R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 020 289 24 UD 006 143

CLASS, STATUS AND POVERTY.

BY- ROSSI, PETER H. BLUM, ZAHAVA D.
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIV., BALTIMORE, MD.

REPORT NUMBER BR-6-1610 PUB DATE MAR 68
REPORT NUMBER JHU-CSSOS-15
GRANT OEG-2-7-061610-0207
EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$1.80 43P.

DESCRIPTORS- *LOW INCOME GROUPS, *ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGEMENT, *SOCIAL DIFFERENCES, *SOCIAL STRUCTURE, *SOCIAL STATUS, SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS, SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS, DISCRIMINATORY ATTITUDES (SOCIAL), PUBLIC POLICY, CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, LITERATURE REVIEWS, EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE, INCOME, OCCUPATIONS, BEHAVIOR PATTERNS,

THIS REPORT PROVIDES AN EMPIRICAL AND THEORETICAL REVIEW OF HOW THE POOR DIFFER FROM THE REST OF SOCIETY, HOW THESE DIFFERENCES ARISE, AND HOW THEY ARE MAINTAINED. SINCE THE POOR DIFFER FROM THE REST OF THE WORKING CLASS ONLY IN LEVEL OF EDUCATION, OCCUPATION, AND INCOME, IT WOULD SEEM THAT THEIR DIFFERENCES ARE QUANTITATIVE RATHER THAN QUALITATIVE. THUS, THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POOR ARISE FROM THE EXIGENCIES OF BEING RELATIVELY WITHOUT RESOURCES AND OF BEING NEGATIVELY EVALUATED BY THE LARGER SOCIETY. THE POOR MAINTAIN THEIR CHARACTERISTIC DIFFERENCES BECAUSE THEY EXIST AT THE BOTTOM OF AN "IMMUTABLE" SOCIAL STRATIFICATION SYSTEM CREATED BY A SOCIETY WHICH STIGMATIZES ITS MEMBERS TO THE DEGREE THEY FAIL TO ACHIEVE. POLICY MAKERS SHOULD CONSIDER WAYS TO REMOVE STIGMATIZING PROCESSES IN THE OCCUPATIONAL SYSTEM AND IN THE DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES OF MAJOR INSTITUTIONS, AND TO PROVIDE A GUARANTEED MINIMUM INCOME AND SELF-RESPECT FOR EVERYONE IN THE SOCIETY. (LB)

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

REPORT No. 15

THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS

CLASS, STATUS AND POVERTY

PETER H. ROSSI
THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

AND

ZAHAVA D. BLUM
NATIONAL OPINION RESEARCH CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

MARCH 1968

CLASS, STATUS AND POVERTY

Peter H. Rossi
The Johns Hopkins University

and

Zahava D. Blum
National Opinion Research Center
University of Chicago

The preparation of this paper was supported in part from a grant from the Russell Sage Foundation and by a Reflective Year Fellowship granted to the senior author by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. This support is hereby gratefully acknowledged. This paper is part of the program of research on Education and Social Change for Negro Americans at the Center for the Study of Social Organization of Schools.

March 1968

Introduction:

The poor are different: On this there is consensus. It is beyond this agreement on the obvious that the critical issues in both our understanding and treatment of poverty arise: In what ways are the poor different? How do these differences arise and how are they maintained? These are the questions to which this paper is addressed.

To provide answers, we will engage in both empirical and theoretical exercises. On the empirical side, the considerable body of researches on social stratification will be examined to glean fairly firm knowledge about the poor and their differences from other layers of our society. On the theoretical side, we will attempt to explain how these differences are generated and maintained.

Whether the poor are differently qualitatively from the rest of American society remains a moot question until we settle both the question of how poverty is to be defined and what is meant by a qualitative difference. Although for some purposes greater precision would be desirable, for present purposes it is sufficient to define the poor as those who are on the bottom of our American class system. The poor are those able bodied adults and their dependent children* whose income and wealth place them at the bottom most layer of the distributions and whose sources of income lie in either welfare payments or in unskilled and poor

---

*This definition excludes those who have retired from the labor force and those who are disabled through disease or infirmity even though their income may place them at the lowest portions of the income distribution. They are excluded because their problems are mainly those of income maintenance through transfer payments of some kind.

paid occupations. These are the "problem" poor, those who should be "making it" in our society and who are either failing to do so or are the products of the failures of our society.*

With the reader's indulgence, we will postpone the question of what is a qualitative difference until a later portion of this paper.

The main concerns of this paper are not merely academic. Whether one conceives of the poor as qualitatively different from the rest of society or mainly differing in degree from those above them affects social policy. A social policy based on a qualitative model of poverty tends to stress rehabilitation and retraining. A quantitative model, in contrast, underlies those policies which stress institutional changes in our society or policies which provide income maintenance. In the last section of this paper we attempt to draw out the policy implications of our findings and theoretical speculations.

The main issues of this paper have appeared in the literature on poverty in a variety of seemingly different forms. For example, there is the question of whether there exists a "culture of poverty". Or, there are discussions of the alternatives of a situational versus a subcultural view of poverty. And so on. It is important to bear in mind that these are all variants of the main issues of this paper: How different are the poor and why are they different?

---

*Obviously this is not a definition that is useful if one were to try to determine the number of poor people in the United States. For present purposes of reviewing a literature that does not employ standardized definitions a flexible definition provides the ability to use a wider range of materials.

How Different are the Poor?

To answer this question, we examined the extensive empirical social science literature published since the end of World War II. The detailed results of our bibliographic survey are contained in another article in this volume to which the interested reader may turn for a discussion of methods and detailed findings. For present purposes, we will provide mainly an overview.

Our first disappointment in surveying the literature was to find that very few of the studies paid close attention to those on the very bottom of the stratification system. Systematic studies of the characteristics of the poor on an extensive basis are particularly lacking, the major exceptions being the Survey Research Center's survey of income and labor force participation based on a national sample, augmented by oversampling of low income households (Morgan et al 1962).* The studies have tended mainly to make only a few distinctions along class lines, the favorites being "working class/middle class" and "blue collar/white collar" dichotomies.

Our second disappointment was to find that the major items bearing directly on the characteristics of the poor rested on restricted empirical bases and upon qualitative observations. The poor have been

---

*References are to the bibliography appended to Blum and Rossi in this volume. Spurred by the "war on poverty", additional extensive systematic researches are presently underway and can be expected to appear in the literature over the next few years, but obviously could not be reviewed here.

studied mainly in the style of anthropological field investigations rather than in the style of large scale systematic surveys. This is not to say that these observations are per se incorrect, but only that they are difficult to evaluate.

