7. Poverty: Changing Social Stratification

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Poverty can be viewed in many contexts. Generally neglected has been the context of social stratification. The limited results of poverty programs based upon subsistence standards are now forcing a realization that not pauperism but inequality is the main issue within high-income industrial societies. When we begin to discuss poverty in terms of relative deprivation and inequalities, we are posing questions about the over-all social stratification of a nation: What are considered 'acceptable' gaps between the poor and other groups? What are the relevant dimensions for viewing differences among groups within the society today?

This chapter's first objective is to recast approaches to poverty in terms of stratification.[1] A thorough poverty analysis questions the level of living of the non-poor as well as the poor. As the late Polish sociologist Stanislaw Ossowski wrote in his brilliant analysis of social stratification, '. . . a class (is) a member of a certain system of relations. This means that the definition of any class must take into account the relation of this group to other groups in this system.'[2] Not just the poor but the entire society is at issue. As yet, poverty programs have not been adequately seen as efforts to engineer changes in the stratification profiles of the United States.

A stratificational analysis requires not only viewing the poor as those who are lagging behind relative to others in society, but extending the concept of poverty beyond the narrow limits of income. When poverty is viewed within the stratificational framework, we see that Max Weber and Richard Titmuss have already made major contributions to its analysis. One of Weber's outstanding contributions to social science was to untwine three components of

1. This is one of a series of papers. For further discussion of what is gained by putting poverty into a stratification perspective see Miller, S. M., Rein, M., Roby, P., and Gross, B., 'Poverty, Inequality and Conflict', *The Annals, 373*, September, 1967, pp. 16–52.
2. Ossowski, S., *Class Structure in the Social Consciousness*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963, p. 133.

stratification: class, status, and power.[3] The Marxian analysis centered on the economic (or class) dimensions of stratification, but Weber believed that the prestige (social honor) and political dimensions of stratification were sometimes independently important. These other dimensions could change without change in the economic or they could remain stable despite changes in the economic dimension of stratification. With his widely ranging erudition, Weber illustrated his thesis by showing that, for example, a high status group, such as the Prussian Junkers, could retain considerable political power despite its reduced economic importance. Conversely, a rising economic group, like the bourgeoisie, could have a long struggle to obtain prestige equivalent to their economic position. Weber sought not to overturn Marx's analysis but to go beyond it, to broaden its perspectives.[4]

In this century, Titmuss has further refined our tools of analysis by conceiving of income as the 'command over resources over time'.[5] He argues that wage-connected benefits (e.g. pensions) and fiscal benefits (e.g. tax deductions for children which benefit the better-off more than the low-income tax payer) as well as welfare (transfer) benefits must be included in any discussion of the command over *resources*.

Recently we have suggested that governments in any society with significant inequalities should at least provide for rising minimum levels not only of incomes, assets, and basic services, but also of self-respect and opportunities for social mobility and participation in many forms of decision making.[6] To gain a better understanding of the objectives of various poverty programs and the relationships between these goals, we can look at efforts to reduce poverty in terms of (i) what aspect of poverty is the program aimed at, e.g. the economic, political, educational and social mobility, or status dimensions of stratification; and (ii) who is the program aimed at, e.g. is the program aimed at improving the social conditions of those who are poor (i.e. jobs, income, housing, health, self-respect) *or* at moving some of those who are poor out of poverty into other

3. Weber, M., 'Class, Status, Party', in *From Max Weber*, edited and translated by Gerth, H., and Mills, C. W., London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958.
4. See 'Introduction' to Miller, S. M. (ed), *Max Weber: Readings*, New York, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1964.
5. Titmuss, R. M., *Income Distribution and Social Change*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1962; and *Essays on 'The Welfare State'*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1958.
6. Miller, S. M., *et al*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

niches in society (i.e. via educational programs). The following diagram may help the reader to think through these various objectives with us.

Governmental and Private Property Reduction Reports

	Stratificational Dimensions			
Program Objectives	Economic Incomes, Basic Services, Assets	Political Participation in Decision Making	Education and Social Mobility	Status
Improving social conditions	Guaranteed Annual Income	'Maximum Feasible Participation'	Consumer Education	Open Housing
	Medicare—Medicaid	'Black Power'		
	Social Security	'Parent Participation in school decision-making'		
	Concentrated Employment Program			
	Housing			
			New Careers	
Promoting social mobility	Job Training	Negro Separatist Movements	Headstart	Income Guarantees without Stigma
	Manpower Programs	School Integration	Upward Bound	'Black is Beautiful'

This typology can aid social scientists in program *planning* by pointing out the diverse and frequently conflicting goals of programs and by highlighting the relatively neglected aspects of poverty. The typology may also assist in program *evaluation* by providing a framework for pinpointing the goals of programs in question and for showing the relationship among the goals of various programs—first steps in any critique.

The typology leads policy makers dealing with the poor to ask what kinds of responsibilities and burdens we wish our society to have. For example, to what extent do we wish to improve the conditions of today's youth? To a large extent these are not narrow

technical issues, but value issues which may be expected to produce acrimonious debate.

