the Polish educational system is much more selective, so that each of the more advanced levels of education consists of a more thoroughly screened group (with correspondingly greater occupational advantages) than in the United States”.

An empirical study comparing the results of a status attainment model estimated for Poland and similar models for Western Europe and the US found that communism shifted the balance between achieved and ascribed principles of social stratification more towards achieved status than the balance present in capitalist countries: ascribed inequality was smaller in Poland, while the impact of educational attainment on status attainment was stronger in Poland than in the West (Slomczynski, 1986: 98).

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN THE TRANSITION TO POST-COMMUNISM

With the fall of the communist regime, countries in the region entered a transformation process that had consequences at the political, economic, and social levels. With the rules of the command economy removed, the relationships in the status attainment model were subject to change, both at the ascribed and at the achieved level. The full extent of the transformations cannot be seen in the 1999 data, since it has only been approximately half of a generation since the onset of changes. The true new impact of social origins will only be observable when the actively employed population will contain only individuals born after the fall of communism. However, the changes in the relationships between education, occupation, and income might already be observable at this point in time, although the potential for these relationships further changing is high.

Even before the fall of the communism in the region, supporters of convergence theories predicted a future trend of growing similarity between social structures in Central and Eastern Europe and social structures in Western capitalist

countries. "Convergence theories of the 1960s and the 1970s predicted that the two rival political and economic systems would inevitably move towards and assimilate one another. The communist East was to be enriched with market elements, while the economic order of Western capitalism had already adopted elements of state intervention" (Domanski, 2000: 2). With the fall of communism and the transition to a market economy, the role of social origins should theoretically increase, in comparison to communist levels. In the absence of state control over job and income distribution, parents' resources should start gaining in importance in the process of children's status attainment.

The rules of the market economy removed the control over wage equality, and the principle of 'jobs for everybody' was replaced by the emergence of the unemployment phenomenon. The variation in incomes is likely to increase, as income distribution starts being influenced by market mechanisms. As competition on the labor market also increases, education and occupational attainment are likely to become more important determinants of income levels. Occupational attainment becomes more the result of individual efforts and resources, than of strict rules of job distribution according to educational level and track. Ideologies and policies that used to keep the effects of social origins at low levels during communism have been abandoned during the transition to market economy. As a result, parental education, occupation, and income start regaining their importance in influencing the children's status attainment process. These changes might lead to a growing similarity with Western social structures. A study comparing post-communist trends in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia, and Slovakia, finds that "the structure of the intergenerational movements in East Central Europe strongly resembles the general shape of basic distances and rigidities in the West which we know from previous studies" (Domanski, 2000: 62). However, the study seems to attribute the similarity to older trends than the fall of communism, since no significant changes in these trends is observed between 1988 and 1994.

The transition process profoundly affects the social stratification systems. Not only do the relationships between different status components change, but there are also changes in the value associated with different stocks of capital, in the criteria of access to elites, in mobility patterns, and a new middle class is expected to emerge. "The data seem to indicate two new elements which might reshape mobility channels in East Central Europe. The first is growing economic inequality, the second, new rules governing income distribution" (Domanski, 2000: 47).

POST-COMMUNIST SOCIAL STRUCTURES: CONVERGENCE?

Transitional social structures in Central and Eastern Europe are best seen as hybrid social structures. While some convergence tendencies may exist, it is also likely that some relationships are more resistant to change. Convergence theories regarding social stratification in transition economies rely on the assumption that

the removal of the socialist rules of income distribution and the emergence of market mechanisms will lead to an increasing similarity of these structures with those in Western capitalist countries (Domanski, 1994). The transitions to democracy and a market economy are bound to have an effect that pushes the social structures in former communist countries towards convergence. The phenomenon of institutional and social imitation is also likely to encourage this process of convergence.

Ten years after the fall of communism, social structures in the region may also retain certain characteristics they had during communism. Post-communist economies of 1999 are mixed economies, in which the privatization process is not yet complete. In Central and Eastern Europe, “the privatization of (mainly small-scale) trade and services enterprises has moved briskly, but it is at a virtual standstill for large-scale enterprises, primarily in the manufacturing sector” (Blanchard et al., 1994: 44). The existence of a relatively large public sector and the fact that the state is still intervening in the economic sector by supervising the privatization process and by creating industrial policies (Blanchard et al., 1994: 185) distances the economic systems in former communist countries and in Western capitalist countries. This situation is less conducive to convergence in the social stratification systems of Central and Eastern European countries.

Path dependence theories about social stratification in Central and Eastern Europe use the idea of institutional inertia to predict that elements in the stratification systems during communism are likely to continue to exist after the fall of communism (Nee, 1996; Nee and Cao, 1999). A similar set of theories known as “state-centered theories”, assume that communist elite members have been able to convert their political capital into the resources necessary to succeed after the fall of communism, and thus have been able to retain their elite status. As a result, these theories predict that the stratification order will be maintained. However, it seems that political capital *per se* was not enough, and only former cadres with entrepreneurship spirit were able to convert their political capital and maintain their position in the stratification order (Nee, 1996: 914). In addition, the former political elite who was able to maintain their high position in social stratification was less successful in preventing other categories of people from gaining access to the elite. These processes hinder the reproduction of the communist stratification order during the transition process. Even though numerous elements of the communist stratification order were not able to survive the transition process, it is likely that certain elements are preserved after the fall of communism.

An example that there communist institutional practices are being conserved, at least in the beginning of the transition process, is the high level of pay in the mining industry. “The fact that in 1994 the wages in the mining industry were still unusually high in Poland suggests that the post-communist structure retained some of the characteristics of the communist social structure” (Domanski, 2000: 119).

Another factor that might hinder the process of convergence would be the presence of a tendency to revert to the stratification type present before communism in these countries (Domanski, 2000: 10). The institutional vacuum left by the crumbling of communism can only be filled through innovation, imitation or reverting to traditional or past institutions. Under the pressure of economic integration, the easiest solution is the import or imitation of institutions already developed in Western capitalist societies. On the other hand, some authors argue that the fall of the communism has not produced an institutional vacuum at all, because the communist systems were unsuccessful in completely suppressing relations of reciprocity and market-like transactions. "Researchers have identified a multiplicity of social relations that did not conform to officially prescribed hierarchical patterns" (Stark, 1996: 994). Thus, transformations after the fall of communism are rather rearranging and recombining practiced routines, institutions and organizations (Stark, 1996: 995).

Another theoretical avenue in predicting changes in social stratification after the fall of communism is offered by market transition theory. Supporters of this theory maintain that "as power – control over resources – shifts progressively from political disposition to market institutions, there will be a change in the distribution of rewards favoring those who hold market rather than redistributive power" (Nee, 1996: 910). Political capital is no longer valuable and human capital and entrepreneurship become important resources that are rewarded on the market (Nee, 1989; Eyal et al., 1998). In this context, the social structures in Central and Eastern Europe are hypothesized to undergo important transformations.

