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Breaking the Poverty Cycle: an Investigation Into the Correlates of Propensity for Change Among the Rural Impoverished in the Mississippi Delta.

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BREAKING THE POVERTY CYCLE: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CORRELATES OF PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE AMONG THE RURAL IMPOVERISHED IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to delineate socio-demographic characteristics of impoverished individuals in rural areas of the Mississippi Delta Region who are potentially breakers of the so-called poverty cycle. The underlying premise of the investigation was that an expressed willingness on the part of impoverished individuals to take positive action to change their life condition implied a higher potential for upward social mobility than an unwillingness to change.

The broad theoretical perspective for the research was derived from social mobility theory--the specific perspective was from Robert K. Merton's approach to social structure and anomie and his typology of modes of individual adaptation.

The following specific questions were investigated:

1. What are the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals with high versus low propensity for change?

2. Can the variables "social participation" and "fatalism" be considered as intervening in the initial stage of the social mobility process?

3. To what extent can the findings from questions one and two be extended to the more affluent people in rural areas of the Mississippi Delta.

4. What are the implications of the answers to the above questions for social theory and social action?

Analyses were performed using data obtained from a randomized, block sample of rural inhabitants in the Delta areas of the states of Arkansas, Missouri, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Approximately 1,300 respondents were interviewed (a one percent sample of the region).

The major findings may be summarized as follows:

1. Individuals with high propensity for change tend to be in the younger age groups, married, heads of smaller households, Negro, and have comparatively high education.

2. Although lower rates of social participation and higher rates of fatalism characterize the rural impoverished (when compared with the relatively affluent), these variables do not effectively intervene in terms of an individual's mobility potential.

3. Findings bearing on propensity for change among the relatively affluent indicate that generally similar factors influence change potential among this group as for the impoverished.

4. The implications for social action policy are that fatalistic attitudes and lack of participation in

formal organizations may not hinder acceptance of and participation in opportunity programs as much as formerly believed. The problem remains of communicating the opportunities available and the procedures for taking advantage of them to all segments of the rural impoverished population. It is thus an important recommendation that meaningful programs be developed for those individuals in circumstances which largely preclude their taking radical steps for change.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM SETTING: BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

B. H. Bagdikian has asserted that

> farmers and farm workers are among the poorest people in the United States. They aren't very healthy. They do not prosper. And they are so beholden to others that they are among the most desperately debt-ridden citizens in the land.[1]

The plight of the impoverished in rural areas, and elsewhere, is compounded. There is evidence which suggests an interrelationship among the physical, social, and psychological characteristics of the poor that reinforces and perpetuates their deprived condition. The poor are "...the products of a special way of life imposed on them not by their genes alone but by their poverty...poverty that perpetuates itself inside its own geography behind a border that separates the despairing from the hopeful."[2] The dilemma of the social immobility of the rural impoverished and the potential implications for sociological theory in attempting its solution have provided the impetus for this research.

The objective of this study was to delineate socio-demographic characteristics of impoverished individuals in rural areas who are potentially breakers of the so-called poverty cycle--or, as some have construed, potential escapees from a poverty subculture[3]--and to determine the implications for sociological theory and social action. The underlying premise is that an expressed willingness on the part of certain impoverished individuals to take positive action to change their life condition implies that they have higher potential for upward social mobility than those who are unwilling to change.[4]

The significance of this study is two-fold. From the standpoint of rural poverty as a social problem, there can be no doubt as to its importance. The President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty has reported that rural poverty affects some 14 million Americans and "...is so widespread, and so acute, as to be a national disgrace...".[5] Findings bearing on the alleviation of the cycle of hunger, disease and premature death, unemployment and underemployment, inadequate schooling, inadequate clothing, and sub-standard housing are, to say the least, urgently needed.

The significance of this study from the standpoint of sociological theory is linked to the naturalistic premise that change, rather than continuity, is the basic problem which should require explanation in sociology.[6] In reference

to the problem at hand, the object is not so much to determine why poverty appears to be self-perpetuating, but to determine factors which characterize those individuals who are assumed to have relatively high potential to escape from their condition and style-of-life. Thus, the research problem lies within the broad context of social mobility and change, and the goal is to determine whether lower strata individuals who evidence relatively high propensity for change have dissimilar socio-demographic characteristics than those who evidence relatively low propensity.

A further correlative theoretical concern of this study was derived from recognition that the outcome of being favorably or unfavorably disposed to change may be altered by the operation of certain associated intervening variables. More specifically, the sociological variable "social participation" and the social-psychological variable "fatalism" have been viewed by some authorities as potential negators, or qualifiers, of the conception that individuals evidencing inclination to change will necessarily achieve upward mobility.[7] These variables may be linked by a phenomenon which has been variously termed as "status discrepancy," "status inconsistency," "low status crystallization," "dissonance," etc. The thesis is that individuals who occupy marginal status positions, or positions in which their roles are not clearly defined, tend to avoid participation in organizations

where their status contradiction or ambiguity is most likely to be perceived.[8] Although uncomfortable under the prevailing status system, they are unable to clearly define their new position. Thus, "they seek to change the system and, in the meantime, they withdraw from voluntary organizations where status judgements are most blatant."[9]

On the other hand, from the standpoint of the fatalism variable, a marginal individual--rather than simply withdrawing from certain kinds of organizations while awaiting social mobility or change--may passively withdraw from the dissonant situation so that none of the elements are salient.[10] He may more or less permanently retreat, in other words, when confronted by role conflict. This conflict may be derived from the contradictory demands of discrepant statuses and/or by certain situational limitations imposed on the individual due to his disadvantaged position.[11]

The above phenomena have been assumed to be of critical significance to individuals in the lower socio-economic strata, for their chances for upward mobility may depend, in large part, on their participation in a number of organizations--particularly those organizations which are social action oriented. These people must not only be ready and willing to take action for change, but they must participate

in a sufficient number of social networks through which action programs operate to learn and take advantage of the available opportunities.

It should be noted at this point that the objectives of this investigation do not depend on the assumption that all individuals who evidence potential for change will necessarily become upwardly mobile, or further, that such individuals are in the process of mobility. The focus is solely in terms of those individuals who evidence an initial willingness to take radical steps for change of their conditions. In effect, analyses will be conducted to ascertain whether it is meaningful to utilize such concepts as fatalism and social participation as intervening variables when focusing at the "inclination to change" level. Essentially, these variables are posed as possible correlates of propensity for change in terms of existing theory. Thus, the research, as such, represents an exploratory study.[12] Further, the posing for analysis of models of poverty and propensities toward change or upward social mobility is believed to be useful for clarification and to illustrate the basic approach to the issue.

The problem, in its broadest sense, is the determination of the social characteristics of segments of a rural poverty population having atypically high levels of aspiration or propensities toward change from their present condition. In a more specific sense, the problem can be

viewed in terms of the delineation of the socio-demographic traits of those who approximate the requirements of two categories or syndromes of behavior.[13] One polar type represents the impoverished individual who is acutely aware of his plight and committed to improving not only his and his family's immediate condition, but to upward mobility for a qualitatively better life. The "ideal typical" individual in this category is characterized by his commitment to both the goals and the means of achieving them within the larger society of which he is a part. He reveals higher than usual participation in voluntary associations, and he has knowledge of and utilizes resources made available through social action programs.

The other polar extreme, as depicted in the literature, is the impoverished individual who reveals relative indifference to his plight; he is apathetic, lack aspiration, or is unwilling to take appropriate remedial action. There is a "...hopelessness of ever achieving the things and ways of people considered more fortunate, more skillful or less culturally deprived.[14] He reveals little or no participation in voluntary associations; he either has no knowledge of or fails to utilize resources made available through social action programs.

One of the purposes of this investigation, therefore, is not only to inquire into the correlates pertaining to each model, but to determine the validity of the models themselves.

An additional concern will be the determination of the extent to which the findings obtained from the poverty group can be extended to the more affluent. That is, the purpose will be to ascertain the degree to which generalizations may be made in terms of social mobility and stratification theory pertaining to different types of populations.

To summarize, then, the research problem can be reduced to the quest for answers to the following questions:

1. What are the socio-demographic characteristics of the rural impoverished with high potentiality for mobility (as determined by high propensity to take positive action for upward social mobility) as opposed to those with low potential?

2. How valid are the proposed "ideal typical" models discussed above? Can the variables social participation and fatalism indeed be considered as intervening in the "willingness to change" stage of the social mobility process?

3. What are the implications of the answers to the above questions for sociological theory and social action?

The Setting: Rural Poverty in the Mississippi Delta

The scope of this study is restricted to the rural impoverished who inhabit the Mississippi Delta Region of the United States (i.e., the Delta counties of Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Missouri). Although generalizations concerning the data from this research will be limited, strictly speaking, to the Delta Region, the theoretical implications should have application to other areas--be they characteristically rural or urban.[15]

On the other hand, the rural poverty context of the study contains important implications related to the urgent public issue of alleviating impoverished conditions in rural areas. That is, the candidacy of the rural poverty issue for public concern, additional research, and corrective legislation is heightened by the growing evidence that in rural areas the attributes of the impoverished elsewhere--youth, advanced age, being nonwhite, rapid technological change, and substandard education-- "...come together in a maximum likelihood combination."[16] Fuller writes:

> Rural poverty is intensive, extensive, and intractable ...yet, it is remote and obscure. The rural population --widely dispersed, racially and culturally heterogeneous, socially and politically incohesive--does not compete well for attention.[17]

The significance of the rural poverty context, then, lies in the very fact of its acuteness and resiliency. Accepting the notion that poverty connected characteristics are

present in a "maximum likelihood combination" among rural residents, the quest of determining the salient factors associated with alleviating the well entrenched cycle is of particular importance. Any forthcoming solutions, therefore, would be applicable, hopefully, to less extreme circumstances.

The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to a selective review of the literature from which the general theoretical perspective is derived.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Poverty and Aspiration Levels: A Problem of Social Mobility

Breaking the poverty cycle is primarily a problem related to social mobility and social change and, as such, is related to the issue sometimes referred to as the "over-socialized conception of man."[18] If man's behavior is "determined" by his environment, how does man succeed in changing environments? It is also relevant to ask why he does or does not want to change. In more specific terms, if an individual's environment happens to be one characterized by a poverty subculture, situation, or way of life, then how is this individual to escape (and be motivated to escape) to better conditions?

A review of the literature related to styles of life of the impoverished reveals the dilemma of their characteristic social immobility or failure to improve their life condition.[19] Thomas Stone and others describe the life situation of the poor as fostering:

> ...the development of certain psychological characteristics, such as apathy, anxiety, depression, hostility, and pessimism, which serve to reduce the capacity for establishing, maintaining, and learning how to engineer supportive social bonds. Thus, all these factors combine into a "vicious," self-perpetuating cycle.[20]

The self-perpetuating nature of poverty is viewed by W. G. Runciman as an outgrowth of limited reference groups whereby, in the absence of an external stimulus, relative deprivation[21] is kept low.[22] "This feedback effect generated by modest comparisons underlies many familiar generalizations about the hold of habit, the correlation between poverty and conservatism, or the unambitiousness of the underprivileged."[23]

From a strictly situational point of view, the simple fact of not having enough money in itself contributes to the self-perpetuation of the deprived condition:

> Because people are poor, they save little; and because their savings are so meager, they are able to spend less for the adequate medical care and housing which would fit them to earn more--and for the education which would make it easier for their children to rise above poverty. Besides, if a breadwinner's savings are negligible, it is harder for him to leave a low-paying job and look for a better one in some other locality--even if a better job were available there.[24]

In the impoverished condition one inadequacy--such as food--often leads to another.[25] Hunger may lead to poor performance in school and work; missing nutrients often weaken the poor's physical and nervous ability required to cope with everyday problems. Or, the unnatural idleness of the unemployed adult may prohibit him from working off excess carbohydrates, and he may begin to get fat. The deterioration of unused muscle is compounded by the weariness from carrying excess weight. "Being fat becomes a social burden as well, further robbing him of self-esteem and fixing his image as a less attractive worker.[26]

Thus, the cycle of deterioration and despair may be compounded from many quarters. The focus of this research, however, is primarily on the assumed consequences of attitudinal components of the poverty cycle. Increasingly, the work attitudes and motivations of the impoverished are being recognized as crucial variables which must be dealt with meaningfully for the successful implementation of social action policy. In the Manpower Report of the President transmitted to the Congress in April, 1967, the implications of the often fatalistic attitudes of the poor are succinctly stated.[27] It is emphasized that to understand the significance of joblessness and low-status, blind-alley employment to the deprived, one must understand that in American society high value is placed upon work as the acceptable means of making a living and achieving success and social

status. The way to a more affluent and satisfying life through meaningful work is closed to most of the poor. It is noted that the problem of negative attitudes and work maladjustment may arise not so much from initially low-levels of aspirations as from the frustrations experienced in efforts to achieve them. Educationally ill-equipped for most of the jobs he aspires to, the impoverished individual tends to fill the most menial of jobs, which may be well below his potential. The harsh and impersonal consequences of malcontent, its unwanted effects on the household head's future and the future of his family may lead to a rejection by the deprived individual of work as a means of achieving his aspirations. Other means may be substituted "...such as illicit activity, or he may, in despair, give up both his goals and the means of achieving them and succumb to drug addiction, alcoholism, or vagrancy, or reject both goals and means through rebellion."[28]

There is other evidence to suggest that people in the lower socio-economic groups place less emphasis on achievement because of their basic value system. Herbert Hyman, in assuming the validity of the corollary notion of stratification in American society that individuals from the lower strata are not likely to climb far up the economic ladder, reviews the facets accounting for lack of mobility.[29] They are derived from the assumption that opportunity in society is differential, with higher education or specialized

training providing access to the highest positions. Education and training "...must be bought with money--the very commodity which the lower classes lack."[30] The existing structure is, however, only partly maintained by such objective factors. Hyman stresses the importance of recognizing the attitudinal components:

> ...There are other factors of a more subtle psychological nature which have not been illuminated and which may also work to perpetuate the existing order. It is our assumption that an intervening variable mediating the relationship between low position and lack of upward mobility is a system of beliefs and values within the lower classes which in turn reduces the very voluntary actions which would ameliorate their low position.[31]

This value system is characterized by increased awareness of the lack of opportunity to achieve success in terms of traditional high success goals. The result, in turn, is a lessening of desire to achieve goals which would be instrumental for success. "To put it simply the lower class individual doesn't want as much success, knows he couldn't get it even if he wanted to, and doesn't want what might help him get success."[32] It is assumed, therefore, that the value system of the impoverished results from a realistic appraisal of reality whereby the impact of low-status is softened for the individual. The data from Hyman's study generally support this assumption.

High Aspirants as Deviant Cases

In summary, then, it may be said that people in poverty tend to remain in poverty, and the attitude component--whether it be attributed as a cause of continuing poverty, or as a reinforcing effect--looms large as a contributing factor.

However, at this point, it is important to emphasize that many people in poverty do have upward aspirations and do take action to break the poverty cycle. The way out of the "oversocialized view of man" dilemma is associated with this very fact. Stated another way, the research findings on the limited aspirations and relative immobility of the lower strata are the outgrowth of observed trends. And a trend, by definition, denotes that exceptions or "deviant cases" do exist. Thus, it is important to determine the correlates of deviance or, in this case, the atypically high propensities toward change of some people in the poverty category.[33]

Hyman's investigation provides an example of deviant case analysis. Although his study yielded strong evidence that lower class or impoverished individuals as a group have a value system which reduces the likelihood of individual advancement, it was revealed from the data that a "sizeable proportion" of these individuals did not incorporate this value system.[34] This fact he attributes to differential

reference group processes. It is proposed that some lower class individuals may identify themselves with upper groups (and vice-versa). Such identification appeared to be the result of both the "class history" of the individual and his current occupational position.

Max F. Jordan and others in their investigation into the aspirations and capabilities of the rural impoverished cite the critical need for additional studies examining the correlates of differing aspiration levels.[35] The acceptance of the notion that training improves the capabilities of individuals and promotes economic development is meaningful, they assert, "...only if designed in relation to existing and desired levels of attainment."[36] The personal characteristics of the individual must be amenable to change if training programs and other opportunities are to be utilized. Motivation or aspiration must be sufficiently high for the individual to put aside other alternatives and devote himself to training or other steps designed to increase his mobility potential.

Marginal Man and the Crisis of Rising Expectations

Equally important in relation to the above context is a consideration of the possibility of intervening variables accompanying willingness or desire to change. There is evidence that the marginality imposed on individuals disposed

toward upward social mobility may lead them to passively withdraw from the demands of discrepant statuses.[37] Thus, it should be realized that although raising the aspirations of the poor is an important and probably necessary first step, it is not a sufficient element in breaking the poverty cycle.

The fatalism variable may emerge to intervene in the mobility process from another direction than the marginality from discrepant statuses standpoint. A different type of marginality may result when the expectations of better living conditions rise faster than the likelihood of their fulfillment.[38] It is this phenomenon some writers have referred to as the "crisis of rising expectations."[39]

Feelings of deprivation relative to rising expectations in the United States have become increasingly present among the poor, and in the nonwhite population especially. The urban slum dweller is particularly vulnerable. The promises of the civil rights movement and the "war on poverty" compound feelings of relative deprivation for the impoverished urbanite, for it is he who may compare his life situation, more easily than his rural counterpart, with that of the more fortunate. In addition, the nonwhite poor have been handicapped by blockages in what has been termed the circulation of the elite.[40] The Negro is more often acquiring the education which is normally crucial to occupational

mobility and economic gain, but the rate of attainment has been less than that to which he believes he is entitled. As his relative deprivation increases, he may revolt in order to correct the situation. The reaction of the impoverished to frustration, to discontent derived from comparing themselves directly with the relative prosperity of some more fortunate community underlies the so-called "revolution of rising expectations."[41]

But the "crisis" is not always followed by "revolution." Bertrand, Jenkins, and Walker note that the response to perceived deprivation may be typified by symptoms of anomia (anxiety, despair, fatalism).[42] As an outgrowth of their study of a Mexican Ejido Community they hypothesize the following:

> Certain types of experience which low-income groups have with the greater more affluent society creates within these groups varying degrees of anomia. This anomia derives from feelings of individual and collective hopelessness of ever achieving the things and ways of people considered more fortunate, more skillful or less culturally deprived.[43]

Meir and Bell generalize "...that anomia results when individuals lack access to means for the achievement of life goals."[44] They write further:

> Lack of opportunity to achieve life goals follows mainly as a result of the individual's position in the social structure as determined by numerous factors: occupation, education, income, age, class identification, participation in formal organizations and in informal groups, social mobility, marital status, and religious preference. Each of these factors is related to anomia.[45]

Thus, it is assumed that whether or not lower strata individuals know about and utilize the resources which are available is not a simple function of "getting the word out" to the people involved. There may be desire on their part for improvement of life conditions, but they may fatalistically believe that little can be done to change their situation. Indeed, it can be inferred from the evidence that some people who have knowledge of resource channels do not take advantage of them. These same people may have held initially high aspirations before becoming apathetic or fatalistic in their outlook. Therefore, a major concern is to determine whether the fatalism variable indeed intervenes in the mobility process.