The second purpose of this paper is to show that stratification theory can be refined and modernized through understanding of poverty action. The bearing which empirical research and theory have upon one another has long been emphasized by Robert Merton and others.[7] Applied social science should also be a 'two way street' both drawing from and contributing to social theory. The many recent 'applied' analyses of poverty need to be distilled and added to the general corpus of sociological theory.[8] Conceptually, the writings of Titmuss on the distribution of 'command over resources' need to be connected with those of Parsons and Marshall on the meaning of citizenship.[9]

The interpretation of any particular historical period may require expanding the number of stratificational dimensions or, at least, recognizing the peculiar and changing content of each dimension.[10]

Which dimension is of most importance may also shift.[11] In this essay we will deal with the dimensions of economic class, status, and power, and then with a fourth dimension of education and social mobility. Weber's order will be changed to have the discussion of status, which in the long run is the basic and most difficult issue of poverty programs, follow that of 'education and social mobility'. We have added the 'education and social mobility' dimension because over the past fifty years educational attainment and social mobility of offspring have become factors differentiating members

7. Merton, R. K., *Social Theory and Social Structure* (revised edition), New York, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1957, pp. 85–117.
8. Cf. the first essay by Gouldner and the concluding article by Miller in Gouldner, A. W., and Miller, S. M. (eds), *Applied Sociology*, New York, The Free Press, 1965. Other essays by Miller that bear on the issues of this paper are 'Poverty' in *Proceedings*, Sixth World Congress of Sociology, 1967, and 'Social Change' and 'The Age of Psychiatry' (with Frank Riessman) in Miller, S. M., and Riessman, F., *Social Class and Social Policy*, New York, Basic Books, 1968.
9. Parsons, T., 'Full Citizenship for the Negro American? A Sociological Problem', *Daedalus*, 94, 4, Fall 1965; Marshall, T. H., 'Citizenship and Social Class', *Class, Citizenship, and Social Development*, New York, Anchor Books, 1965.
10. Cf. Weber, M., *op. cit.*, p. 185.
11. Many American sociologists have been misled into believing that today's society is characterized by consensus simply because conflicts centering around the workplace are considerably less violent today than in the 1880s or 1930s. Rather than disappearing, conflicts have shifted from the workplace to ghetto streets where rebellions are aimed at societal and governmental injustices.

of the working and depressed classes. Today, not only class, status, and power but educational attainment and social mobility of offspring determine persons', particularly the poor's, future standard of living. Therefore, we believe that education and social mobility have become independent stratificational dimensions and should be treated as such.

We hope that other social scientists will also attempt to relate 'applied' and 'theoretical' social science. We believe that doing so will enrich American social science by forcing consideration of generally neglected facts, by pressing for reconsideration of misleading or incorrect theories, by clarifying vague concepts, and by generating new theories or conceptual schemes. We are persuaded with Dahrendorf that if we as social scientists 'regain the problem-consciousness which has been lost in the last decades, we cannot fail to recover the critical engagement in the realities of our social world which we need to do our job well.[12] We believe that refinement of stratification theory through analysis of applied sociology will in turn strengthen social scientists' efforts to reduce poverty.

Class

Weber's discussion of the class or economic dimension of stratification built on Marx, but as elsewhere Weber attempted to broaden the Marxian perspective. Marx's analysis was based on the material and social relationships to the production process. Weber shifted from the sphere of production to that of the market or exchange and defined class as 'a number of people who have in common a specific causal component of their life chances in so far as this component is represented exclusively by economic interest in the possession of goods and opportunities for income, and is represented under the conditions of commodity or labor markets'.[13] The economic dimension of stratification, in Weber's conceptualization, included a great variety of explicit and implicit market relationships. As we shall discuss later, the major development today in many societies is the beginning of an important break between the market and well-being.[14]

12. Dahrendorf, R., 'Out of Utopia: Toward a Reorientation of Sociological Analysis', *American Journal of Sociology*, 64, pp. 115–127.
13. Weber, M., *op. cit.*
14. Many sociologists have observed portions of this development. For example, Parsons has noted that public control of private business contributed to the inclusion of Negroes and other groups and that government control over the value of the dollar shapes the distribution of wealth. Parsons, T., 'Full Citizenship for the Negro American? A Sociological Problem', *Daedalus*, 94, 4, Fall, 1965.

The post-World War II era saw a proliferation of studies in which the central explanatory or classificatory variable was occupation.[15] The current concern with poverty is, by contrast, focusing on income. There are several reasons for the growth of interest in income as the definer of class position:

1. The links between occupation and income are becoming fuzzier. The range of income of incumbents of particular occupational positions appears to be getting wider.[16] The result is that a description of occupation poorly predicts income.

15. Lipset and Zetterberg maintain that historically, occupation has been the most common indicator of stratification. Lipset, S. M., and Zetterberg, H., 'A Theory of Social Mobility', in Reinhard Bendix and S. M. Lipset (eds), *Class, Status, and Power* (second edition), New York, The Free Press, 1966, p. 155. Great attention has been paid to the consistency with which prestige is accorded to occupations among different nations. However, international comparative studies pose many methodological problems. These frequently appear to result in a spuriously high degree of inter-country similarity. Following the most recent comparative study of occupational prestige, Hodge *et al* wrote, 'It is quite possible that much genuine diversity in occupational-prestige systems not captured by our analysis is reflected in the relative placement of occupations that are not comparable across societies, or even across subsectors of any given society. In Tiryakian's study of the Philippines, only a small number of occupations could be found about which it was sensible to ask both peasants in remote villages and the residents of Manila. . . . Invoking even so gross a distinction as the manual-nonmanual dichotomy reveals divergences between national prestige structures which are concealed by the total correlation over all occupations. The evidence mustered not only points to dissimilarities from country to country in occupational prestige structures, but also suggests that this variation is intertwined with economic development in a way which is not fully captured by a simple "structuralist" or simple "culturalist" expectation of prestige differences.' Hodge, R., Treiman, D., and Rossi, P., 'A Comparative Study of Occupational Prestige', in Bendix and Lipset, *ibid*, pp. 318, 321. Lenski contends that 'the great importance of the occupational class system is . . . indicated by the fact that one of the chief rewards distributed by most other class systems is access to favored occupations'. Lenski, G., *Power and Privilege*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1966, p. 347. We believe, however, that the importance of the occupational class system is declining as the role of government expands.
16. For instance, in only two years, the *interquartile* range of *weekly* earnings of accounting clerks increased by $2.50, of material handlers by $8.00, of maintenance electricians by $2.00 in the New York S.M.S.A. US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Area Wage Survey*, Bulletin No. 1530–83, April 1967: US Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Wage Survey*, Bulletin No. 1430–80, April, 1965.

