

# Occupational Status and the Experience of Anger

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Current theories in the sociology of emotions posit contradictory expectations regarding the relationship between status and the relative experience of anger, with some predicting a negative relationship and others proposing a positive one. We test the compatibility of these opposing hypotheses by examining the relationship between anger and a key dimension of socioeconomic status – the occupational status score of an individual's occupation – for a representative sample of Americans. We connect different strands of theory and research in the social psychology of emotions to posit a non-linear relationship between occupational status and the experience of anger. Analyses of data from the 1996 General Social Survey's emotions module (N = 1460) are consistent with this integrative account. Individuals located at the two opposite ends of the status and prestige hierarchy are more likely to experience anger than those of middle status. We use insight from Blau's macro-structural theory to help elucidate this complex relationship.

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How is emotional experience shaped by an individual's location in the power and prestige order? This question, while central to early work in the sociology of emotion (Collins 1975, 1990; Gordon 1990; Hochschild 1975, 1979, 1983; Kemper 1978; Kemper and Collins 1990), has received relatively little empirical attention recently (but see Schieman 2003; Simon and Nath 2004; Turner and Stets 2005 for a detailed theoretical treatment). This is unfortunate, because the link between emotion and patterns of interaction across structural positions, and the role that emotion has in the maintenance of social structures, are, in our view, the primary contributions and promise of a sociological approach to the study of emotion.

In this article, we open a path in this direction by focusing on the relatively under-examined link between occupational status (Hauser and Warren 1997) and anger, an emotion that has been prominently studied in social psychological research (Collins 1990; Hegtvedt 1990; Johnson, Ford and Kaufman 2000; Lovaglia and Houser 1996; Ridgeway and Johnson 1990; Shelly 2004; Stets 2004; Stets and Harrod 2004).

While the study of emotion and the study of structural patterns of stratification have, to date, remained largely separate enterprises, we see many ways in which

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these two research streams can complement each other. On the one hand, a focus on emotional experience as it relates to patterns of micro-interaction can help refocus the study of status attainment and class (Grusky and Sørensen 1998), a tradition focused on large scale patterns of sorting into different positions (Blau and Duncan 1967; Featherman and Houser 1978). On the other hand, precisely because studies of micro-interaction sometimes lose focus of how the outcomes produced in those local settings feed back into the larger structure (Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1994; Smith-Lovin 2003), linking emotional experiences with occupational standing might clarify how this process operates outside of the controlled laboratory settings often used in research on status and emotion.

We focus on anger because it is both an important product of, and contributor to, the maintenance and transformation of large scale patterns of inequality and stratification (Collins 1990). Anger has been the focus of detailed empirical and theoretical treatment in both the structural social psychology of small groups (Lovaglia and Houser 1996; Ridgeway and Johnson 1990) and more macro-oriented analyses of the link between emotion and social structure (Collins 1975; Turner 2002). In spite of all of the attention that anger has received, the relationship between anger and status remains ambiguous at best.

In what follows, we specify both the expected relationship between status and anger and the mechanisms that may help explain that association. We draw from research on emotion rules (Hochschild 1990; Thoits 1990), perceptions of control (Mirowsky and Ross 1990), status organizing processes (Ridgeway and Johnson 1990; Shelly 2004) and structural-relational theories of emotional experience (Collins 1990; Johnson, Ford and Kaufman 2000; Kemper 1978; Kemper and Collins 1990), while also taking into account an important implication of Blau's (1977) macro-structural theory, to explore the possibility of a curvilinear relationship between status and anger.

## **Anger and Status: Divergent Perspectives**

### *The Compatibility Hypothesis*

Status and emotion are generally thought to be compatible. That is, the higher one's status, the more positive their emotion (Shelly 2004). Research and theory substantiate this view. For example, Lovaglia and Houser (1996) show that high status is compatible with positive emotion because it leads to higher degrees of influence and positive evaluations from others. Low status, on the other hand, is likely to be associated with negative emotion (especially anger) as lowered status decreases interpersonal influence and forecloses opportunities for advancement and personal enhancement (Conway, DiFazio and Mayman 1999; Lucas and Lovaglia 1998). Those of low status are more likely to be chronically situated in "aversive environments" that produce anger as a response (Agnew 1997; Berkowitz 1982) or to experience a chronic state of under-reward for contributions, which fosters feelings of anger and distress (Hegtvedt 1990). Furthermore, low status in-

dividuals are more likely to experience feelings of “helpless anger” (Scheff 1986:74) because they are situated in disadvantageous structural conditions.

In addition to these structural dynamics, any positive correlation between status and the experience of anger is likely partially driven by the extent to which individuals occupying status positions abide by rules that either discourage or promote the public expression of negative socio-emotional behavior (Hochschild 1975, 1979, 1983, 1990). Individuals draw on emotion rules as they work over and direct their subjective interpretation of events. Engaging in surface and deep acting manages both emotional expression and the physiological arousal caused by certain social situations, helping ensure that individuals adopt culturally appropriate feelings and emotional behavior.

Hochschild (1979:572) connects emotion management to employment and argues that more emotion work occurs in settings where it is a worker’s job to “make and sustain meaning.” While the original focus of the work on emotion management centered on the service sector, there is increasing attention to other occupations where concerns with maintaining professionalism lead those of middle and upper classes to carefully manage their demeanor, including often suppressing negative emotion (Lively 2000). With parents’ child-rearing so closely tied to employment experiences (Kohn 1963), these middle- and upper-class parents are more likely to encourage children to engage in emotion work than working class parents. Therefore, with an emotion rule that discourages negative emotion, status should be negatively related to anger (Hochschild 1979, 1983; Smith-Lovin 1995; C. Stearns and P. Stearns 1986; P. Stearns and C. Stearns 1985).

Considering this research alone, the association between increasing status and the experience of anger is expected to be negative, with individuals of lower status the most likely to experience anger. Nevertheless, focusing on other, more interaction-centered, research (Collins 1990; Ridgeway and Johnson 1990) suggests that high status individuals experience more situation-specific and episodic anger than those of lower status, resulting in a more complex relationship between status and anger.

### *The Emotion-Domination Link Hypothesis*

Insofar as anger can be considered an emotion that signals mastery and domination over others, there are reasons to expect that high status may also be positively linked to the experience of anger. The observation that higher status members of groups are more likely to produce negative socio-emotional behavior (actions accompanied by external signals of emotional arousal) in the context of task groups is evident in the seminal experiments of Bales and Slater (1955). As Ridgeway and Johnson (1990:1192-1193) point out, “task leadership requires disagreement with and negative evaluation of others... [as a result] negative socio-emotional behavior is more common from high status members than from low status ones.”