As a consequence of the characteristics of the research literature we have had to fall back upon a less direct strategy in answering the question of how different are the poor than would be optimally desired. Our main approach has been to assess whether the images of the poor as arising from the qualitative literature could be anticipated on the basis of extrapolation from general relationships found in the correlates of social class position.

Although no single writer in the qualitative tradition has provided exactly the description shown below, we think it contains the essential features of most.* These features include:

1. Labor-Force Participation: Long periods of unemployment and/or intermittent employment. Public assistance is frequently a major source of income for extended periods.
2. Occupational Participation: When employed, jobs held are at the lowest levels of skills -- e.g., domestic service, unskilled labor, menial service jobs, and farm labor.

---

*Cohen, 1964; Engel, 1966; Harrington, 1962; O. Lewis, 1966; Lockwood, 1960; Matza, 1966; S. M. Miller, 1964a, 1964b; W. B. Miller, 1958, 1959; Pavenstedt, 1965; Riessman, 1962, 1964; and Schneiderman, 1964, 1965. Of these writers, S. M. Miller has attempted to elaborate a typology of the lower classes, distinguishing essentially between the "hopeless" poor and those who are attempting to cope with their problems.

3. Family and Interpersonal Relations: High rates of indices of marital instability (desertion, divorce, separation), high incidence of households headed by females, high rates of illegitimacy; unstable and superficial interpersonal relationships characterized by considerable suspicion of persons outside the immediate household.

4. Community Characteristics: Residential areas with very poorly developed voluntary associations and low levels of participation in such local voluntary associations as exist.

5. Relationship to Larger Society: Little interest in, or knowledge of, the larger society and its events; some degree of alienation from the larger society.

6. Value Orientations: A sense of helplessness and low sense of personal efficacy; dogmatism and authoritarianism in political ideology; fundamentalist religious views with some strong inclinations toward beliefs in magical practices. Low 'need achievement' and low levels of aspirations for the self.

Although several other characteristics could be added to this inventory, our informal content analysis of the literature indicates that these characteristics are those over which there is considerable consensus and which tend to be stressed as critical features of the poor.

Dissensus among writers exists around the question of whether the poor are "happy" or not. Some writers extol the spontaneity of expression among this group while others ascribe the same phenomenon to lack of impulse control. Some see the poor as having a fine and warm sense of humor but others regard their humor as bitter and sad. Some claim that

the poor are desperately trying to change their condition, sinking into apathy when it becomes clear to them that the odds are greatly against their being able to do so, others deny that a strong desire for change exists.

A second point of disagreement arises over whether or not the "lower-lowers" have developed a contra-culture -- a rejection of the core values of American society -- or whether they are best characterized by what Hyman Rodman (1963) calls "value stretch," a condition in which the main values are accepted as valid, by persons who, nonetheless, exempt themselves from fulfilling the requirement of norms.*

Our detailed findings from the survey of empirical studies are contained in another article in this volume. For present purposes, it is only necessary to state that in almost every case, it is clear that the alleged "special" characteristics of the poor are ones which they share generally with the "working class" or "blue collar" component of the labor force. In other words, the poor are different but the difference appears mainly to be a matter of degree rather than of kind.

---

*As described in Rodman (1963), the concept of "value stretch" is a phenomenon not peculiar to the "lower-lowers." No normative system is adhered to completely by everyone in the society and, depending upon the norms in question, the latitude given for compliance can be considerable. For example, adultery has undoubtedly been widespread throughout the whole range of American social strata although there is clear evidence from attitude surveys that legitimate sexual alliances are to be preferred over adulterous ones. If there is any reason for the concept to be applied to the "lower-lowers" with more force than to any other group in American society it is that their lives (for a variety of reasons) depart from standard American in more areas and more dramatically.

Listed below are some of the socio-economic differentials which are well documented in the literature reviewed:

...The lower the socio-economic level, the higher the incidence of family disorganization, e.g. divorce, desertion, unhappiness in the marital relationship, illegitimacy, etc.

...The lower the socio-economic level, the higher the sense of alienation from the larger society, the poorer is knowledge concerning matters of public interest, the less participation in voting, parapolitical organizations, and in associations in general.

...The lower the socio-economic level, the higher the incidence of symptoms of mental disorder, the less well adjusted on personality tests, and the higher the rates of rejection from selective service on psychiatric grounds.

...The lower the socio-economic level, the less competence with standard English, the more likely to score poorly on tests of verbal and scholastic ability, and the more likely to drop out of school before completion.

...The lower the socio-economic level, the higher the rates of mortality and the incidence of physical disorders, although there is some evidence that such socio-economic differentials have been declining over time.

...The lower the socio-economic level, the lower the need for achievement and the less likely individuals are to manifest what has been called the deferred gratification pattern. Some critics have questioned the evidence for the deferred gratification pattern and some studies have shown that Negroes (presumably the group most likely to be among the "poor") manifest very high occupational aspirations for themselves and for their children.

...The lower the socio-economic level, the less likely are parents to socialize their children through the use of explanations for obedience to rules and the more likely to assert such rules without presenting rationales.

...The lower the socio-economic level, the higher are crime and delinquency rates (when based on arrests and convictions) although there is some evidence both that law enforcement agencies treat lower class delinquents more harshly and that when adolescents are asked whether they have committed delinquent acts, the socio-economic differentials tend to decline.

> ...In political attitudes, the lower socio-economic levels were more likely to be liberal on economic issues but somewhat less liberal on civil liberties or political deviants.

In other areas of attitudes and behavior, the literature review did not find reasonable degrees of consensus concerning what is related to socio-economic status. Sometimes, contradictory patterns of findings were reported by different researchers: For example, the results in studies of child rearing practices varied, possibly reflecting the different historical periods in which the studies were undertaken. In other cases, the data were too fragmentary or based on such small studies that, for the time being, their results were mainly suggestive. For example, studies of social class related linguistic differences are based on such small numbers of observations that the differences found can hardly be said to have been firmly established. Similar statements can be made about studies of value patterns, or of certain types of leisure activities.

A "Culture of Poverty"?

In its most extreme form, the position which maintains that the poor are qualitatively different expresses that difference in the claim that there is a distinctive culture displayed by the poor -- the "culture of poverty". Although, our review of the literature casts considerable doubt on the distinctiveness of the poor, there are other aspects of the concept of "culture of poverty" which bear some examination.

A main difficulty stands in the way of an unequivocal answer to the question of whether a culture of poverty is to be found. The concept of "culture of poverty" is not a paragon of clarity or specificity. The popularity of the concept and its concomitant rapid diffusion into the

rhetoric of the "war on poverty" have not helped to make it clearer, although they have helped to make the concept more important.

Oscar Lewis (1966), who apparently coined the term "culture of poverty", distinguishes between "poverty per se" and poverty as "a culture or, more accurately, as a subculture with its own structure and rationale, as a way of life which is passed down from generation to generation along family lines" (p. xliii). He then goes on to a description of the characteristic features of families and individuals living in a culture of poverty.