While the different theories presented above predict different outcomes for social structures in former communist countries, they are not necessarily opposed, and may be combined to analyze the dynamism of the relationships that make up the social stratification process. Since convergence and continuity trends in social stratification systems in Central and Eastern Europe might coexist, a theoretical framework including elements of market transition theories, convergence theories, theories about the role of the state during the transition process and theories regarding institutional continuity might be better suited to explain trends in social stratification after the fall of communism.

When comparing social structures in post-communist societies and in capitalist societies, the problem that arises is that of disentangling the impact of communism from the impact of other factors, such as the level of development, industrialization, and marketization. According to convergence theory, we might see an increasing similarity between the relationships in the status attainment model in former socialist countries and in capitalist countries. If we are to take into account country specific characteristics, we might be able to explain the speed of the process of transformations of social structures. Countries with higher marketization levels in 1990 (i.e. Hungary and Poland) may experience a faster transformation of their social structures. Countries with a higher level of economic development in 1990 (i.e. the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland) may go

through a speedier process of social structure transformation than the others. Countries that went through shock transition (i.e. Poland) might be closer to social structure types in the West than countries going through a more gradual transition (i.e. the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania). According to this line of thinking, we might see a greater similarity between the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the U.S. than between Romania and Bulgaria and the U.S. Researchers have noticed a north-south type of division emerging in the group of former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. “Differences between countries are becoming more evident, with a north-south division in social and material conditions which is expressed through fast and slow path programmes for economic reform and the enlargement of the EU” (Turnock, 1997: 89).

DATA AND MODEL

The data for this study come from two different sources: an international comparative research on social inequality – The International Social Survey Programme, the 1999 Inequality Module (ISSP, 2002), and a national survey conducted in Romania – The Public Opinion Barometer, November 1999 (POB, 1999). The ISSP – Inequality 1999 provided the data for three of the Eastern European countries used for this study (the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland) and the U.S. Data for Romania come from “The Public Opinion Barometer”, a periodic survey initiated by the Open Society Foundation in 1994. In order to have a similar time frame, I selected the November 1999 Public Opinion Barometer.

The study focuses on earned incomes and the status attainment process during the years the individuals are actively employed. Consequently, all analyses were conducted on employed sub-samples. Thus, the final sample sizes are reduced to 975 in the Czech Republic, 538 in Hungary, 505 in Poland, 970 in Romania, and 846 in the U.S. The missing data in all of the samples were handled using the FIML (Full Information Maximum Likelihood) procedure provided by the AMOS software (Arbuckle and Wothke, 1999: 332).

The model examines the relationship between individual status components – social origins, education, occupation, and income (see Table 1 for a description of the main variables in the model). Because the status attainment process under analysis involves multiple dependent variables and intermediating effects, a structural equations model is appropriate for modeling the relationships. The method also allows for easy integration of latent constructs, such as social origins in the analysis. The analyses were conducted using a path model very similar to the classical status attainment model (Blau and Duncan, 1967), including controls for marital status, gender, age, residential area, and public employment¹.

¹ Descriptive statistics for these control variables and for the age grouping variable used in these analyses are available from the author on request.

Table 1

Distribution of the Main Variables in the Status Attainment Model (%)

Variables		Czech R. (n = 975)	Hungary (n = 538)	Poland (n = 505)	Romania (n = 970)	USA (n = 846)
Father's occupation	1. farmer	2.97	9.48	26.53	31.55	7.92
	2. unskilled worker	6.46	10.78	5.74	5.46	6.86
	3. skilled worker	47.59	45.54	39.41	29.07	29.79
	4. worker in commerce	2.97	6.88	1.98	1.65	6.26
	5. clerk, medium studies	5.33	1.12	3.17	3.92	2.13
	6. technical occupations	9.85	3.16	5.15	5.46	5.56
	7. personnel with higher education	14.15	13.38	12.48	3.09	19.86
	missing	10.67	9.67	5.54	19.79	21.63
Father's education	0. no school	0.00	0.19	0.99	5.36	0.47
	1. 1–4 years	1.03	15.43	8.51	23.20	4.26
	2. 5–8 years	21.64	26.95	40.99	26.80	10.64
	3. vocational school	47.08	31.60	22.57	13.71	8.27
	4. high-school	18.46	13.20	13.86	9.69	26.12
	5. post high-school	0.92	5.76	0.99	3.40	8.04
	6. higher education	7.69	4.46	6.34	4.02	15.48
	missing	3.18	2.42	5.74	13.81	26.71
Mother's education	0. no school	0.00	0.37	1.19	7.22	1.30
	1. 1–4 years	1.74	21.56	9.11	30.82	2.72
	2. 5–8 years	38.97	43.49	51.29	28.97	10.17
	3. vocational school	37.03	11.52	14.26	6.08	10.05
	4. high-school	18.26	16.73	15.64	11.34	38.06
	5. post high-school	0.10	4.09	2.18	2.78	13.95
	6. higher education	2.15	0.74	3.56	1.13	13.59
	missing	1.74	1.49	2.77	11.65	10.17
Respondent's education	0. no school	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.52	0.00
	1. 1–4 years	0.10	0.74	0.00	3.71	0.12
	2. 5–8 years	7.38	15.43	12.28	12.58	1.89
	3. vocational school	41.23	30.30	31.68	22.37	7.68
	4. high-school	36.72	32.34	29.90	32.99	28.49
	5. post high-school	1.95	13.94	9.90	10.62	33.45
	6. higher education	12.62	7.25	16.24	17.22	28.37
	missing	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Respondent's occupation	1. farmer	1.54	3.16	12.28	13.09	0.71
	2. unskilled worker	6.36	7.62	7.33	6.19	8.51
	3. skilled worker	29.95	29.74	29.50	30.52	19.39
	4. worker in commerce	10.05	12.83	8.12	12.06	14.07
	5. clerk, medium studies	9.03	6.51	8.71	14.02	12.77
	6. technical occupations	19.18	15.24	12.48	4.33	10.64
	7. personnel with higher education	19.90	22.30	21.19	15.57	33.22
	missing	4.00	2.60	0.40	4.23	0.71