The primary mechanism offered to explain the association between high status and negative socio-emotional behavior in task groups concerns the higher

performance expectations held by high-status individuals. These expectations lead high-status individuals to consider their behavior more legitimate and to value their contributions over those of lower-status group members. In addition, high-status individuals may feel angry and frustrated if they perceive themselves as strong and see others as interfering, not following instructions that were given, or not showing proper respect (Conway, DiFazio and Mayman 1999).

Research on emotion that draws on attribution theory suggests that when high-status individuals encounter socio-environmental triggers that lead to frustration they are less likely to assume responsibility for that state of affairs and more likely to blame others (Turner 2002). This leads to a higher likelihood of experiencing the negative emotion of anger instead of shame (Scheff 1988) or sadness. This is particularly true when interacting with lower-status alters (Lively 2000). As Ridgeway and Johnson (1990:1198) observe: When high-status individuals (in the context of task groups) attribute “disagreement from another to that other, they are likely to experience anger and be inclined to express negative socio-emotional behavior toward the other.”

Collins’ (1990) Interaction Ritual Model of emotional dynamics is similar to this account. According to Collins, high-status individuals are more likely to have a chain of interaction rituals that raises their emotional energy levels and lowers those of their lesser-status interaction partners. High emotional energy then leads to the experience of anger when faced with an obstacle (Collins 1990). Consistent with this, Sloan (2004) finds that members of high-status occupations are more likely to experience (and subsequently express) anger directly toward an interpersonal target during social interaction at work. In line with Collins’ domination hypothesis, she finds that “high status workers most frequently reported experiencing anger at work due to the behavior of others that interfered with their own endeavors.” (Sloan 2004:65)

According to Identity Control Theory, negative emotion arises out of the failure to confirm identity expectations during interaction (Cast and Burke 2002). Because high-status individuals are likely to have their identities confirmed during everyday interaction (Stets 2004; Stets and Harrod 2004), the specific situations when their high-status identities fail to be confirmed are especially salient, meaning they are more likely to report such instances, and these situations produce intense negative emotion. This negative emotional arousal is elevated when “the source of the disconfirmation is a *low status other*.” (Stets 2004:53, italics added) In other words, while any failure to confirm identity expectations in interaction produces negative emotion, such failures are particularly salient and distressing for those of high status and when the source of the anger-producing experience is a low-status other.

In contrast to the “compatibility hypothesis,” which suggests a negative relationship between status and anger, these theoretical perspectives suggest that in certain situations, especially those involving interaction with low-status alters (Lively 2000; Ridgeway and Johnson 1990; Sloan 2004; Stets 2004; Stets and

Harrod 2004), high status should be positively connected to anger. The gist of this second perspective is that among the “negative” emotions, anger in particular will be experienced by those of high status whenever an interactional challenge to their privileged position arises on the part of formal subordinates or others perceived as lower status (Collins 1990; Shelly 2004).<sup>1</sup>

### An Integrative Account

Of course, according to the emotional domination model outlined above, the effect of these anger-inducing encounters on the relationship between status and anger partly depends on the frequency of status-dissimilar interactions. If high-status individuals almost never came into contact with lower-status alters, the set of mechanisms highlighted above would never be activated, and we might expect a simple linear negative association between status and anger as suggested by the compatibility hypothesis. However, Blau’s (1977) and Ridgeway and Balkwell’s (1997) formulation regarding the macro-structural distribution of encounters suggests that high-status individuals might possess, by virtue of their position in the social structure, a higher likelihood of having encounters with low-status alters – the type of interactions most likely to result in the experience of anger.

From this perspective, individuals on the top rung of the status ladder, as a relative minority group, should be structurally more likely to experience encounters with individuals of lower status who comprise a relative majority (Ridgeway and Balkwell 1997). Thus, higher status leads to a higher likelihood of encounters with lower-status alters and these encounters increase the probability of the experience of anger on the part of the high-status member through the proximate situational and interactional mechanisms of status loss (Kemper 1978), status challenge (Collins 1990; Ridgeway and Johnson 1990) and identity disconfirmation (Stets 2004).

Therefore, we suggest that after a certain threshold of status is crossed, the point at which those of high status become a minority in relation to the rest of the population, high-status individuals begin to acquire a higher likelihood of experiencing status-dissimilar encounters in which they occupy the dominant position. As status continues to increase, the anger-eliciting effect of status-dissimilar encounters – the “ecology of encounters” (Ridgeway 2000) – begins to outweigh the negative first-order effect on the experience of anger (the compatibility perspective). If the above is correct we should expect the experience of anger to be unevenly distributed in the status hierarchy, with those at the extreme low and high ends more likely to feel anger than those in the middle:

Hypothesis 1: Individuals located at the extreme ends of the occupational status hierarchy are more likely to experience frequent feelings of anger than those in the middle.

## Explanatory Mechanisms

The mechanisms that produce increasing feelings of anger should be different for the groups at the extremes. While the first-order negative effect should be explained by trans-situational factors such as adherence to emotion rules and a sense of control over life events, the second-order positive effect is purely structural and should be explained by the higher likelihood of high-status individuals to have had a recent anger-eliciting interaction. The data allow us to test for the possible intervening role of two broad classes of explanatory mechanisms implicated in the former set of processes: perceptions of control (Mirowsky and Ross 1990, 1991) and emotion rules (Hochschild 1979, 1983). Controlling for these should therefore partially account for any relationship between occupational status and anger.

### *Perceptions of Control*

Gecas (1989) suggests that most sociological research on individuals' beliefs about causality is systematically related to social structure, as one's sense of control is often attributed to an efficacy building middle and upper-class workplace (Kohn 1963). Not surprisingly, "along with the various undesirable consequences of lower income, poorer education, poorer work conditions and more uncertain employment status... [an] absence of control is one of the 'hidden injuries' of social class." (Gecas 1989:304) Status is important to perceptions of control because of its relation to the opportunities for action afforded to individuals (Mirowsky and Ross 1990).

From this perspective, the feeling of anger is usually triggered by some form of frustration or inability to control the external physical or social environment (Agnew 1997; Kemper 1978). If this account is correct, we should expect that:

Hypothesis 2a: As occupational status increases, the concomitant sense of control increases.

Hypothesis 2b: Sense of control should partially explain any negative association between the experience of anger and occupational status.

Thus, perceptions of control should stand as a reasonable intervening factor which may help explain a negative association between occupational status and anger.