It is not clear from this definition how distinctively different the poor must be in order to characterize them as living in the culture of poverty. There are several models of class differences which might fit this definition, as follows:

A. The "Greatest Difference" Model: The poor are different from other socio-economic groups mainly in showing proportionately more of the qualities and characteristics which increasingly characterize groups as one goes down the stratification ladder. Of all low socio-economic groups the poor show the greatest differences from the central tendencies of the society in all critical respects.

B. The "Only Difference" Model: The poor is the only group in the society which displays a particular characteristic, other levels of the society stratification system showing only traces of such characteristics or showing no signs of such characteristics at all.

From Lewis' discussion it is not clear which of these two* models of patterns of differences from the rest of society is meant by the phrase "a subculture with its own structure and rationale". It would seem that the concept would be of maximum utility as an explanatory tool if it had the meaning of the "Only Difference" model. However, in all fairness, it should be said that the "greatest difference" model would certainly be of some utility. Hence, at least as far as class differentials are concerned it is unclear whether the evidence from our review of the literature supports the concept. All that can be said is that there is very little if any support for the "culture of poverty" concept if by that concept is meant that the poor show unique characteristics.

The literature review suggests that those traits used to define the culture of poverty are manifested by the extreme poor with only somewhat greater frequency than is true of those immediately above them in socio-economic status. This is not to deny the importance of these characteristics in marking out a group which displays especially aggravated forms and degrees of disabilities, but merely to state that poor do not display characteristics <u>qualitatively</u> different from those immediately above them in the stratification hierarchy, and so on up the ladder.

---

*A possible third model would be one in which the relationship between a characteristic and socio-economic status would be monotonic and non-linear such that the poorest group would show considerably more of a characteristic than its neighbors than would be expected on the basis of a linear relationship between socio-economic status and that characteristic. We do not consider such a model for two reasons: First of all, the data in the literature review are too crudely studied to be able to make reasonable distinctions between linear and non-linear relationships; and secondly, linearity is strongly affected by which metric is used and hence can be manipulated by transformations.

The definition of the "culture of poverty" contains an additional crucial element, referring to the transmission of the culture across generations. Oscar Lewis' account of an extended Puerto Rican family claims that the family has lived in the culture of poverty for at least four generations.*

A similar position is taken by Walter Miller** in his study of Roxbury, Massachusetts. Miller does not accept the concept of "culture of poverty", preferring instead to refer to a "subculturally lower class style of life". He reports the existence of such a subculture extending a considerable period of time in Roxbury. Some degree of subcultural continuity has existed in Roxbury over a long period of time, although the subculture is not necessarily related to a group of specific families residing in that community for the period in question.

Some of the evidence for a culture of poverty that has been presented by its proponents concerns the continuity across generations of families on relief. For example, much has been made of statistics indicating that for some samples of families presently on AFDC or public welfare, large proportions (up to forty percent) come from families of orientation which were themselves on the relief rolls, e.g. Burgess and Price (1963).

---

*Actually the case histories themselves indicate some departure from this generalization. One of the individuals refers to her grandfather as a landowner.

**Miller, Walter. City Gangs. New York: John Wiley & Sons, forthcoming.

These statements are difficult to evaluate because they are not placed in juxtaposition with statements concerning the general population. For example, Puerto Rico has been a poverty stricken territory which despite improvements as a Commonwealth, still has a standard of living considerably below that of any state in the union. Under those circumstances, most persons in Puerto Rico would have been descended from families who have been poor for generations. Similarly, we need to know about <u>all</u> the descendents of families living in the past in Roxbury to determine whether or not there has been a significant amount of cross generational stability in poverty.

Data collected for Duncan and Blau* on intergenerational mobility indicate a considerable amount of intergenerational reshuffling of the population among major occupational groups. For example, of those sons presently (1962) listed as laborers (among whom presumably the bulk of the lower-lowers would be classified), only 12.2% had fathers who were in the same occupational category. Most of the unskilled were recruited from families whose breadwinners were farm laborers (5%), farmers (31.5%), or operatives (15.4%).** Similar findings for 19th century Newburyport, Massachusetts, are reported by Thernstrom (1964).***

---

*U. S. Bureau of the Census. <u>Current population reports</u>, <u>technical studies</u>, Lifetime Occupational mobility of adult males: March, 1962. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1964, Series P-23, No. 11. See also Duncan article in this volume.

**Of course, not all laborers may be considered to be "poor" and not all the "poor" are laborers. Nevertheless, of all the occupational groups distinguished by the Census, "laborers" contain more of the poor by any definition. Certainly these data do not support a contention that a large number of the poor are living in "inherited poverty."

***See also Thernstrom's article in this volume.

Perhaps the most persuasive argument for intergenerational transmission of characteristics comes from studies of child rearing practices. Children in many poor households are being reared in a culturally deprived environment which is linguistically and emotionally impoverished. It is hard to imagine that considerable proportions of such children will find their way into the professional and managerial occupations. But, it is not inconceivable that, despite handicaps of early childhood, large proportions will find their way higher in the "blue collar" occupations that did their parents. If the past is any indication, then some poverty is "inherited," but life chances are reshuffled sufficiently in each generation to allow a large proportion of the children of the poor to move out.

All told, the empirical evidence from our review of the literature does not support the idea of a culture of poverty in which the poor are distinctively different from other layers of society. Nor does the evidence from inter-generational mobility studies support the idea of a culture of poverty in the sense of the poor being composed largely of persons themselves coming from families living in poverty. That the poor are different and show higher rates of a wide variety of disabilities seems well enough documented: If this is what is meant by a culture of poverty, then the concept has some validity although perhaps little utility. If by the concept is meant something more, then the empirical evidence would not support such a view.

In some ways the concept of a culture of poverty transmitted across generations would simplify the problem of how class differences in behavior are generated. If there is a subculture of the poor, then one may

as easily postulate subculture for the "working class", "middle class" or any other recognizable class group in the society, which together generate the range of socio-economic status related behavior summarized earlier. All that would be necessary, within such a theoretical model, would be to postulate some initial state in which class differences are generated; then, the processes of intergenerational transmission would account for the persistence of differences at any point in time thereafter. Calling into question class differences as subcultures raises the question of how class differences are generated, a topic to which we turn in the next section.

Before doing so, however, it is important to keep in mind that many of the differences among socio-economic status levels found in the literature reviewed are not very large. Where correlation coefficients have been computed, it is rare for a coefficient to rise above .4, and indeed the correlation between father and son's occupation is only .3 - .4.* Hence, in accounting for socio-economic status differences, one is mainly concerned with explaining tendencies rather than explaining stark contrasts between class levels.