Social Participation, Mobility, and Social Action

It is suggested by some writers that those individuals who participate to a high degree in various social activities tend to be more active in social action programs.[46] The issue becomes whether or not those who are potentially mobile (as evidenced by high aspirations or propensities toward change) and those who are actively mobile actually tend to participate in a wide range of social activities. It is relevant to inquire first into how and why, on the basis of current theory and research on social mobility, the social participation and aspiration variables "should"

relate. From one point of view, those who aspire to be socially mobile should tend toward higher social participation than those with low aspirations or no aspirations. Those who accept this notion argue that the very reasons for joining voluntary associations involve increasing opportunities for gaining access to different channels of mobility--whether they be in terms of personal contacts, learning appropriate modes of behavior, or of promoting social change by organized pressure against an undesirable status-quo.[47]

From the other point of view, the argument has been that the theoretical relationship between social participation and social mobility that "should" obtain has not been substantiated empirically. Curtis presents evidence to dispell the notion that high participation is directly related to upward social mobility.[48] He further notes that actually, theoretically, there is reason to expect this:

> Following Durkheim's passing reference to the consequences of social mobility in Suicide, and Sorokin's extended analysis in Social Mobility, sociologists have reasoned that a variety of effects of mobility may be deduced from the assumption that social mobility produces social isolation. The application of this assumption to participation in formal voluntary associations in an urban community would lead us to expect upwardly mobile persons to be under-represented in such associations, compared to their stable peers.[49]

Social mobility and social participation may be negatively related when mobility is rapid or extreme, or when mobility had just begun. Ellis and Lane support Sorokin's dissociative hypothesis "...that upward mobility is itself a

disruptive social experience which leaves the individual for an appreciable period without roots or effective social support."[50]

There are additional arguments that those who aspire to be upwardly mobile will participate less frequently in voluntary associations. Lenski utilizes the concept "status crystallization" to explain his findings that upwardly mobile individuals tend to be unable to maintain durable associational ties.[51] He maintains "...that a person whose status is poorly crystallized occupies an ambiguous position in society--a position in which he is likely to be subjected to numerous unpleasant experiences in the normal course of social interaction."[52] Turning to learning theory in psychology, Lenski predicts the withdrawal from or avoidance of social situations (participation in voluntary associations) by upwardly mobile individuals in conjunction with their incomplete status crystallization. In essence, they avoid confrontation with the denial of rewards in the realm of interpersonal relations.[53]

There is also evidence to indicate that socio-economic status is directly related to degree of social participation. For example, E. J. Brown in a study of the variables associated with activity and inactivity in rural organizations found a positive association between high participation and higher socio-economic status.[54] It is often assumed, therefore, that the typically lower rates of social participation

among the impoverished are the partial cause of their immobility in some cases--or, at least, that this variable is significantly associated with mobility potential.

Of particular interest to this investigation, then, will be the determination of whether those who can be defined as living in poverty and having high propensities for mobility are characterized by significantly higher or lower rates of social participation, or if any relationship exists at all.

In Chapter II is presented the conceptual frame of reference on which the investigation is based.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Ben Bagdikian, In the Midst of Plenty: The Poor in America (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 92.

[2]Ibid., 162.

[3]J. L. Roach and O. R. Gursslin in "An Evaluation of the Concept 'Culture of Poverty'," Social Forces, XLV (March, 1967), pp. 383-92, are critical of the poverty subculture notion. They assert that a distinction must be made between causal and descriptive conceptions. "Many students of poverty tend to confuse these conceptions and conclude that the traits of the poor are the cause of the traits of the poor" (p. 392). They go further to note that empirical evidence reveals that some segments of the poor are not involved in a poverty culture--at least, not in any causative sense. They argue for an approach in which a wider range of factors would be considered as causative (among them the material conditions of economic deprivation).

The concerns of this study do not depend on the validity of the culture of poverty notion, however. Whether due to subcultural factors, material deprivation, or simply inertia, it may be inferred from the evidence that people in poverty tend to remain in that condition. The object of this investigation is primarily to determine the social characteristics of people who say they are willing to take radical steps for change.

[4]It is most important to note that the orientation of the discussion and analyses which follow is not in terms of upward aspirations per se, but in terms of one of the assumed consequences of such aspirations, that is, willingness to take positive action to change life conditions. This strategy is an attempt to avoid, at least partially, a fundamental dilemma which exists in any study of attitudes (in this case, aspiration levels). Since the most common definition of "attitude" involves the notion of an individual's predisposition to respond with appropriate action, it must be assumed that the validity of the expressed attitude rests on whether such action will actually occur. That is to say, there must be a close correspondence between attitude and behavior for the concept of attitude to have any meaning.

To avoid, at least partially, the possible pitfalls of a gap between attitude and action, the focus of this research, while not at the actual level of behavior itself, will be at an intermediary level of abstraction. The focus is in terms of an expressed commitment to undertake a particular type of behavior, rather than the more abstract attitudes underlying such behavior. More specifically, rather than concentrating on indices of levels of aspiration among the impoverished, the major dependent variable will be termed "the propensity for change" that is, the willingness among some segments of the impoverished to take positive steps toward changing their life condition.

However, the assumption remains that commitment to certain consistent strategies of action is based on more abstract and general systems of attitudes. Thus, although the empirical or operational focus of this investigation will be at the level of "propensities to take remedial action," the theoretical discussion will be oriented around aspiration levels (attitudes).

[5]Edward T. Breathitt (Chairman), The People Left Behind: A Report by the President's National Advisory on Rural Poverty (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, September, 1967), p. ix.

[6]This element of naturalism (sometimes called the "axiom of inertia") consists of the belief that change is problematic. In an excellent treatment of the elements of naturalism and their relation to contemporary sociological thought, W. R. Catton, From Animistic to Naturalistic Sociology (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1966), asserts that "whatever the level of complexity of the system being studied, when that system is in a steady state, the naturalistic approach assumes continuation of that steady state and deems its interruption to be problematic..." (p. 5).

[7]Indirect evidence that some factors are operating (to hinder social mobility), other than lack of professed willingness to take steps for change, is derived from the fact that a relatively large proportion of formerly rural inhabitants have already migrated to urban centers in search of better living conditions. Therefore, in studying rural inhabitants one is dealing with "the people left behind," so to speak. A key problem is determining why some individuals profess a desire or willingness to take action for change and yet have not taken one of the logical alternatives open to them--leaving the region in search of better opportunities.

[8]F. L. Bates and R. J. Pellegrin, "Congruity and Incongruity of Status Attributes," Social Forces, XXXVIII (1959), pp. 308-20, have developed a variety of types of "status incongruity" within organizations in terms of role theory as a perspective for analysis.

[9]N. J. Demerath, Social Class in American Protestantism (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1965), p. 132.

[10]Ibid., 136 (this writer's emphasis).

[11]Within a broader context, the seemingly indifferent individual may be frustrated from his lack of means of alleviating his discontent. This individual's high but thwarted aspirations make him a prime candidate for deviant or disruptive behavior.

[12]At this point it is important to recognize both the limitations and advantages of this study's design and its exploratory nature. Although both the methods of data collection and the design are dealt with in Chapter III, it should be initially recognized that the collection of the data for this study occurred at one point in time. Thus, there is no way of affirming with any degree of certainty that specific consequences will follow from the association of particular variables. Any discussion implying consequences is necessarily in the realm of speculation and is designed solely to place the problem in a broader theoretical context.

The exploratory nature of the study, while precluding verificational procedures and allegations of cause and effect, does enable one to observe clustering or significant associations among specified variables. This is particularly valuable when the relevant variables are not known beforehand or when they are not sufficiently refined. Further, greater flexibility is allowed for the emergence of heretofore unknown factors (i.e., there is a greater chance for serendipity to occur). The overall objective, of course, is the generation of hypotheses which will ultimately be subjected to verificational study. For an excellent overview of the relative merits and demerits of different study designs, refer to M. W. Riley, Sociological Research: A Case Approach (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963).

[13]These syndromes of attributes were not necessarily the same that this researcher expected to find in view of existing sociological theory. However, many social action programs are predicated on the idea that these syndromes exist, hence, the validity of these assumptions is tested.

[14]Alvin L. Bertrand, Quentin Jenkins, and Marcial Walker, "Beyond the 'Revolution of Rising Expectations': An Hypothesis Derived From a Study of Members of a Mexican Ejido Community" (Unpublished paper, Department of Sociology and Rural Sociology, Louisiana State University, 1967), p. 12.

[15]This is not to deny the significance of regional factors. Of crucial importance is the determining of the extent previous theoretical generalizations must be qualified in light of both rural and regional restrictions. From the empirical standpoint, the problem becomes that of ascertaining how the data are modified by the rural variable and/or the unique historical circumstances attributed to the regional setting.

[16]Varden Fuller in Margaret S. Gordon (ed.), Poverty in America (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1965), p. 390.

[17]Ibid.

[18]See Dennis H. Wrong, "The Over-Socialized Conception of Man," American Sociological Review, XXVI (April, 1961), pp. 185-93.

[19]Several difficulties are encountered in dealing with the style of life concept. S. M. Miller, "The American Lower Class: A Typological Approach," Social Research, XXXI (Spring, 1964), pp. 1-22, asserts that one of the main difficulties is that the content of the "lower class style-of-life" is debatable. Further, "as yet, it is not possible to formulate a cleancut classification which avoids cultural biases and still is of use in formulating a judgement about the impact of life style on individuals" (p. 7).

[20]Thomas Stone, D. C. Leighton, and A. H. Leighton, "Poverty and the Individual," Poverty Amid Affluence, Leo Fishman, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 81-82.

[21]Concept originated in S. A. Stouffer, et al, The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life and The American Soldier: Combat and its Aftermath (Princeton: The Princeton University Press, 1949). Also refer to Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1957), pp. 234-35.

[22]W. G. Runciman, Relative Deprivation and Social Justice (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

[23]Ibid., 24.

[24]Conference on Economic Progress, Poverty and Deprivation in the U. S.--The Plight of Two-Fifths of a Nation (Washington, D. C.: The U. S. Government Printing Office, 1962), p. 23.

[25]Bagdikian, 10.

[26]Bagdikian, 53.

[27]U. S. Department of Labor, Manpower Report of the President (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1967), pp. 82-84.

[28]Ibid., 82 citing Merton, 131-60.

[29]Herbert H. Hyman, "The Value Systems of Different Classes: A Social Psychological Contribution to the Analysis of Stratification," in Reinhard Bendix and S. M. Lipset (eds.), Class, Status and Power: A Reader in Social Stratification (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1957), p. 426.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid., 426-27.

[32]Ibid., 427.

[33]The utility of deviant case analysis is illustrated in Patricia L. Kendall and Katherine M. Wolf, "The Two Purposes of Deviant Case Analysis," in Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Morris Rosenberg (eds.), The Language of Social Research: A Reader in the Methodology of Social Research (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1955), pp. 167-70. The two functions of deviant case analysis are said to be "...to correct the oversimplification of predictive schemes by demonstrating the relevance of additional variables" and "...to refine the measurement of statistical variables used to locate the deviant cases." (pp. 168-69).

[34]Hyman, 441.

[35]Max F. Jordan, James F. Golden, and Lloyd D. Bender, Aspirations and Capabilities of Rural Youth (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas AES Bulletin 722, 1967), p. 4.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Refer to Demerath, 132.

[38]Refer to Runciman, 22.

[39]"Expectation" and "aspiration" are not necessarily the same. The former term connotes waiting, looking, or even hoping for something, but "aspiration" connotes this and more. It implies, especially in the context of the dissertation, an active willingness for change toward a perceived higher goal. But attainment of the goal may or may not be expected. Conversely, one may expect something that he has not aspired for.

[40]An elaboration of this notion is contained in James A. Geschwender, "Social Structure and the Negro Revolt: An Examination of Some Hypotheses," Social Forces, XLIII (December, 1964), pp. 248-56.

[41]Runciman, 9.

[42]Bertrand. For a concise review of the anomia concept, refer to Marvin B. Scott, "The Social Sources of Alienation," and E. H. Mizruchi, "Alienation and Anomie: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives," in Louis Horowitz (ed.), The New Sociology: Essays in Social Science and Social Theory in Honor of C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).

[43]Bertrand, 12.

[44]Dorothy Meir and Wendell Bell, "Anomia and Differential Access to the Achievement of Life Goals," American Sociological Review, XXIV (April, 1959), p. 189.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Evidence for a strong relationship between social participation in ongoing groups and participation in broader social action programs that emerge is presented in George M. Beal, "Social Action: Instigated Serial Change in Large Social Systems," in Our Changing Rural Society: Perspectives and Trends, James H. Copp (ed.) (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1964), pp. 233-64.

[47]Bernard Berelson and Gary A. Steiner, (eds.), Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1964), p. 380.

[48]Richard F. Curtis, "Occupational Mobility and Membership in Formal Voluntary Associations: A Note on Research," American Sociological Review, XXIV (December, 1959), pp. 846-48.

[49]Ibid., 846. Also refer to Emile Durkheim, Suicide, trans. John Spaulding and George Simpson (Glencoe: Illinois: Free Press, 1951), pp. 252-53; and Pitirim Sorokin, Social Mobility (New York: Harper, 1927).

[50]R. A. Ellis and W. C. Lane, "Social Mobility and Social Isolation: A Test of Sorokin's Dissociative Hypothesis," American Sociological Review, XXXII (April, 1967), pp. 237-57.

[51]Gerhard E. Lenski, "Social Participation and Status Crystallization," American Sociological Review, XXI (August, 1956), pp. 458-64.

[52]Ibid., 458.

[53]The concept of "sociological ambivalence" is also consistent with this argument. R. K. Merton and Elinor Barber, "Sociological Ambivalence," in A. Tiryakin (ed.), Sociological Theory, Values and Sociocultural Change (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), p. 95), state that the concept "refers to incompatible normative expectations of attitudes, beliefs, and behavior assigned to a status or to a set of statuses in a society...or incorporated into a single social status." R. L. Coser, "Role Distance, Sociological Ambivalence, and Transitional Status Systems," American Journal of Sociology, LXXII (September, 1966), p. 173, defines two dimensions of sociological ambivalence: "(1) pretense of detachment from some status prerogatives in order better to perform a role...; (2) taking distance from one role in order to prepare for taking another role." It is the latter which is more likely to occur during social mobility (i.e., during times of transitional status). Both dimensions imply relatively low social participation, so that the individual may avoid, in essence, the "unpleasantness" of the ambivalent situation.

For an overview of the "status crystallization" concept, refer to Demerath, Chapter VI.

[54]Emory J. Brown, Elements Associated with Activity and Inactivity in Rural Organizations (State College, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 574, 1954). Also see Mirra Komarovsky, "The Voluntary Associations of Urban Dwellers," American Sociological Review, XI (December, 1946), pp. 686-98; and refer to William G. Mather, "Income and Social Participation," American Sociological Review, VI (June, 1941), pp. 380-83.

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL FRAME OF REFERENCE: A MODEL OF ALTERNATIVES TO MOBILITY AMONG THE RURAL IMPOVERISHED

THE THEORETICAL FRAME OF REFERENCE

The broad theoretical perspective for this research is derived from social mobility theory--the specific perspective is from Robert K. Merton's discussion of social structure and anomie and his typology of modes of individual adaptation.[1] The following discussion is designed to place the research problem in a theoretical context or sociological frame of reference. This frame of reference is necessary for an understanding of the analytical model which will form the rationale for the analysis procedure. Thus, the emphases of this chapter will be shifted from consideration of the specific research problem to the broader context of alternatives to mobility in American society.

Social Mobility or Immobility: Modes of Individual Adaptation

In utilizing Merton's modes of individual adaptation as a social mobility context, it is relevant to acknowledge that any number of paradigms or models could be employed in such a discussion. Merton's original formulation was

developed in 1939; needless to say, a number of sociologists have suggested extensive refinements since that time. The purpose of this chapter, however, is not necessarily to improve Merton's paradigm, but simply to modify it somewhat for contextual usage. Thus, any suggestions for refinement will be resorted to only if directly related to the broad problem of avenues for mobility among the impoverished.[2]

Four nearly universal ways of improving one's status may be delineated.[3] Probably, the most widespread means is through occupational improvement, moving to a higher status occupation. Economic success and educational achievement are the second and third avenues. In practice, it is sometimes difficult to separate these three components, yet they may be quite distinct. For example, one may obtain a larger than normal sum of money from his occupation and, thus, perhaps enhance his upward social mobility. Education has become a symbol of prestige in itself.