### *Adherence to Emotion Rules*

A second plausible mechanism in the negative relationship between status and anger is that high-status individuals are more likely to abide by emotion rules that encourage anger suppression. According to Stearns and Stearns (1986) these types of anger-reducing emotion rules became institutionalized in the upper-middle class following the 19th century separation of home from the workplace. From

this point of view, internalization of cultural codes that restrict negative emotion leads high-status individuals to engage in “deep” management (Hochschild 1979, 1983) of their emotional reactions in potentially anger-producing settings, ultimately decreasing the likelihood of experiencing anger. If this is correct, we should expect that:

Hypothesis 3a: Persons of high occupational status should be more likely than persons of low occupational status to report agreement with an emotion rule that encourages the suppression of negative emotion

Furthermore, we should find that:

Hypothesis 3b: Holding constant allegiance to specific rules that regulate the expression of anger should partially explain any negative association between the experience of anger and occupational status.

### *Ecology of Encounters*

While the higher probability of persons of low occupational status to experience negative emotion are tied to chronic and durable features of low-status positions such as lower perceptions of control and lower adherence to emotion rules governing the suppression of negative emotion, the higher likelihood of those of high occupational status to experience negative emotions is tied to more situational features of their interactional ecology. Data limitations preclude us from directly testing all of the empirical implications of this second-order effect. Most importantly, we cannot directly demonstrate that the ecology of encounters of high-status individuals is biased in the way that we propose. However, with the data at hand, we can use suggestive indirect evidence to explore the salience, recency and target of the anger-producing events for high-status individuals to hone in on the potential of the “ecology of encounters” argument.

### **Data and Variables**

We test our hypotheses using data from the 1996 General Social Survey (N = 1460). The GSS is administered biannually by the National Opinion Research Center to a nationally representative sample of non-institutionalized, English-speaking, American adults. The 1996 wave included an emotions module with questions regarding the respondents’ recent experience of several emotions.<sup>2</sup> A portion of the emotions module was dedicated to asking respondents about anger, focusing in particular on the target of the feelings of anger and whom they held responsible for the situation that occasioned the anger (self or other person). Respondents were also asked about various ways to cope with the anger

(cognitively, behaviorally, etc.) and their attitudes toward emotional expression and the public management of emotion.

*Dependent Variable: The Experience of Anger*

The experience of anger is measured with a series of questions that asked respondents to report “On how many days in the past 7 days have you... (felt a certain emotion)?” We constructed a single “number of angry days in the past week” variable by taking the maximum response from either of two items asking respondents whether they had “felt angry at something or someone,” and had “felt mad at something or someone.” The variable has a mean of 1.85 and a standard deviation of 2.00, and ranges from a minimum of zero days in the past to a possible maximum of seven days. The distribution of respondents across this variable is skewed, following a slightly over-dispersed Poisson distribution, with 57 percent of individuals in the 0 to 1 range, and 73 percent in the 0 to 2 interval (thus the median of about one day per week having experienced anger is much more indicative of the emotional history of the modal individual than the mean).

*Independent Variable: Occupational Status*

As Hauser and Warren (1997), Hauser (1998) and Miech et al. (2003) point out, occupational status is an important component of overall socioeconomic status. Occupational status thus serves as a shorthand summary for those characteristics of a person’s social position that determines his or her capacity to create and access valued material and social resources. Occupational status is also highly correlated with widely recognized symbolic indicators of social standing (Hope 1982). Occupational status thus serves to link an individual’s position within markets for material resources with membership in exclusive groups of acquaintance and sociability (Bourdieu 1986; Weber 1994). Empirical research tends to support the notion of occupational status as a distinct component of socioeconomic status, which contributes predictive power net of income and education in models predicting a host of important outcomes, including those associated with health (Dahl 1994) and social connectivity (Lin 2001).

Hauser and Warren (1997) and Hauser (1998) show that whether we use one or the other of the two most commonly specified components of occupational status – occupational *education* or occupational *earnings* – leads to very different substantive conclusions in everyday practice. They suggest that the use of a weighted measure incorporating both education and economic indicators is “scientifically obsolete” and note that future research interested in using occupational status as a predictor of a given outcome should not combine them into an omnibus SES measure. Separating these two indicators of occupational status when looking at their effects on a given outcome is therefore the more appropriate analytic strategy because they tend to yield different information about the underlying cultural and material resources of interest (Miech et al. 2003).



The bulk of evidence suggests that occupational *education* is a more valid (in terms of criterion validity) indicator of occupational standing when it comes to most outcomes of interest to sociologists, including intergenerational mobility (Hauser and Warren 1997) and health outcomes (Miech and Hauser 2001). As Hauser (1998:8, italics added) concludes, “one can plausibly regard occupational education as *the central dimension* of intergenerational occupational stratification and specify occupational prestige and occupational income each as weak indicators of that construct.” Consistent with this line of research, we should expect occupational education to be a more consistent predictor of emotional experience than occupational earnings.

We follow Hauser and Warren (1997) and Miech et al. (2003) in using two separate scalar indicators of occupational rank. As already noted, one scale ranks occupations according to empirically observed levels of education of individuals holding that title, and the other ranks occupations according to typical earnings in that occupation. More specifically, occupational education is the percentage of an occupation’s incumbents in the total labor force who had one or more years of college education as reported in the 1990 U.S. Census, and occupational earnings is the percentage of incumbents in the total labor force who earned \$14.30 or more per hour in 1989 (Hauser and Warren 1997).<sup>3</sup> Occupational earnings and occupational education were transformed into started logits (Hauser and Warren 1997). Given  $p$  as the percentage of respondents above a threshold level, the started logit transformation =  $\ln[(p + 1)/(100 - p + 1)]$ .<sup>4</sup>

### *Intervening Mechanisms*

#### *Adherence to Emotion Rules*

We use one item to measure allegiance to emotion rules regarding anger: “When I’m angry I let people know.” Respondents were asked to choose from a five-point Likert scale that ranged from “strongly agree” (1) to “strongly disagree” (5) with “neither agree nor disagree” as the midpoint (3). These types of statements are consonant with Hochschild’s (1990:122) conceptualization of emotion rules that “[refer] specifically to the display or masking of feeling.” Because higher scores indicate that respondents are less likely to report expressing anger to others, higher levels of this ordinal variable indicate increasing levels of allegiance to the “anger-suppression” emotion rule characteristic of middle-class Americans (Stearns and Stearns 1985). We should thus expect this variable to have a negative effect on the frequency of anger experience.

#### *Sense of Control*

The sense of control variable is the estimated regression score for the first factor (Eigenvalue = 2.32, proportion of variance accounted for = 58%) extracted from a principal components factor analysis of the polychoric correlation matrix of the four variables that comprise Mirowsky and Ross’s (1991) sense of control scale

(Cronbach's  $\alpha = .68$ ): (1. "Most of my problems are due to bad breaks," (2. "The really good things that happen to me are mostly luck," (3. "I have little control over the bad things that happen to me," and (4. "There's no sense planning a lot – if something good is going to happen, it will.")<sup>5</sup> Higher values on the predicted factor indicate higher levels of perceived control over life events.