Accounting for socio-economic Status Differentials

Ever since empirical social scientists moved out of the classroom forty years ago to study larger social systems presenting a fuller range of socio-economic variation, it has been abundantly clear that there are small but pervasive and persistent differences among socio-economic status

---

*These relatively low correlations are further evidence against the view of the class system as subcultures because they indicate that considerable separation between class levels does not exist.

levels across a wide range of variables.* Yet, considerably more attention has been paid to the problem of defining and measuring socio-economic status than to explaining why socio-economic status is such an important variable.

This paper may also be considered a contribution to a major controversy over the essential nature of social stratification. Three major conceptual positions may be distinguished: Classes as subcultures defined by distinctive value patterns and differential association (Warner and his students); stratification as the differential distribution of resources and income; and stratification as the distribution of prestige. In empirical research the three positions tend to converge on a common set of indicators, -- occupation, income and education, -- indicating the extent to which the controversy has been primarily nominal. In this paper we have used the concepts of class level and socio-economic status as roughly equivalent in meaning regardless of the variables used to index them.

Aside from Merton (1957) and Kriesberg (1963), explanations of socio-economic status differences tend to be ad hoc or regarded as self-evident. To be sure, many such differences are self-evident in the sense that they are implied by the measurement of socio-economic status position in terms of occupation, education, or income. Thus, the concentration of

---

*Nineteenth and early twentieth century Censuses contained relatively meager socio-economic information and it was difficult to relate such data to other characteristics of the population. It should be recalled that major cities began to be tracted with the 1920 Census, a development which made possible ecological studies of the distribution of a variety of social phenomena. For example, ecological voting studies began in the Twenties on a fine enough scale to establish clear socio-economic status differentials in voting. See Gosnell (1937) for an example of one of the earliest studies.

business air travel in the upper socio-economic status needs no elaborate explanation: managerial and professional occupations require travel as part of occupational duties, while few blue collar occupations require extensive travel by fast transportation. But many of the socio-economic status differences are not self-evident. Why should the lower socio-economic status levels at the same time display higher levels of economic liberalism but less support for civil liberties? Why are there quantitative and qualitative differences in reading habits? And so on. With respect to many such correlates of socio-economic status, the only thing which is self-evident is the need for the development of a systematic scheme which accounts for a wide range of socio-economic status differentials by postulating a relatively small number of generating processes.

At this stage in the evoluation of sociological theory, attempts to develop generalizations by examining large amounts of empirical data tend to produce explanatory models which are complex and cumbersome. Our own attempt is no exception. The scheme described below is more complicated than one would ideally desire, and as yet insufficiently well integrated to provide a clear and unequivocal set of predictions concerning what one may anticipate to be related to socio-economic status positions in either our own society or stratification systems in general. Whatever merit it may have will be mainly as an attempt to open up an area for further development.

Our starting point is to distinguish among three broad classes of processes, each of which has important but varying implications for the generation of socio-economic status-related behavior. First, socio-economic

status levels, by definition, differ with respect to income and wealth, occupation, and education, each of which has important but conceptually distinct effects on behavior and attitudes. We have labeled these processes "Direct Effects of Socio-economic Variables." Second, we distinguish processes which arise in reaction to the hierachical and evaluational aspects of social stratification. Finally, we point out processes which tend to maintain and reinforce socio-economic status differences. These three classes of processes are probably applicable to all stratification systems which tend to be universalistic and achievement oriented. We also consider features of the American stratification system which are peculiar to our history, in particular the ethnic and racial heterogeneity of the American population.

Direct Effects of Socio-Economic Variables

Any operational definition of socio-economic status relies on occupation, income, and education or some combination of the three to place individuals and households in socio-economic status classes. Whether one regards these three variables as indicators of some more basic concept of stratification (as do Warner and Hollingshead) or as socio-economic status itself, they remain the major means by which socio-economic status is in practice determined and for that reason constitute the most obvious differences among class levels.

Obviousness is no bar to importance, however. These three variables each generate some of the differences we reviewed earlier and it is important to point out the kinds of effects involved, at least in order to separate them from other variables to be considered later on.*

Despite the obvious importance of income and wealth, it is particularly disappointing that we know so little about its direct effects. The pioneering work of Morgan et al. (1962) represent the best of our efforts, but this volume is particularly meager on precisely those aspects of poverty which would most interest the sociologist and social psychologist. We know most about the influence of income and wealth on consumer behavior, arising out of ample amounts of market research. Differences in housing, diet, access to life experiences, etc., are all strongly conditioned by disposable income, at least in the negative sense that income and wealth determine whether certain consumer goods or life experiences are accessible to the individual, although they do not altogether determine whether the access will be used.

The influence of income and wealth upon behavior is historically conditioned, being very much affected by trends in household real income. Thus, thirty years ago ownership of a telephone, a mechanical refrigerator (as opposed to an ice box), and an automobile more closely related to

---

*It is particularly important to do so if one is concerned with social policy. Poverty reduction programs which stress income maintenance need to be distinguished in their effects from policies which stress rehabilitation or retraining. The latters reluctance to stress income maintenance stems from an implicit assumption that most of the problems of the poor stem not from their lack of income but from other sources.

socio-economic status,* although today diffusion of ownership of these items is so widespread that this relationship has declined considerably. Similarly, although today air travel is restricted to a minority of the population and the upper ends of the socio-economic status ladder, one can already envisage a time when air travel will be used frequently by all.

Occupational differences, stripped of income differentials, have an effect on class related behavior through the kinds of skills which are exercised and maintained in the activities of the occupation. Thus, part of the reason why higher socio-economic status jurors make more contributions to jury deliberations (Strodtbeck, et al, 1965; James, 1964) is that higher socio-economic status occupations require the exercise and maintenance of communication and negotiation skills. Studies of the reading habits of adults indicate that white-collar workers continue reading relatively complex materials throughout adulthood, while manual workers tend to decline in their reading habits after formal schooling. The occupational activities of upper socio-economic status individuals tend to reinforce and even extend the skills acquired during formal schooling.

Whether or not entry into high status levels is becoming increasingly dependent on educational attainment, we can point to such differences among socio-economic status levels at the moment as being among the most consistent of all. As a generator of class-related behavior, education functions in two ways: First of all, formal education increases one's ability to handle abstract ideas and one's knowledge about the world.

---

*Indeed, ownership of these items was used in an index of socio-economic status in the early days of market research.