Control of power is the fourth means of achieving status:

> The best way to attain control of social power is debatable. It is also difficult to isolate power from occupation, wealth, and education. However... using ideal constructs, power may be attained in a political sense, at least, without great initial change in wealth and with no change of formal education.[4]

Such miscellaneous factors as an individual's unusual talent (e.g., as a musician, dancer, singer, actor), athletic prowess, physical beauty, or military reputation may also provide channels for upward mobility. Marriage, particularly for women, is an important additional way.[5]

But for those in poverty are all these channels to upward mobility open? The pragmatic answer appears to be no. The "rags to riches" saga of Horatio Alger has been termed by Wohl as "an episode of secular idealism" and as "a dream to be defended from attack."[6] The disadvantages of low status and the restriction of "life chances" which low status carries with it has been well documented in the literature. Occupational improvement, economic success, educational achievement, and control of power may all be effectively blocked by the life style and life chances of low income people. Knupfer writes:

> ...The lack of financial reserves prevents people from taking advantage of the few opportunities for making more money which do present themselves; the people who need it least have friends who can lend them money in an emergency. Moreover, the economic restrictions, because of the accompanying lack of education and perhaps a certain adaptation to submission and failure, result in psychological restrictions which reinforce the economic.[7]

The question becomes not only how indeed does anyone in poverty become upwardly mobile, but what alternatives might the impoverished resort to in response to their seemingly hopelessly deprived circumstances? It is at this

point that Merton's modes of individual adaptation to the cultural emphases and social structure of American society are of relevance.[8] Merton poses the question of how individuals respond to a cultural context "...characterized by a heavy emphasis on wealth as a basic symbol of success, without a corresponding emphasis upon the legitimate avenues on which to march toward this goal."[9] He proposes polar types of social structure--at one extreme, exclusive stress on the value of culturally defined goals; at the other extreme, undue stress placed upon the means of attainment, where the means become an end in themselves. An intermediate type may exist if there is a balance between the extremes. Nonconforming or "deviant" behavior may be regarded sociologically, in Merton's scheme, as a dissociation between cultural goals and institutionalized means. Thus, his analysis is focused in terms of the society that places strong emphasis on certain goals.

In using the United States as a case study, Merton asserts that it exemplifies undue emphasis on goals, particularly monetary goals. Three axioms of success are stressed from grade school on:

> First, all should strive for the same lofty goals since these are open to all; second, present seeming failure is but a way-station to ultimate success; and third, genuine failure consists only in the lessening or withdrawal of ambition.[10]

It can be inferred that Merton's modes of individual adaptation are of special relevance in explaining and describing the plight of the impoverished in their differing responses to the press from the goals of upward mobility. Merton aptly poses the most significant question of all: "What, in short, are the consequences for the behavior of people variously situated in a social structure of a culture in which the emphasis on dominant success-goals has become increasingly separated from an equivalent emphasis on institutionalized procedures for seeking these goals?"[11] Looking at the problem from the standpoint of social mobility, the issue becomes one of possible responses to a situation where aspirations are increasingly raised, particularly among the underprivileged (e.g., by the civil rights movement and the "War on Poverty"), but with only limited addition of channels for mobility.

Merton's fourfold classification of possible types of deviant responses are as follows:

1. Innovation, characterized by those who accept the prevailing goals or ends, but who reject the approved means. Burglarly, theft, and racketeering are examples.

2. Ritualism is practiced by those who as close and strict followers of rules (means) lose sight of goals and thus in essence reject them. The zealously conforming bureaucrat who makes a fetish of rules is an example of the ritualist.

3. Retreatism is characterized by a rejection of both goals and means and is one of the least common modes of adaptation. Merton writes:

> People who adapt (or maladapt) in this fashion are, strictly speaking, in society but not of it. Sociologically, these constitute the true aliens.[12]

In this category fall the alcoholics, vagrants, and psychotics.

4. Rebellion occurs out of a rejection of both goals and means when a new set is substituted representing a different system of values. Rebellion from old ways and the substituting of new norms is typified by the attempts to build utopian communities earlier in this century.[13]

Merton maintains that the lower strata experience the greatest pressure in terms of internalizing goals not readily attainable.[14] Thus, from the proposition that deviant behavior stemming from an anomic social structure (i.e., generated from a lack of opportunity or the means for achieving life goals), it follows that studies of low-income groups show these people to have higher rates of anomie or fatalism than the general population.[15] For example, a study conducted by D. E. Alleger reveals that the anomic abject despair of literally thousands of low-income southerners (in the United States) has rendered them incapable of adjustment to work.[16]

Despite the premise that the anomic social structure of American society creates special pressures for the underprivileged which may result in various forms of deviant behavior, there are also "normal" modes of responding to the press for upward mobility. There may be conformity to both the cultural goals and institutionalized means of the larger society. Merton writes: "The mesh of expectancies constituting every social order is sustained by the modal behavior of its members representing conformity to the established, though perhaps secularly changing culture patterns."[17] This criterion of behavior must be met in terms of orientation toward the basic values of the society if one is to speak of the human aggregate as comprising society.

It is crucial to delineate what "legitimate" channels for mobility <u>are</u> open to the impoverished if the individual responds in terms of conformity to the values of the larger society.[18] The "miscellaneous" channels (e.g., unusual talent or athletic prowess) are open to some of the more fortunate in the lower strata, but relatively few individuals fall into this category. The mass migration of the rural impoverished to the cities is an outgrowth of attempts to take advantage of what are perceived to be better job opportunities. But the dilemma of the urban slum dweller is well known. Indeed, current national policy is to enrich

the opportunities for higher levels of living in rural areas to stem the influx of rural-urban migrants. For people in poverty, occupational improvement, economic success, and control of power largely depend upon educational achievement. Though there are many obstacles in the way of higher education (or even minimal education) for the lower class youth, if high motivation can be initiated and sustained, education is perhaps a realistic channel for mobility among large segments of the deprived.[19]

Other more immediate avenues for improving life conditions are becoming increasingly open to the impoverished. These take the form of social action programs sponsored by agents outside of the poverty milieu, generally, but sometimes instrumented from within. There are a variety of types. They may be designed, simply, to provide more or less immediate assistance to those in intolerable circumstances (welfare payments, hospital care, urban renewal); they may be designed to open previously closed channels for mobility (increased employment opportunities through vocational training); or they may be designed to offer a means of penetration to a higher economic base from which new opportunities may emerge (e.g., various low interest loan programs).

To recapitulate, one of the main objects of this investigation is to determine if breakdowns may occur after the inception of social action programs, due to the intervention of certain social-psychological processes and/or situational factors which, in turn, make these programs ineffectual for the majority of the people for which they are intended. The discussion to follow will provide a conceptual framework which will delineate the alternatives to what will be termed as the "press for upward social mobility."

Responses to the Press for Upward Social Mobility

Figure 1 depicts the theoretical framework from which the social action alternative to upward mobility is conceived. The title of the model, in reference to the "press" for upward social mobility, is in recognition of two major facts of life for the poor. First, the impoverished are under pressure to become upwardly mobile if for no other reason than the undesirability, or perhaps the unbearability, of their present life condition (this fact remains in spite of the existence of apathetic or fatalistic out-looks). There is often a lack of what are considered as the very basic necessities of life--food, clothing, and shelter. Second, such movements as the "War on Poverty" and civil rights, and the publicity accorded to these and similar movements through the mass media, have instilled a new

RESPONSES TO THE PRESS FOR UPWARD SOCIAL MOBILITY AMONG THE IMPOVERISHED

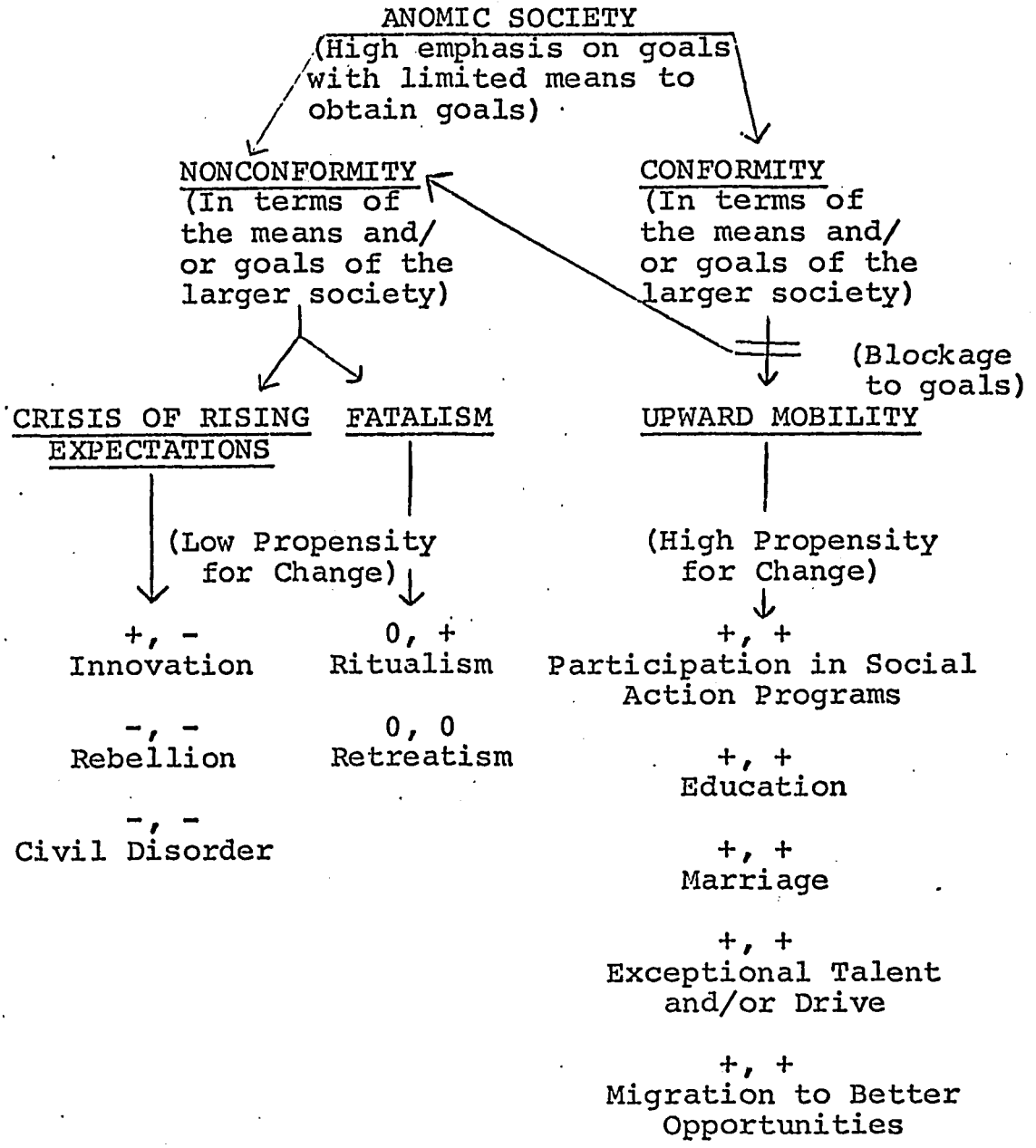


Figure 1

self-awareness on the part of the poor; their deprivation is being more acutely felt. There is a new realization of the great gap between American ideals and American reality. The slogans "we want freedom now" and "we want first class citizenship" do not belong to the Negro alone, but to all of the impoverished who find extremely limited channels for gaining improvement in their life conditions.

The overall context of the model is anomic society, characterized by Merton as placing heavy emphasis on goals, but with limited means of obtaining them.[20] Those in poverty are particularly vulnerable to stress in such a cultural context. It is they whose means to the goals are most limited, perhaps nonexistent.

Following Merton's modes of adaptation, the desire for upward mobility in anomic society may result in one of two broad categories of responses (i.e., in terms of the means and goals, or the values, of larger American society). The individual in poverty may "conform" and attempt to become upwardly mobile by the limited means at his disposal. He will evidence relatively high propensity for change, because his aspirations are geared toward bringing himself and his family's life condition closer to the normative ideals of American society. On the other hand, if the individual perceives that the means to his goals are permanently blocked (or blocked for a longer period than he is willing to endure), his response may fall into the "nonconformity"

category. Such an individual will likely evidence relatively low propensity for change. He may react apathetically or fatalistically to his plight, because he feels there is little hope for change. Or, he may react aggressively in the face of frustration, out of the crisis of rising expectations.[21]

The category of "civil disorder" has been added to Merton's typology as a mode of nonconforming response by this writer to account for short term violence, such as rioting. It is similar to what Merton distinguishes as "ressentiment," which, unlike "rebellion," does not involve a genuine change in values. "In 'ressentiment,' one condemns the craving itself."[22] Social disorder can be viewed as an outgrowth of diffuse feelings of hate, envy and hostility. There is "... a sense of being powerless to express these feelings actively against the person or social stratum evoking them and...a continual re-experiencing of this impotent hostility."[23] In short, "rebellion" is distinguished by an adherence to a new set of values, while "civil disorder" is distinguished by a lack of adherence to any clear-cut values; it is an act born out of frustration.

Further modification of Merton's scheme is employed by consideration of an additional dimension for each mode of

response. Harary, in analyzing Merton's typology, suggests the following:

> Merton's typology of modes of individual adaptation is ambiguous in the employment of symbols. By introducing a symbol for indifference in addition to the symbols for acceptance and rejection, the difficulties can be obviated and the classification scheme expanded to encompass modes of deviant behavior not explicit in the original.[24]

The writer, following Harary, employs a (0) to denote utter indifference on the part of the individual in terms of goals and/or means of the larger society; a minus (-) to indicate active rejection; and a plus (+) to denote active acceptance.[25] In Figure 1 the "goals" response is depicted by the first symbol over each mode of adaptation, the "means" by the second. Thus, indifference and/or rejection characterizes the goals and means for attainment under the nonconformity category.

It will be noted that the "ritualism" and "retreatism" responses are listed under the fatalism heading, as they both involve <u>indifference</u> to goals and/or the means for their attainment in the larger society.

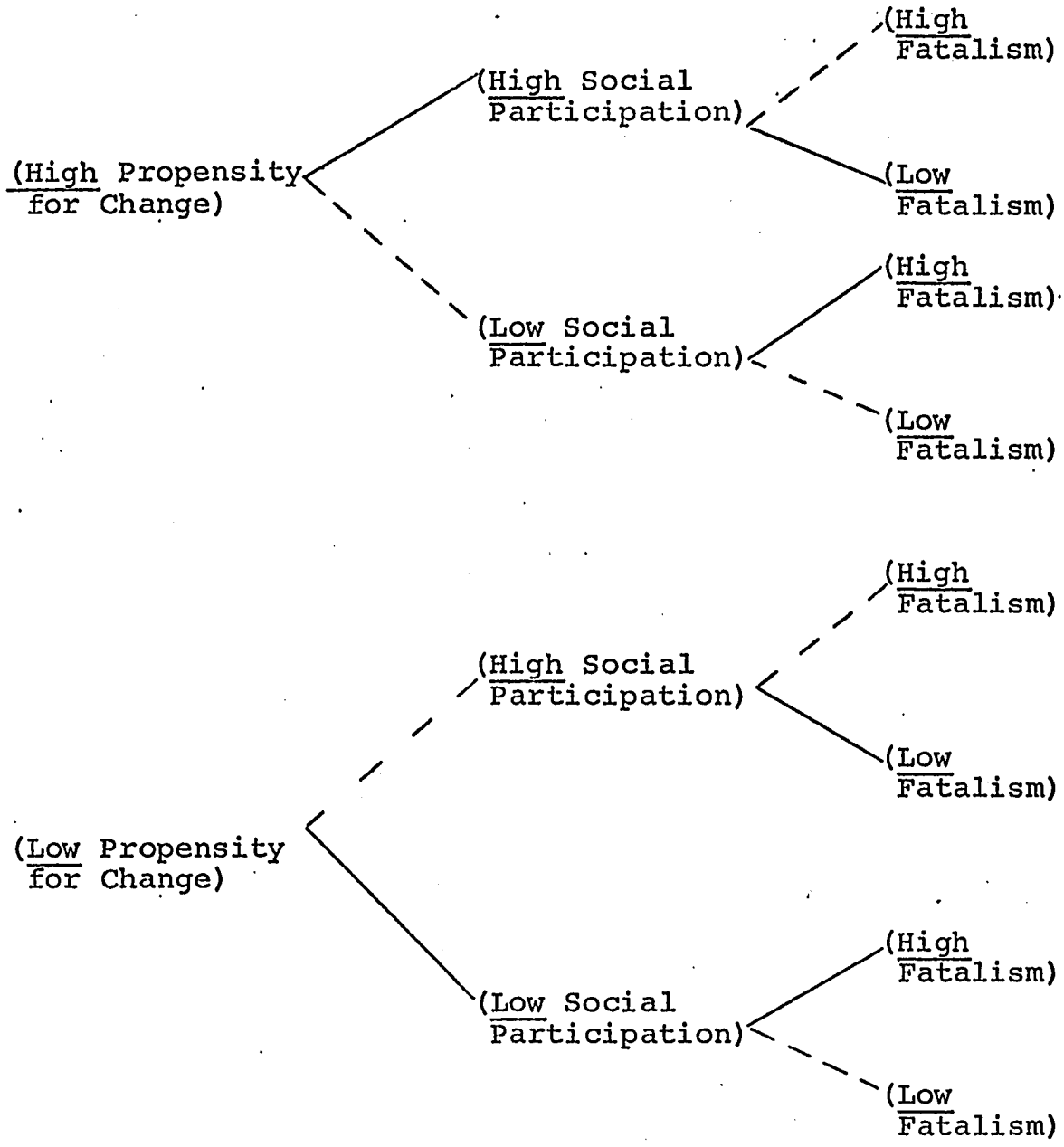
Under the "conformity" category are listed the various means, defined by the norms of American culture as "legitimate." It is by these methods that the deprived may attain better lives, or at least substantial improvement in their living conditions.

Thus, in terms of this framework, the research problem is posed as the determination of the social characteristics of those with high mobility potential (i.e., propensity for change toward "conformity" modes of responses) versus those with low potential. Further, the effects of, or relationships between, these variables and the proposed intervening variables of social participation and anomie will be ascertained.

THE ANALYTICAL MODEL

The logical possibilities for the combining of the main variables of this study, from which the analysis plan is derived, are depicted in Figure 2. The "ideal typical" models of poverty and propensities for upward social mobility (i.e., in terms of the assumptions upon which social action programs are sometimes predicted) are formed by the solid lines. Possible deviations from these conceptualizations are represented by the dotted line connections. Therefore, the ideal model for individuals with high mobility potential (propensity for change) yields expectation for significant association among the variables high propensity for change, high social participation and low fatalism. And the ideal model for individuals with low mobility potential yields expectation for significant association among the variables low propensity for change, low social participation and high fatalism.