2. The poor are a congeries of groups who share low income in common but frequently not many other things. While some of the poor are definable by their low-paying jobs, many other poor are outside the labor force and dependent upon transfer income of various kinds.[17]

3. Government policy, growing in importance, defines groups mainly by income levels whether for purposes of income taxes or welfare assistance.

In turn, income is an adequate indicator of economic level. Within the 'welfare state', the resources that are available to individuals are a mosaic of the income derived from market activities, from the 'fringe benefits' attached to various occupations and organizations, from the operation of the tax system, from various public and private transfer and pension systems, from assets whether protected or pseudo as in the case of many capital gains, and from the availability, utilization, and quality of public goods.

Weber's notion of class must be widened beyond that of property and the market. In particular, in the 'welfare state' many important elements of the command over resources become available as public services. The distribution and quality of these public services affect the absolute and relative well-being of individuals.[18] Considerable inconsistency *may* exist between the income and basic services of persons or groups. While the two are fairly closely linked in the United States, poor basic services are *not* associated with low income in Sweden.[19]

17. Cf. Hamilton, R., 'The Income Question', Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin (manuscript).
18. Brian Abel-Smith has contested some prevailing views of the distribution of benefits in his trenchant 'Whose Welfare State?' in MacKenzie, N., (ed) *Conviction*, London, MacGibbon and Kee, 1958.
19. In his critique of Davis and Moore's proposition that 'social stratification, the uneven distribution of material rewards and prestige, is functionally necessary', Wesolowski maintains that in Poland and Norway the range of income has been distinctly narrowed but education and other services have been expanded. In these countries, he contends, not 'material rewards' but authority (which gives one the opportunity to express one's own personality) and education are viewed as 'end values'. In support of his thesis that occupational prestige is not an important motivational force under the Polish value system, Wesolowski cites Dr. Adam Sarapata's finding that 50 per cent of the respondents in a survey of Lodz 'replied, "No" when asked if some of the occupations were more important than others'. Wlodzimierz Wesolowski, 'Some Notes On The Functional Theory of Stratification', in Bendix and Lipset, *op. cit.*

A larger issue is also involved. As Marshall has argued, the welfare state approach is to break the link between the market and well-being.[20] The role of government is tremendously increased.[21] To a growing extent, the command over resources of the individual depends on his relation to government, whether in terms of income tax, subsidies, licensing, or public services.[22] The concept of 'property' has therefore to be enlarged and altered to include the perspectives of time in pension accumulations and of rights to governmental largesse and services, especially education. Property in the more conventional sense still remains important, but other forms of rights of determination are beginning to possess similar importance.

This broadened view of the command over resources has important political implications.[23] If government plays a major role in

20. Marshall, T. H., *Class, Citizenship and Social Development*, New York, Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1964.
21. Ossowski has noted, for instance, '. . . the experiences of recent years incline us to formulate the Marxian conception of social class in the form of a law which establishes a functional dependence: the more closely the social system approximates to the ideal type of a free and competitive capitalist society, the more are the classes determined by their relation to the means of production, and the more are human relationships determined by ownership of the means of production . . . the majority of American citizens are becoming accustomed to large-scale activities planned by the central authorities. . . . Hence comes the talk about the crisis facing political economics, whose laws were formerly rooted in the basic and inevitable tendencies of human behavior, but which today faces a dilemma caused by the growing influence of the government as a factor which consciously directs the country's economic life.' Ossowski, *op. cit.*, p. 185.
22. The importance of government subsidy and licensing has led Charles Reich to speak of 'largesse' in his seminal essay, 'The New Property', *Yale Law Review*, 93, 1964.
23. A new and neglected aspect of income is its stability. Just as the assurance of future income through pensions is an increasingly important component of well-being, the security and predictability of income within and over the years is becoming more significant. One of the most important differences today between factory workers and lower-level white collar workers in the United States and perhaps some other countries is not the level of income. Frequently, factory workers receive more income than do white collar employees. The more important difference in many ways is that the latter have a stability of income which as yet is not available to factory workers. This is true both within a year where factory workers may suffer layoffs and among years where white collar workers can have more confidence about the drift and certainty of their incomes. As a consequence, collective bargaining negotiations in the United States in the next years are likely to center to a large extent on the obtaining of greater employment surety and income guarantees for factory workers. Obviously, the stability of income can be

affecting the command over resources, then organized action will be increasingly centered on the governmental arena. When Marx wrote, the arena of action was more narrowly the workplace, the setting of production. In the United States, low-income persons have been organizing to affect their rights to welfare and to other forms of government services rather than to affect the economic market. As we shall see in our discussion of power, the relationships to government bureaucracy have become important not only for the poor but for all segments of American society.[24]

The primary point, then, in the effort to modernize the discussion of class is to become aware of the different and new elements in the command over resources over time and of the new role of the government as a direct distributor of resources. The issues of class and economics are intimately politicized as the market-place and property are affected by governmental action and political formations.