### *Control Variables*

Gender, which has been shown to influence the frequency, intensity and experience of anger, with women scoring higher on all (Haukkala 2002; Simon and Nath 2004; Thomas 2002), is coded (1) if the respondent is a woman and (0) for men. Race, which has been linked to feelings of anger with the external attribution of prejudice against members of minority groups (Wong 1996), is a three-category variable designating whites, blacks and "other." Dummy-variable coding uses "white" as the reference category. Previous research (Birditt and Fingerman 2003; Schieman 2003) found that adolescents and young adults are more likely to experience and express more anger while older respondents are less likely to experience potent emotions such as anger (Lively and Heise 2004), so we also controlled for age and the square of age in years.

## Results

### *Poisson vs. Negative Binomial Model*

Because the dependent variable is a count of the number of days having felt angry or mad in the past week, we use models appropriate for this type of limited dependent variable (Long 1997). Preliminary analyses showed that the Poisson Model was not appropriate for these data, due to the presence of over-dispersion. A likelihood ratio test of the assumption of conditional mean-variance equality rejected the null-hypothesis of equidispersion ( $\chi^2 = 430.33, p < .01$ ) for a model predicting frequency of anger experience using occupational educational education, race, gender and age. We followed standard practice in this case by fitting a Negative Binomial Regression Model instead of a Poisson Model. The NBR Model accounts for over-dispersion through the incorporation of an extra gamma-distributed parameter which allows the expected variance of the dependent variable to be different from its expected mean (relaxing the Poisson assumption of equi-dispersion).

### *Effect of Occupational Education vs. Occupational Earnings*

Hypothesis 1 suggests that the association between status and the experience of anger is not linear but parabolic (Stolzenberg 1980). Models 1 and 2 in Table 1 show the regression results for the model corresponding to the parabolic specification of the effects of occupational education and occupational earnings. As shown in Model 1, the results are clearly consistent with the composite model (Hypothesis 1) when using occupational education as our indicator of occupational status. The effect of occupational status on the frequency of anger experience is non-linear

with the maximum-likelihood estimate for the linear effect of status being less than zero ( $\beta_1 = -.078, p < .05$ ) and the corresponding estimate for the quadratic effect being more than zero ( $\beta_2 = .026, p < .05$ ). This pattern of results suggests that the expected distribution of the frequency of anger experience across the linear occupational status dimension should be a parabola with the “U” shape (Stolzenberg 1980). Had we limited ourselves to a linear specification of the occupational education effect, we would have erroneously concluded that there are no differences among individuals in different socioeconomic strata in the experience of anger ( $p = .20$  for the status coefficient in the linear specification).

Model 2 shows the results obtained using the same parabolic specification of the occupational status effect as in Model 1, but this time using occupational earnings as our indicator of occupational status. The results show that this variable has no statistically discernable impact on the experience of anger, although the coefficients are in the expected direction ( $\beta_1 = -.026, p < .57; \beta_2 = -.019, p < .50$ ). These divergent results are consistent with previous research that shows occupational education to be a more valid indicator of occupational status than is occupational earnings (Hauser and Warren 1997; Hauser 1998). This adds confidence to our claim that it is something associated with overall social status (rather than income or possession of material resources) that generates the observed correlation between social position and emotional experience. In the rest of the analyses we therefore limit ourselves to the relationship between occupational education and emotion-related outcomes.

To provide a more concrete picture of the magnitude of the estimated effects of occupational education on the frequency of angry feelings, as well as a tangible representation of the substantive meaning of the parabolic effect described above, Figure 1 shows a line plot of the expected number of days in a typical week an individual (white male, at the mean age of 45 years, and of average status) experienced feelings of anger. While respondents at the extreme ends of occupational education, either of high status (e.g., physician) or low status (e.g., janitors), are expected to experience anger about two and half days per week on average, for respondents toward the middle of the distribution (such as teacher’s aides) this number drops to about 1.8. As shown by the simulated confidence intervals around the coefficient estimates (King, Tomz and Wittenberg 2000), high- and low-status respondents are statistically more likely to experience anger compared to middle-status respondents, but are indistinguishable from one another. This expected weekly difference becomes substantial when we project it toward longer stretches in time: in a given year, respondents at the top and the bottom of the status ladder are expected to experience anger 36 more days on average than middle-status respondents.

### *Occupational Status, Emotion Rules and Perceived Sense of Control*

To explore the relationship between occupational status and (1. adherence to emotion rules that regulate the experience of anger and (2. sense of control as possible

mechanisms behind the (negative) association between occupational status and the experience of anger, we first specified an ordered logit regression equation with the ordinal variable indexing adherence to an emotion rule that restricts the public display of anger to others (Model 3). We then specified an OLS regression equation with the sense of control principal factor score as the dependent variable (Model 4). All of the models include occupational education as the main predictor and age, gender, and race as controls.

As shown in Model 3 of Table 1, we find that, consistent with Hochschild (1979) and work in the history of emotions and social class in the United States