ALTERNATIVE CONFIGURATIONS OF ASSOCIATION[a]



[a]Solid lines represent "ideal" or assumed relationships between the respective variables; dotted lines represent deviations from proposed models.

Figure 2

To reiterate, the analysis plan involves testing the validity of the above models and delineating the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals who conform to a particular model. In the event that the models are valid, a deviant case analysis procedure would be applied to individuals evidencing atypical response syndromes. To determine whether the variables social participation and fatalism are indeed intervening, the first step in the analysis strategy is to ascertain if associations occur between these variables and the major dependent variable, propensity for change. That is, the presence or absence of such an association is an indication of the effects (or lack thereof) of social participation, fatalism and propensity for change.

In the event that associations are found among the above variables, it is relevant to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals evidencing dissimilar response configurations <u>within each</u> propensity for change category (high and low). The rationale is that the various combinations of characteristics within the respective propensity for change categories have differential implications for social mobility. Thus, it is important to determine the existence of any distinguishing characteristics for individuals exhibiting certain combinations of responses. For example, it would be important to determine the distinguishing characteristics between individuals evidencing high

propensity for change with high social participation and low fatalism and individuals evidencing high propensity for change with low social participation and high fatalism.

On the other hand, if no associations obtain between propensity for change and social participation and fatalism, these latter two variables cannot be considered as intervening--that is, they cannot be considered as influencers of mobility potential (propensity for change). In this case, the logical step would be to disregard the social participation and fatalism variables and simply determine if the broad categories of high and low propensity for change respondents have differential socio-demographic characteristics. In other words, social participation and fatalism are considered as not being related to the problem at hand--ascertaining the characteristics of high mobility potential versus low mobility potential individuals.

The final step will be to compare the findings obtained for the poverty groups with the results of analyses involving the more affluent among the interviewees in the Mississippi Delta population. This procedure will serve as a basis of comparison in regard to the generalizability of the findings to the larger population.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1957), pp. 131-94.

[2]In this connection, it should be noted that Merton's paradigm is primarily designed as a framework "...to provide one systematic approach to the analysis of social and cultural sources of deviant behavior" (Merton, 132, this writer's emphasis). The emphasis of this discussion, however, will center more on what will be termed as the correlates of "conforming conduct" among the lower socio-economic strata. "Deviant" behavior is a specific concern of this study only as it is related to "fatalism" or "anomie," or, more generally, as a contextual background for the study problem.

[3]A concise summary discussion of the avenues to mobility is contained in Alvin L. Bertrand, Basic Sociology: An Introduction to Theory and Method (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), pp. 188-89. Also refer to related readings in Reinhard Bendix and S. M. Lipset, Class, Status and Power, 2nd ed. (New York: Free Press, 1966); H. M. Hodges, Jr., Social Stratification: Class in America (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1964); Gideon Sjoberg, "Are Social Classes in America Becoming More Rigid?" American Sociological Review, XXVII (December, 1951), pp. 775-84; Milton M. Gordon, Social Class in American Sociology (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Paperback ed., 1963); and W. L. Warner, et al, Social Class in America (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbook, 1960).

[4]Ibid., 189.

[5]For an elaboration of the intercorrelation or convergence of stratification variables as they affect the social and psychological situation of a given individual, see the discussion by Milton M. Gordon, Social Class in American Sociology, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1963), particularly the chapter "A System of Social Class Analysis," pp. 234-56.

[6]R. Richard Wohl, "The 'Rags to Riches Story': An Episode of Secular Idealism," in Bendix and Lipset, pp. 388-95.

[7]Genevieve Knupfer, "Portrait of the Underdog," Public Opinion Quarterly, XI (Spring, 1947), p. 103.

[8]Merton, 140.

[9]Merton, 139.

[10]Merton, 139.

[11]Merton, 139.

[12]Merton, 153.

[13]H. L. Bredemeier and R. M. Stephenson in The Analysis of Social Systems (New York: Holt, Rinehard and Winston, 1962), pp. 124-25, contend that another form of deviant behavior which contains some aspects of anomie is overconformity. The "overconformer" complies with the letter of the law beyond the limits normally expected. Such behavior may be found, for example, in religious groups, among some newcomers to a given status position, and in some highly structured situations, such as Marine boot camps.

[14]Hyman, 426-42, has taken issue with what he believes to be Merton's assumption that the success-values among economic and social strata are evenly distributed; he questions whether these values are in actuality internalized by lower class individuals and cites evidence to the contrary. Hyman writes: "What is obviously required is empirical evidence on the degree to which individuals in different strata value the culturally prescribed goal of success, believe that opportunity is available to them, and hold other values which would aid or hinder them in their attempts to move towards their goal" (pp. 427-28).

Merton, 174, agrees that the evidence reveals differentials in proportions (but not the degree) of commitment to success goals among the different social strata. He writes, however, that "...it is not the relative proportions of the several social classes adopting the cultural goal of success that matter, but their absolute numbers" (p. 174, Merton's emphasis). He goes further to say: "...The hypothesis does not require that larger proportions or even larger numbers in the lower social strata be oriented toward the

success-goal, but only a 'substantial number' be so oriented, that is, ...a more frequent disjunction between goals and opportunity among the lower-class strata than among the more advantaged upper-class strata" (p. 174, Merton's emphasis).

[15]The term "anomie" is often used to denote feelings of fatalism and low morale in general, and in this sense is to be distinguished from the sociological meaning of the term (for Merton, the disjunction between the goals of a society and the legitimate means for their attainment). "Anomie," used here as a psychological concept, refers to feelings of despair and hopelessness (fatalism) in the face of what are perceived to be overwhelming circumstances. Individuals having the symptoms of anomie may evidence a wide variety of dysfunctional behavioral responses.

[16]Daniel E. Alleger, A Southern Rural Paradox: Social Change and Despair (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, Research Report XI, January, 1966), p. 6; cited in Bertrand, 231.

[17]Merton, 141.

[18]Merton and A. K. Rossi are careful to differentiate between the notion of "conformity" as used in Merton's paradigm from what is often termed "social conformity." The former concept denotes adherence to the norms of the society at large, but "...social conformity denotes conformity to the norms and expectations current in the individual's own membership-group." Refer to R. K. Merton and A. K. Rossi, "Reference Group Theory and Social Mobility," in Bendix, p. 511.

[19]The application of education as a tool to raise income levels is the subject in L. G. Tweeten, The Role of Education in Alleviating Rural Poverty (Washington, D. C.: United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Agricultural Economic Report No. 114, 1967).

[20]This type of individual is represented in the first ideal type characterization posited in the introduction to Chapter I.

[21]Alvin L. Bertrand, Quentin Jenkins, and Marcial Walker, "Beyond the 'Revolution of a Crisis of Rising Expectations': An Hypothesis Derived From a Study of Members of a Mexican Ejido Community" (unpublished paper, Department of Sociology and Rural Sociology, Louisiana State University, 1967), p. 12.

[22]Merton, 156.

[23]Merton, 156, paraphrasing Max Scheler, L'homme du Ressentiment (Paris, n.d.).

[24]Frank Harary, "Merton Revisited: A New Classification for Deviant Behavior," American Sociological Review, XXXI (October, 1966), p. 693.

[25]Harary provides an expanded classification scheme to encompass modes of deviant behavior not explicit in the original typology by Merton. However, Merton's scheme suffices for the theoretical concerns of this research.

CHAPTER III

THE SAMPLE AND INDICES OF MAJOR RESEARCH VARIABLES

THE SAMPLE

Before setting forth the sample design for the Delta Study, a brief description of the Mississippi Delta Region will be presented.

Sample Area Description[1]

The Mississippi Delta Region includes most of the flood plain of the Mississippi River south of the Ohio River and the valley of the Red River in Louisiana. Although technically not a delta, the region's flat topography and deep fertile alluvial soil are conducive to agricultural pursuits. The region encompasses an elongated area of over 30,000 square miles, extending from southern Missouri to central Louisiana.

Before the late 1800's, only scattered settlements were located in the Delta due to poor drainage, floods, and dense woods. The Delta did not become the foremost cotton producing section in the United States until land was cleared and drained and railroads were brought in. With the expansion of cotton production in the first decades of the 20th century substantial population growth occurred.

However, the rate of population increase soon reached a state of near equilibrium. At present there is even a slight population decline in some areas. Migration to urban centers from the rural countryside has resulted in significant population losses in farming districts particularly.

In 1960 cotton was still the chief product in the Mississippi Delta, with cotton farms comprising seven-eights of all commercial farm operations. This is not surprising since cotton yields in the Delta are higher than in any other nonirrigated part of the country. In the past few years, however, the sale of livestock and, increasingly, the growing of soybeans and rice have made for diversification in the Delta.

The large-scale adoption of tractors and mechanical cotton pickers has almost eliminated the typical cotton farmer of the past who was "...a 'cropper' working 15 or 20 acres on shares for a landlord."[2] Increasing mechanization and a changing technology have resulted in fewer and fewer job opportunities and large-scale underemployment. This factor, coupled with the pull of non-farm employment opportunities, has been a major reason for the mass exodus to the cities.

Multiple-unit operations are found in the Delta more than in any other region, but the proportion of these type operations to the more centralized type has decreased

rapidly. More than half of the farmers of this region are Negroes.

Memphis, Little Rock, and Baton Rouge lie on the periphery of the region (Shreveport being the only city of over 100,000 situated within it). The major cities (Alexandria, Monroe, Lafayette, Pine Bluff, Greenville) are founded primarily on wood and farm product processing and manufacturing. A major natural gas field (near Monroe) and several oil fields are found in the Louisiana areas of the Delta.

There are wealthy individuals in the Delta, but family incomes are generally far below the national average.

The section to follow will contain a detailed account of the technique employed in sampling from the population of this region.

The Sampling Design

A team of twenty enumerators from Mississippi State University and Southern University (Baton Rouge, Louisiana) interviewed approximately 1,300 rural residents during the summer of 1966. The 45 whole delta counties within Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Missouri composed the study area.[3] The population sampled consisted of rural farm and nonfarm inhabitants who were heads of households. The randomized, block sampling technique was designed to yield

a one percent sample of the dwellings. The following steps constituted the sampling procedure:

1. Each state economic area was divided into relatively homogeneous groups of three counties. Because of the odd number of counties in Mississippi two large counties, Bolivar and Coahoma, were taken as a sampling unit.

2. From 1960 census data the rural population of each county and each sampling unit was determined.

3. Through the use of a table of random numbers, there was a random selection of one county to represent each group.

4. From census data the number of households to be enumerated in each county proportionate to a one percent sample of the area's rural population was determined.

5. Also from census data was determined the population of towns and villages under 2,500 inhabitants in 1961.

6. The proportion of the total rural population in towns and villages was computed.

7. The number of households was determined proportionate to the 1960 population in towns and villages to be enumerated in each group of counties.

8. The towns and villages in the selected county to be sampled were randomly selected with the aid of a table of random numbers.

9. On the most recent State Highway Departments county maps were delineated sample segments of approximately 10 households each. These segments covered all open country areas in each of the selected counties and each segment was numbered.

10. Using a table of random numbers, the number of sample segments previously determined that approximated a one percent sample of households in open country areas was selected.

11. In the previously selected towns and villages, sample segments of approximately 10 households per segment were delineated on Census 1960 E. D. Maps.

12. Again, with the aid of a table of random numbers, the number of sample segments previously determined that equaled a one percent sample of the households in towns and villages was selected.

Characteristics of the Sample[4]

Preliminary analyses involving the characteristics of the sample respondents revealed the following features:

Within the 45 whole Delta counties in the four states which constituted the Delta sample, 71 percent of the total respondents resided in the open country while the remainder lived in towns under 2,500 population. Negroes comprised 47 percent of the sample.

In regard to the characteristics of the sampled households, 82 percent were headed by males, with a mean family size of 3.88 (for whites 3.35, for Negroes 4.47). The median age of the household heads was 53. As such, the relatively high median age may be interpreted as an indication of the high rate of migration out of the region by the younger population groups. Approximately 4 percent of the households were headed by persons under 25 years of age, while 28 percent were headed by persons 65 years of age and older.

One of the dominant features of the Delta sample is the prevalence of poverty. According to the poverty classification scheme used in the Delta Study, 67 percent of the people in this area either dwell in poverty or marginal conditions.[5] (Among Negroes 93 percent live in marginal conditions or worse, as compared with 54 percent of the whites.) Significantly, only 6 percent of the total sample received incomes of $10,000 or more.

In terms of education, although 56 percent of all applicable household heads considered a college education as being desirable for their children, the majority of the respondents had only 5 to 11 years of formal schooling.

Thus, the more salient characteristics of the sample can be summarized as indicating a high proportion of Negroes, a high incidence of poverty (disproportionately shared by

Negroes), high median age (an indication of migration of the younger population out of the area), and generally low educational attainment.

MAJOR RESEARCH VARIABLES AND THEIR INDICES

The research problem has been posed as (1) the determination of the socio-demographic characteristics of impoverished individuals who have relatively high propensity for change (as opposed to those with low-propensity), (2) the determination of the possible intervention of the variables social participation and fatalism, and (3) to infer from the findings the implications for sociological theory. The investigation of these areas of concern involves the operationalizing of four major variables--poverty, propensity for change, social participation, and fatalism. Since the entire study design hinges on the first two variables, poverty and propensity for change, the indices of these variables will be dealt with in the remainder of this chapter. Social participation and fatalism, their indices and the results of tests of association with propensity for change, are presented in Chapter IV. Also presented in Chapter IV are the findings pertaining to the socio-demographic characteristics associated with propensity for change.

Poverty and Its Measurement

In 1892, John George Godard defined poverty as "an insufficiency of necessaries; or, more fully, as an insufficient supply of those things which are requisite for an individual to maintain himself and those dependent upon him in health and vigour."[6] He was not content to let his case rest here, however, for he goes on to write that while

> ...the degree of poverty will obviously be determined by the extent of the insufficiency...(there is) the further question as to what things are requisite: and it must at once be stated that there is no sharply defined line between necessaries and unnecessaries--or luxuries. A given article may be requisite to one man and not to another, and may be requisite at one time and not at another; whilst the requirements of an individual that he may adapt himself to his environment naturally depend upon the nature of the environment. The personality, the time, and the circumstance, have all to be taken into account, and no general rule can therefore be laid down.[7]

Significantly, as long as three quarters of a century ago the notion of relative deprivation was incorporated into definitions of poverty.

Politicians, economists, sociologists, and other interested individuals have had difficulty in reaching agreement as to what constitutes the best of the wide variety of indices and definitions of poverty. Researchers involved in the Delta Study were no exception. However, the definition of poverty utilized for this research, hopefully, is relative (as Godard would certainly have it be)

to the time, circumstances, and environment of individuals in contemporary United States society. Thus, poverty is conceived of as starting at that level (in U. S. society) which precludes adequate food, shelter, and clothing, and full participation in activities which are available to the majority of other inhabitants in the society. The concept is operationalized in terms of different levels which are determined by household income adjusted by household size. The resulting size-income classes are depicted in Table I. These categories were developed jointly with researchers working on related studies in other regions for the purpose of coordinating efforts and providing inter-regional comparisons.[8] For purposes of this investigation the first three classes serve to constitute a general poverty category. Where applicable, however, analyses incorporate the degrees of deprivation within this broad category. Table II reveals the frequencies and percentages of respondents by each size-income class. A clearer conception of the size-income classes can be gained by viewing the categories in terms of the approximate per capita income for each:

Class 1: Seriously deprived--The maximum per capita income for any household in this group is $500, but the average for all households (obtained by dividing the mid-points of the intervals of number of persons into the mid-point of the income intervals) is about $250.

TABLE I

HOUSEHOLD SIZE-INCOME CLASS: RELATIVE INCOME DEPRIVATION, BASED ON RELATIONSHIP OF INCOME TO HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Household Income	1	2	3	4	5	6 (Other)
$0-$999	2 or more persons	1 person	---	---	---	
$1,000-$1,999	5 or more persons	2, 3, or 4 persons	1 person	---	---	
$2,000-$2,999	9 or more persons	4 through 6 persons	2 and 3 persons	1 person	---	
$3,000-$4,999	---	8 or more persons	4 through 7 persons	2 and 3 persons	1 person	
$5,000-$7,499	---	---	9 or more persons	4 through 8 persons	1 through 3 persons	
$7,500-$9,999	---	---	---	6 persons and over	1 through 5 persons	
$10,000 and over	---	---	---	9 persons and over	1 through 8 persons	

(Household Size-Income Classes, or Relative Income Deprivation Classes)

Class 1	Seriously deprived	Class 4	Probably not deprived
Class 2	Deprived	Class 5	Definitely not deprived
Class 3	Marginal	Class 6	Undetermined (either income or size class not reported)

TABLE II

FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF RESPONDENTS IN HOUSEHOLD INCOME-SIZE CLASSIFICATIONS

Classes	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percentages (down)[a]	Cumulative Percentages (up)[b]
I Serious Poverty	317	25	25	100
II Poverty	333	27	52	75
III Marginal Poverty	188	15	67	48
IV Probably not in Poverty	138	11	78	33
V Definitely not in Poverty	177	14	92	22
VI Size or income not Reported	93	8	100	8
Totals	1246	100		

[a]Percentages added cumulatively down the column.

[b]Percentages added cumulatively up the column.

Class 2: Deprived--Per capita income in this group ranges from a minimum of $250 for large families to a maximum of $1,000 for 1 person families with a mid-point average of $400.

Class 3: Marginal--This group covers a per capita income range of $500 for large households to $1,500 for 1 person families for an average of approximately $1,000.

Class 4: Probably not deprived--A per capita income range of $750 for large households to $3,000 for 1 person households.

Class 5: Definitely not deprived--A minimum per capita income of approximately $1,500.