This relationship often makes it difficult to judge whether or not one has really tapped class differences rather than simply differences in ability to handle abstractions. Thus, the fact that a much larger proportion of poorly educated respondents are unable to name the ocean that lies between the United States and Europe does not mean necessarily that lower status persons could not find their way from Chicago to Europe. It may only mean that when asked questions of this sort, persons with more formal education understand the meaning of such questions more easily.*

The second way in which formal education functions is to impart to the individual a relatively standard conception of what it is to be a full member of society and what are the obligations of a citizen. Thus, we find on a wide variety of measures, that the better educated give answers which are more in keeping with the official values of the society. The better educated are less prejudiced on scales of attitudes toward minority groups and political deviants. They are more likely to endorse normative statements concerning participation in community affairs and to express interest in what is happening in the society and in the world. They are more likely to express opinions, even on issues of a factitious nature.** The evidence up to now does not allow us to judge whether the better

---

*This problem dogs all empirical social research to the extent that one may question whether many of our most cherished findings are not merely disguised measures of educational attainment. For example, answers to the F-scale are so strongly related to education that several critics (Christie and Jahoda, 1954) feel that it is largely measuring education.

**In an old experiment on response set, Crespi asked a sample of respondents whether or not they were in favor of the "Anti-metallurgical bill." Fewer of the better educated indicated that they had no opinion on this fictitious issue.

educated have a deeper commitment to the main value emphases of our society or whether they merely know better what those emphases are. Most likely both statements are partially true, with the critical question being which should be given the most weight.

Although we have tried to make an analytical distinction here between education and occupation, in point of fact the two variables are so closely related, particularly in the upper reaches of the occupational prestige hierarchy, that they can scarcely be empirically distinguished. High status occupations, particularly the scientific, professional, and technical occupations, ordinarily can only be pursued by persons of high educational attainment, and the managerial occupations are being increasingly dominated by college graduates. Hence, in the empirical world, occupational differences tend to strongly reflect educational differences and vice versa, which renders separation of the effects of these two variables difficult.

Reactions to Class Position

Under this heading we classify processes which involve reaction to socio-economic position. There is abundant evidence from empirical social research that there is widespread consensus both on the general outlines of the stratification system and on one's own position in the hierarchy. Studies of the prestige position of occupations in the United States and in other countries indicate very little difference from socio-economic status level to socio-economic status level in the prestige accorded to occupations.* Respondents on surveys tend to identify their

*Hodge, Siegel, and Rossi (1966) and Hodge, Treiman, and Rossi (1966).

class positions in large part according to their occupations, education, and income. Evidence from the literature reviewed shows that lower status persons feel deprived and know they are on the bottom of the hierarchy.

Parsons (1954) views the stratification system as expressing society-wide evaluation of social positions, mainly occupational in character. To be at the bottom of the heap then, is to be evaluated negatively. Merton (1957) emphasizes another evaluational aspect of social stratification: if the norm of the society expresses success in terms of the attainment of wealth (or of high occupational position), then those who do not attain wealth (or high occupations) have failed. Low socio-economic status is thus a position of failure and persons in that position argues Merton, may react to their failure in a number of ways, as indicated below.

Closely related to this argument are the explanations given by Matza (1966) and Coser (1965) for the appearance of poverty as a social problem. Both authors stress that poverty in an objective sense is characteristic of some groups in almost every large scale society, but only in some societies is poverty regarded as a social problem. The process of creating the "problem poor" or poverty as a social problem is a process in which the poor are degraded by being labelled failures and unworthy of full citizenship in the society. Oscar Lewis* (1966) takes much the same position (at least by implication) when he states that a culture of poverty can only arise in a society in which there is upward mobility and

---

*Oscar Lewis also states that traditional societies which are not based on a wage economy and in which there are unilineal kinship systems have poverty but not a "culture of poverty."

considerable unemployment, underemployment or intermittent employment among the unskilled or poorly skilled workers. Coser and Matza argue that a specially punishing evaluation is given of the poor in such societies through the singling out of this group for treatments which mark them off as much less than full citizens.

The common thread running through the statements of all the writers mentioned above is the psychologically punishing situation of those on the bottom of a stratification system in a society which stresses achievement for all and universalism as a mode of selection for occupational placement. Of course, there is no reason to restrict this process only to those on the very bottom of the stratification hierarchy. While it is undoubtedly the case that the very poor experience the greatest gap between their position and the attainment of approbation, the punishment may be viewed as occurring, to some extent, all up the line, to a diminishing degree as one proceeds higher and higher. Indeed, a case might be made that although only those who have reached the very pinnacle of the occupational system may be considered a success in terms of some version of the "American dream", in fact, the experience of success probably comes at a lower level, but still somewhat above the average occupational status in the population.

The negative evaluation of the lower levels of the socio-economic status dimension is manifested in a variety of ways. To begin with, the tone of our society is decidedly middle class. The mass media, for example, portray the American household as a middle class household, and working class or lower class individuals are portrayed as either problems or comics. Textbooks, mail order catalogues, advertisements in newspapers, novels, etc.

all show much the same pattern. The positively evaluated persons, dress, homes and speech are middle class or better. At least by implication, the lower status individual finds himself negatively evaluated because he does not see his counterparts put forth in a positive way in the institutions which set the tone for the society.

A second way in which the poor are made aware of their negatively evaluated position in the society is through the process of being designated as poor and hence as a problem. The special legislation designed to provide some measure of relief for the poor in and of itself places them in a special category. It is hard to see how our treatment of the poor as a special group can do anything but compound the feeling of being less than equal.

Finally, the most extreme form of negative evaluation manifests itself as discrimination. The lower levels of the socio-economic status suffer poorer treatment at the hands of the schools, stores, banks, law enforcement agencies, medical personnel, landlords, etc. Some of these patterns of differential treatment have been documented in the literature reviewed: Others -- for example, differential treatment in stores and government agencies -- can be expected to exist and certainly can be observed readily in a qualitative way. In short, at the main points of contact with the formal organizations of our society, lower status persons can easily experience being treated differently and with less respect, courtesy, and efficiency.

Discrimination directed against Negroes is, of course, the most blatent of all. This is not the place to document the differential treatment accorded to Negroes in our society, except to state that the psychological burden of being lower class for this group is added to (or multiplied by) being at the same time a much discriminated against ethnic group.

Some of the characteristics of the poor can be seen as reactions to the punishment of being judged negatively. Merton suggests that modes of reaction involve combinations of rejections of goals (mobility and wealth) and the means designated by society as legitimate ways in which such goals may be attained. Under this scheme, those who reject the goal of success but accept the means are reacting in a "ritualistic" fashion; those who accept the goal but reject the legitimate means are "deviants;" those who reject both are characterized as "retreatists;" and finally those who reject both and substitute alternative goals and means are characterized as "rebels."