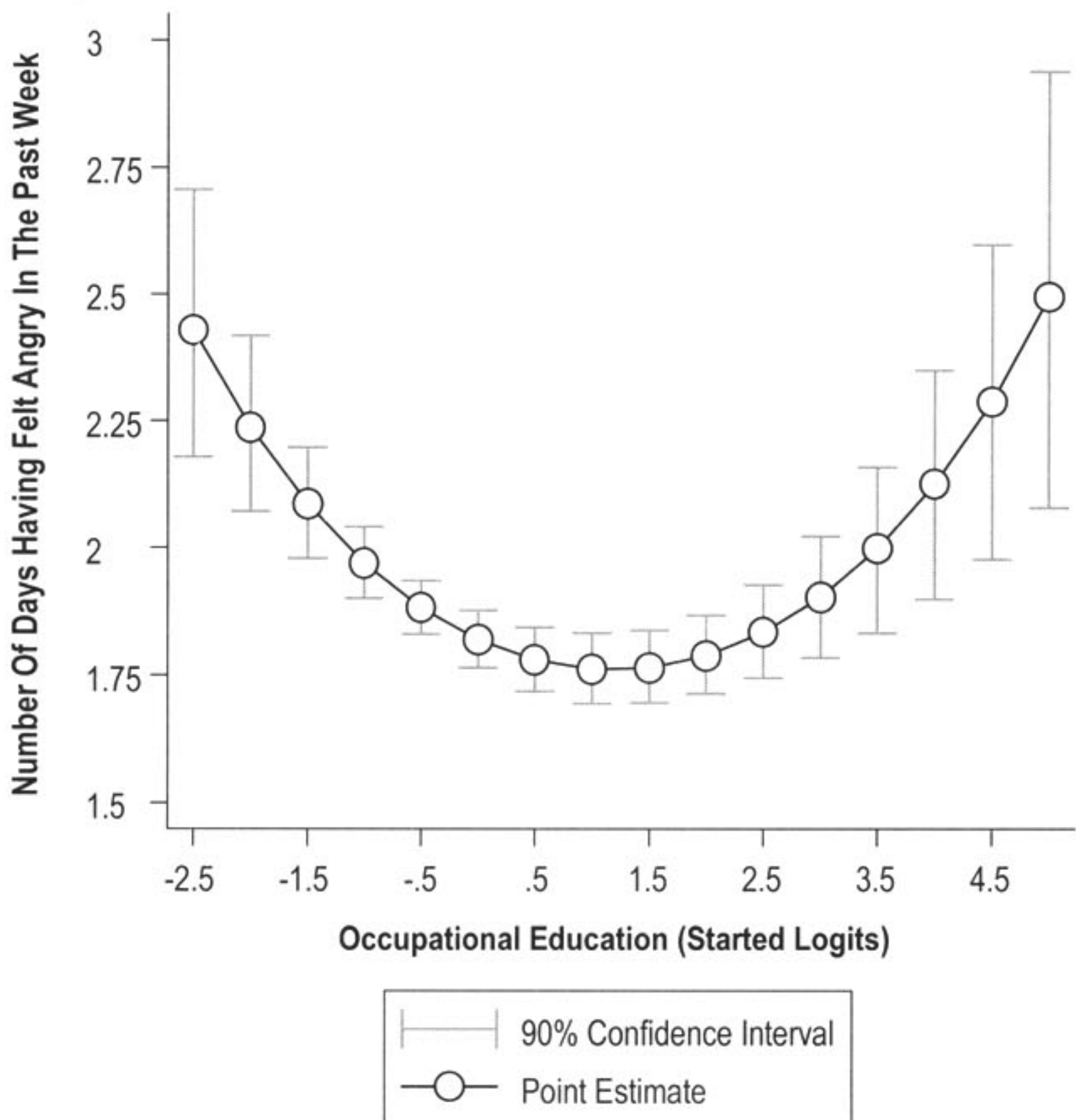
Dependent Variable: Statistical Model:	# of Angry Days		No Anger Rule		Sense of Control		# of Angry Days	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 4	Model 5	
	Negative Binomial	Ordered Logit	Ordered Logit	OLS	OLS	Negative Binomial	Negative Binomial	
Gender (Women = 1)	-.0487 (-.84)	-.1082 (-1.81)	-.1830 (-1.84)	-.0442 (-.86)	-.0658 (-1.14)			
Race (Black = 1)	.0159 (.19)	.0227 (.27)	-.4104* (-2.74)	-.4889* (-6.41)	-.0684 (-.81)			
Race (Other = 1)	-.1593 (-1.20)	-.1828 (-1.37)	.0556 (.25)	-.2580* (-2.18)	-.1834 (-1.39)			
Age	.0182 (1.79)	.0197 (1.93)	.0075 (.46)	.0446* (5.17)	.0238* (2.35)			
Age-Squared	-.0330* (-3.17)	-.0342* (-3.28)	.0037 (.23)	-.0452* (-5.24)	-.0381* (-3.66)			
Occupational Education	-.0783* (-2.62)		.0939* (2.55)	.2150* (11.19)	-.0437 (-1.43)			
Occupational Education <sup>2</sup>	.0264* (2.20)				.0239* (2.02)			
Occupational Earnings		-.0259 (-.45)						
Occupational Earnings <sup>2</sup>		.0192 (.80)						
Anger Expression Rule							-.0863* (-3.53)	
Sense of Control							-.1195* (-4.14)	
Constant	.5359* (2.31)	.4825* (2.02)		3.6682* (18.25)	1.1751* (4.55)			

(Stearns and Stearns 1985), occupational status is indeed associated with an emotion rule that restricts the display of anger. As shown by the positive coefficient corresponding to occupational education (increasing values on this variable indicate higher levels of disagreement), persons of high occupational status are more likely to disagree with the statement “when I’m angry I let people know,” suggesting that they engage more often in conscious (and possibly habitualized) attempts to restrict their display of feelings of anger towards others. In addition, as shown in Model 4 of Table 1, and consistent with previous research (Mirowsky and Ross 1990), occupational status has a strong positive relation to sense of control ( $F =$

T1	-1.3899*						
	(-3.59)						
T2	.7490						
	(1.94)						
T3	1.1733*						
	(3.04)						
T4	3.3136*						
	(8.24)						
ln( $\alpha$ )	-.5203*	-.5191*	-.5749*				
	(-6.42)	(-6.41)	(-6.89)				
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.014	.013	.019				
R <sup>2</sup>				.15			
Model F-Statistic				42.20*			
Model $\chi^2$	70.74*	69.32*	35.92*	100.73*			
N	1,403	1,403	1,406	1,406	1,406	1,403	

\* $p < .05$  (two-tailed test, t-statistics in parentheses)

**Figure 1. Expected Number of Days Having Experienced Anger by Occupational Status**



126.93,  $p < .001$  for the hypothesis test that the coefficient corresponding to the effect of status is different from zero). As occupational status increases, a person's perception of control over every day events also increases.

### *Emotion Rules, Sense of Control and the Frequency of Anger Experience*

In accord with Hypothesis 2a, which suggests a connection between perceived lack of control over life events and the experience of negative emotion (Gecas 1989), we find that persons who believe they possess high levels of control over their environment are significantly less likely to experience anger. This is shown by the fact that in Model 5, the subjective sense of control is a strong and significant predictor of anger frequency ( $t = 4.14$ ). Individuals scoring at the top of the sense of control are expected (holding all other variables at their means) to experience anger only 1.5 times per week, while those with the lowest scores are more likely to experience anger (about 2.5 times per week).

Adherence to an emotion rule regarding the suppression of anger has an independent (net of age, status, gender and race) effect on the experience of anger ( $p < .01$ ), providing support for Hypothesis 3a. Those respondents who report being less likely to let other persons know about their feelings of anger are also less likely to report experiencing anger frequently. This is consistent with theories that point to the link between emotion expression and emotional experience – where attempts at managing and suppressing emotion feed back into a person's likelihood of experiencing that emotion – as formulated in Hochschild's (1975, 1979) and Shott's (1979) early work.

More importantly, the magnitude of the association between occupational status and anger is affected by the inclusion in the equation of indicators of sense of control and adherence to an anger suppression rule. The estimate for linear effect of occupational education is now reduced by 50 percent in comparison to the original estimate in Model 1. In addition the linear negative component of the status/anger experience association is no longer statistically significant from zero ( $p = .15$ ). Additional analyses which included both the anger-expression rule indicator and the sense of control scale showed that the latter does a much better job of accounting for the negative association between occupational status and anger (Gecas 1989; Mirowsky and Ross 1990), providing stronger support for Hypothesis 2b (sense of control as an important mediating factor) than for 3b (class-based adherence to anger-suppression rules as an important mediating factor).