Levels of Aspiration and Propensity for Change

As stated in Chapter I, the operational focus of this investigation is related to propensities to take action for change, but the theoretical orientation is in terms of aspiration levels (attitudes). Thus, before elaborating on the operationalizing procedure, it is relevant to discuss several theoretical considerations which the usage of the aspiration level concept implies.

It may be inferred from the evidence that the level of aspiration concept is multi-dimensional in nature.[9] Haller and Miller discuss the different facets of aspiration levels, noting that the concept, at its most fundamental level, refers to one or more people who are oriented toward a goal.[10] They also point out that "the person's goal is a selection of one among the alternative behavior

levels that are possible with respect to an object," and "...the alternatives are ranked in a continuum of difficulty."[11] Further, the individual "...may have a range of aspirations with rough upper and lower boundaries, and the whole range may vary according to whether he is concerned with his goals for the immediate future or for some more distant time. Haller and Miller aptly summarize the literature related to the level of aspiration concept:

> Almost all writers agree that each person has a range of goal-levels within which the valences of all particular goal-levels is relatively high; few view the person's level of aspiration as being concentrated on a single point. Among those who recognize the existence of a range rather than a point, there are two different emphases. Some stress variations in the level of aspiration at one time. These writers use terms such as preference versus expectation, and the like. Others stress variations in the level of aspiration at different times. These writers use terms such as short-range versus long-range.[12]

Strictly speaking, in this investigation the assertion cannot be made that propensities for change are directly related to levels of aspiration. However, it can be argued that propensities for change may reflect aspiration levels, but at a lower, more concrete level of abstraction. Thus, the emphasis is upon variations in propensities for change (rather than aspiration levels per se) among different individuals at one point in time. More specifically, propensity for change is operationalized in terms of expressed degrees of willingness to take action for change

in the areas of educational and vocational betterment. It is through these channels that the impoverished adult may best gain upward mobility and corresponding improvement of life circumstances.

The first type of the "actions for change," pertaining to education or training, was gauged by the following two questions:

1. Would you take courses for education or special training if they were available and free of charge? Yes ___, No____, Indefinite____.

If a response of "no" or "indefinite" was received the question was posed--

2. Would you take these courses <u>if you were paid</u>? Yes___, No____.

The second type of action, involving changing occupations for economic advancement, was measured by three questions:

1. Would you be interested in changing to another type of job at higher pay if you could continue to live here in the community? Yes___, No___.

2. Would you be interested in changing to another type of job at higher pay if you would have to move away from this community to another community <u>at least 50 miles away</u>? Yes____, No____.

3. Would you be willing to move to a more distant location--say 200 miles from here--for a good paying job? Yes___,No___.

Evidence that an underlying variable (i.e., propensity for change) is operating is revealed in that both the educational and occupational items were found to be highly associated. In Table III are presented the chi-square and adjusted coefficients of contingency for the cross-classification combinations. (Throughout the analyses relationships which are significant at the .05 level will be designated by one asterisk [*], at the .01 level by two asterisks [**], and at the .001 level by three asterisks [***].) All frequencies are depicted in Appendix, Table I.

To facilitate analyses a four point propensity for change typology was developed. The criteria for the different response categories were as follows:

1. "high propensity"--responses involving the greatest willingness to change for both sets of items (i.e., would take courses or training without being subsidized and would move 200 or more miles to obtain a higher paying job).

2. "medium-high propensity"--affirmative responses to at least one question in each set of items, but willing to a lesser degree than in the above category (e.g., willing to train only if subsidized and willing to change jobs, but only if able to remain in the same community).

TABLE III

WILLINGNESS TO TAKE COURSES OR TRAINING AND WILLINGNESS TO CHANGE JOBS

Willingness to Take Courses or Training Without Subsidy			
	(X^2)[a]	(N)	(C)[b]
Change jobs within community	113.48***	419	.653
Change jobs and move 50 miles away	72.25***	401	.553
Change jobs and move 200 miles away	83.26***	448	.560

Willingness to Take Courses or Training Only if Subsidized			
	(X^2)	(N)	(C)[b]
Change jobs within community	49.19***	185	.648
Change jobs and move 50 miles away	32.45***	128	.636
Change jobs and move 200 miles away	16.25***	125	.480

[a]All chi-square values are based on analyses of 2 x 2 tables, therefore, there is one degree of freedom for each computation.

[b]Adjusted coefficient of contingency.

3. "medium-low propensity"--an affirmative response to one or more questions within only one of either set of items, but negative responses to all the questions in the other (e.g., willing to change jobs, but not willing to train--whether subsidized or not).

4. "low propensity"--negative responses to all the items in each category.

In cases where no response was obtained for the complete set of questions in either category (i.e., either the take training or change occupation categories) respondents were assigned to a high or low propensity type on the basis of their responses to the set of questions in the other category. The frequencies and percentages of individuals meeting the requirements for each type are revealed in Table IV. It will be noted that a relatively high percentage of respondents on the high propensity for change side of the basic dichotomy had incomplete responses. This was not believed to be a serious weakness in the measure due to the high association (and high amount of variance accounted for) between the two categories of items. However, as an additional precaution against possible distortion introduced into the findings by this factor, all analyses were performed both with and without inclusion of the incomplete responses. In no case were the outcomes of the findings made substantially different by using one procedure as opposed to the other.

TABLE IV

PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE TYPOLOGY

Types	Frequencies	Percent
High	14	2
Medium-high	124	15
High (incomplete)	266	33
Medium-low	237	28
Low	110	9
Low (incomplete)	72	13
No response	19	2
Total	842	100

FOOTNOTES

[1]The following description of the Mississippi Delta Region is summarized from D. J. Bogue and C. L. Beale, Economic Areas of the United States (The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., 1961) pp. 369-70. Allowances have been made in cases where the rapidity of change in the Delta has outdated segments of their work. Precise information concerning the Delta Region at present, however, is difficult to obtain, because Census information is compiled either for large state (and definitely unregional) units or for the small and multitudinous (3,100) county units.

[2]Ibid., p. 369. Although this type of farm worker still prevailed in 1960, the last Census did not even enumerate the "cropper" due to the rapidity of his decline in the face of mechanization.

[3]Counties in the sampling frame which were part delta and part hill were excluded because of the difficulty of differentiating those portions of counties that should be included in the study area (i.e., the Delta).

[4]The writer is indebted to Professors R. Steptoe of the Department of Agricultural Economics, Southern University (Baton Rouge, Louisiana) and J. C. Crecink of Mississippi State University for furnishing much of the information contained in this section.

[5]See Mollie Orshansky, "Counting the Poor," Social Security Bulletin (January, 1964). Estimates by Orshansky of minimum income needs for families by number of persons in family were used as a guide in formulating the criteria for various categories of relative poverty and affluence. The scheme will be presented in detail later in this chapter.

[6]John George Godard, Poverty: Its Genesis and Exodus (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892), p.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Agricultural Economists and Rural Sociologists employed by the Economic Research Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture developed the classification scheme. Three regions were compared: the Coastal Plain Region of South Carolina, the Mississippi Delta, and the Ozarks (Arkansas and Missouri).

[9]See, for example, W. A. Lurie, "Estimating the Level of Vocational Aspirations," Journal of Social Psychology, X (1939), pp. 467-73; J. W. Gardner, "The Use of the Term 'Level of Aspiration'," Psychological Review, XLVII (1940), pp. 59-68; and F. S. Irwin, "Motivation," in H. Helson (ed.), Theoretical Foundations of Psychology (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1951), pp. 239-41.

The above references, as well as the discussion to follow, are drawn from A. O. Haller and I. W. Miller, The Occupational Aspiration Scale: Theory, Structure, and Correlates, Technical Bulletin 288, East Lansing: Michigan State University, A.E.S., 1963.

[10]Haller and Miller, p. 7.

[11]Haller and Miller, p. 7.

[12]Haller and Miller, p. 8.

CHAPTER IV

CORRELATES OF HIGH AND LOW PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE: THE FINDINGS

The results of the first two phases of the investigation conducted are in this chapter. The first phase was devoted to the use of the instruments of the analyses to test the association between the major dependent variable--propensity for change--and the potential intervening variables--social participation and fatalism. The second stage in the procedure included an analysis of the findings pertaining to the socio-demographic correlates of high and low propensity (for change) respondents. Results of the final procedural phase of the study--the determination of the extent to which the findings obtained from the poverty group can be extended to the more affluent--are presented in Chapter V.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION, FATALISM, AND PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE: TESTS OF ASSOCIATION

The Instruments of Analyses

Social participation. Chapin's social participation scale was utilized in an effort to determine the kind and

degree of participation in voluntary organizations.[1] Four components of organizational affiliation were weighed: 1) organization membership, 2) frequency of attendance, 3) committee membership, and 4) office holding.

Percentages of responses to the frequency of attendance variable by type of organization are given in Table V. It is apparent that church and church group organizations consitute the main type of organizational activity for the lower strata. In fact, lodge and P.T.A. were the only other activities in which 8 percent or more of the respondents participated. From 97 to 100 percent of the respondents either rarely or never attended the other organizations.

Further evidence of the limited scope of organizational participation by the rural impoverished is revealed in Table VI. The frequency of positive responses to the three components of organizational affiliation, attendance, committee membership, office holder, again reveal that participation is highest in church and church groups, lodge, and P.T.A. The latter two type organizations, however, represented a combined membership totaling only 7 percent of the sampled population, as opposed to 66 percent of those interviewed participating in church and church groups.[2]

For the purposes of this investigation, allowances were made for what were assumed to be "non-status-quo"

TABLE V

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION: ORGANIZATION BY FREQUENCY OF ATTENDANCE (IN PERCENTAGES)

Type of Organization	Frequency of Attendance					
	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Fairly often	Often	Total
Church	20	6	18	10	46	100
Church group	85	3	2	2	8	100
Civic	97	2	-[a]	-	1	100
Farm org.	94	3	1	1	1	100
Lodge	91	2	1	1	5	100
Labor union	97	3	0	0	-	100
Co-op	97	2	-	0	1	100
Political	98	2	0	0	-	100
Community or neighborhood club	97	2	-	-	1	100
Community action program	97	2	0	0	1	100
P.T.A.	90	2	3	1	4	100
Other	96	2	-	-	2	100

[a]The symbol (-) indicates that responses totaled less than 0.5 percent.

TABLE VI

FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF POSITIVE RESPONSES TO THE COMPONENTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION

Type of Organization	Member of Organization		High Attendance[a]		Member of Committee		Holder of Office	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Church	463	55	369	56	178	21	174	21
Church group	93	11	86	10	49	6	32	4
Civic	9	1	10	1	4	0.4	4	0.4
Farm organization	23	3	14	2	4	0.4	3	0.4
Lodge	35	4	43	6	20	2	22	3
Labor union	4	0.4	3	0.2	1	0.1	1	0.1
Co-op	8	1	8	1	2	0.2	1	0.1
Political	2	0.2	3	0.2	1	0.1	1	0.1
Community or neighborhood club	12	1	14	1	7	1	4	0.4
Community action program	3	0.4	8	1	2	0.2	1	0.1
P.T.A.	29	3	39	5	10	1	5	1
Other	18	2	19	2	10	1	8	1

[a]High attendance respondents were those who responded that they attended meetings "fairly often" or "often."

oriented types of social participation (i.e., participation for the purposes of changing social, economic, or political conditions by direct or indirect means). Participation in civic clubs, farm organizations, labor unions, co-ops, community action programs and P.T.A. was designated as "social action" oriented. The premise for singling out participation in these types of activities is that mobility potential is perhaps greatest for individuals who are active in organizations designed primarily (or in some cases, indirectly) to improve economic, educational, or political conditions.[3] Thus, a "social action" score for each respondent was computed by applying the Chapin technique of score computation, but counting only participation in the above types of organizations. The Chapin method consists of assigning different weights to the four components of participation, with the greatest weight allotted to those activities requiring the most involvement. Therefore, membership in the organization was assigned a weight of 1 (one), high frequency of attendance--2 (if meetings were attended "fairly often" or "regularly"), membership in a committee--3, and holding of an office--4. A total social action score was obtained for each individual by summing the respective individuals' scores for each of the activities.

An over-all social participation score was also obtained by adding to each respondent's social action score

the total score derived from other, non-action oriented, activities. Included in this category were church, church groups, lodge, community or neighborhood club, and "other" organizations. It should be noted that differentiation between social action activities and the above was also considered crucial in view of the relatively high church related participation among the rural impoverished. Some authors have maintained that this type of organizational involvement may have little or no effect on improvement of one's mobility potential.[4] Further, the remaining non-social action activities are primarily recreational in nature. Additional categories of types of participation were not utilized due to the small percentage of respondents actively taking part in the various organizations.

A typology of responses was developed by combining social action and total social participation scores. The first step in this procedure involved determining the frequency distribution of the score responses (i.e., the number of respondents for each score obtained) for both social action and total participation responses. (The respective distributions are presented in the Appendix, Table II.) Individuals scoring above the median were classed as "high" social action participants, those scoring below as "low" social action participants.[5] The total participation score frequency distribution was divided into

approximate quartiles. Thus, in terms of their total participation, respondents were classed as "high," "medium high," "medium low," and "low" participants. The last step in this procedure consisted of merging the two types of participation into eight classes or combinations to form the typology. Table VII reveals the score types and their score criteria, along with the percentages of responses among the impoverished for each type.

Fatalism. Fatalism (sometimes termed "anomia"), as used in this study, refers to the socio-psychological state of an individual or his attitude. The underlying doctrine is that all events are determined by necessity, or fate, that there is little, if anything, an individual can do to change what he perceives as his life destiny.

A six-item, Guttman-type Srole scale was utilized to measure the extent of fatalistic orientations among the respondents.[6] Five different responses to each of the items were possible. They were: 1) strongly agree, 2) agree, 3) undecided, 4) disagree, and 5) strongly disagree. However, the two degrees of agreement and the two degrees of disagreement were later consolidated into single "agree" and "disagree" categories to facilitate scale analyses and to reduce scale error. "Undecided" responses were assigned where least error would be produced, to the "disagree"

TABLE VII

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION TYPOLOGY

Score Types (from low to high)	Score Criteria		Respondents
	Social Action Score	Total Score	Percent
1	0	0	27
2	0	1 - 2	20
3	1	1 - 2	1
4	0	3 - 8	26
5	1	3 - 8	4
6	0	9+	17
7	1	9+	5
		Total	100

category.[7] The dichotomized responses were computer processed by the Cornell Technique utilizing the U.C.L.A. Biomed Program.[8] The Cornell Technique yields a scoring distribution based on increasing frequencies of "yes" or "no" responses. Manipulation of the scale print-out score arrangement was employed to develop scale types which allowed minimal error. In cases where error patterns produced a situation whereby assignment to one or another scale types would be arbitrary, these patterns were grouped and assigned alternately to upper and lower scale types.[9] The resulting scale is termed a Guttman-type scale because it fails to conform to all of Louis Guttman's requirements.[10]

The computation print-out of poverty scale responses by the Cornell Technique yielded a coefficient of reproducibility of .844. However, upon rearranging the data into scale types (rather than scores) in terms of least error, the coefficient of reproducibility was raised to an acceptable .919.[11]

The following six items (in their scale order) comprised the Srole scale:

1. Even if a family objects, a man should choose a job that he thinks is best for him.

2. There's little use writing to public officials because often they aren't really interested in the problems of the average man.

3. It is hardly fair to bring children into the world with the way things look for the future.

4. Nowadays a person has to live pretty much for today and let tomorrow take care of itself.

5. In spite of what some people say, the lot of the average man is getting worse, not better.

6. These days a person doesn't really know on whom he can count.

The range of percentages of positive responses for each item varied between 11 percent for item 1 and 82 percent for item 6. Table VIII reveals the number of respondents falling into each scale type. The unevenness of distributions for poverty scale types I, II, and III (and the disproportionate decrease from III to IV, i.e., the percentages of responses fitting these types) would appear to indicate the need for improving the measuring instrument's sensitivity. In other words, a greater number of items might be required to measure more accurately gradations of fatalism approaching the high end of the scale. However, for the purposes of this study, the scale is adequate as a gross measure. By dichotomizing the scale into high and low fatalism categories or by utilizing the extreme types at each end of the scale, it is possible to determine the influence of this variable. This is done in the analyses which follow.

TABLE VIII

FATALISM SCALE: CLASSIFICATION BY SCALE TYPES

Perfect Scale Type	Scale Items[a] 1	2	3	4	5	6	Percentage of Respondents
I	+	+	+	+	+	+	9
II		+	+	+	+	+	42
III			+	+	+	+	23
IV				+	+	+	6
V					+	+	7
VI						+	4
VII							9
Total							100[b]

Coefficient of Reproducibility = .919.

[a]The symbol + designates agreement with the respective item.

[b]The responses of 817 individuals were included in the scale. Responses of 21 individuals were not included due to failure to respond to one or more of the scale items.

Tests of Association

The results of tests of association designed to determine the validity of the assumption that social participation and fatalism are intervening variables in the social mobility process are presented in this section. The object of these tests was to ascertain whether significant relationships obtain between the major dependent variable--propensity for change--and the above variables. Also to be determined were what modifications needed to be made in the two "ideal typical" models or syndromes of relationships posed in Chapter I.

The first step in the analysis was the cross-classification of the social participation scale typology and the fatalism scale types with the four degrees of propensity for change (i.e., in terms of the propensity for change typology posed in Chapter III). Chi-square values were obtained utilizing dichotomous high-low classifications.[12] Computations were made for the poverty population as a whole, and also for age, sex, and race groups.

Table IX reveals the chi-squares for the tests of association between propensity for change and social participation. One-tailed tests of significance were utilized to test the validity of the models proposed in Chapter I. It was predicted that a positive relationship exists between propensity for change and fatalism. However,

TABLE IX

PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Control Groups	Chi-Square Values[a]
1) All respondents	0.02
2) Respondents 45 years of age and under	0.08
3) Respondents over 45 years of age	0.13
4) Males	3.17*[b]
5) Females	6.07**
6) Whites	4.04**
7) Nonwhites	0.82
8) White males	5.60**[b]
9) White females	2.28
10) Nonwhite males	0.02
11) Nonwhite females	7.73***

[a]One-tailed tests of significance are utilized.