The attraction of Merton's paradigm lies in the similarity one may easily see between certain characteristics of the poor and the types of reactions Merton postulated in his paradigm. The apathy and apparent withdrawal of the poor from participation in the society resembles Merton's "retreatist" reaction. The "ritualistic" reaction resembles the quiet desperation of the "poor but honest" who outwardly conform to the society while having given up any hope or desire to attain success. Perhaps the most attractive feature of the Mertonian paradigm is its explanation of "deviance" as a reaction to the structural position of the poor. This theme has been elaborated by A. K. Cohen (1955) and in a modified form by Cloward and Ohlin (1960) in their theories of delinquency.

The "rebellious" reaction has been given less attention in the literature. Indeed the events of the last three years may shift attention from "retreatism" to a concern for "rebellion". Here the critical issues are what are the conditions under which a deprived and negatively evaluated population shifts from a posture of apathy to riots? There is, furthermore, the question of the development of counter-ideologies. Black nationalist movements, the adoption of African dress and hair styles, and separatist tendencies can be viewed as movements to deny the negative evaluations placed upon being Black and assert that either Black is as good as White or better. In this respect the recent shifts in Negro leadership ideology resemble the development of nationalist feelings among European peasant immigrants to this country, the content of some pietistic sects which promise an afterlife with either a reversed social class system or an equalitarian one, and more directly political movements aimed at redistributing in this life power, prestige, and resources.

The problems with Merton's paradigm arise from several sources: First, although it is clear that American society rewards success, it is not clear whether success is mandatory and what are the dimensions along which success is to be measured. For example, if the emphasis is on income and wealth, then entrepreneurial and managerial occupations ought to be those toward which everyone should aspire, but if the emphasis is on contributions to knowledge and culture, other occupations would be stressed. Second, Merton's paradigm remains mainly a classificatory scheme at present with little ability to predict the appearance of one or another type of reaction for groups or individuals in different circumstances. Why does rebellion occur at this moment in the history of our urban ghettoes, along

with criminality, retreatist resort to drugs, etc.? Effectively to use the paradigm as theory means to go beyond present formulations and develop predictive propositions. Third, by implication, Merton's paradigm is mainly directed toward explaining working class and lower class behavior. It seems to the present authors that we need theoretical propositions which will cover the reactions in the full range of socio-economic status. In some sense, all but those at the very top have failed to achieve the fullest degree of achievement urged by the society. The social psychology and sociology of failure will have to be oriented toward degrees of failure and toward those devices, structural and psychological, which insulate individuals and social groups from the potentially devastating fact that only a very few achieve the most that is offered by a society at a given point in time.

It may be best, for example, to conceive of success and failure as defining two continua rather than being at the opposite ends of the same continuum, just as it has turned out to be empirically useful to conceive of negative and positive feelings as constituting two separate and somewhat unrelated continua both independently related to subjective feelings of happiness. (See Bradburn and Caplovitz, 1965). If such turns out to be the case empirically, then an individual could experience neither success nor failure, or both, or combinations of more of one and less of the other. Incidentally, such a conceptualization may provide one of the clues to the mechanisms by which most members of our society do not strongly experience failure from the viewpoint of not having achieved as much as the society on some level urges them to. To fail may mean something more than not achieving success.

The main point to be made here is that the social stratification system of an open society with few ascriptive bars to achievement creates a situation in which all individuals are subject to positive or negative evaluations depending on the degree to which they have in fact achieved. This process of evaluation is one which rewards some and punishes others, generating in turn reactive processes which underlie some of the class differences which we have seen earlier in the literature. It is to this source that one should probably attribute the lowered self-esteem of the poor,* the phenomenon of "value stretch" (Rodman, 1963), in which the poor exempt themselves from main value themes, their apathy and withdrawal from participation, their sense of helplessness and powerlessness, and high levels of dissatisfaction with their position in life.

It should be noted that these processes are ones which are to be found in any stratification system, regardless of its level of living and its distribution of income.

Processes which Maintain Class Differences

We turn now to processes which tend to maintain differences among socio-economic levels. For example, there is no particular obvious reason why child-rearing practices (especially those which do not require income expenditures) should not be uniform through the stratification system, unless one postulates that there are barriers to the diffusion of knowledge

---

*Very dramatically portrayed in the recent study of a Washington, D.C. street corner group of Negro men in Elliot Liebow Tally's Corner, Little Brown and Company, Boston, 1967.

and practice across such levels.* Similar statements could be made with respect to linguistic behavior -- particularly dialect -- class differences, food preferences, dress and cosmetic styles, etc.

Two major factors can be seen as impeding the diffusion of behavioral and attitudinal patterns across class levels. First, the different socio-economic status levels are exposed to different media and educational experiences. Studies** of book reading, exposure to newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, all indicate that upper socio-economic status persons read, listen, and view more than lower socio-economic status persons and, furthermore, expose themselves to materials of greater complexity and difficulty. Hence, the articles in newspapers and magazines which discuss such topics as child-rearing practices or diet are more likely to be read by upper socio-economic status persons. Obviously, this differential exposure is related to educational experiences which provide the individual with the skills to assimilate and understand such discussions. But educational experience also has a more direct effect because part of the content of formal education is instruction in speech, nutritional standards, and conceptions of citizenship, which involve paying attention to the "serious" part of the mass media.

---

*Of course, one may also postulate that child-rearing practices are so basically a part of personality -- particularly of women -- that they are intractable to change, including purposeful attempts on the part of educators and the medical profession. However, if Bronfenbrenner (1966) is correct, since middle class women have changed their child-rearing practices over the last thirty years, but working class women have not, then we would have to postulate that working class women have personalities which are qualitatively different from middle-class women, an assumption which is not warranted.

**This research literature was not reviewed, except incidentally, in the previous section of this paper. For a review of studies of book reading see Ennis (1965). Several references to differential exposure to media are contained in Berelson and Janowitz (1966).

Those changing tendencies within the society which are diffused, or at least supported by reading, listening, and viewing therefore move more slowly into the lower levels of the socio-economic status ladder.* Thus some of the socio-economic status differences that may be found at a particular point in time represent differential diffusion along socio-economic status lines. Hence some of the differences shown in the last section can be expected to disappear with time, in the same way that socio-economic status differentials in telephone ownership and the use of mechanical refrigeration have largely disappeared in the past three or four decades.

The second major mechanism maintaining socio-economic status differences involves differential association along class lines. Work groups, friendship groups, neighborhoods, and kinship groups tend to be homogeneous with respect to socio-economic status level (or at least more homogeneous than randomly selected individuals). How important such informal social supports are can be seen in studies of such diverse phenomena as voting behavior of adults and college-going intentions of adolescents. In the former case, a good part of the reason for class solidarity in voting behavior, despite whatever may be the political bias of the mass media, lies in the political homogeneity of informal groups.