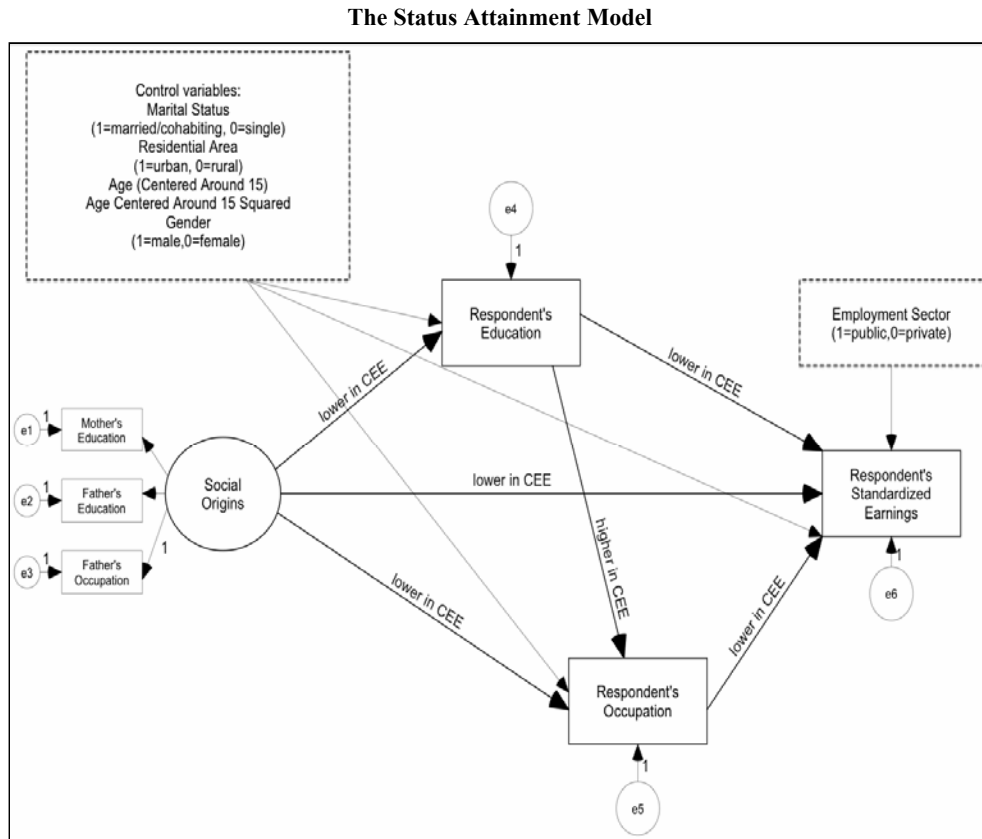
Variables		Czech R. (n = 975)	Hungary (n = 538)	Poland (n = 505)	Romania (n = 970)	USA (n = 846)
Respondent's Income	1 (first decile)	9.13	4.0	10.89	17.63	5.91
	2	13.95	15.61	12.67	12.89	7.21
	3	18.05	21.75	11.49	14.33	9.93
	4	15.90	13.38	16.83	8.9	14.42
	5	10.56	7.9	19.21	12.68	13.00
	6	4.92	8.1	9.1	3.2	14.30
	7	2.26	3.5	2.7	6.6	12.06
	8	3.18	1.1	4.1	4.2	6.86
	9	2.6	0.5	2.1	3.3	1.18
	10 (last decile)	1.44	0.9	1.9	3.0	2.60
	missing	17.95	22.86	8.7	13.09	12.53

Data Sources: International Social Survey Programme, 1999 (ISSP, 2002); Public Opinion Barometer, Romania, 1999 (POB, 1999).

The study examines the model simultaneously for three age groups (18 to 28, 29 to 48, and over 49 years of age). The multiple group analysis approach is chosen because of the belief that the processes in the status attainment model are different in these different age groups, mainly because of different amounts of work experience. Furthermore, changes in the status attainment model in former state socialist societies might occur at a different pace for these different age groups. The three different age groups are designed to represent individuals with different work experiences. Assuming that, on the average, individuals enter the labor force at age 18, the youngest group contains individuals with all or almost all of their work experience during the transition to post-communism. The middle age group is a group with mixed employment experience under the two regimes – communism and the transition to post-communism. The last group of individuals over 49 has the most work experience under communism. The age comparison model will explore patterns in the status attainment model for each of these age groups.

The path model contains six dependent variables: the three indicators of the social origins factor (mother's education, father's education and father's occupation), and three dependent variables for the regression equations of main interest (respondent's educational level, respondent's occupation and respondent's income). Each of the main interest dependent variables (i.e. education, occupation, and income) has a common set of predictors (marital status, urban residence, gender, and social origin). Besides this common set of predictors, the occupation is also modeled as being dependent on social origins and education, and the income is regressed on employment in the public sector, social origins, education, and occupation. Employment in the public sector is a control variable only for the regression equation that has income as a dependent variable, and it is not used as a control variable for the other two dependent variables in the model (see Figure 1).

Figure 1



Note: The paths labeled 'lower in CEE' are relationships theorized in the reviewed literature to be weaker in Central and Eastern Europe, during communism, than in Western capitalist countries. The paths labeled "higher in CEE" are relationships theorized in the reviewed literature to be stronger.

The analysis focuses on the within age group, cross-country comparison of effects in the model. The goal is finding out whether there are differences between the social structure of a society with a long term experience of capitalism, and that of former communist societies going through the transition process, almost ten years after the fall of the communism. On one hand, the societies going through the transition process will probably retain some of the characteristics of the communist social structure. On the other hand, the changes in social stratification introduced by the transition process might have produced a greater similarity between the social structures of former communist societies and capitalist societies today than the similarity between communist societies and capitalist societies more than a decade ago.

I expect that while the Central and Eastern European social structures have gone through important transformations distancing them from the communist

patterns of social stratification, some elements of communist stratification might persist after the fall of communism. I hypothesize that there are three main processes that are influencing the transformations in the social structures in Central and Eastern Europe: the changing ideology (triggering changes in state policies and public attitudes), the gradual retreat of the state from the economy accompanied by the emergence of market mechanisms, and the rising importance of a new criterion of stratification (human capital).

The communist ideology has had a significant impact on the importance and hierarchy of social origins in Central and Eastern Europe. The ideology was abandoned after the fall of communism, and the state retreated from its previous role of regulating the impact of social origins in the status attainment process. As a result, the relationships between social origins and education, between social origins and occupation, and between social origins and income are expected to increase in Central and Eastern Europe, approaching the levels in Western capitalist societies.

Before the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, the state was actively engaged in keeping down the variation in income levels (thus diminishing the association between education and income), and in diminishing the wage differences across occupational categories (thus diminishing the association between occupation and income). In addition, the socialist states instituted strict policies of job distribution according to educational levels, causing an increase in the relationship between education and occupation. With the fall of communism, the state gradually retreats from its role of controlling income and job distribution, and market mechanisms begin to influence the relationships in the status attainment model. This is expected to lead to increases in the associations between education and income and occupation and income and to decreases in the relationship between education and occupation. Although state intervention after the fall of communism has decreased compared to previous levels during communism, the state in Central and Eastern Europe in 1999 was still involved in the economy, establishing minimum income levels, providing welfare, and financing the farming sector and certain industrial branches.

Given the decrease in the degree of state interventionism after the fall of the communism, but also the fact that state intervention in Central and Eastern Europe was still higher than in the U.S at the time of the analysis, the patterns of relationships between education and income, occupation and income, and education and occupation are expected to have diverged from the patterns existing during communism, without completely converging towards patterns in the U.S (the process might be labeled as semi-convergence).