[b]Direction opposite than that predicted.

significant associations obtained only for the "male," "female," and "white" categories of respondents. Additional breakdowns for the different combinations of attributes revealed that the responses of nonwhite females and white males were the primary contributors to the respective relationships. The cell frequencies for each of the categories yielding statistically significant associations are presented in Table X. It will be noted that a one-way relationship exists for the white male category and a two-way relationship for nonwhite females. However, for the white males the relationship is in the opposite direction from that predicted. For nonwhite females low propensity for change is associated with low social participation and vice-versa. But, for white males low propensity for change is associated with high social participation (and not vice-versa). In the former case, the relationship accounts for 30.6 percent of the variance, in the latter 20.2 percent.

Table XI reveals the chi-square values for propensity for change and fatalism. No statistically significant associations obtained between these variables for any of the respondent categories.

From the above findings, it may be concluded that there are only two exceptions to the negation of the assumption that social participation and fatalism are intervening variables in the initial step toward social

TABLE X

PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION: CONTROL CATEGORIES YIELDING SIGNIFICANT ASSOCIATIONS[a]

Female Respondents				
Social Participation	Propensity for Change High	Low	Total	
High	56	60	116	Z = -0.44
Low	17	42	59	Z = 4.78***
Total	73	102	175	
Chi-square: 6.07**				
C^c = .259				

White Respondents				
Social Participation	Propensity for Change High	Low	Total	
High	57	85	142	Z = -2.43**[b]
Low	91	86	177	Z = 0.27
Total	148	171	319	
Chi-square: 4.04**				
C^c = .158				

Nonwhite Females				
Social Participation	Propensity for Change High	Low	Total	
High	42	40	82	Z = 1.81*
Low	13	36	49	Z = -3.22***
Total	55	76	131	
Chi-square: 7.73***				
C^c = .306				

White Males				
Social Participation	Propensity for Change High	Low	Total	
High	43	64	107	Z = 2.07*[b]
Low	89	73	162	Z = 1.27
Total	132	137	269	
Chi-square: 5.60**				
C^c = .202				

[a]One-tailed tests of significance were utilized.

[b]Direction opposite from that predicted.

[c]Adjusted coefficient of contingency.

TABLE XI

PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE AND FATALISM[a]

Control Groups	Chi-Square Values
1) All respondents	0.31
2) Respondents 45 years of age and under	0.02
3) Respondents over 45 years of age	1.38
4) Males	2.25
5) Females	1.04
6) Whites	0.27
7) Nonwhites	0.08

[a]One-tailed tests of significance were utilized.

mobility (i.e., having a disposition to change): social participation and propensity for change relationships among white males and nonwhite females.

Comparisons were made in order to ascertain whether the above findings might be the product of different types of organizational activities predominantly engaged in by the respective groups. The results are depicted in Table XII. It is evident that females of both races engage in substantially more church and church related activities than do the males. However, the greatest difference lies between white males and Negro females. (When church and church group activities are taken together and proportional comparisons are made, a Z score of 4.07*** is obtained.) Further, membership in "social action" activities by white males is relatively high when compared with the almost complete lack of membership in these organizations by Negro females.

In light of the above findings it may be speculated that one side of the "status crystallization" type of relationship is operating in reference to white males. That is, those individuals with low social mobility potential (propensity for change) have relatively highly crystallized statuses and, therefore, participate to a greater degree in those organizations which would be stressful under more dissonant circumstances. For example, the

TABLE XII

ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX-RACE GROUPINGS (IN PERCENTAGES)[a]

Organization	White Males	Negro Males	White Females	Negro Females
Church	47.3	55.8	71.7	63.6
Church group	7.6	11.8	13.2	15.9
Civic	1.8	0.5	3.8	0.0
Farm org.	6.5	1.3	1.9	0.0
Lodge	3.6	4.7	3.8	3.8
Labor union	0.7	0.3	1.9	0.0
Co-op	2.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Political	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Community or neighborhood club	2.2	0.3	3.8	2.3
Community action program	1.1	0.3	0.0	0.0
P.T.A.	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0
Other	0.4	0.8	0.0	0.8
Total	74.8	76.1	100.0	85.6

[a]Figures are in terms of percentages of positive responses out of the respective categories of the poverty population (and, thus, totals can be less than 100 percent).

individual who is socially immobile would be relatively sure of his status(es) and appropriate roles in civic, farm, political, and other such organizations. But these types of organizations would tend to be avoided by those who are in the process of upward social mobility and who must redefine what constitutes "correct" behavior. On the other hand, the female Negro participates, for the most part, in status-quo, church related organizations. Thus, the notions of status crystallization and dissonance seldom or never apply. In the case of the latter, low propensity for change may well be tied with such factors as family burdens (since the Negro female is generally a household head by virtue of being widowed, separated, or divorced), age, and disability. These factors might preclude most participation, even in weekly church activities.

The fact that a significant one-way relationship obtains for the white male group on the side of the low propensity for change respondents has certain implications. It should be noted that propensity for change in this study is a rather restricted concept--referring not necessarily to upward social mobility itself, but to potential for mobility. It could be that the concept (propensity for change) and its measure do not adequately tap those white male respondents who are actively mobile. These are the individuals who would experience the greatest dissonance

from status inconsistency. On the other hand, people who are actively mobile may have already migrated out of the region in search of better conditions. The "people left behind" who indicate relatively high willingness to change may not be as yet experiencing status discrepancy.

One final point has significance for the relationships described above. Out of the 14 basic tests of association which were computed, the probability of obtaining two .05 level relationships by chance alone is .49. Further, relatively small percentages of the variance are accounted for by the associations, indicating that unknown or unaccounted for variables may be impinging to affect the results.

Probably the safest statement that can be made regarding the relationships between propensity for change and social participation is that present assumptions concerning the latter variable and its association with social mobility are oversimplified. Qualifications and refinements are required in cognizance of particular populations and circumstances.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH HIGH AND LOW PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE

The results of tests of association involving propensity for change and selected socio-demographic characteristics of the impoverished in the Mississippi Delta are presented in this section.[13]

The following socio-demographic characteristics were cross-tabulated with the propensity for change variable: age, sex, race, marital status, education, literacy, degree of deprivation, household size, length of time lived in same county, and area of residence.[14] The chi-square values and adjusted coefficients of contingency for the tests of association are listed in Table XIII. (Table IV in the Appendix contains, in addition to the above, the cell frequencies and Z scores.) Four age categories were utilized in the analyses. Respondents were classified as being 35 years of age and under, 36 through 45 years of age, 46 through 55 years of age, and over 55 years of age. Propensity for change and age were found to be <u>inversely</u> related. When the extreme age categories were compared (i.e., the 35 and under and over 55 categories), a stronger association was obtained. Therefore, the older the individual, the less likely he will be to take radical steps for change and vice-versa.

TABLE XIII

PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE CLASSIFIED BY SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristics	Chi-Squares	Adjusted Coefficient of Contingency
Age	110.33***	.486
Age (extremes)	138.72***	.640
Sex	12.00***	.170
Race	4.23*	.101
Marital status	21.23***	.224
Household size	71.96***	.409
Education	14.85***	.188
Education (extremes)	11.42***	.306
Literacy	0.70	---[a]
Degree of poverty	3.45	---
Degree of poverty (extremes)	1.65	---
Length of time lived in same county	4.95*	.110
Area of residence	1.72	---

[a]Adjusted coefficient of contingency not computed in the absence of a statistically significant association.

Males tended to have a significantly higher propensity for change than females. However, further analyses revealed this finding to be a product of marital status. That is, it was realized that females generally fell into the household head category by virtue of their having been separated, divorced, or widowed.[15] As a consequence, such individuals are the only parent, and likely to be the only adult, presiding in the household. It can be speculated, therefore, that unusually heavy burdens are imposed on such household heads. There may be no one to share the work and family responsibilities. Thus, if sex is controlled by marital status no significant associations exist between propensity for change and sex (refer to Table V in the Appendix).

Further, as suspected, propensity is related to marital status. Married respondents tend to have higher propensities for change than the unmarried, and probably due to the factors mentioned above.

There was a negative relationship between propensity for change and household size. This finding is added evidence of the contribution of situational factors as influencers of propensity for change. Again, the presence of particularly heavy family responsibilities appears to depress inclination to change.

A negative relationship was obtained between being white and propensity for change (i.e., Negroes tended to have higher disposition for change than whites).[16] This fact could be the out-growth of Negroes' rising expectations in the face of hopes generated by the civil rights movement. Perhaps it is felt that their chances to improve life conditions are greater than before.

Tests of association between propensity for change and educational attainment were undertaken utilizing both dichotomous and extreme divisions pertaining to years of schooling completed. The dichotomy was portioned into respondents with a sixth grade or less education versus those with more than a sixth grade education. The findings revealed that propensity for change is positively related with educational attainment. However, tests of association utilizing the educational attainment extremes yielded only a one-way relationship between the variables. It was found that individuals with less than a third grade education tend to have low propensity for change--but no association was revealed for those with educational attainment above the tenth grade. Apparently, educational attainment above the sixth grade is more crucial in relation to propensity for change than the upper extremes. It should be noted in this context that the literacy factor was not related to the change variable.

The household size-income classes depicted in Table I of Chapter III were cross-tabulated with disposition to change in order to determine if degree of deprivation might be a significant factor. No relationship existed between the three degrees of poverty and propensity for change. This was also the finding when only the "seriously deprived" and "marginal" categories were compared.

Respondents who had lived all of their lives in the same county tended to have higher inclinations to change than those who had lived elsewhere. This finding is most likely a result of the age factor. Younger household heads (and, thus, those most likely to be willing to change) naturally had not had as many opportunities to have lived elsewhere--that is, they had not had the same amount of time to move.

And finally, no relationship was revealed between propensity for change and whether an individual had lived most of his life in a town, village, or the open country.

Summary interpretation and implications of the above findings will be dealt with in Chapter VI.

FOOTNOTES

[1]A description of this scale is contained in F. S. Chapin, Experimental Designs in Sociological Research (New York: Harper, 1955), pp. 275-78.

Research applications of the social participation concept may be found in F. S. Chapin, "The Effects of Slum Clearance on Family and Community Relationships in Minneapolis in 1935-1936," American Journal of Sociology, (March, 1938), pp. 744-63; F. S. Chapin, "Social Participation and Social Intelligence," American Sociological Review, IV (April, 1939), pp. 157-66; W. T. Martin, "A Consideration of Differences in the Extent and Location of the Formal Associational Activities of Rural-Urban Fringe Residents," American Sociological Review, XVII (December, 1952), pp. 687-94; and G. A. Lundberg and Margaret Lansing, "The Sociography of Some Community Relations," American Sociological Review, II (June, 1937), pp. 318-28 and many rural sociological studies (see Bulletins in Bibliography).

[2]Caution must be exercised in the interpretation of any social participation figures. It must be realized that data may be artificially depressed by the lack of availability of certain (or all) organizations in which one might participate, particularly is this true in impoverished rural areas.

[3]It is realized that the above organizations are not all, strictly speaking, "action organizations." However, a rather broad range of organizations (some only peripherally related to change of the status-quo) was included due to the very minute amount of participation by the impoverished in any types of formal activities other than those which are church related. Therefore, it was felt that any participation which could not be classed strictly as religious and/or recreationally oriented might be significant in its potential association with propensity for change.

[4]Some authors maintain that religious affiliation may actually contribute to social immobility. It is argued that the main theme espoused by the relatively untrained pastors of fundamentalist denominations in rural areas is that salvation lies in the life hereafter, not in life on this earth. The implication is that one must bear the consequences of poverty to enjoy salvation after death. See M.R. Janssen, Elmer Moore, and W.K. Easter, "Rural Poverty Policies and Programs," administrative document prepared for the Bureau of Budget, U.S.D.A., December, 1966.

[5]Only two classes of "social action" responses were formulated in that the median score for this item was less than 1 (one). Thus, any participation in such groups among the impoverished may be considered as "high" participation, relatively speaking. Dividing scores into more classes would be meaningless in this light.

[6]Refer to Leo Srole, "Social Integration and Certain Corollaries: An Exploratory Study," American Sociological Review, XXI (December, 1956), pp. 709-16.

Srole's scale, though originally constructed to measure what was variously termed as social dysfunction (malintegration) or group alienation (demoralization), is often called a scale of "anomia." However, there is a tendency to confuse this term (which refers to the psychological state of an individual) with the sociological condition of a group or a society (termed "anomie") characterized by a state of relative normlessness. Thus, the word "fatalism" is used in this study to avoid confusion and also because it seems most accurately to depict the single dimension meaning of the scale instrument. Dorothy L. Meir and Wendell Bell, "Anomia and Differential Access to the Achievement of Life Goals," American Sociological Review, XXIV (April, 1959), pp. 189-202, use such terms as "despair," "hopelessness," "discouragement," "personal disorganization," and "demoralization" in reference to the Srole scale.

[7]"Undecided: responses produced least error when combined with the "disagree" category for a very high proportion of the cases. This phenomenon is perhaps the outgrowth of a feeling among the respondents that it was more tactful not to know something than to overtly disagree with a statement.

[8]For a detailed treatment of the use of the Cornell Technique refer to Louis Guttman, "The Cornell Technique for Scale and Intensity Analysis," Educational and Psychological Measurement, VII (Summer, 1947), pp. 247-80.

[9]This procedure, in effect, cancels error bias throughout the range of scale types.

[10]Although all of Guttman's requirements are not met, one of the most important criteria is--"...that it is possible to derive from the distribution a quantitative variable with which to characterize the objects, such that each attribute is a simple function of that quantitative variable." Refer to Louis Guttman, "Basis for Scalogram Analysis," Samuel A. Stouffer, et al., Measurement and Prediction (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 64.

[11]See E. A. Suchman, "Scalogram Board Technique for Scale Analysis," in Stouffer, Chapter 4.

[12]In line with the exploratory nature of this study, the values were first partitioned into various combinations of categories and analysed to determine whether major variations in statistical significance and relationship direction could be induced. The results were negative--thus, the dichotomous classification scheme proved to be adequate.

[13]As a partial test of the face validity of the propensity for change concept and its measurement, the following procedure was undertaken. Disposition to change was cross-tabulated with whether the respondent was presently looking for a job. The assumption that a positive relationship between these variables would exist proved to be correct (refer to Table III, Appendix).

It was also reasoned that individuals evidencing a high willingness to change (and thus having relatively high mobility potential) should have a higher incidence of taking advantage of any job or apprenticeship training programs currently available. Further, it was predicted that these people would be more likely to have availed themselves of training for a specific type of work in the past. However, only 43 respondents out of 821 had received prior training, and only four were currently enrolled in any kind of job or apprenticeship training program. These findings are largely a function of the lack of relevant programs available in the Delta Region. Those who are familiar with this area assert that the few programs which do exist are not meaningful to the majority of the deprived population, that the training is seldom suited to their specific needs.

[14]Numerous other characteristics were also cross-tabulated with the propensity for change variable. However, with one exception, no implicit specific or even general theoretical orientation underlay the inclusion of the different items for analyses. The purpose was solely to determine the existence of any possible relationships which might lead to further insights. No statistically significant associations were revealed from the analyses.

The one exception mentioned above was a series of items dealing with whether the respondent was familiar with or took advantage of such programs as the Opportunity Loan Program of the Farmers Home Administration, PCA Production Credit Loan, welfare organization aid, etc. It was thought likely that individuals with high propensity for change might evidence greater knowledge and usage of available programs. However, the number of respondents using the programs or even knowing about them in some cases, precluded cross-tabular analyses.

[15]The great majority of the unmarried respondents had been married previously. Thus, single individuals, as such, had little, if any, influence on the findings. The few that had never been married almost without exception fell into the high propensity for change end of the continuum.

[16]The Z scores based upon the independent variable, race, indicate the absence of any significant one-way relationship. Therefore, the next step is to determine the Z score of either of the diagonals in order to ascertain whether the chi-square relationship is produced at this juncture. The "Z" for the diagonals proved to be significant, thus supporting the obtained chi-square value.

CHAPTER V

PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE AND THE RELATIVELY AFFLUENT: A TEST OF THE GENERALIZABILITY OF THE FINDINGS TO THE LARGER POPULATION

The primary focus of this investigation has been posed as the determination of the correlates of propensity for change among the rural poor. In this chapter the degree to which generalizations from the findings may be extended to the larger population is explored. Specifically, the analyses are directed toward determining whether the same relationships which apply to members of the lower social strata apply to the more affluent individuals in the Mississippi Delta. Comparisons of the characteristics of the respective populations will also be made.

The discussion is organized as follows: First, comparisons between the poverty and non-poverty groups relative to the major study variables are made. Next, tests of association with the proposed intervening variables, social participation and fatalism, are presented. The final section of the chapter includes findings bearing on the correlates of high and low propensity for change among the relatively affluent.

POVERTY AND RELATIVE AFFLUENCE: A COMPARISON IN TERMS OF THE MAJOR VARIABLES

Propensity for Change

The items comprising the propensity for change index were formulated for application to the more deprived segment of the sample.[1] The prevailing assumption was that items pertaining to whether one would be willing to take additional training and/or change jobs would be most relevant to those with the greatest need for material improvement. However, as revealed in Table XIV, the percentages of the poverty and non-poverty segments of the sample population falling into the different propensity for change categories show little difference. Cross-tabular analyses were conducted in order to compare poverty and non-poverty respondents on the propensity for change variable. Propensity for change and level of poverty (or affluence) were not significantly associated (see Table VI in Appendix). Thus, it can be concluded that approximately equal proportions of the different populations are willing to take radical steps for change and that material possessions apparently has little or no bearing on the matter. (Additional findings concerning this point will be presented later in the chapter.)