Power

Not only is the government becoming a direct dispenser or withholder of resources but it is also regulating, controlling and directing

even more important for the poor who suffer from insecurity and unpredictable as well as inadequate income. The poor are unsure because of bureaucratic arbitrariness as well as because of unemployment and underemployment. Indeed, the war on poverty programs, it could be argued, have increased some income uncertainties among the poor by their sudden starting up and then emergency curtailing or ending because of budgeting or political difficulties. In 1963, the unemployment rate for unskilled laborers except farm and mine was 12·1 per cent as compared to the national average of 5·7 per cent, the 4·8 per cent rate for craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers and 1·6 per cent for managers, officials and proprietors except farm. In November 1967, in the midst of the Viet Nam involvement, the unemployment rate for unskilled laborers (7·3 per cent) remained over three times that of craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers (2·2 per cent) and over eight times that of managers, officials and proprietors except farm (0·9 per cent). US Department of Labor, *Manpower Report of the President and a Report on Manpower Requirements, Resources, Utilization and Training*, Transmitted to the Congress, March, 1964, p. 25; US Dept. of Labor, *Employment and Earnings*, December, 1967.

24. Dahrendorf links class and politics even more closely when he writes, '. . . class is about power and power is about politics'. Dahrendorf, R., 'Recent Changes in the Class Structure of European Societies', *Daedalus*, 93, Winter, 1964. While class and power are closely related, we also believe that for conceptual purposes they have to be independently analysed.

the economy, even in non-socialist societies. Efforts to spur economic growth and to prevent recessions inevitably involve questions of who is to benefit, who is to pay the costs of trying to keep prices from rising rapidly, who is to be disadvantaged by economic changes. The expanding role of government means that presumed notions of market automatically succumb to political decisions about who gains and loses.[25] These decisions are supposedly made on immutable technical grounds alone.[26] But, with greater sophistication, these decisions are found to be based upon a political struggle among groups and individuals possessing different values.[27]

Consequently, political position becomes increasingly important in affecting the command over resources. The political dimension of stratification grows in significance. Political organizations are based not only on relations to the private market but to the developing 'public market' in which key decisions are made.

The political dimension has its roots in the right to vote.[28] As voting becomes a widespread legal right in many societies like the United States with large differences in inter-group voting rates, the issue becomes how to get all groups to use their vote and how to get important issues before the electorate. This means dealing with the

25. Dahrendorf has observed, 'Just as in a modern shoe factory, it is hard to answer the question, "Who makes the shoes?", it is hard to tell who, in the bureaucratic administration of a modern enterprise, church, or state, holds the power'. Dahrendorf, R., *ibid*, p. 236.
26. Cf. Rein, M., and Miller, S. M., 'Poverty Programs and Policy Priorities', *Trans-action*, 4, 9, September, 1967.
27. For a strong attack on the 'assertion that the old sources of tensions and class conflict are being progressively eliminated or rendered irrelevant . . .', see Westergaard, J. H., 'Capitalism Without Classes?', *New Left Review*, No. 26, Summer, 1964, pp. 10–32. Also pertinent to these issues is John H. Goldthorpe's essay, 'Social Stratification in Industrial Society', in Bendix, R. and Lipset, S. M. (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 648–659.
28. See the important discussion of citizenship in Marshall, T. H., *op. cit.* When describing nineteenth and twentieth century European changes in citizenship, Dahrendorf has stated, 'The slogan (political participation) points to a symptom of the development of equality of citizenship rights rather than to its entire substance. Citizenship is the social institution of the notion that all men are born equal. Its establishment requires changes in virtually every sphere of social structure. Apart from universal suffrage, equality before the law is as much a part of this process as is universal education, protection from unemployment, injury and sickness, and care for the old. Representative government, the rule of law, and the welfare state are in fact the three conditions of what I should describe as the social miracle of the emergence of the many to the light of full social and political participation.' Dahrendorf, R., 'Recent Changes in the Class Structure of European Societies', *op. cit.*, p. 239.

overt and covert barriers to voting.[29] Another level, connected with the interest in voting, is the degree, kind and effectiveness of organization of various interest positions. Currently, low-income groups are beginning to develop organizations (whether in the form of activist clubs for the aged, or political associations of slum residents) which push more effectively for programs dealing with their problems.

Today the social stratification theorist must devote attention to political issues that go beyond voting.[30] The emergence of many institutions dispensing services and resources has meant that the well-being of individuals depends to a large extent on bureaucratic decisions in an immediate sense rather than political decisions in the broad sense. The bureaucracies of the welfare state have considerable discretion in the way they disperse their funds and services. Bureaucratic decisions having deep impact upon the well-being of both the poor and the nonpoor have been somewhat removed from accessible political processes. As a consequence, there is a growing attack on 'welfare bureaucracy' as infringing rights of individuals, capriciously making decisions, 'professionalizing' and technicizing decisions which should be political decisions.