The rise of education as the new most important criterion of stratification after 1989, replacing the political capital criterion of stratification characterizing the communist systems (Eyal et al., 1998) is likely to produce an increasing effect of education on income and an increasing effect of education on occupation.

Some of the relationships in the status attainment model are likely to change more rapidly than others, and the rate of change might differ according to age. For example, older people in 1999 are less likely to be affected by the change in the importance of social origins in the status attainment model, since their educational and occupational levels and their career tracks are already largely determined by the meaning of social origins during communism. The changes in the effects of social origins are instead more likely to affect the younger generations, people still pursuing their education and starting their first jobs after the fall of the communism. The full impact of the new meaning of social origins is thus likely to be seen around 2055, when the actively employed population will contain mostly individuals born after the fall of the communism. The changes in the relationships between education, occupation and income are likely to start affecting individual life courses more rapidly. Both older people and younger people might begin experiencing these changes, immediately after the fall of the communism. For younger people, however, the full extent of the changes in the relationships between education, occupation and income might be felt later on, due to the fact that after finishing school, an individual's social status is still undergoing changes, as people advance in their careers and get more work experience.

In sum, based on conceptualizing the changes in the status attainment model after 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe as being determined by changes in ideology, in the state role, and in the main criterion of social stratification, the empirical analysis examines the following hypotheses:

H1 – Due to changes in ideology, the effects of social origins on education, occupation, and income are likely to be similar in Central and Eastern Europe and in the U.S. in 1999, especially in the youngest age group.

H2 – The changes in the relationship between education and occupation are under opposed influences: the change in the criterion of stratification is likely to trigger an increase in the relationship (which was already higher during communism in Central and Eastern Europe), while the decrease in the degree of state interventionism is likely to trigger a decrease in the relationship (semi-convergence towards the US effect). The empirical analysis will explore whether the size of the effect in Central and Eastern Europe is similar to the size of the effect in the U.S.

H3 – Due to the combined impact of a change in the main criterion of stratification and a change in the degree of state interventionism, the effect of education on income is expected to be similar in Central and Eastern Europe and in the U.S, especially in the older age groups.

H4 – Due to the decrease in the degree of state interventionism, the effect of occupation on income is likely to have increased from previous levels during communism (especially in the older age groups), but it is expected to be lower than the effect in the U.S. (semi-convergence).

The data analysis will also explore the impact of the transition process on the balance between achieved and ascribed principles in social stratification. The communist regime, while trying to reduce both forms of inequality, had a greater success at diminishing ascribed inequality. Although ascribed inequality is likely to

increase after the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, achieved inequality is also likely to increase. Thus, the fifth hypothesis states:

H5 – The balance between achieved and ascribed inequality in Central and Eastern Europe is likely to remain inclined towards achieved inequality.

The primary goal of the analysis is to determine the degree of similarity between social structures in Central and Eastern Europe and the U.S. achieved in 1999, almost ten years after the fall of communism. A secondary goal is to examine the question of convergence of patterns in the status attainment model in the post-communist countries towards the pattern encountered in the U.S. The next sections present and interpret the results of the empirical models. I would like to make a final note, prior to the interpretation and discussion of results, related to pinpointing similarities and convergence trends among countries. I expect that while a general pattern of similarity of social structures in the Central and Eastern Europe might be visible in the data analysis results, due to similarities in their political and economic systems, the relationships in the status attainment model will not be uniform across all former communist countries. The experience of communism was different in these countries and at the moment of the fall of the communism these countries had different levels of development, marketization, and urbanization, making it likely that some unique trends exist in each of these countries. Also, in order to evaluate the amount of convergence over time between effect sizes in Central and Eastern Europe and the U.S. in the absence of strictly comparable empirical models regarding the effect sizes during communism, I will take as a reference point the published research and findings about status attainment during communism discussed earlier in this paper.

RESULTS²

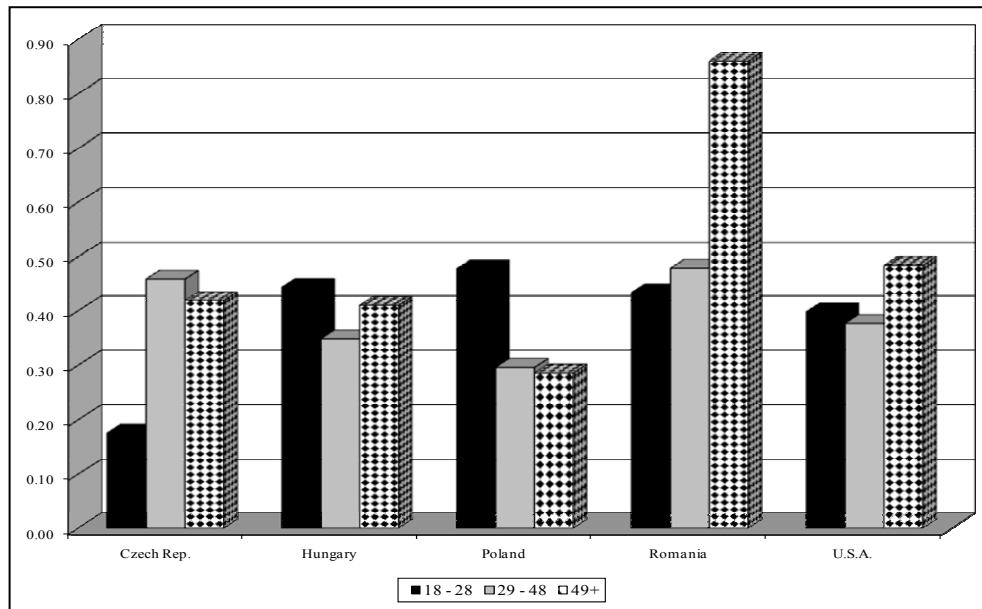
The status attainment model is estimated separately for each of the five countries in the study. Within each country, the three different age groups are treated as distinct groups, with the model estimated simultaneously for these groups. While patterns involving the social origins factor are expected to be more visible for the youngest age group (18–28), patterns involving the relationships between education, occupation and income are expected to be more visible in the oldest group (over 49).

An examination of the results of this study reveals that the effects in the middle age group, a group with mixed work experience under two different political and economic regimes, are often not at intermediate levels between the effects in the youngest and the oldest age groups. Because of the unique working experience of this age group, it is difficult to make interpretations about the relationships in the status attainment model for this category of the population. Consequently, the discussion of results will focus on patterns for the youngest and the oldest age groups, with less attention given to patterns in the middle age group.

² All of the effects between main interest variables (social origins, education, occupation, and income) discussed in this paper are effects in the presence of control variables. To avoid repetition, whenever effects are discussed, it will be implied, but not specifically stated, that the effects in question are estimated in the presence of control variables.