TABLE XIV

POVERTY, RELATIVE AFFLUENCE, AND PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE

Propensity for Change	Poverty (percent)	Non-poverty (percent)
High	2	2
Medium high	15	22
High (Incomplete)	32	31
Medium low	29	18
Low	13	17
Low (Incomplete)	9	10
Total	100	100

Respondents were asked to give their reasons for not taking courses for education or special training, even if paid to do so. The responses of individuals falling in the poverty and non-poverty categories are revealed in Table XV. Significant differences in responses appear in two crucial instances. Members of the poverty group listed the age factor as a reason in significantly larger numbers. On the other hand, the reason most often given by members of the non-poverty sample was lack of interest due primarily to capital outlay and economic security. Thus, the primary explanation among those within the lower class least willing to take courses appears to be age (coupled with poor health

TABLE XV

REASONS FOR NOT TAKING COURSES FOR EDUCATION OR SPECIAL TRAINING AMONG THE POVERTY VERSUS NON-POVERTY GROUPS[a]

	Poverty (percent)	Non-Poverty (percent)	Z
(Individuals not willing to take courses)[b]	(42.5)	(49.2)	(-0.53)
1) Age (too old, retired, etc.)	67.5	37.7	4.21***
2) Poor health or physically handicapped	14.3	5.8	0.59
3) Burdened with care of disabled persons	1.4	0.0	-
4) Small children to care for	2.2	0.6	-
5) Educational deficiency	2.0	1.3	-
6) Lack of transportation	0.0	0.6	-
7) Uninterested (land owner, etc.)	12.6	53.9	-4.57***
Total			

[a]Unless otherwise noted, percentages are based on total number either in the poverty or in the non-poverty groups who would not take training.

[b]Percentages based on total number of respondents.

and/or being physically handicapped). It should be noted that the age and disability factors also loom large for the relatively affluent as explanations for unwillingness to take courses.

Respondents were also asked their reasons for unwillingness to change jobs for higher pay and/or leave the community. The percentages of the poverty and non-poverty groups giving specific explanations are presented in Table XVI. For both categories of respondents the reason most often given was that the respondent was satisfied with his present job.[2] However, in two instances non-poverty individuals gave this reason in significantly higher numbers. Being "too old to change" was the second most common explanation given by each group. Also for each of the respective class groups family considerations played a role when moves of 50 or 200 miles were entailed.[3]

Social Participation

Two sets of criteria were employed in the development of social participation scale typologies to compare poverty versus non-poverty respondents. It will be remembered that it was assumed (and there is also some evidence) that the impoverished are characterized by rather unique and intrinsic attitudinal and behavioral qualities which set them apart from the more affluent. Therefore, the procedure for developing scale criteria for measurement within poverty and

TABLE XVI

REASONS FOR NOT WANTING TO CHANGE JOBS AND MOVE FOR HIGHER PAY (PERCENT)[a]

	Within Same Commun.			Moving 50 Miles			Moving 200 Miles		
	Pov.	Non-Pov.	Z	Pov.	Non-Pov.	Z	Pov.	Non-Pov.	Z
(Individuals not willing to change jobs)[b]	(13.1)	(22.0)	(0.92)	(21.6)	(33.4)	(2.01*)	(25.7)	(34.1)	1.58
1) Satisfied with present job	56.4	75.4	-2.12*	64.3	76.2	1.67	64.8	78.5	2.17*
2) Already trained	7.3	2.9	-	1.6	1.0	-	1.9	2.8	-
3) Family considerations	0.0	0.0	-	8.2	2.7	-	12.5	4.7	-
4) Too old to change	21.8	17.4	-	16.5	15.4	-	12.5	11.2	-
5) Physically handicapped	0.9	0.0	-	4.4	2.9	-	4.2	2.7	-

TABLE XVI (CONTINUED)

	Within Same Commun.			Moving 50 Miles			Moving 200 Miles		
	Pov.	Non-Pov.	Z	Pov.	Non-Pov.	Z	Pov.	Non-Pov.	Z
6) Owns land or house	5.5	2.9	-	4.4	1.8	-	3.6	0.0	-
7) Would not change unless present job were lost	8.2	1.4	-	0.6	0.0	-	0.5	0.0	-
Total	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0	

[a]Unless otherwise noted, percentages are based on total number either in the poverty or in the non-poverty groups who would not change.

[b]Percentages based on total number of respondents.

within non-poverty groups was to develop median and quartile score distributions based solely on the responses of the individuals in the respective groups. Scale criteria formulated in this manner prevents possible distortion by factors peculiar either to the poverty or non-poverty population.[4] (A comparison of the scale typology criteria is presented in the Appendix, Table VII.) However, in comparing the extent of organizational participation between the two populations, composite scale criteria must be utilized. That is, the score distributions of all the Delta sample respondents taken together must be accounted for in determining the scale criteria for cross population analyses.

The results of the "composite," cross population analyses of social participation of the poverty and non-poverty categories largely confirm the findings of other researchers. Analysis in terms of a simple dichotomy of high-low social participation cross-classified by poverty and relative affluence reveals a one-way relationship between the two variables (refer to Table XVII). Among the non-poverty respondents there was a greater tendency for relatively high social participation. When the social participation scale typology extremes are studied, a negative (two-way) relationship is seen to exist between social participation and deprivation. Organizational membership

TABLE XVII

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AMONG THE IMPOVERISHED VERSUS THE RELATIVELY AFFLUENT[a]

	Social Participation			
	High	Low	Total	Z
	(Dichotomy)			
Poverty	433	404	837	0.87
Non-poverty	210	99	309	6.33***
Total	643	503	1146	
Chi-square: 24.10***				
C^b = .204				
	High	Low	Total	Z
	(Extremes)			
Poverty	38	229	267	-11.76***
Non-poverty	68	41	109	2.51**
Total	106	270	376	
Chi-square: 88.82***				
C^b = .618				

[a]One-tailed tests of significance were utilized.

[b]Adjusted coefficient of contingency.

differences are most striking. As revealed in Table XIII, in every instance the poverty segment of the Delta population sample registered lower than the non-poverty segment (a sign-test probability of .0002 is obtained).

Fatalism

A similar strategy of analysis was employed for the fatalism measure as was for the social participation scale typology criteria. Analyses within the respective poverty and non-poverty categories were based on scales developed appropriate to the particular population of concern.[5] But the responses of all respondents in the Delta sample were utilized to form a composite scale for cross-category analyses.[6] The breakdowns of poverty versus non-poverty respondents in terms of fatalism responses appear in Table XIX. It may be seen that a positive relationship exists between poverty and fatalism, thus supporting the findings of other researchers. The strength of the relationship increases when extreme scale types are utilized in the analyses.

In light of these findings, it can be concluded that people in poverty do indeed display a higher incidence of fatalistic orientations than the relatively affluent.

TABLE XVIII

DIFFERENCES IN ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIP BETWEEN THE POVERTY AND NON-POVERTY GROUPS[a]

	Poverty (percent)	Non-Poverty (percent)	Sign
1) Church	55.2	69.0	-
2) Church group	11.2	20.4	-
3) Civic	1.0	8.0	-
4) Farm organization	2.9	16.0	-
5) Lodge	4.2	11.8	-
6) Labor union	0.5	5.4	-
7) Co-op	1.0	10.2	-
8) Political	0.2	1.6	-
9) Community or neighborhood club	1.4	6.4	-
10) Community action program	0.5	2.2	-
11) P.T.A.	0.1	0.3	-
12) Other	0.6	4.5	-

[a]Percentage based on the number of individuals in each category who are members of the respective types of organizations.

TABLE XIX

FATALISM AMONG THE IMPOVERISHED VERSUS THE RELATIVELY AFFLUENT

	Fatalism			
	High	Low	Total	Z
		(Dichotomy)		
Poverty	570	144	714	17.31***
Non-poverty	120	148	268	-1.67*
Total	690	292	982	
Chi-square: 114.58***				
C^b = .457				
	High	Low	Total	Z
		(Extremes)		
Poverty	346	89	435	12.50***
Non-poverty	56	115	171	-4.45***
Total	402	204	606	
Chi-square: 120.18***				
C^b = .578				

[a]One-tailed tests of significance were utilized.

[b]Adjusted coefficient of contingency.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION, FATALISM, AND PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE: TESTS OF ASSOCIATION

The determination of whether propensity for change is linked with social participation and fatalism among the more affluent is the subject in this brief section. The results of the tests of association (using similar procedures as for the impoverished) are presented in Tables XX and XXI. None of the chi-square values are statistically significant. Thus, it is concluded that the social participation and fatalism variables do not intervene as factors determining propensity for change among the non-poverty respondents.

The fact that the same relationships (as for the impoverished) were not obtained in the "female" and "white" categories among the relatively affluent (or in the sub-categories "white male" and "nonwhite female") is noteworthy. The results could be interpreted as evidence that the associations obtained for these sub-groups among poverty respondents might have been "Type I" error, chance relationships.[7]

TABLE XX

PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AMONG THE RELATIVELY AFFLUENT

Control Groups	Chi-Square Values
1) All respondents	1.54
2) Respondents 45 years of age and under	1.92
3) Respondents over 45 years of age	0.47
4) Males	0.96
5) Females	0.10
6) Whites	1.22
7) Nonwhites	0.61

TABLE XXI

PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE AND FATALISM
AMONG THE RELATIVELY AFFLUENT

Control Groups	Chi-Square Values
1) All respondents	0.89
2) Respondents 45 years of age and under	0.04
3) Respondents over 45 years of age	2.16
4) Males	0.13
5) Females	0.04
6) Whites	0.00
7) Nonwhites	0.25

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH HIGH AND LOW PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE AMONG THE RELATIVELY AFFLUENT

The results of tests of association involving propensity for change and selected socio-demographic characteristics of the relatively affluent in the Mississippi Delta are presented in Table XXII (see Appendix, Table IV for cell frequencies). As for the impoverished, there is a negative association between inclination to change and age. However, whereas for the poverty group a two-way relationship was obtained between propensity for change and race (i.e., a positive association between being Negro and willing to change), among the more affluent only a one-way relationship exists. A significantly larger number of whites express low willingness to change. For the poverty category, there was a positive association between propensity for change and education,[8] and a negative relationship between propensity for change and household size.

It will be remembered that propensity for change and degree of deprivation were not related either within the poverty group or when comparing these individuals with the more affluent respondents. However, <u>within</u> the more affluent group there was an inverse relationship between propensity for change and level of affluence. Also, unlike in the

TABLE XXII

PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE AMONG THE RELATIVELY AFFLUENT CLASSIFIED BY SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristics	Chi-Squares	Adjusted Coefficient of Contingency
Age	20.36***	.352
Age (extremes)	33.95***	.571
Sex	-[a]	-
Race	4.68*	.173
Marital status	-[b]	-
Household size	43.79***	.498
Education	4.88*	.173
Education (extremes)	-[c]	-
Literacy	-[d]	-
Degree of affluence	13.62***	.291
Length of time lived in same country	0.06	-[e]
Area of residence	0.43	-

[a]Insufficient number of females for analysis.

[b]Insufficient number of unmarried respondents for analysis.

[c]Insufficient number of low education respondents for analysis.

[d]Non-poverty respondents were not asked questions pertaining to literacy.

[e]Adjusted coefficient of contingency not computed in the absence of a statistically significant association.

poverty group, propensity for change was not found to be associated with length of time lived in the same county--even before controlling by age.

A brief summary, interpretation, and discussion of the implications of these and the other findings will be presented in the final chapter.

FOOTNOTES

[1]But all respondents were asked the same series of questions.

[2]The results presented in this and similar tables illustrate, somewhat, the limitations of research which is geared solely to asking simply why a respondent does or does not do something, or why he would or would not be inclined toward a certain type of action. Seemingly logical answers to logical questions often turn out to be not so logical. Or, at best, the responses reveal only superficial causes (if they are indeed "causes" in any sense of the word). It is the burden of the researcher to determine analytically the underlying dynamics associated with the espousing of various explanations. Ironically, from the standpoint of sociology such "causes" of phenomena as social characteristics (age, sex, race, etc.) are meaningful only to sociologists and the instigators of social action programs. That is, an impoverished individual would never say, "I have a high willingness to change because I'm in the younger age bracket and have a reference group which is oriented toward change." Thus, with respect to Table XVI (and others like it), the reason for not being willing to change "satisfied with present job" given by a large proportion of the poverty respondents should not be taken too literally.

[3]The apparently large differences in percentages listing the different explanations are primarily a product of the way the questions were asked. Respondents were told to list their main reason for not willing to change. Thus, clusters of explanations were not possible, and the rationale listed was generally the first which the respondent gave. Such a reason as "family considerations," therefore, could have played a much more significant role than its small percentage would indicate.

[4]In other words, this procedure prevents the possible distortion of variance brought about by the operation of the poverty and non-poverty variables as potential influencers of social participation.

[5]It is noteworthy that the Guttman scale orders for the two populations were quite different. The percentages of positive responses to the battery of items for each fatalism scale are presented in Table VIII of the Appendix.

[6]Due to limitations in computer capacity, scale analyses had to be restricted to less than 1000 respondents. Selection of the respondents to be included in the analyses was made randomly, stratifying by household size-income levels and sampling units.

The coefficients of reproducibility for the poverty, non-poverty, and composite scales were .919, .894, and .915 respectively.

[7]That is, it supports the possibility that the null hypothesis (of no difference) was rejected when it was in fact true.

[8]A one-way relationship was obtained for the poverty category when the simple 6th grade and below and above 6th grade dichotomy was utilized. But, generally speaking, the same relationships for the two categories appear to hold. Extremely low educational attainment has the greatest impact on propensity for change (i.e., it is highly associated with low propensity).

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This concluding chapter is divided into two sections. The first contains a summary and interpretation of the study findings and a discussion of their implications for social theory and social action. The second and final section is devoted to a critical appraisal of the investigation and a statement of the implications of findings for future research.

THE FINDINGS

Social Participation, Fatalism, and Propensity for Change

One of the primary purposes of this investigation was to determine the validity of assumptions basic to two models or syndromes of behavior pertaining to the impoverished. To reiterate briefly, the first type is represented by the individual who is highly apathetic or fatalistic, participates little, if any, in formal organizations, and is unwilling to take appropriate action to escape his impoverished condition. The other type is exemplified by the individual who reveals higher than usual participation in voluntary associations, has high morale, and is committed to taking action to improve his and his family's life condition.

The findings of this study have cast serious doubt on the validity of the above models. The relationship of an individual's willingness to change and his participation in voluntary associations was limited. Among white males with low propensity for change, there was relatively high social participation. For Negro females the opposite relationship was found. These findings led to the speculation that one side of the "status crystallization" concept may be operating among the white males. That is, those white males with low propensity for change have crystallized statuses and are thus likely to be "comfortable" in a relatively wide range of organizations. For the Negro female, however, as a member of the predominantly status-quo element within the community, church related organizations, it was speculated that both her propensity for change and social participation would more likely be governed by situational factors. Since the Negro female household head is generally the only parent--by virtue of separation, divorce, or being widowed--her family burdens may cause her to feel that she is too tied down to change and prevent her from participating in any outside activities as well.[1]

There was no relationship between respondents' inclination to change and their feelings of fatalism.

The Correlates of Propensity for Change

The following relationships were found to exist between respondents' propensity for change and various social characteristics:

1. Propensity for change and age were inversely related.

2. There was a positive association between propensity for change and being married.

3. There was a negative relationship between propensity for change and household size.

4. Negroes tended to have a higher disposition for change than whites (proportionately).

5. A positive association was obtained between propensity for change and educational attainment.[2]

The following ex post facto explanations of the observed relationships can be offered:

The propensity for change-age relationship appears to be a logical one. Older individuals are more established in their routines and are more apt to be saddled with the problems of poor health and other physical disabilities. The younger household head, with his future before him, is probably more free to change and has less binding ties to his home and community.

Married heads of households, perhaps, were able more easily to change (and therefore more willing) due to material (and perhaps emotional) support of their spouses. Unmarried

heads of households were probably less flexible toward change because they alone had to take care of and provide for their families.

It appears likely that individuals who headed large families could less afford to take radical steps for change. The ties of family responsibilities, with the corresponding difficulty of leaving the family to take training and/or uprooting them in pursuit of a better job, is an obstacle to positive action.

The fact that Negroes tended to have a proportionately higher disposition to change could be the outgrowth of their rising expectations in the face of hopes generated by the civil rights movement. They perhaps feel that their efforts to change may have greater chances for success than they had previously believed.

Educational attainment is apparently rather critical to whether the impoverished individual will be favorably disposed to change. It can be speculated, on one hand, that lack of education may cause the respondent to believe that his chances for success in any training course or of obtaining a better job are small indeed. His deficiency, in other words, is perceived as an overwhelming obstacle. On the other hand, the values instilled in this individual (or lack of them) as an outgrowth of his low education could

lead to low propensity for change. That is, there may be failure on his part to perceive the long-range advantages associated with taking specific steps for change.[3]

Propensity for Change and the Relatively Affluent

Surprisingly, approximately equal percentages of the poverty and non-poverty groups evidenced propensity for change. Degree of deprivation (or affluence) was found to be associated with the disposition to change variable only within the relatively affluent segment. That is, individuals in the most affluent class tended to be less willing to change than the relatively affluent strata directly beneath them.

Although the rural population as a whole was characterized by generally low participation in voluntary associations, social participation and level of deprivation were inversely related. Further, a positive association was obtained between fatalism and poverty. Yet for the relatively affluent, as well as the poverty respondents, no associations prevailed between propensity for change and the respective variables.[4] Thus, it can be concluded that lower rates of social participation and higher rates of fatalism typify the impoverished in the Mississippi Delta. However, what is most significant is the fact that these variables were generally found not to intervene in individuals' propensities for change.

Rural Poverty in the Delta and Social Action

The answers to two of the research questions posed in Chapter I can be summarized as follows:

1. Individuals with high propensity for change are generally in the younger age groups, married, head smaller households, Negro, and have comparatively high education.

2. Although lower rates of social participation and higher rates of fatalism characterize the impoverished, these variables do not effectively intervene in terms of individuals' mobility potential.