The concern in the United States with 'participatory democracy',

29. Janowitz and Segal note that in Great Britain, Germany and the United States 'there is a tendency for persons in the lower working classes to have a higher degree of non-party affiliation than in the other strata of society'. However, he notes that the source of ineffective political participation lies not in income and education *per se* but 'as a series of life experiences which produces persons . . . without adequate institutional links to the political system'. Furthermore, '. . . such disruption can occur at various points in the social structure, for example among elderly men and women living outside family units'. Janowitz, M., and Segal, D. R., 'Social Cleavage and Party Affiliation: Germany, Great Britain and the United States', *American Journal of Sociology*, 72, 6, May, 1967.
30. Parsons has pointed out that inclusion ('the process by which previously excluded groups attain full citizenship or membership in the societal community') requires not a 'mere statement that it is necessary for justice but that the group has the capacity to *contribute* to the larger society', . . . and as long as the group doesn't have that capacity, 'the larger society needs to develop it'. Because inclusion of an excluded group requires the mobilization of the entire society, Parsons suggests that it is useful to conceive of political power more broadly than usual. 'Essential as government is, it does not stand alone in implementing major political changes.' For example, 'the political problems of integration involve all fields of organizational decision-making, especially for business firms to accept Negroes in employment, for colleges and universities to admit them for study, for trade unions to avoid discrimination'. Parsons, T., 'Full Citizenship for the Negro American?', *op. cit.*

'maximum feasible participation' in the poverty programs, and 'community representation', are manifestations of the effort to deal with the growing impact of welfare state bureaucracies and the more obvious social control agencies like the police on the lives of most.[31] The ability to be relatively insulated against bureaucratic mishandling and injustice is differentially distributed in society—the better-off and better-educated manage more effectively than the low-income and the low-educated.[32]

At one level within the economic dimension, the issue is to what extent are individuals protected *against* control by bureaucratic agencies? At another level, the issue is becoming to what extent are political processes being transformed so that recipients of government benefits become consumers and citizens with a decision-making role rather than dependents without choice or any degree of sovereignty? Both levels require the extension of traditional stratificational analysis of power to the new instruments of government, administration and resource-distribution.

Education and Social Mobility

In today's credential society which places heavy emphasis on educational attainment for entrance into higher-level occupations, education becomes a crucial dimension in social stratification.[33] The importance of education is illustrated by Wilensky's and

31. Marshall's categorization of 'four degrees of cooperation' is useful in the consideration of many forms of political participation as well as of the relationships between employers and employees for which it was originally intended: (i) 'information: . . . men though informed of decisions, have no share at all in the making of them'; (ii) 'consultation': persons 'are not only informed before a decision is taken, but have an opportunity to express their views on points that concern them. These views may or may not be taken into account when the decision is made; there is no transfer of authority'; (iii) 'delegation': persons 'have been informed and consulted and their views have been taken into account in formulating a plan, then . . . small groups of them may be asked to work out the details for executing part of the plan'; (iv) 'joint control' exists in cases such as those where 'workers are represented in the management'. Marshall, T. H., *op. cit.*, pp. 244–245.
32. After a four year court battle, Alameda County (California) awarded $23,000 in back pay to a social welfare worker who was fired for refusing to participate in the welfare department's 'operation bedcheck'. It is less likely that the female welfare recipients whose homes were invaded by welfare workers without search warrants will be recompensed. *Berkeley Barb*, 5, August 24, 1967, p. 7.
33. Cf. Miller, S. M., 'Breaking the Credentials Barrier', New York: The Ford

Duncan's findings that it is the only variable which consistently ranks all the white collar strata above each of the manual and farm strata.[34] In addition to its economic role, educational experience affects the way individuals are treated by other people and by organizations and bureaucracies of one kind or another. An individual with inadequate education is an outsider, less able to take advantage of the opportunities which exist, and is treated less well than those with the same income but a higher education. American Negroes' great interest in education, for example, is partially due to the protection which education provides against nasty treatment.

Educational attainment of children is only a partial function of the income of parents. Below the highest I.Q. levels, the education of parents is more important than their income in affecting the educational experience of children. Economic position is thus not a fully adequate indicator of the educational prospects of children.

Many governmental policies are aimed at reducing the correlation between the economic position of the child and that of his parent. The aim is *inter*generational social mobility rather than improving the conditions of the poor today. For example, the emphasis in the war on poverty, on job training programs (e.g. Job Corps, Manpower Development), and on education (e.g. Headstart, Elementary and Secondary Education Act) are essentially programs in social mobility. The programs aimed at the young, like Headstart, obviously aim for intergenerational mobility while those designed for older persons, like many of the Manpower Development and Training Act programs, seek *intra*generational mobility.

What is the value of casting these poverty and manpower programs in the language of mobility? In some cases, the mobility

Foundation, 1968. Lenski has written, 'Of all the changes linked with industrialization, none has been more important than the revolution in knowledge. . . . From the standpoint of the occupational class system, this development has been highly significant. To begin with, it has been responsible for the considerable growth in size, importance, and affluence of the professional class. Second, it has caused education to become a much more valuable resource, and made educational institutions far more important in the distribution of power and privilege, than ever before in history.' Lenski, G., *Power and Privilege*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1967, p. 364.

34. Duncan, O. D., 'Methodological Issues in the Analysis of Social Mobility', in Smelser, N., and Lipset, S. M. (eds), *Social Structure and Mobility in Economic Development*, Chicago, Aldine Publishing Co., 1966; Wilensky, H., 'Class, Class Consciousness and American Workers', in Haber, W. (ed), *American Labor in a Changing World*, 1966.

perspective points out that program goals are too low. In some job training programs, for example, 'success' is recorded if the individual secures a job, even if the job pays no more or is no less of a dead end than his previous job. Similarly, low wage full-time employment may not be a substantial mobility step over unemployment or irregular employment.

The mobility approach may also indicate the possible importance of stratum or group mobility.[35] Important gains may be achieved not only by moving individuals out of particular low-wage occupations but by securing a substantial improvement in the occupation's relative position in terms of wages, status, and conditions. The large percentage of families living in poverty headed by males working full-time suggests that change. The returns for certain kinds of work may be crucial if poverty is to be rapidly reduced.