### *The Anger-Producing Encounters of High Status Individuals*

Our integration of the compatibility and emotion-domination accounts suggests that while the higher probability of persons with low occupational status to experience negative emotion may be tied to trans-situational and durable features of low-status positions, the higher likelihood of those with high occupational status to experience negative emotions is tied to more situational characteristics of their interactional ecology. In particular we argue that high-status individuals will be more likely to experience anger: (1. in direct person-to-person interaction (Collins 1990), (2. when those encounters feature relatively unfamiliar, identity-disconfirming others (Stets 2004; Stets and Harrod 2004), and (3. when those interactions are status-dissimilar, with alter being of *lower* status than self (Ridgeway and Johnson 1990). We argue that the ecology of encounters of those of high status will tend to become more biased with increasing status because of their very position as numerical minorities in the social structure (Blau 1977; Ridgeway and Balkwell 1997).

Data limitations preclude us from testing all of the empirical implications of this model. Most importantly, we cannot directly demonstrate that the ecology of encounters of high-status individuals is biased in the way that we propose, as this would require direct "experience sampling" of the features of all interpersonal encounters of a representative sample of the population (Osborn and Stets 2007).

*Occupational Status and the Odds of Recalling an Anger-Producing Experience*

If persons of high status are more likely to experience an anger-producing interpersonal encounter, then we should find that they are more likely to report remembering such an encounter in the first place. Model 1 in Table 2, shows evidence that speaks to this; there we show the coefficient estimates of a logistic regression in which the dependent variable is simply whether the person reports remembering

**Table 2: Effect of Occupational Status on Recalling Anger-Producing Events**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Gender	.231+ (1.75)	.673* (4.00)	.824* (5.23)	.187 (.87)	-.360* (-2.62)	-.102 (-.43)	-.874* (-2.20)	-.340 (-1.57)
Race (Black = 1)	-.339+ (-1.77)	-.446+ (-1.88)	.364+ (1.65)	.400 (1.38)	-.582* (-2.47)	-.382 (-.87)	.661 (1.13)	-.691 (-1.58)
Race (Other = 1)	-.324 (-1.07)	-.427 (-1.24)	.370 (1.11)	.323 (.70)	-.571+ (-1.71)	.050 (.10)	-.528 (-1.48)	-.827 (-1.12)
Age	-.028* (-6.81)	-.010+ (-1.85)	-.001 (-.25)	.006 (.82)	-.024* (-5.72)	-.020* (-2.06)	.015 (1.26)	.026* (3.96)
Occupational Education	.172* (3.39)	.158* (2.58)	-.176* (-3.04)	-.055 (-.74)	.110* (2.35)	-.123 (-1.38)	.222* (1.95)	.143* (1.98)
Constant	2.433* (11.01)	1.728* (6.61)	-1.196* (-5.09)	-2.417* (-6.57)	.357+ (1.73)	.077 (.18)	-2.776* (-5.19)	-3.298* (-9.25)
Model $\chi^2$	61.85	28.60	41.39	4.62	48.77	7.97	9.72	29.68
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.05	.03	.04	.01	.03	.02	.04	.05
N	1,406	1,091	908	908	1,091	369	369	1,091
Model	Dependent Variable   Condition							
1	Anger-producing event recalled? (Yes = 1)							
2	Angry at a person? (Yes = 1)   Recall							
3	Angry at a family member? (Yes = 1)   Recall & Angry at a person							
4	Angry at a friend, neighbor or acquaintance? (Yes = 1)   Recall & Angry at a person							
5	Angry at work? (Yes = 1)   Recall							
6	Angry at boss or supervisor? (Yes = 1)   Recall & Angry at work							
7	Angry at subordinate (Yes = 1)   Recall & Angry at work							
8	Angry at government employee, public figure, or someone who provided a service? (Yes = 1)   Recall							

\*p < .05 (two-tailed test, t statistics in parentheses)  
 +p < .05 (one-tailed test, t statistics in parentheses)



a specific anger-producing event in the past week. The results show that net of socio-demographic controls, persons of high-occupational status are more likely to remember such an event ( $t = 3.39$ ).<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that in contrast to the relationship between occupational status and experience, the relationship between occupational status and the odds of *recalling* an anger-producing interaction is linear and not curvilinear. Results of a model including a logistic regression model predicting recall of an anger-producing event that includes a quadratic term for status explicitly suggest a rejection of the curvilinearity hypothesis.