Figure 2

Unstandardized Direct Effects of Social Origins on Education, by Age Group and Country



Data Sources: *International Social Survey Programme, 1999 (ISSP, 2002)*; *Public Opinion Barometer, Romania, 1999 (POB, 1999)*.

The examination of the effects of social origins on education across countries does not reveal a clear pattern. In the oldest age group, the effect of social origins on education in the Czech Republic and Hungary is similar to the effect in the U.S. However, for the same age group (over 49), in Poland the effect is smaller than in the U.S., while in Romania it is much larger. In the youngest groups, the effects are much more similar across countries than in the oldest group (the effects in Hungary, Poland and Romania are similar to the U.S. levels – see Figure 2³). In Czech Republic, among the youngest age group, this effect is smaller, compared to the rest of the countries, probably closer to the pattern of reduced social origin effects that was hypothesized to exist during communism. With this exception, the results confirm part of the first hypothesis and suggest that, if the effect of social origins on education was indeed smaller during the communist regime in Central and Eastern European countries, it is increasing and approaching the U.S. levels during the transition to post-communism, and a convergence trend is already apparent among the youngest members of the employed population.

³ All the graphs in the paper present the effects that are not statistically significant with a 0 value. The actual value of the effects that are not statistically significant is shown in the tables associated with the graphs.

Table 2

Status Attainment Model Results (Direct Effects for Main Relationships), by Age Group and Country

	b	p	β	b	p	β	b	p	β	b	p	β	b	p	β
	Czech Republic			Hungary			Poland			Romania			U.S.A.		
Social Origins \rightarrow Education (SO \rightarrow E)															
Age: 18-28	0.176	***	0.336	0.444	***	0.490	0.478	***	0.539	0.434	***	0.497	0.398	***	0.568
	(.052)			(.094)			(.113)			(.074)			(.064)		
Age: 29-48	0.459	***	0.529	0.349	***	0.441	0.296	***	0.365	0.479	***	0.525	0.377	***	0.514
	(.041)			(.047)			(.050)			(.042)			(.046)		
Age: 49+	0.419	***	0.443	0.410	***	0.451	0.286	*	0.272	0.860	***	0.444	0.484	***	0.559
	(.058)			(.100)			(.114)			(.142)			(.086)		
Social Origins \rightarrow Occupation (SO \rightarrow O)															
Age: 18-28	0.303	**	0.287	0.206		0.137	0.174		0.135	0.024		0.019	0.143		0.111
	(.096)			(.124)			(.148)			(.097)			(.123)		
Age: 29-48	0.100		0.070	0.046		0.033	0.149	*	0.106	0.157	***	0.121	0.107		0.079
	(.062)			(.073)			(.071)			(.049)			(.082)		
Age: 49+	-0.022		-0.015	-0.019		-0.015	0.111		0.066	-0.035		-0.014	0.132		0.094
	(.071)			(.122)			(.143)			(.109)			(.137)		
Social Origins \rightarrow Income (SO \rightarrow I)															
Age: 18-28	0.088		0.144	-0.074		-0.092	0.043		0.066	-0.097		-0.098	0.037		0.110
	(.072)			(.099)			(.099)			(.101)			(.039)		
Age: 29-48	0.026		0.030	0.070		0.090	0.042		0.060	0.033		0.073	0.058		0.081
	(.046)			(.052)			(.045)			(.026)			(.045)		
Age: 49+	-0.043		-0.056	-0.171	*	-0.238	-0.020		-0.023	0.030		0.019	0.078		0.084
	(.048)			(.087)			(.092)			(.159)			(.089)		
Education \rightarrow Occupation (E \rightarrow O)															
Age: 18-28	0.819	***	0.406	1.126	***	0.675	0.484	***	0.332	0.877	***	0.607	0.625	***	0.341
	(.159)			(.122)			(.129)			(.095)			(.157)		
Age: 29-48	0.992	***	0.606	0.973	***	0.561	1.076	***	0.622	0.935	***	0.658	0.820	***	0.444
	(.065)			(.087)			(.082)			(.048)			(.095)		
Age: 49+	1.063	***	0.700	0.976	***	0.689	0.854	***	0.531	1.074	***	0.827	0.664	***	0.406
	(.072)			(.115)			(.126)			(.056)			(.130)		
Education \rightarrow Income (E \rightarrow I)															
Age: 18-28	-0.011		-0.009	0.278	*	0.314	0.087		0.119	-0.436	***	-0.384	0.040		0.082
	(.125)			(.125)			(.090)			(.120)			(.050)		
Age: 29-48	0.293	***	0.299	0.281	***	0.287	0.091		0.107	0.151	***	0.306	0.116	*	0.119
	(.058)			(.074)			(.064)			(.033)			(.057)		
Age: 49+	0.322	***	0.397	0.483	***	0.610	0.292	**	0.357	0.160		0.196	0.276	**	0.255
	(.066)			(.103)			(.098)			(.134)			(.088)		
Occupation \rightarrow Income (O \rightarrow I)															
Age: 18-28	0.135	*	0.234	0.093		0.176	0.159	*	0.315	0.388	***	0.495	0.033		0.124
	(.069)			(.074)			(.065)			(.080)			(.024)		
Age: 29-48	0.074	*	0.124	0.101	*	0.180	0.175	***	0.356	0.010		0.030	0.143	***	0.273
	(.033)			(.041)			(.036)			(.024)			(.027)		
Age: 49+	0.055		0.102	-0.018		-0.033	0.108		0.213	-0.060		-0.095	0.159	***	0.240
	(.040)			(.067)			(.064)			(.100)			(.043)		

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; b – unstandardized coefficients, β – standardized coefficients; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05.

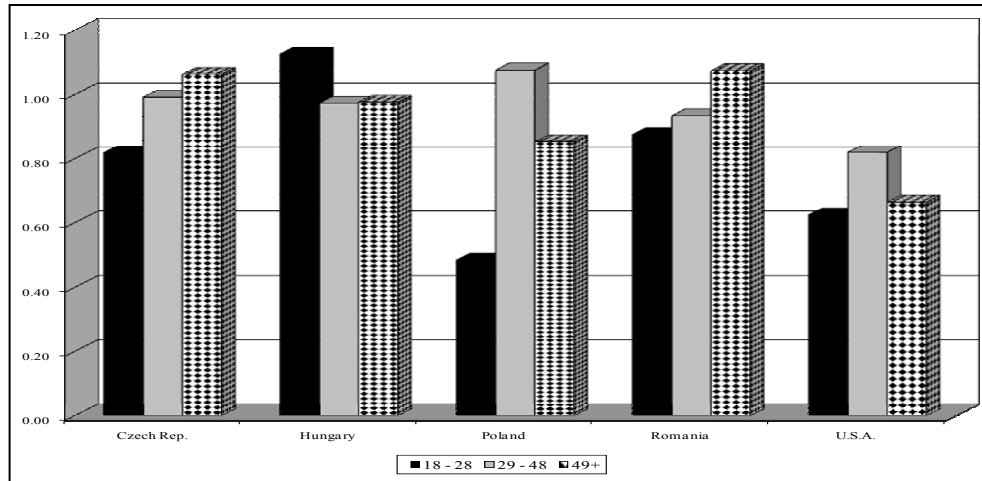
Data Sources: International Social Survey Programme, 1999 (ISSP, 2002); Public Opinion Barometer, Romania, 1999 (POB, 1999).