The stratificational approach also encourages studying the factors which impede or promote mobility. Lack of education may be a less important barrier than current common sense suggests while discrimination may continue to be significant.

As societies become increasingly future-oriented, a crucial dimension of stratification is what happens to the children of different strata. Current position of families only partially denotes future positions. Blau and Duncan found for instance that 'nearly ten per cent of manual sons achieve élite status in the United States, a higher proportion than in any other country'. Commenting on their findings, they wrote, 'the high level of popular education in the United States, perhaps reinforced by the lesser emphasis on form distinctions of social status, has provided the disadvantaged lower strata with outstanding opportunities for long-distance upward mobility'.[36] Hopefully, public policies will make sharper the break between the present of the family and the future of the child. Consequently, social mobility, an important part of Weber's concept of 'life chances', should receive attention as an independent vector of stratification.

Obviously, there are important questions concerning the significant economic-political-social boundaries of high and low position. Social stratification analysts have been slow to refine the manual/nonmanual divide. Our conclusion is that the increasingly important social divide is not between the manual and non-manual groups but

35. See Miller, S. M., 'Comparative Social Mobility', *Current Sociology*, 9, 1960.
36. Blau, P. M., and Duncan, O. D., *The American Occupational Structure*, New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1967, p. 435.

between those with and without a college diploma—between those in professional and managerial occupations and the rest of the society. As Kolko has remarked, 'economic mobility in a technology and society enormously—and increasingly—dependent on the formally trained expert ultimately reflects the extent of equality in education'.[37] Important differences obviously exist below the professional-managerial level, but the expanding 'diploma élite' is becoming distinctly advantaged in society.[38] Their advantage is not only economic but social and political as well. The diploma élite manages to achieve deference and decent treatment from governmental organizations and at the same time—perhaps because of this—is able to organize effectively as a political voice. As the complexity of life in the United States increases, we may expect the importance of education to grow.

Status

Weber's discussion of the status dimension of stratification has frequently been compressed into an analysis of family or occupational prestige rankings. This reduction is an inadequate rendering of what was obviously intended to embrace the socio-psychological dimensions of stratificational systems.

Three dimensions are worth distinguishing here: 'social honor', styles of life, and self-respect. In Weber's usage, 'social honor' referred to the social evaluation by others of a class or political group. As we have noted earlier, a high economic class may or may not have high social prestige at any particular moment in time. This can be seen through patterns of interaction such as intermarriage among groups and classes.

Social honor is *externally* awarded on a variety of bases: income, occupation, education, family history. In the past, American sociologists probably overstressed the significance of prestige and understressed the importance of class, but prestige is again growing in importance as a dimension of stratification.[39] Because social honor significantly affects government policy, its importance

37. Kolko, G., *Wealth and Power in America: An analysis of social class and income distribution*, New York, Praeger, 1962, p. 113.
38. Cf. Miller, S. M., 'Comparative Social Mobility', *op. cit.*
39. In a seminal paper Richard Hamilton has contended that sociologists have overstressed the blurring of status or prestige lines. He believes this has occurred because (1) although sociologists talk much about status seeking activity, they have inadequately researched the matter and (2) they consequently turn to income trends which they inaccurately assume to be becoming more equal and then assert that status and consumption patterns are also becoming equalized. Hamilton, R., *op. cit.*, p. 1.
40. Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Stanley S. Surrey has suggested that tax savings that accrue to individuals and groups from preferences or loopholes in the tax law should be reported as Federal 'expenditures'. If this were

increases with the increasing importance of government action affecting persons' well-being and command over resources. For example, a group which is regarded as an 'undeserving poor' is much less likely than a 'deserving poor' to be aided. Prestige, then, is intimately tied to access to resources. It also, as we shall discuss later, affects self-respect.

The issues of desegregation, especially in housing, in the United States also point up the significance of prestige. Undoubtedly, much of the slowness in making it possible for Negroes to have effective free choice in housing locations is due to class feelings—disturbance about 'lower class' Negro families. Nonetheless, a considerable part of the resistance against Negro mobility is directed against Negroes as a status group regardless of class levels.

The development of national states accentuated the problems of ethnic minorities. These problems will probably increase again with the tide of foreign, low-level workers in many European nations. Ethnic and class factors will intertwine to make the prestige of a grouping an important factor in the way that it is treated. Alwine de Vos van Steenwijk and Père Joseph of Aide à Toute Détresse tell us that in France the way that poverty is viewed largely depends on whether the poor are thought to be of French or foreign background. In the United States, attitudes toward dealing with poverty combine with the stress on the importance of Negroes as a poor group and the shifting compound of feelings about Negroes.

The increased significance of government as the conveyor of the command over resources also complicates the traditional relationships between source of income and 'social honor'. The conclusions of yesterday were simple: earned income is more prestigious than unearned income (unless it is very high unearned income); legitimate income is better than 'illegitimate' income. Today the evaluations of the different bases of income are cloudy. Income given to public assistance clients leads to low prestige; but financial assistance to farmers in the form of money subsidies or to entrepreneurs in the form of tariffs do not.[40] Payments to the retired which purportedly

have a relationship to their contributions to a fund during their lifetime are not stigmatized income, even if the relationship of contribution and payment is indeed remote. Payments to youth who go to school are not regarded as habit-forming or character-debilitating. When made to poor families, they are often so regarded.

Thus, it is not government payments and contributions *per se* but their basis which is unprestigious. If the payments are connected to the operation of the production system (tariffs, agricultural subsidies) or to the future productivity of workers (education) or to previous work status, then stigma does not attach to the support.