The implications of the above findings in terms of theory and social action are several. First, in regard to social action policy, it is most important to develop meaningful programs for those individuals likely to have low propensity for change. Older individuals need to be offered opportunities which do not require radical action on their part. In other words, it is probably not realistic to expect these people to enroll in training courses or leave the community for another job if they are much past 45 years of age. The same is true for household heads with large families. Special attention also needs to be focused on single-parent families. It must be realized that the single-parent, female household head (whether young and with children or old and isolated) requires aid programs directly related to her plight. Further, although a higher proportion

of Negroes dwell in poverty, the slight tendency for lower propensities for change to exist among the whites may suggest that greater difficulties will be encountered when dealing with this population segment. In effect, these individuals might be considered as a "harder core" of poverty--they are poor in spite of the absence of racial discrimination. Special efforts will additionally be required in motivating segments of the impoverished with exceptionally low education (6th grade or less) and providing training and jobs for which they may be capable.

There is a more positive side of the picture for social action change agents wishing to gain acceptance of and participation in their programs. The popular assumption that the apathy or fatalism typifying many of those in the lower strata make these people resistant to change (seemingly almost by definition) is not supported. Nor does the assumption that potential for mobility is associated with social participation generally appear to be true--at least not in a direct sense. The problem remains, however, of communicating the opportunities made available and the procedures for taking advantage of them to all segments of the impoverished population. For it must be recognized that some individuals, perhaps from lack of opportunity to participate (or not being willing to), do not participate in organizations where communication lines might be established.

The fact that a very high percentage of the rural impoverished in the Delta were not taking part in the few programs which are available to them is significant.[6] It can be speculated that the programs may not be directly applicable to their needs. Thus, one of the main problems appears to be the formation of training and/or job opportunities directly relevant and appropriate to the needs and dispositions of people in the Delta.

CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Study Limitations

One of the most demanding exercises in any scientific investigation is concept formation. A specific problem, or portion of a problem, must be delineated along with appropriate tools which can be used to observe or measure it. These tasks are made especially difficult when the research design and conceptual model must correspond to data not collected for the specific purposes of the investigation at hand. Matters are complicated because the data may not fit proposed "...definitions of the concept under scrutiny; they may lack correspondence with the conceptual model."[7] Such was the case in this study. It is particularly difficult to assess the validity or limitations of the index for the major dependent variable, propensity for change. Ex post facto construction of this measure from the available indices

yielded what is believed to be an adequate index, however.[8] Probably one of the main limitations is the measure's relative insensitivity to gradations of propensity for change between the extremes. Thus, at best, the index can be considered as a gross measure.

A further limitation related to the propensity for change concept is derived from the static nature of the study. Individuals were asked if they would be willing (at some point in the future) to take certain actions for change. However, it is realized that there is often conspicuous discrepancy between what people say and what people actually do.[9] Thus, the cross-sectional approach of this study precluded determining whether at some later point in time the individual would engage in appropriate action.

The ex post facto design of the investigation also imposes certain difficulties and limitations. In circumstances where it is impossible to contrive the situation in advance--as in any study of attitudes and in a high proportion of sociological investigations in general--the problem of controlling extraneous variables is most crucial. It is always possible, no matter how rigorous the design, that unknown (and undetected) variables may impinge to affect the outcome.

Finally, the exploratory design of this investigation makes findings and conclusions tentative. The concepts and their indices are not highly refined; verificational

procedures and allegations of cause and effect are not possible. Findings are restricted to the observance of clustering or significant associations among specified variables.

Further Research

Several issues are worthy of further investigation in view of the findings and limitations of this investigation. They may be summarized as follows:

1. What attitudes, values, beliefs, and life-styles characterize those individuals (at different points in time) who actually achieve mobility out of poverty?

2. What strategies of action (i.e., legitimate means to goals) did these people utilize?

3. At different stages of the mobility process, what role, if any, did participation in voluntary organizations play?

4. Is "fatalism" a viable construct (and does it intervene) at any stage of the social mobility process?

5. To what extent can the findings of the present study be extended to individuals residing in other regions?

In conclusion, it must be emphasized that the findings and implications of this study should not be considered as final answers. The purpose has been to generate insights concerning both fallacies and facts which apply to the rural impoverished in the Mississippi Delta. Hopefully,

on the bases of these findings, hypotheses will be developed which will ultimately be subjected to verificational study. In the meantime, a wide range of clues has been offered to aid program planners and policy formulators in implementing positive change in the Delta Region.

FOOTNOTES

[1]It should be emphasized that these are statements of speculation. Further, in light of the very limited associations between the variables for the respective control groups and the conspicuous absence of other supporting relationships, these findings, especially, should be considered as tentative.

[2]Additional characteristics proved to be significantly associated with propensity for change, but the above relationships were attributed as the primary factors contributing to the apparent significance of the relationships.

[3]It is rather interesting that the most crucial level of educational attainment, in terms of the relationship relative to propensity for change, was the sixth grade. The hypothesis can be advanced that educational exposure beyond this level is of a qualitatively different nature. The student is exposed to ideas and values not as culturally bound as those which might be instilled at the lower level. Thus, if the individual enters the higher levels, his propensity for change tends to increase.

[4]This was true, it will be remembered, even when comparing propensity for change and social participation in terms of the "white male" and "Negro female" controls.

[5]In some cases, one-way rather than two-way relationships were obtained for one segment and not for the other. These differences are not thought to be too significant because they are usually the product of very small differences in proportions. The rather gross nature of the measuring indices and, in certain instances, the small N in some cells could be responsible for the differences. This would be particularly true when Z tests and chi-square values were barely significant at the .05 level.

[6]This fact became evident in the analyses designed to ascertain whether propensity for change and taking advantage of available opportunities were related. So few individuals were participating in specific programs that statistical analyses were not feasible.

[7]Matilda White Riley, Sociological Research I: A Case Approach (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963), p. 254.

[8]The high association among the components of the propensity for change index and its relationship with other variables in the expected direction (e.g., with age) does suggest rather high face validity.

[9]Refer to Irwin Deutscher, "Words and Deeds: Social Science and Social Policy," Social Problems, XIII (Winter, 1966), 235-54; and to Richard La Piere, "Attitudes vs. Actions," Social Forces, XIII (March, 1934), pp. 230-37.

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APPENDIX

TABLE I

WILLINGNESS TO TAKE COURSES OR TRAINING BY WILLINGNESS TO CHANGE JOBS

Willingness to Take Courses	Willingness to Change Jobs: Yes	No	Total	Z
Yes	267	35	302	13.27***
No	44	73	117	-2.60*
Total	311	108	419	

Chi-square: 113.48***

C^a = .653

Willingness to Take Courses	Willingness to Change Jobs: Yes	No	Total	Z
	(50 Miles Away)			
Yes	210	81	291	7.55***
No	28	82	110	-5.25***
Total	238	163	401	

Chi-square: 72.25***

C^a = .553

Willingness to Take Courses	Willingness to Change Jobs: Yes	No	Total	Z
	(200 Miles Away)			
Yes	177	112	289	3.75***
No	26	133	159	-8.58***
Total	203	245	448	

Chi-square: 83.26***

C^a = .560

TABLE I (CONTINUED)

Willingness to Take Courses and/or Take Jobs if Subsidized

Willingness to Take Courses	Willingness to Change Jobs Yes	No	Total	Z
	(Within Community)			
Yes	100	19	119	7.42***
No	23	43	66	-2.44*
Total	123	62	185	

Chi-square: 46.19***

C^a = .632

Willingness to Take Courses	Willingness to Change Jobs Yes	No	Total	Z
	(50 Miles Away)			
Yes	32	19	51	1.86
No	11	66	77	-6.32***
Total	43	85	128	

Chi-square: 32.45***

C^a = .636

Willingness to Take Courses	Willingness to Change Jobs Yes	No	Total	Z
	(200 Miles Away)			
Yes	24	22	46	0.27
No	14	65	79	-5.69***
Total	38	87	125	

Chi-square: 16.25***

C^a = .480

[a]Adjusted coefficient of contingency.

TABLE II

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL PARTICIPATION SCORES

Social Action Score and Frequency	Total Participation Score and Frequency
0-230	0-756
1- 88	1- 14
2- 88	2- 21
3-118	3- 19
4- 31	4- 3
5- 14	5- 1
6- 41	6- 5
7- 20	7- 1
8- 24	8- 1
9- 13	9- 2
10- 65	10- 9
11- 8	
12- 20	12- 1
13- 9	13- 2
14- 3	
15- 6	
16- 9	16- 1
17- 5	
18- 8	
19- 2	19- 1
20- 21	
22- 2	
23- 2	
25- 2	
28- 1	
29- 2	
30- 2	30- 1
33- 2	
40- 1	
50- 1	

TABLE III

PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE AND WHETHER PRESENTLY LOOKING FOR A JOB

Whether Presently Looking for a Job	Propensity for Change			Z
	High	Low	Total	
Yes	31	10	41	3.33***
No	251	351	602	-5.43***
Total	282	361	643	
Chi-square:	17.88***			
C^a = .233				

[a]Adjusted coefficient of contingency.

TABLE IV

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE AMONG THE IMPOVERISHED

Age	Propensity for Change			
	High	Low	Total	Z
45 and under	196	53	249	9.17***
Over 45	223	351	574	-4.03***
Total	419	404	823	
Chi-square:	110.33***			
C^a =	.486			

Age	Propensity for Change			
	High	Low	Total	Z
	(Age Extremes)			
35 and under	100	19	119	7.42***
Over 55	104	316	420	-10.30***
Total	204	335	539	
Chi-square:	138.72***			
C^a =	.640			

Sex	Propensity for Change			
	High	Low	Total	Z
Male	346	293	639	2.03*
Female	73	111	184	-2.72**
Total	419	404	823	
Chi-square:	12.00***			
C^a =	.170			

TABLE IV (CONTINUED)

Race	Propensity for Change			Z
	High	Low	Total	
White	150	173	323	-1.74
Negro	269	231	500	1.70
Total	419	404	823	

Chi-square: 4.23^{*} $z^{b} = 2.18^{**}$

$C^{a} = .101$

Marital Status	Propensity for Change			Z
	High	Low	Total	
Married	331	261	592	2.88^{**}
Not married	87	142	229	-3.64^{***}
Total	418	403	821	

Chi-square: 21.23^{***}

$C^{a} = .224$

Household Size	Propensity for Change			Z
	High	Low	Total	
1-5 members	315	240	555	3.30^{***}
6 or more	56	179	235	-7.98^{***}
Total	371	419	790	

Chi-square: 71.96^{***}

$C^{a} = .409$

TABLE IV (CONTINUED)

Education	Propensity for Change			
	High	Low	Total	Z
Above 6th grade	192	132	324	3.24***
6th grade or less	227	272	499	-2.46*
Total	419	404	823	
Chi-square: 14.85***				
C^a = .188				

Education	Propensity for Change			
	High	Low	Total	Z
	(Extremes)			
Above 10th grade	40	30	70	1.17
Less than 3rd grade	54	108	162	-4.33***
Total	94	138	232	
Chi-square: 11.42***				
C^a = .306				

Literacy	Propensity for Change			
	High	Low	Total	Z
Literate	102	117	219	
Semi-literate or illiterate	82	111	193	
Total	184	193	412	
Chi-square: 0.70				

TABLE IV (CONTINUED)

Household Size-Income Classes	Propensity for Change High	Low	Total	Z
1) Seriously deprived	171	139	310	
2) Deprived	157	169	326	
3) Marginal	91	94	185	
Total	419	402	821	
Chi-square: 3.45				

Household Size-Income Classes	Propensity for Change High	Low (Extremes)	Total	Z
1) Seriously deprived	171	139	310	
3) Marginal	91	94	185	
Total	262	233	495	
Chi-square: 1.65				

Whether Lived in Same County all of Life	Propensity for Change High	Low	Total	Z
All of life	297	255	522	1.79
Less than all of life	121	145	266	-1.64
Total	418	400	818	
Chi-square: 4.95^{*}			$Z^{b} = 2.31^{*}$	
$C^{a} = .110$				

TABLE IV (CONTINUED)

Areas of Residence	Propensity for Change			Z
	High	Low	Total	
Open country	288	261	549	
Town or village	128	141	269	
Total	416	402	818	
Chi-square: 1.27				

[a]Adjusted coefficient of contingency.

[b]Computed single sample difference of proportions for diagonal values.

TABLE V

PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE AND SEX CONTROLLED BY MARITAL STATUS

Sex	Propensity for Change		
	High	Low	Total
	(Married Respondents)		
Male	354	252	606
Female	7	9	16
Total	361	261	622
Chi-square: 1.39			

Sex	Propensity for Change		
	High	Low	Total
	(Unmarried Respondents)		
Male	26	40	66
Female	66	102	168
Total	92	142	234
Chi-square: 0.00			

[a]Category includes single, divorced, separated, and widowed respondents.

TABLE VI

PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE AMONG THE IMPOVERISHED VERSUS THE RELATIVELY AFFLUENT

	Propensity for Change		
	High	Low	Total
Poverty	418	400	818
Non-poverty	140	167	307
Total	558	567	1125

Chi-square: 2.71

TABLE VII

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION TYPOLOGIES

Score Types (from low to High)	Sample Segments			
	Poverty		Non-Poverty	
	(Social Action Score)	(Total Score)	(Social Action Score)	(Total Score)
1	0- - - - - - -	- 0	0- - - - - - -	- 0
2	0- - - - - - -	-1-2	0- - - - - - -	-1-2
3	1- - - - - - -	-1-2	1- - - - - - -	-1-2
4	0- - - - - - -	-3-8	0- - - - - - -	-3-9
5	1- - - - - - -	-3-8	1- - - - - - -	-3-9
6	0- - - - - - -	-9+	0- - - - - - -	-10+
7	1- - - - - - -	-9+	1- - - - - - -	-10+

TABLE VIII

BATTERY OF ITEMS FORMING THE SROLE SCALE
BY TYPES OF POPULATIONS UTILIZED AND
PERCENTAGES OF POSITIVE RESPONSES[a]

	Population	Total No. of Respondents	Percentage of Positive Responses
1. There's little use writing to public officials because often they aren't really interested in the problems of the average man.	Poverty	823[b]	55[b]
	Non-poverty	314	55
	Both	985	51
2. Nowadays a person has to live pretty much for today and let tomorrow take care of itself.	Poverty	826	75
	Non-poverty	315	36
	Both	985	63
3. In spite of what some people say, the lot of the average man is getting worse, not better.	Poverty	824	81
	Non-poverty	315	53
	Both	985	72
4. It is hardly fair to bring children into the world with the way things look for the future.	Poverty	824	74
	Non-poverty	313	43
	Both	985	64
5. These days a person doesn't really know on whom he can count.	Poverty	825	82
	Non-poverty	313	62
	Both	985	80

TABLE VIII (CONTINUED)

	Population	Total No. of Respondents	Percentage of Positive Responses
6. Even if a family objects, a man should choose a job that he thinks is best for him.	Poverty	825	10
	Non-poverty	312	81
	Both	985	11

[a]Undecided responses were scored as negative.

[b]Totals vary due to the omission of respondents not answering one or more items. The unadjusted totals for poverty, non-poverty, and composite categories are 838, 315, and 985 respectively.

TABLE IX

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE AMONG THE RELATIVELY AFFLUENT

Age	Propensity for Change			Z
	High	Low	Total	
45 and under	83	56	139	2.38*
Over 45	57	111	168	-4.16***
Total	140	167	307	
Chi-square:	20.36***			
C^a = .352				

Age	Propensity for Change			Z
	High	Low	Total	
	(Age Extremes)			
35 and under	48	25	73	2.74**
Over 55	22	79	101	-5.63***
Total	70	104	174	
Chi-square:	33.95***			
C^a = .571				

Race	Propensity for Change			Z
	High	Low	Total	
White	118	154	272	-2.33*
Negro	22	13	35	1.54
Total	140	167	307	
Chi-square:	4.68*			
C^a = .173				

TABLE IX (CONTINUED)

Household Size	Propensity for Change			Z
	High	Low	Total	
1-4 members	143	106	249	2.22*
5 or more	24	34	58	-3.20**
Total	167	140	307	
Chi-square:	43.79***			
C^a = .500				

Education	Propensity for Change			Z
	High	Low	Total	
Above 6th grade	142	123	265	1.20
6th grade or less	20	34	54	-1.92
Total	162	157	319	
Chi-square:	4.88*		Z = 1.97*	
C^a = .173				

Household Size-Income Classes	Propensity for Change			Z
	High	Low	Total	
4) Probably not in poverty	78	58	136	1.65*
5) Definitely not in poverty	62	109	171	-3.74***
Total	140	167	307	
Chi-square:	13.62***			
C^a = .291				

TABLE IX (CONTINUED)

Whether Lived in Same County all of Life	Propensity for Change High	Low	Total	Z
All of life	99	41	140	
Less than all of life	116	51	167	
Total	215	92	307	
Chi-square: 0.06				

Areas of Residence	Propensity for Change High	Low	Total	Z
Open country	109	135	244	
Town or village	31	32	63	
Total	140	167	307	
Chi-square: 0.43				

VITA

The author was born in Roanoke, Virginia, on June 3, 1942. Shortly thereafter his family moved to Tuscaloosa, Alabama. He received his elementary and secondary education in the public school system of that city. After graduating from Tuscaloosa High School in 1960, he enrolled in Vanderbilt University. In the summers of 1961 and 1962 he pursued his undergraduate studies at the University of Alabama and the College of William and Mary. While a student at Vanderbilt University he was a recipient of the National Science Foundation undergraduate research award for being nominated as one of three outstanding seniors in Sociology. In 1964 he was graduated from Vanderbilt and was commissioned as an ensign in the United States Navy. Subsequently, he was granted a leave of absence to pursue graduate work.

He entered Louisiana State University in 1964 as a graduate assistant in Sociology. He was awarded the Master of Arts degree in Sociology in 1966 with a minor in Psychology. From January, 1967 to the present he has been employed by the United States Department of Agriculture as a Social Science Analyst. He is currently a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

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EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Colgan Hobson Bryan, Jr.

Major Field: Sociology

Title of Thesis: BREAKING THE POVERTY CYCLE: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CORRELATES OF PROPENSITY FOR CHANGE AMONG THE RURAL IMPOVERISHED IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA

Approved:

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Date of Examination:

May 7, 1968