---

*This implies that by and large changes in behavioral and attitudinal tendencies diffuse from the upper levels of the socio-economic status structure to the lower. There are outstanding exceptions to this pattern, e.g. jazz music, certain vernacular expressions of speech, etc. David Riesman, (1954) in a suggestive essay, proposes that instrumental ideas diffuse downward but that expressive ideas diffuse upward. Whether or not he is correct, it still remains the case that some cultural items have their origins in the lower socio-economic status levels and diffuse upward from that point.

In the latter case, the class composition of high schools has an effect on intentions to go to college, modifying the influences of the class background and academic performance of the young persons involved. Thus adults are responsive to the political climates of their small groups, and adolescents are responsive to the intellectual climates of their high schools.

If we accept the general proposition that face-to-face influences are more effective and persuasive than those emanating from the mass media, then we can begin to understand how the poor manage to evade some of the more punishing aspects of being negatively evaluated by the social stratification system and how they manage to maintain patterns of behavior regarded as deviant by the larger society. Surrounded by persons who are in much the same socio-economic situation as himself and more oriented toward obtaining approval of friends, neighbors, and kin than to the approval of the larger society, an individual can find some support for his particular style of life. We suggest that this mechanism is considerably more important for the maintenance of class differences than early childhood socialization. It is also a mechanism which helps to understand the persistence of other types of group differences along ethnic, religious, and regional lines* which we have seen to be as important as class differences.

---

*Although we have stressed the importance of this mechanism for the maintenance of lower socio-economic status homogeneity, obviously the same mechanism helps to account for upper socio-economic status homogeneity as well. Indeed, for some areas of behavior, e.g., voting and political ideology, there is evidence that the upper levels maintain greater homogeneity than the lower. The stress is given here to the lower socio-economic status levels because their homogeneity is maintained in the face of the fact that the society in its official institutions and in the mass media stresses the upper socio-economic status modes of ideology and behavior as modal and model. This is a middle-class society.

It would be very easy to exaggerate the amount of socio-economic homogeneity in friendship, neighborhood, work, and kinship groups. Some types of occupations bring one into contact with a range of socio-economic status levels, e.g., sales clerk, appliance repairman, etc., and kinship groups may turn out to be the most socio-economically heterogeneous of all the intimate face-to-face groups to which an individual may belong.* Some amount of cross-class contact continually occurs within intimate face-to-face groups, for example, enough to account for at least some part of the lack of clear-cut class differences as shown in the literature on voting behavior.

The processes commented upon above are general ones, applicable to all social stratification systems of a universalistic-achievement type. In order to understand the stratification system of American society, however, additional features have to be taken into account. Perhaps the most important of all is the ethnic and racial heterogeneity of American society. Race and ethnicity are related to class in a complicated way which changes over time. The bottom layers of our major urban centers are at the present time heavily populated by Negro migrants from rural areas and their second generation descendants. In the first half of this century, the same layers were occupied primarily by immigrants and their descendants from Eastern Europe.

---

*Indeed, given the relatively low correlation between the occupational statuses of father and son, it can be anticipated that similar low correlations (of the order of .4 to .6) can be found among the occupational statuses of siblings. Thus a set of siblings and their spouses can be expected to span a range of socio-economic status greater than can be expected to be found within small work groups, for example, or perhaps greater than to be expected between adjacent neighbors.

The strength of ethnic, racial, and the often accompanying religious collectivities as determinants of behavior and attitudes is considerable. For example, Jews are considerably more liberal in their political and economic ideologies than other high-status groups. Catholics tend to display standards of family and personal behavior which are, in general, more traditional than other groups: and within Catholicism, ethnic groups vary from one another. Our knowledge of American Negroes as an ethnic group is at the moment very meager since it is difficult to specify the content of ethnicity in this particular case.*

A major difficulty with race, religion, and ethnicity as generators of group differences in our society is that these differences tend to be particularistic and do not lend themselves to systematic treatment. The surviving cultural traits of the Germans, for example, are peculiar to that group and appear in a variety of apparently capricious ways.** To some extent, the class differences shown in the literature reviewed in this paper reflect the varying ethnic and racial composition of different socio-economic status levels. Which and how much of the

---

*The problem lies in the fact that the slavery experience fairly completely wiped out all traces of the original cultures which the Negroes brought with them from Africa. Whatever particular cultural features of American Negroes presently exist are ones which developed within the context of American society and hence may be only marginally differentiated from lower class whites in the rural South.

**For example, among college graduates, those of German ancestry (no matter how remote) tend to be more interested in engineering and physical science, traits which seem sensibly related to popular conceptions of German "national character," but Irish Catholic college graduates tend to be interested in medicine as a career, a pattern which appears somewhat as a surprise (Greeley, 1964).

differences can be attributed to this source of variation is not known, especially since ethnicity is not ordinarily used as a variable except in its disguised forms of race and religion. Rosen (1959), for example, finds that ethnicity and religion are as important as socio-economic status position in explaining differences in achievement motivation of young boys. Studies of presidential elections, (e.g. Lazarsfeld, et al., 1948; Berelson, et al., 1954) have found that religion was an important predictor of voting for the two sets of presidential candidates. Knowing the ethnic composition of Detroit, one wonders how different the interpretation of Miller and Swanson's (1958) findings would be if the ethnic background of individual respondents had been taken into account.

The persistence of ethnic group differences over time can be attributed to differential association. Ethnicity, religion, and race constitute axes of interpersonal association which possibly rival class in importance. Whatever particular behavioral and attitudinal patterns different ethnic and racial groups either bring with them or develop will therefore tend to persist because of the social support provided by the ethnic and racial homogeneity of small informal groups.*

The main point of this section of our paper has been more to lay out the main considerations which should go into a theory of how class differences are generated and maintained rather than to develop such a

---

*We would anticipate that ethnic and racial patterns concerning family roles and interpersonal relations would persist longer than other types of ethnic differences. Those ethnic differences which would constitute a handicap in coping with the outside worlds of politics and economic life (e.g., observance of the Sabbath) would be among the first to disappear, while those pertaining to the world of informal, small groups would tend to persist longer (e.g., food habits, mutual aid, expectations of friends and relatives, etc.).

theory in detail. Stated in another form, we have tried to decompose the concept of socio-economic status into a number of components, each of presumed importance in generating and maintaining class differences in behavior and attitudes.

To return to the initial concerns laid out in the very beginning of this paper, the viewpoint set out in this past section has been that which is oriented toward a situational as opposed to a subcultural view of classes in general and of the poor in particular. With the exception of ethnicity race and religion, the processes stressed here whereby class differences are generated are rooted in the existential nature of social stratification. If there is a culture of poverty or a subculture of the poor, then it is a condition which arises out of the exigencies of being relatively without resources and of being negatively evaluated by the larger society. Furthermore, if there is a culture or a subculture of poverty only in this limited sense, then it is not clear what is gained by the use of the term other than dramatic emphasis.