Most of the effects of social origins on occupation are not statistically significant in the model. In the youngest age groups, the effect of social origins on occupation is statistically non-significant across all countries, with the exception of the Czech Republic. In the oldest age groups, no statistically significant effects are encountered in any of the countries (see Table 2). These findings also contribute to a confirmation of the first hypothesis, stating the existence of similar effects of social origins in Central and Eastern European countries in their post-communist transition period and the U.S., especially among the youngest age groups.

A similar situation is encountered when examining the effects of social origins on income. With the exception of a statistically significant negative effect of social origins on income, in the oldest age group, in Hungary, the rest of the effects are not statistically significant across countries and across age groups (see Table 2). The negative effect in Hungary in the over 49 age group might be a result of the policies regarding social origins during the communist period, but since the effect is not encountered in any of the other former communist countries in the analysis, the interpretation is unclear. These findings confirm the last part of the first hypothesis and suggest that if any differences in the size of this effect existed during the communist period between these Central and Eastern European countries and the U.S., this is no longer the case ten years after the fall of the communism.

Figure 3

Unstandardized Direct Effects of Education on Occupation, by Age Group and Country

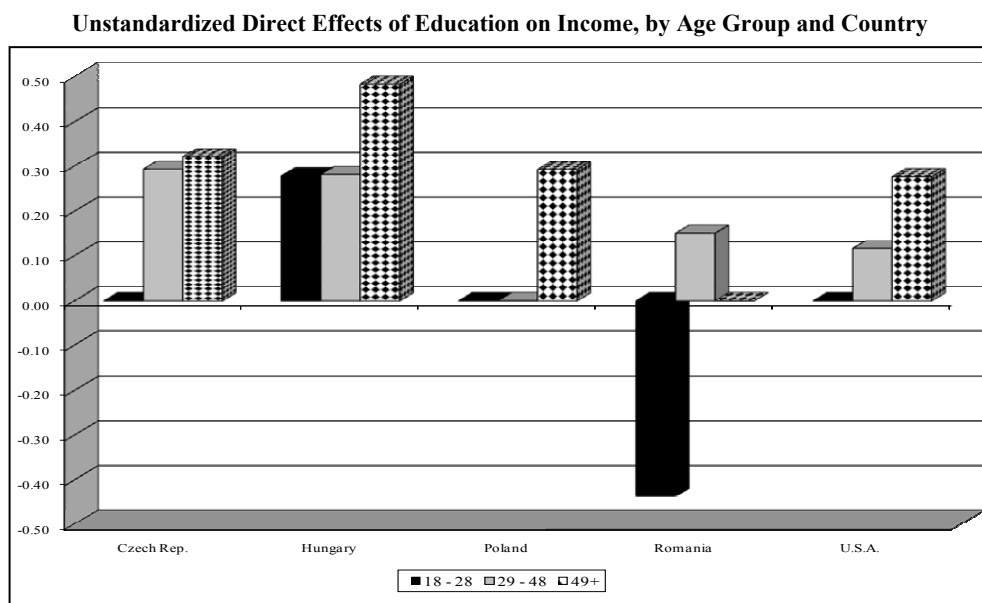


Data Sources: *International Social Survey Programme*, 1999 (ISSP, 2002); *Public Opinion Barometer, Romania*, 1999 (POB, 1999).

Figure 3 shows the unstandardized effects of education on occupation. In the oldest age group, the effects of education on occupation are higher in the Central and Eastern European countries than in the U.S. The same is true for the effects of

education on occupation in the middle age group. The impact of education on occupation in the youngest age groups is also higher in the former communist countries (with the exception of Poland) than in the U.S (see Figure 3). This particular pattern of effects suggests that the stronger relationship between education and occupation that has been theoretically attributed to communist societies (in comparison to Western capitalist societies) has survived ten years after the fall of communism and is somewhat resistant to trends of convergence, disconfirming the second hypothesis.

Figure 4



Data Sources: International Social Survey Programme, 1999 (ISSP, 2002); Public Opinion Barometer, Romania, 1999 (POB, 1999).

Figure 4 shows the unstandardized effects of education on income. People over 49 have similar or even higher income returns to their educational levels in Central and Eastern Europe than in the U.S (with the exception of Romania, where the effect is not statistically significant). Education brings the highest material rewards in the group aged over 49 in Hungary. A similar pattern is observed when examining the effects of education on income in the middle age group. With the exception of Poland, the effects are higher in Central and Eastern Europe than in the U.S. While during communism the effect of education on income was smaller in the Central and Eastern European countries, the 1999 data shows that for employed people over 29 years of age, the size of the effect in the former communist countries generally surpasses the size of the effect in US. In the youngest age group, in most of the countries analyzed here, the effect of education

on income is not statistically significant (Hungary and Romania diverge from this finding – the former with a statistically significant positive effect, and the latter with a statistically significant negative effect). The results support the third hypothesis, with an observable similarity in the size of this effect among the oldest age groups across countries.

This particular pattern is interesting, and suggests that the effect of education on income in Central and Eastern Europe is converging towards the U.S. effect, but rather for the middle and older age groups than for the youngest age group, where the patterns are more erratic. As proposed in the previous section of the article, it is possible that older people are more affected by this change than younger people, primarily because of an interaction between education and work experience (since younger people have less work experience, their educational levels are less rewarded than in the older age group).