### *Occupational Status and the Recency of Anger-Producing Events*

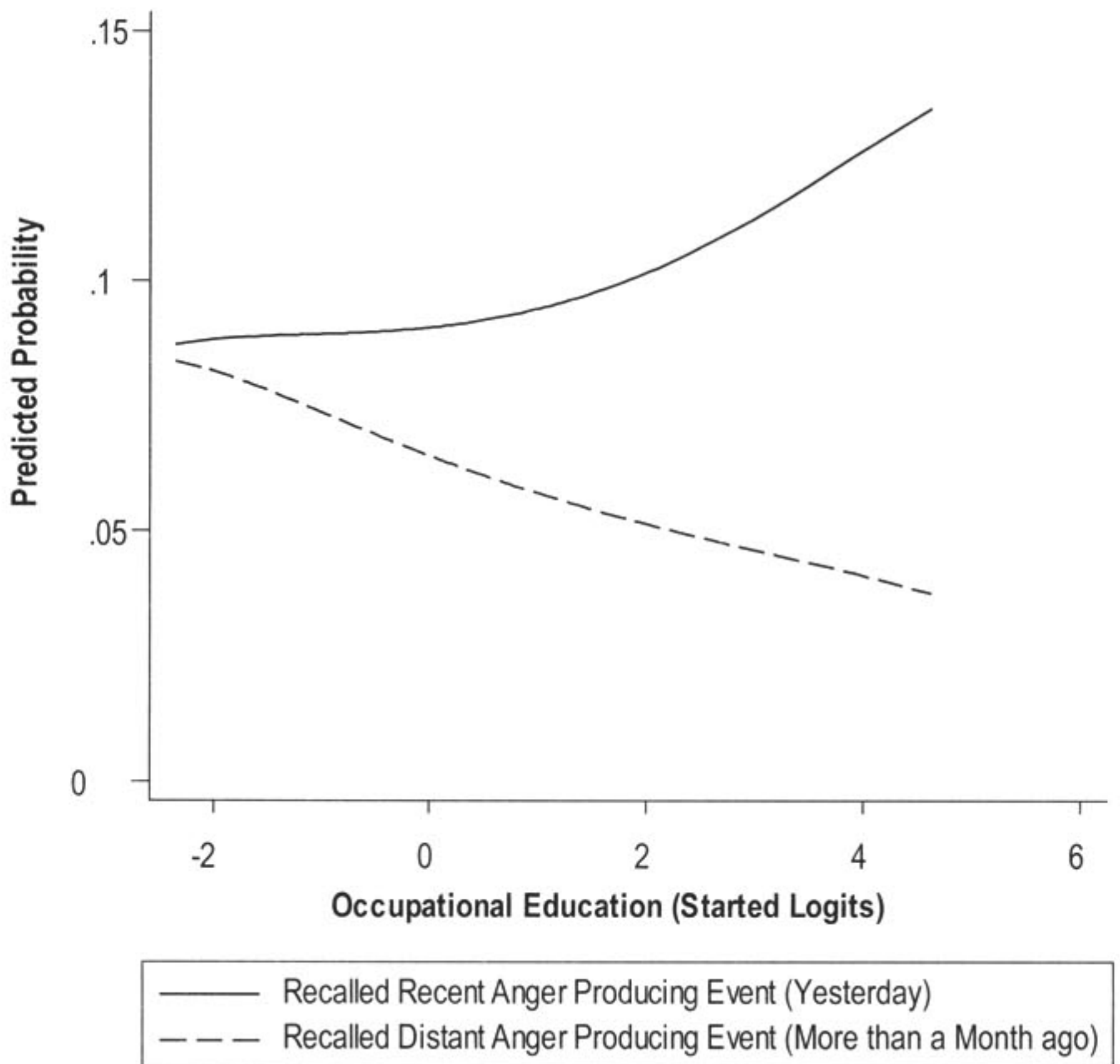
If high-status individuals are structurally “biased” toward experiencing relatively frequent anger-producing encounters, then we should find that, among those who report remembering an event, high-status individuals should be more likely to report remembering a more *recent* event. Figure 2, shows evidence consistent with this claim. The predicted probabilities in the figure come from a multinomial logit equation with a self-reported estimate of how recent the anger-producing event recalled was as the dependent variable and occupational education (with the effect specified to be non-linear), age, race and gender as the predictors. The figure shows that indeed, as occupational education increases, the chances of remembering an event that happened very recently increase, while the chances of remembering a more distant event decline. This suggests high-status individuals are more likely than low-status individuals to be exposed to routine, recurrent anger-producing interpersonal interactions which remain salient in memory to a larger extent.

### *Occupational Status and the Micro-Ecology of Anger-Producing Encounters*

We also anticipate that high-status individuals should be more likely to report directing their anger toward specific *persons* rather than toward unspecified crowds, events, circumstances and other impersonal objects. Furthermore we should find that within the category of persons, the anger-producing interactions of high-status persons should feature (relatively) unfamiliar others. Finally we should find that the targets of anger of high-status persons should be lower-status others not similar high-status alters. Models 2-8 in Table 2 speak to these questions.

As Model 2 of Table 2 shows, among those individuals who reported recalling an anger-producing event ( $N = 1,091$ ), as occupational education increases the odds of reporting having been angry at a person rather than at circumstances or other impersonal objects increase ( $t = 2.58$ ). In addition, as shown by the coefficient estimate for occupational status in Model 3, we find that, among those respondents who recalled an event and who reported that the target of their anger was a person, high occupational status persons are much less likely to be angry at family members ( $t = -3.04$ ). Model 4 shows that persons across the occupational status continuum are equally likely to have directed their anger towards friends, neighbors or acquaintances ( $t = -.74$ ). This is in contrast to the result shown in

**Figure 2. Expected Probability of Having Anger-Producing Event Recall by Occupational Status**



Model 5. The positive and statistically significant coefficient for occupational status in this model suggests that, high occupational status persons are much more likely to have encountered the target of their anger at work ( $t = 2.35$ ) not at home.

This suggests a natural ordering of the likelihood that a person will be featured in an anger-producing interaction for high-status – and conversely for low-status – persons, with family being disproportionately least likely, friends being equally likely and persons encountered in the instrumental arenas or work and other public settings being disproportionately more likely. This also means that when lower-status individuals experience anger, they are disproportionately more likely to direct that anger toward familiar others (spouses, children and kin), who form a more substantial part of their immediate social network (Marsden 1987).

What are the characteristics of those alters towards whom high-status persons direct their anger? As models 6-8 show, we find that the relative status of the target (Johnson, Ford and Kaufman 2000; Ridgeway and Johnson 1990) in relation to the focal person affects the likelihood that a given encounter will result in an expe-

rience of anger. As shown in Model 6, among those individuals who report having recalled an anger-producing interaction at work ( $N = 369$ ) high occupational status persons are statistically no more likely to have experienced anger than low-status persons in an interpersonal interaction involving a superior (e.g., boss or supervisor), although the coefficient is in the negative direction. However as shown in Model 7 they are substantially more likely to report a relative *status inferior* at work as the target of their anger, suggesting that these status-dissimilar encounters are more likely produce anger among high-status persons (Lively 2000). Following a similar dynamic, high-status persons are also statistically more likely to report recalling an anger-producing event involving a government worker or someone who provided a service. These are the types of encounters classically documented by Hochschild (1983), and which can be interpreted here as involving the local interactional ingredients (relative lack of familiarity, status differentials) likely to generate anger among high-status individuals.

Taken together, these results suggest that when encounters produce the experience of anger for high-status persons, (1. these tend to feature relatively unfamiliar others outside of intimate sites of sociability such as the workplace and other public settings, and (2. those others tend to be of lower (not of equal or higher) status than self.

## Discussion and Conclusion

### *Summary of the Results*

The finding, that those at extreme ends of the occupational status hierarchy are more likely to experience anger, points to the uneven distribution of anger in the status structure (Collins 1990). Our analysis of the possible intervening mechanisms between occupational status and anger experience show that when the two primary trans-situational factors responsible for the negative effect of status on the experience of anger are held constant, namely, the sense of control over life events and allegiance to specific emotion rules, the relationship between occupational status and anger experience is no longer described by a “U-shaped” curve, but as monotonically and exponentially increasing with status.

We argue that the positive association between status and anger experience that remains (indicated by the quadratic component of the occupational education effect) is at least partially the result of factors associated with the features of the micro-ecology of encounters as these are shaped and biased by the structural position of high-status persons. In examining data from the last anger-producing encounter recalled by a representative sample of individuals, we find that (1. high-status individuals are more likely to have anger-producing encounters outside of the private realm, among unfamiliar others (Stets 2004), and (2. anger is systematically directed downwards in the status ladder as high-status individuals are more likely to have felt anger against an alter of lower status than against a higher status target (Johnson, Ford and Kaufman 2000; Ridgeway and Johnson 1990). Our results in this last regard are only suggestive, but they are consistent with

previous research and theory (Collins 1990; Ridgeway and Johnson 1990). We believe these findings warrant further exploration.