Policy Implications

Only minor differences separate the subcultural and situational interpretations of the poor as far as empirical descriptions of their characteristics are concerned. The major disagreement centers over how these characteristics are generated and hence how they may be changed. The subcultural view stresses as necessary, mechanisms by which behavior and attitudes are transmitted across generations and the situational view stresses the structural features of the society which generate those characteristics without positing a necessary intergenerational transmission

mechanism. Characteristically, the subcultural viewpoint stresses the family and the situational viewpoint stresses the occupational system as the points to which the levers of social policy should be applied.

It is easy to exaggerate the differences between the two views, as we have done in the previous paragraph. There are undoubtedly transgenerational transmission processes at work whereby the views and feelings of a parental generation are transmitted to the next, hampering or at least dampening the effects that changes in the occupational system might bring about. Similarly, subcultures can hardly be viewed as rising spontaneously without regard to the larger society: Hence as soon as a subcultural view is pushed by the question of how such subcultures arise, then answers have to be given in terms of how such subcultures are functional to the situations of the groups involved.* In the long run, the two views of poverty will undoubtedly converge. In the meantime, the tactical differences as far as social policy is concerned will remain, the one stressing the mechanisms of socialization and the other stressing the effects of the occupational system and social stratification. Since there are better spokesmen for the subcultural view than the present authors, we will not be concerned with presenting this viewpoint any further but rather we will seek to draw out the implications for social policy at the situational view.

---

*Lewis' (1965) statement of his conception of the "culture of poverty" contains an analysis of the structural circumstances under which such cultures arise.

According to the views outlined in the last section of this paper, the nature of the poor is generated primarily by their positions in the occupational and social stratification systems. Properly to draw out the policy implications of this position means to consider those elements of social stratification which are inherent in any social class system and those which are variable and hence subject to change.

The immutable nature of social stratification lies in the fact that some positions in every society will be regarded as in some sense better than others. This implies that there is and will be always some differentials in income, life chances, prestige, deference, honor or status. But, it does not imply that the distribution is identical from society to society or from time to time in the same society. Social stratification is more a rating system than a ranking system: That is to say, members of a society do not each occupy a unique rank position but many persons can share roughly the same evaluation position. This can be seen most clearly with respect to two types of stratification variables: income and prestige. Over time, the amount of income in the society can vary as well as its distribution. While completely equalitarian societies in income terms have not existed on any large scale, the share of income attained by different levels of our society has changed in the last half century along with a considerable gain in the total real income earned by the system as a whole. Similarly, with prestige: The prestige of occupations has not changed to any appreciable extent over the forty years that studies of occupational prestige (Hodge, Siegel and Rossi: 1966) have been conducted although the distribution of the labor force has shifted. Compared to the 1920's our labor force contains proportionately greater

numbers in the more prestigeful occupations than did the labor force of the earlier period. In short, there have been shifts in the average amount of occupational prestige in occupational system and shifts in the distribution of persons towards occupations with higher evaluations.

The implication of this view of social stratification is that it is not necessary to consider that we must always have some group in our society occupying positions which are highly negatively evaluated. By reorganizing the division of labor it is possible to upgrade tasks without necessarily merely shifting the negative evaluation from one group to another. For example, among the most negatively regarded occupations in our society are those involving personal service -- household help, personal service in hotels, restaurants and the like. These are also industries whose technology has remained essentially the same for a considerable period of time. It is conceivable that through technical advances the skill levels of workers can be upgraded and the occupations transformed in the public view from servile to skilled trades.* Although it is difficult to look forward at this point in time to a period when there are no unskilled and servile occupations, it is possible to look forward to a time when the proportion of such occupations in the labor force is further considerably reduced.

The same point may be made with respect to income. A guaranteed annual income could put a floor under the consumption status of American families which would go far towards the reduction of differences in the

---

*For example, services have been started in many of the major metropolitan area for periodic housecleaning employing skilled teams of workers and advanced housecleaning equipment. The servile aspects of housework are removed for the worker along with an upgrading of his skills and his wages.

consumption of goods and services. But an even more important function would be served by such a policy. At the moment, income supplementation in the form of welfare and relief payments can be attained only by proving that you are in some sense unable to function normally in the society. The means test in whatever benign form is still a means test and functions to brand the poor as such. It is significant that Social Security benefits from the very beginning have not had attached to them the same negative connotation as welfare payments (Schiltz, 1967) nor have family allowances in other countries been perceived negatively. The differences are that Social Security benefits have been defined as a matter of right which goes to a group neutrally and universalistically defined, while welfare goes to a group negatively and particularistically defined.

According to the view of social stratification held by the authors, jobs would be more important to offer to the poor than income maintenance if a choice had to be made, although it might be best to provide both simultaneously, supplementing income when jobs do not provide the necessary floor for consumption.

Discriminatory practices are another important source of negative evaluation, especially for Negroes. The effects of the punishment of discrimination at the hands of major institutions can hardly be underrated as a source of feelings of unworthiness and failure, and increasingly of anger and rebellion.

The policies suggested above have as their major aim the softening of negative evaluations in the stratification system. They are designed to produce a society in which there is a floor under household resources and a floor under individual self-respect. They are designed to

remove the most invidious distinctions from our class system. Note that they are not aimed at removing all distinctions, but merely those which are the most punishing.

Of course, there is more to social stratification than differential evaluation. But it is not clear that occupational and educational differences and their effects are more difficult to change than those arising out of negative evaluation. It will still be the case that college graduates will be more articulate and verbally adept than high school graduates and that professional persons will be pursuing occupations intrinsically more interesting and satisfying than those of skilled workers. What can be done in this connection is to shorten the gaps between levels. The history of our educational efforts over the past century has indicated the extent to which progress can be made. Illiteracy has been reduced so far that we no longer count (since 1930) illiterates in the Census. Our population reads more, probably reads better material, and probably has a larger vocabulary than our population of fifty years ago. Putting a floor under education would help to give at least a minimum verbal adequacy to all levels of the population.

Concerning participation in decision making, it is clear that at the moment, the poor and lower status persons in general are at a serious disadvantage. Our participatory institutions have not rewarded their participation nor has their occupational and educational experience prepared them for holding their own. But, we have not exhausted our ingenuity in providing organizations which make it easy for lower class individuals to participate. Some successful examples already exist (Silberman, 1963) proving that it is possible under some circumstances to get reasonably high levels of participation from the poor.

In sum, the policy implications of our examination of the relationship between social stratification and poverty stresses heavily the removal of stigmatizing processes in the occupational system, in the discriminatory practices of major institutions and the provision of a floor of income and self respect for every person in the society. While we have not indicated the specific policies which would bring these ends about, they are not beyond the ranges of the innduative capacities of our creative society.