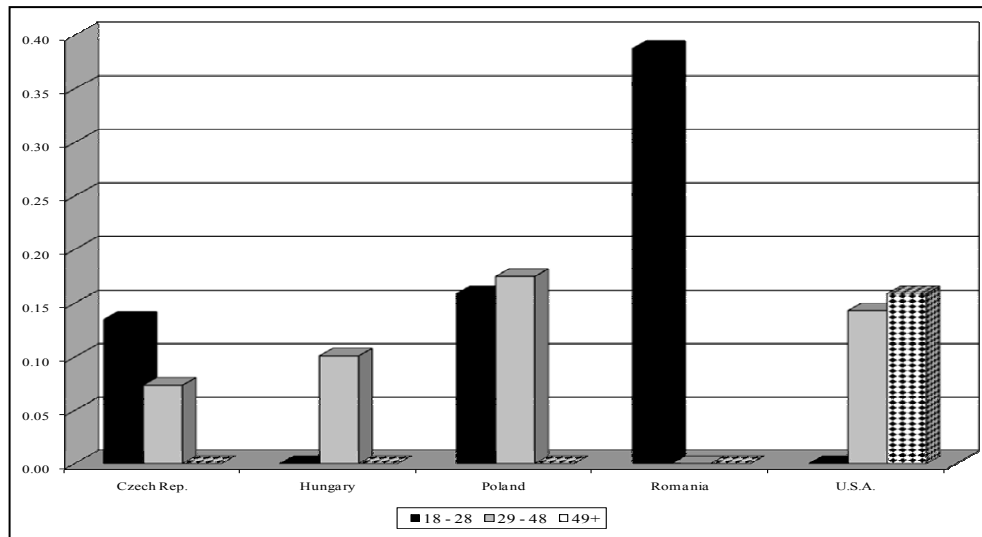
The examination of the effects of occupation on income in the oldest age groups across countries shows that the effect is the strongest in the U.S., while in all of the other Central and Eastern European countries it is not statistically significant. In the youngest age group, the pattern is reversed, with stronger relationships between occupation and income in the former communist countries (except Hungary) than the relationship in the U.S. (see Figure 5). These results help in the evaluation of the fourth hypothesis, which proposed that, while this effect might increase in size during the post-communist transition, it is still likely to be lower than the effect in the U.S. Whether this hypothesis is confirmed or disconfirmed depends on the size of the effect during communism. While previous research and theory proposed that communism acted to reduce this effect, in comparison to capitalist countries, it is unlikely that state socialist societies achieved a negative effect of occupation on income (keeping under control other influences in the status attainment model). Working with this assumption, the results here rather disconfirm the hypothesis of convergence of this effect during post-communism towards the U.S. effect size. In the oldest age group, where convergence was expected, the pattern of effect sizes is closer to what one would have expected during communism: a null effect in Central and Eastern European countries, and a statistically significant positive effect in the U.S.

In order to offer some insights into the question regarding the balance between achievement and ascription during post-communism in the status attainment model, I examined the hierarchy of the main effects in the model for each country, ordered from the most intense to the least intense. The hierarchy of effects in the model for the youngest age group shows a similar ordering of the two most intense effects in the U.S. and Poland. In these two countries, the most important effect is that of social origins on education, followed by the effect of education on occupation (see standardized coefficients in Table 2). In the rest of the countries, the hierarchy of the first two strongest effects is reversed, with the education – occupation relationships being the most powerful. In the 29 to 48 age group and in the oldest age group, the hierarchies of effects differentiate clearly

between a pattern in the U.S. and a common pattern in the former communist countries. For these two age groups, while the effect of social origins on education is the most important effect in the model for the U.S., the impact of education on occupation is the most powerful relationship in the models for the former communist countries (see standardized coefficients in Table 2). These findings suggest that in general, in the former communist countries examined here, during the post-communist transition the most sizeable link in the status attainment model is an achievement-type relationship, with ascription-type relationships being less sizeable. This goes along the lines of the predictions made by the fifth hypothesis.

Figure 5

Unstandardized Direct Effects of Occupation on Income by Age Group and Country



Data Sources: *International Social Survey Programme, 1999 (ISSP, 2002)*; *Public Opinion Barometer, Romania, 1999 (POB, 1999)*.

The R squared values for the regression equations predicting education are between approximately 0.20 and 0.46. The age comparison models in each country explain between 40% and 50% of the variation in occupational levels. In Romania, the R squared values associated with the regression equations predicting occupation are very high, especially in the 29 to 48 age group (0.63) and in the over 49 group (0.81). The model explains approximately 10% to 35% of the variation in income levels (see Table 4). The measures of model fit indicate a good fit of the models to the data (see Table 5), with TLI indices around 0.98, and RMSEA values within the conventional limit of adequate fit in all countries. The age comparison model for Hungary achieves perfect fit, according to the chi-square goodness-of-fit test, which is statistically non-significant at the 0.001 level.

Table 3

R Squared Values in the Status Attainment Models, by Age Group and Country

	Czech Rep.			Hungary			Poland			Romania			U.S.A.		
	18-28	29-48	49+	18-28	29-48	49+	18-28	29-48	49+	18-28	29-48	49+	18-28	29-48	49+
Education	0.201	0.282	0.234	0.269	0.210	0.225	0.355	0.291	0.260	0.296	0.338	0.468	0.320	0.283	0.349
Occupation	0.452	0.450	0.504	0.585	0.417	0.460	0.509	0.542	0.547	0.510	0.627	0.808	0.244	0.285	0.251
Income	0.200	0.296	0.310	0.243	0.288	0.366	0.192	0.325	0.364	0.220	0.206	0.097	0.102	0.293	0.364
Mother's education	0.289	0.421	0.480	0.536	0.436	0.662	0.484	0.557	0.776	0.723	0.634	0.474	0.612	0.390	0.458
Father's education	0.660	0.812	0.925	0.852	0.903	0.681	0.794	0.878	0.920	0.863	0.880	0.896	0.850	0.716	0.643
Father's occupation	0.648	0.570	0.473	0.564	0.573	0.574	0.546	0.520	0.429	0.622	0.596	0.406	0.470	0.436	0.360

Data Sources: *International Social Survey Programme*, 1999 (ISSP, 2002); *Public Opinion Barometer*, Romania, 1999 (POB, 1999).

Table 4

Model Fit for Status Attainment Models, for each Country

	Czech Rep.	Hungary	Poland	Romania	U.S.A.
Chi square	134.604	80.715	96.158	135.021	104.789
Degrees of freedom	48.000	48.000	48.000	48.000	48.000
P	0.000	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.000
Tucker-Lewis index	0.982	0.986	0.978	0.978	0.985
Parsimony adjusted CFI	0.289	0.290	0.289	0.289	0.290
RMSEA	0.043	0.036	0.045	0.043	0.038
P for test of close fit	0.899	0.963	0.736	0.894	0.983

Data Sources: *International Social Survey Programme*, 1999 (ISSP, 2002); *Public Opinion Barometer*, Romania, 1999 (POB, 1999).

In sum, the model results confirmed some of the similarities that were expected based on the theoretical framework of the model. More specifically, similarities across all countries examined here were apparent in regards to social origin effects on education, occupation, and income (especially in the youngest age group) and in regards to material returns to education (especially in the older age groups). However, the education – occupation relationship and the occupation – income relationship seem to be characterized by an inheritance of patterns theorized to be present during the communist regimes (in the older age groups).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The study examined the changes in the relationships among social status components almost ten years after the fall of the communism in Central and Eastern Europe. The empirical analysis focused on the results of a within age-groups, cross-country comparison model. The paper explored to what extent the transitions to post-

communism have brought the social structures in Central and Eastern European countries closer to the model in Western capitalist countries (more specifically, to the U.S. model), and to what extent communist patterns of social stratification are preserved after the fall of the communism. A theoretical framework combining elements of convergence theories, market transition theories and theories on the role of the state in the transition process was used in order to examine the differences and similarities in the status attainment process among countries. The empirical analysis has confirmed that, while some of the relationships in the status attainment model in 1999 have similar patterns in Central and Eastern Europe and the U.S., others reproduce the patterns found before the fall of the communism. At the same time, the results of the analyses showed that convergence trends of the Central and Eastern European effect sizes towards the U.S. effect sizes are limited to certain age groups.