Our main finding of a U-shaped distribution of the relative frequency of anger-experience across the occupational status dimension are consistent with (and serve to partially reconcile) the two leading perspectives linking status and anger in structural social psychology and the sociology of emotions (the compatibility and domination accounts). Our integrative account however, also qualifies them and specifies their range of applicability. We suggest that anger is likely produced by different mechanisms for the two status groups, with the compatibility mechanisms being more plausible descriptors of the chronic anger-producing experiences among low-status persons, and the domination mechanisms being more accurate descriptors of the situational anger-producing experiences of high-status persons.

We find that the relatively trans-situational factor of sense of control is – in addition to adherence to an emotion rule on anger suppression – an important intervening link between occupational status and anger for low-status individuals (Aneshensel 1992; Gordon 1990; Mirowsky and Ross 1990; Stearns and Stearns 1985). Chronic stressors that are personally threatening, such as those lower-status individuals experience, are more conducive to psychological distress than the “hassles” (Thoits 1995) most likely experienced by those of higher status (Umberson, Williams and Anderson 2002). The higher likelihood of those in low-status positions to experience anger appears to be tied to the typical day-to-day experiences of those in low-status positions; in particular, the sense of not being in control of one’s life leads to frustration and anger (Berkowitz 1982). Given the connection between negative emotional experience and health-related outcomes (Aneshensel 1992), the occupational status/experience of anger linkage may be an important member of constellation of factors that serve to reproduce the relationship of “fundamental causality” between socio-economic status and health (Lutfey and Freese 2005).

Further, reports by low-status individuals that the targets of their anger are most often family members is consistent with previous research. Individuals lacking personal control outside the home tend to attempt to regain control by exerting it within the home (Umberson, Williams and Anderson 2002), which some argue is related to higher incidences of domestic violence in lower-status households (Umberson, Anderson, Glick and Shapiro 1998). In other words, even if the threats to control come from outside intimate relationships, individuals experiencing this type of stress often express it toward family members, partially explaining the relationship between low socio-economic status, life strain and violent behavior (Aneshensel 1992; Umberson, Anderson, Glick and Shapiro 1998; Umberson, Williams and Anderson 2002).

### *Limitations of the Study and Future Directions*

Although we were unable to provide a direct test of the “ecology of encounters” argument with the General Social Survey emotions module, our results tenta-

tively suggest that high-status individuals' pronounced rates of anger appear to be connected to specific episodes of interaction. Future research should address this head-on, and we believe that collecting the data required for such a venture is possible and desirable. One potential source might be an experience sampling method (Osborn and Stets 2007). It is our hope that our current research encourages others to no longer assume an either-or relationship between status and anger while taking into account the various sources of anger.

In a social world where few cross-status interactions take place, the association between occupational status and anger might well look, as the compatibility perspective suggests, like anger is concentrated in the lower levels of the status structure. However, due to social structural arrangements (e.g., economically mediated transactions involving organizational representatives, interaction across levels of hierarchical differentiation in the bureaucratically organized workplace) that induce high-status individuals to interact with lower-status alters and the propensity for such interactions to result in anger, individuals of ultra-high status are induced to experience anger.

### *Contributions and Broader Implications*

This article expands and contributes to theory and research in several areas. Following Collins (1975, 1990; Kemper and Collins 1990) and recent advances in the interactionist view of inequality and stratification (e.g., Schwalbe, Godwin, Holden, Schrock, Thompson and Wolkomir 2000) we view socio-economic status as leading to not only material or structural rewards (Featherman and Hauser 1978), but also to a higher likelihood to exercise emotional domination over others (Collins 1990), especially lower-status alters encountered in the public sphere. However, we acknowledge that part of this dynamic is the product of the structural position of those in high-status positions, insofar as they are forced by the distribution of individuals to come into contact with individuals over which they can exercise interactional dominance through the expression of negative socio-emotional behavior.

Conversely, our analyses support previous literature's assertion (Gecas 1989) that chronic anger may be an important component of the "hidden injuries of class." Those at the bottom of the power and prestige hierarchy are more likely to feel continuous anger for longer periods. Further, the feelings of anger of those at the bottom of the status hierarchy appear to be disconnected from specific situations and are more likely to be directed toward impersonal targets. The fact that they are more likely to take objects or circumstances, rather than persons, as a target may account for their endurance. In this way anger seems to play a role in the "chronically instantiated" reproduction of low-status positions in the social structure (Giddens 1984; Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1994), insofar as "objectless" anger may be less likely to find resolution or to lead to self-assertive action than situational anger in concrete settings.

Our guiding imagery throughout is largely consonant with that employed by Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin (1994) when they propose the link between microstructure and macrostructure. Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin view microstructure as shaped and informed by larger cultural and structural factors, which the outcome of microinteraction goes on to reproduce, and in some instances modify. From this perspective, individuals bring into the interactional setting information, biases and habits related to their position in the larger macro-setting. The dynamics associated with the face to face encounter, as well as its organization in time and space (Giddens 1984), are indelibly affected by these resources.

## Notes

1. While our concern here is experience, the subsequent expression of anger by high-status individuals can then be seen as a strategy to sustain their position in the status structure and to enact the power of institutionalized roles.
2. Respondents were queried about whether they had experienced a variety of primary (anger, sadness, happiness, etc.) and secondary (shame, embarrassment, outrage, pride, etc.) emotions in the past week. The specific item reads: "*Now I'm going to read a list of different feelings that people sometimes have. After each one, we would like you to tell me on how many days you have felt this way during the past seven days.*"
3. Out of the 1,451 respondents who participated in the 1996 emotions module, 56 (4%) did not report an occupation. Among these 56 respondents with missing data on occupation 35 (54.7%) were classified (according to the work status variable WRKSTAT) as "keeping house," 15 (23.4%) as "in school," 3 as "working, fulltime," 2 (3.1%) as "unemployed," and 1 (1.5%) as "other." We included these individuals in the analysis by assigning them a value of occupation using the following rule: if the individual was married, we assigned them the value of their spouse's occupation. If the individual was not married, we assigned the value of their father's occupation, and if that value was not available that of their mother's occupation. Excluding these individuals from the analysis changes none of the substantive conclusions.
4. Note that these scores are defined at the detailed three-digit 1980 census classification level (OCC80). For details concerning the design, construction and external validation of these scores, see Hauser and Warren (1997).
5. Respondents who were missing in one of the items were assigned the value of the average of the rest of the non-missing item in the final scale. Respondents who were missing on all items were coded as missing.
6. This result is also consistent with the identity-control theory proposal that such anger-producing encounters are particularly salient for high-status individuals because they are identity disconfirming.

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