By styles of life, the second dimension of status, we refer to the norms and values of particular groups.[41] If social honor is the way the group is regarded from without, styles of life refer to the way the group behaves. Obviously, styles of life and their interpretation affect the bestowal of social honor.[42]

The determination of styles is no easy matter; it is difficult to have a summation of a style that is not judgmental and even more difficult to have a style description that does not fall afoul of competing efforts to utilize that description in the struggle for policy choices. The significance of style of life underscores the importance of status considerations in government decisions as well as the importance of government decisions.

Because of the importance of styles of life in affecting social honor and public policy, social science becomes particularly political. Its mode of interpretation has strong reverberations. Yet, the knowledge base from which descriptions and interpretations are made is

done, the Commerce Department would show $1-billion for aiding business in the form of special deductions. *New York Times*, November 12, 1967. 55 per cent of total 1963 government payments to farmers went to the top 11 per cent of all farmers, those with farm sales of $20,000 and over. Schultz, T., 'Public Approaches to Minimize Poverty', in Fishman, L. (ed), *Poverty Amid Affluence*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1966. Cf. Stern, P. M., *The Great Treasury Raid*, New York, Random House, 1964.

41. As elsewhere in this paper, we assume that we are dealing with a group defined economically in class terms and that we are pursuing the political and social behavior components of this class group. Frequently, there is little convergence among the groups defined in class, political, or social terms.

42. The link between styles of life and their interpretation is not perfect, for as Lockwood has pointed out with regard to affluent manual employees whom he terms the 'new working class', to display the life styles of those 'above' and to be accepted by those 'above' are two quite different things. Lockwood, D., 'The New Working Class', *European Journal of Sociology*, 1, 2, 1960.

limited and controversial. In an important sense, however, this has always been true; the interpretation of the social stratification of a nation is always a most sensitive political issue. What is striking in the present is the particular importance of styles of life. The greater controversiality may be due not only to the fact of greater stakes (government is more likely to do something now than in the nineteenth century) but to the production of a larger number of fairly independent social scientists and to the politicalization of issues which provide once-neglected groups with spokesmen.

Current research on the poor is leading to the rejection of the notion of *the* one style of life among this group.[43] It is always difficult to make a historical statement, since much of the past is sentimentalized in the telling, but it does appear that life style heterogeneity within a grouping is indeed increasing. One reason for this is the greater variety of cross-pressures today in societies which are increasingly national and where more styles are visible through travel, the mass media, and more public life. A second reason underlines the mode of stratificational analysis proposed by Weber: change in one dimension of life does not automatically produce change in other realms. Discontinuities often result from a rapid pace of change in which spurts and lags are pronounced.

The heterogeneity of styles is important in two ways. One has been referred to already: the receptivity to aiding particular groups, and especially the poor, depends to a large extent on their 'social honor'. In turn, their social honor depends largely on what purports to be their life style. Those low-income groups with more appealing life styles are much more likely to be given some aid. The second way that heterogeneity affects policy is that any given policy is likely to fit more easily into the style and condition of one section of the poor than another. The result frequently is, whether intended or not, the process of 'creaming', working with the best off or most adaptable of the poor. It usually takes some time to discover that the policy left behind groups with other life styles or other class positions.

The process leads to the question of whether groups need to change their life styles in order to be able to take advantage of new oppor-

43. Other strata are also likely to be viewed as heterogeneous groupings. Cf. Miller, S. M., 'The American Lower Class: A Typological Approach', of *Social Research*, Spring, 1964; and Wilensky, H., 'Mass Society and Mass Culture', in Berelson, B., and Janowitz, M. (eds), *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication*, New York, The Free Press, 1966.

tunities in the private market or in governmental policies. Here, style of life becomes a problematic of the efficacy of change rather than a moral gatekeeper of whether or not a particular group should be helped.

Frequently, in the United States life styles are discussed in terms of relatively impenetrable barriers which the culture or subculture of poverty place in the way of advance. An alternative formulation, which Riessman and Miller have attempted to develop, emphasizes those aspects of low income life styles which must be considered in order to make public policies more effective.[44] The stress is on reducing strains, obstacles and difficulties of policy rather than on castigating the poor or ignoring their particular outlook.

In a sense, what is important about the styles of life of groups, especially those most needful of governmental aid, is largely determined by the political culture of a nation. Whether the bases of life styles are ethnic or marginal economic circumstances, what is crucial about them is the way they interact with political values concerning who should be helped, how they should be helped, and how the behaviors of those helped should change. The style of life variable has become more highly charged than it was for Malthus.

Self-respect, the third dimension of status, points to the way the grouping regards itself. It is a complex admixture of economic and political conditions, social honor, and styles of life. In it, feelings of relative deprivation generally represent only a rough approximation to actual inequalities existing within a society.[45] The discussion of poverty, at least in the United States, should make us aware that only the narrowest view of poverty would make it a problem of income alone. In the spongy openness of the affluent society, poverty becomes not only a shorthand expression for inequality but a truncated phrase for the many ways in which the poor are different in society.

One does not have to accept all the nostrums of change that are offered in the United States to concur in the importance of a feeling of dignity, of inclusion and participation in the society which goes

44. Miller, S. M., and Riessman, F., *Social Class and Social Policy*, New York, Basic Books, 1968.

45. Following his study of relative deprivation in England, Runciman concluded that for each stratification dimension, 'the only generalization which can be confidently advanced is that the relationship between inequality and grievance only intermittently corresponds with either the extent or the degree of actual inequality'. Runciman, W. G., *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1966.

beyond the attaining of an income above a minimum level. Obviously, rising income alone may not wipe out external stigma and internal group-hatred and deprecation. On the other hand, gains in group respect are unlikely if the group falls behind the rising standards of society. Between these two boundaries, many kinds of permutations are possible.