The first hypothesis, according to which there is a similarity in the effects of social origins on education, occupation, and income between Central and Eastern Europe and the U.S., especially for the youngest group, was confirmed. In the youngest age group of employees, the effects of social origins on education in the former communist countries are generally at similar levels or even at higher levels than in the U.S. (Czech Republic constitutes an exception to this finding, though). Also in this group, the effects of social origins on occupation in Central and Eastern Europe are at similar levels compared to the effect in the U.S. (reflected in the absence of a statistically significant relationship) or even higher in the Czech Republic than in the U.S. The same is the case with the effect of social origins on income among the youngest employees in these samples (the effect is not statistically significant, in the presence of all other control variables in the model). These findings generally hold for the other age groups as well.

In general, the effects of social origins in the status attainment model seem to have increased compared to pre-transition levels (taking into account previous research findings), growing more similar to the effects found in the U.S. In the absence of state ideology and policies that benefited people coming from farming and manual worker families, social origins in Central and Eastern Europe seem to have become a more important resource in the status attainment process, with a growing impact on educational achievement.

The second hypothesis was limited to pinpointing the opposing influences of changes in the criterion of stratification and changes in the role of the state in the economy on the relationship between education and occupation. The empirical data analysis showed that the relationship is still characterized by higher levels in Central and Eastern Europe than in the U.S. This pattern is reproduced in all of the three age groups, with small exceptions (only in the youngest group in Poland the effect is smaller than in the same age group in the U.S.). It is hard to determine based on the available data which of the two processes mentioned earlier has a greater impact on trends in the association between education and occupation. Whatever the mix of effects on the relationship between education and occupation, the empirical data showed that the relationships in Central and Eastern Europe are still different from the U.S. level, preserving the pattern existent during communism. The factors affecting the

education – occupation relationship during the transition process might, in fact, lead to divergence, rather than convergence (i.e. the increasing impact of education in social stratification is likely to keep the relationship at high levels in the future).

The third hypothesis stated that the effect of education on income in former communist countries is likely to increase, compared to pre-transition levels, and to approach the levels of the effect in the U.S. The pattern was expected to be apparent especially in the older age groups. The empirical analysis confirmed the existence of similar effects in 1999 for these age groups (29–48 and over 49 years of age), showing similar or even higher levels in Central and Eastern Europe, compared to the U.S. (with the exception of Poland – among the middle age group and Romania – among the oldest age group). Speaking in terms of a decomposition (during communism) and recomposition (during the post-communist transition) of social status, this finding also suggests that if this link in the status attainment model was loosened in Central and Eastern European countries compared to the U.S. during communism, this relationship is likely to undergo a recomposition during the post-communist transition.

The fourth hypothesis predicted that, while convergence trends might affect the occupation – income relationship, especially in the older age groups, the size of the effect is likely to still be smaller in Central and Eastern Europe than in the U.S., due to the continuing role of the state in former communist countries in regulating the public sector. The trend of convergence, if existent, was expected to be more visible in the oldest age group. The analysis results disconfirmed the expectation that convergence is more likely in the oldest age group. In fact, divergence is the general trend characterizing the impact of occupation on income in all age groups. In the older age group, the impact of occupation on income is not statistically significant in Central and Eastern Europe, while it is positive and statistically significant in the U.S. In the younger age group, the situation is in general reversed, with a statistically non-significant effect in the U.S. and positive and statistically significant effects in the former communist countries. The pattern revealed by the analyses regarding this relationship in the oldest age group is that of an inheritance of the differences between communist and capitalist social stratification.

Finally, the fifth hypothesis predicted that the balance between achieved and ascribed inequality in Central and Eastern Europe is likely to remain inclined towards achieved inequality. The hierarchy of the most sizeable effects in the estimated status attainment models provides some support for this hypothesis, placing an achievement-type relationship (the effect of education on occupation) as the most sizeable direct effect in the status attainment model in the four Central and Eastern European countries, in opposition to the situation in the U.S., where the most sizeable effect is an ascription-type relationship (the effect of social origins on education).

In sum, the empirical analysis suggested that convergence trends do exist, at least for some of the relationships in the status attainment model, and that the transformation of the social stratification is not uniform (neither across countries, nor across relationships, nor across age groups). Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland seem to be closer to the U.S. status attainment model than Romania. At the same time, the social origins – education, social origins – occupation, social origins – income, and

education – income relationships seem to have had a more rapid convergence towards U.S. levels than the other relationships in the model. The education – occupation and occupation – income relationships are reminding of the patterns existing during communism. These two effects may be inherited from the previous period, and undergoing a slower convergence process, or they might be influenced by transition processes that will widen the gap between these effects in Central and Eastern Europe and effects in the U.S. Also, the change in the relationship between social origins and education is mainly affecting the youngest age groups, while the change in the relationship between education and income is mainly affecting older age groups.

The patterns of relationships in the status attainment model in the comparison between the four former communist countries and the U.S. offered support for the market transition theories of social stratification, confirming that education is becoming more important as a criterion of stratification (education has similar-sized effects or even higher effects in the post-communist countries, compared to the U.S.). The study has also shown that elements of the market transition theories may be combined with elements from convergence theories and theories regarding the role of the states in transition economies to predict the trends in the status attainment process after the fall of communism.

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Articolul analizează schimbările care au loc în relațiile dintre componentele statutului social, la aproape zece ani după căderea comunismului în Europa Centrală și de Est. Regimurile comuniste au schimbat relațiile implicate în procesul de realizare de status, producând diferențe față de relațiile întâlnite de obicei în țările vestice capitaliste. Datorită influenței ideologiei și politicilor comuniste și datorită caracteristicilor economiei de comandă, influența originilor sociale asupra statutului social dobândit a fost redusă, efectele educației și ocupației asupra venitului au fost diminuate, iar relația dintre educație și ocupație era, în general, mai puternică în societățile socialiste, în comparație cu societățile vestice capitaliste. Odată cu căderea comunismului, unele dintre constrângerile pe care regimurile comuniste le-au exercitat asupra stratificării sociale au dispărut. Este de așteptat ca acest proces să genereze schimbări în procesul de realizare de status. Articolul investighează, de asemenea, gradul în care tranzițiile la post-comunism au adus stratificarea socială din țările din Europa Centrală și de Est mai aproape de modelul din țările vestice capitaliste și gradul în care patternurile comuniste de stratificare socială s-au păstrat după căderea comunismului.

Cuvinte-cheie: realizare de status, Europa Centrală și de Est, stratificare și inegalitate în societățile socialiste, stratificare și inegalitate în societățile post-comuniste.