One can interpret Negroes' interest in 'maximum feasible participation' in the local decision-making of the war on poverty in many ways, but an important way for stratification theory is that it represents the politicalization of the issue of self-respect. One does not have to believe that the poor are the ultimate repository of all wisdom about what poverty means and what should be done about it to recognize that this politicalization recasts the search for self-respect in new ways, making a political issue out of what has appeared to be a personal struggle. Access to self-respect, despite its curious formulation, becomes one of the important dimensions of social stratification. The alienated nonpoor have had an opportunity to make a choice; not so with the poor.

Conclusions

Casting the issues of poverty in terms of stratification leads to regarding poverty as an issue of inequality. In this approach, we move away from efforts to measure poverty lines with pseudo-scientific accuracy. Instead, we look at the nature and size of the differences between the bottom 20 or 10 per cent and the rest of society. Our concern becomes one of narrowing the differences between those at the bottom and the better-off in each stratification dimension.

In casting many of the issues of poverty in terms of stratification, we do not wish to imply that the poor are a fixed, homogeneous group that shares a common outlook. Rather, we see the poor as those who lag behind the rest of society in terms of one or more dimensions of life. There may be considerable turnover in these bottom groups. Although we lack data showing what proportion of persons in the bottom groups move in and out of poverty, we do know that a life cycle pattern is of some importance for the risk of being at the bottom is much greater for the older individuals.[46]

46. Since the aged have different needs and consumption patterns than younger persons, it may make more sense to think in terms of stratification within the aged. Incidentally, there is a greater concentration of income among those above 65 than among any other age group.

There is undoubtedly greater turnover in the bottom 20 per cent of the population than is commonly believed by those who stress the inheritance and culture of poverty. Even with a high turnover, however, questions concerning what size and kind of disparities are acceptable between those who fall behind and others in society remain important.

We hope that our effort to place some poverty action issues in the context of social stratification is not merely a translation from one language of discourse to another. Therefore, we must ask what would be done differently if poverty problems were seen as issues in stratification.

First, we believe that poverty programs would aim for higher targets. Reforming the social structure so that the differences among individuals are reduced usually requires higher goals than bringing individuals up to a rather low economic standard.

Second, a stratificational approach requires constant adjustment of the targets, for as the better-off groups advance, new levels and kinds of concerns for the bottom-most should emerge. A fixed level of well-being is no longer the aim.

Third, a stratificational approach implies that economic goals are not the only important objectives. Frequently, the economic goal of raising incomes to a $3,000 level has been treated as though it were the only significant objective. The multi-dimensional concerns of stratification force attention to the non-economic aspects of inequality.

Fourth, we see that changes and shifts in one dimension do not automatically produce changes in other dimensions. Economic gain does not insure automatic attainment of other goals. Indeed, much of contemporary stratificational analysis is about this problem —and much of the difficulty with appraisal of poverty strategies is that little is known about the multiplier effect of each strategy.[47]

Fifth, a stratificational approach suggests that style of life variables may be important in the construction and conduct of programs. This statement does not suggest a 'culture of poverty', but an effort to make policies and programs relevant and appropriate to the life styles of their intended consumers.

Finally, we see that many programs aimed at moving youth out of poverty have neglected vital dimensions of the youths' lives.

47. See Rein, M., and Miller, S. M., 'Poverty, Policy, and Purpose: The Dilemmas of Choice', in Goodman, L. H. (ed), *Economic Progress and Social Welfare*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1966.

Many social mobility programs have aimed at enhancing the prospects of youth without improving the conditions of their families. Other programs have sought to improve the education of children without improving the schools which they attend. Headstart and Job Corps, for example, have attempted to create a parallel educational system rather than change educational institutions. In these instances, the social setting of behavior has been neglected.

Conventional poverty discussions are thin because they are cast in terms of nineteenth-century concerns about pauperism and subsistence rather than in twentieth-century terms of redistribution. We are not clear about the goals of poverty-reduction and inequality-reduction because we have not forthrightly discussed our objectives. When poverty is viewed in the stratificational perspective we see that the goal of bringing all families up to a certain income level cloaks disagreements about the relative importance of differing, often conflicting, objectives. For example, at the level of objectives of efforts to change the stratificational system, are we seeking a classless society with only minor differences among individuals; or is the goal a meritocracy in which individuals have in actuality equal access to high-level jobs which are highly rewarded; or do we seek to connect an 'underclass', which does not improve its conditions as much as the rest of the society does, into the processes which will begin to make it less distinctive; or do we seek to reduce the gaps in some vital dimensions between the nonpoor and the poor? Each of these views implies a belief concerning what is important about stratificational systems, how permeable these systems are, and how other goals should be balanced against the concern with the underclasses.

The stratification perspective leads us to see that in dealing with poverty we are dealing with the *quality of life* of individuals and not just their economic positions. This means that not only individuals' relationship to government but the *quality of relationships among people* in society are important. Although governmental and organizational action is needed to diminish the economic and political inequalities separating people, we as individuals must assume responsibility for changing the quality of relationships among ourselves and others. Ultimately, change in the distribution of 'social honor', and self-respect, the most fundamental aspects of stratification, can only be accomplished by each of us, members of society, caring about the excluded and breaking down the walls of social and psychological exclusion. If poverty is about stratification, we cannot escape one another.