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BELIEFS ABOUT STRATIFICATION

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Since stratification is a basic aspect of society, beliefs about stratification are necessarily related to beliefs about society in general. Consideration of the determinants of beliefs about stratification necessitates attention to the effects of culture and subculture, technology, occupational conditions, class, and economic position. A review of the consequences of beliefs requires consideration of political ideology and political behavior.

We limit this review in two ways. First, we focus on beliefs about economic inequality. Thus, we do not review work directly related to beliefs about racial or sexual inequality; both of these topics have substantial literatures of their own, which are best reviewed in the context of the broader study of race and sex inequality. We also exclude the substantial literature on occupational status or prestige. Although certain aspects of this literature are relevant to stratification beliefs (Goldthorpe & Hope 1974; Villemez 1974), much of the work in this area has attempted to use occupational position to establish a general measure of position in a societal inequality hierarchy (Treiman 1977), and this effort is largely irrelevant to our present concern. Second, we limit our attention primarily to recent American research and secondarily to recent British work on stratification beliefs. These two countries have produced most of the recent empirical studies of stratification beliefs in English.

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This essay aims (*a*) to summarize what recent research shows about stratification beliefs, (*b*) to evaluate critically the basis of this knowledge, and (*c*) to discuss needed directions for future research. We use the term "belief" in a broad sense to refer to the information (veridical or non-veridical) about a phenomenon that an individual uses as a basis both for inferring other information and for action. This usage encompasses such more specific social-psychological concepts as values, perceptions, and attitudes. Thus a "stratification belief" is here defined as a belief about some aspect of economic inequality. Modifying Lenski's (1966) definition of the study of objective inequality, we may therefore describe this field as the study of what people believe about who gets what and why. Three general topics have been the foci of the study of stratification beliefs: opportunity, the distributive process, and class. Concerning beliefs in these three areas, research has addressed four major questions: (*a*) What is believed? (*b*) What principles organize thought about social inequality? (*c*) What determines what is believed? (*d*) What are the consequences of the beliefs?

WHAT IS BELIEVED?

Much research on stratification beliefs is descriptive—i.e. it tends to ask what people believe about a specific feature of inequality. (Less attention has been devoted to the determinants and consequences of such beliefs.) We briefly review major descriptive findings on specific topics.

Opportunity

Americans endorse the statement that theirs is the land of opportunity where anyone who works hard can get ahead. Huber & Form (1973) sampled beliefs about opportunity in a single midwestern community. Distinguishing between general (normative) and situation-specific (existential) beliefs, they found that while there is widespread agreement among whites on the existence of general opportunity, there is no such agreement concerning the opportunity of specific groups (such as the poor). Lower-status persons are more likely to deny opportunity in situation-specific questions than are upper status individuals. On the basis of in-depth interviews with sixteen "common men," Lane (1962) also found a stronger belief in the existence of *some* opportunity for all than in the equality of opportunity for specific groups.

Poverty

Studies of beliefs about the poor (Allston & Dean 1972; Feagin 1975; Goodwin 1973; Huber & Form 1973; Lauer 1971; Osgood 1977;

Williamson 1974a, b) consistently show a prevailing negative view—i.e. the poor are blamed, partially or totally, for their poverty. They are seen as lacking work motivation, ability, or proper morals. Partial blame involves the theme that while there are obstacles to self-betterment by the poor, such obstacles would be surmountable if it were not for the debilitating personal characteristics of the poor. All methods of measuring attitudes towards the poor find the population divided into three groups: The largest group (the majority) believe the poor are partially to blame, the next-largest group attach total personal blame to the poor, and the smallest group see poverty as due entirely to structural factors (i.e. to supra-individual factors such as the failure of society to provide good schools or the failure of private industry to provide jobs). These findings support the somewhat polemical claim by Ryan (1971) that "blaming the victim" is a dominant element of American thinking about poverty.

Distributive Justice

Recent research by Rainwater (1974) and by Rossi and his colleagues (Jasso & Rossi 1977; Alves & Rossi 1978; Jasso 1978) examined popular principles of fairness concerning the distribution of earned income. Although Rainwater and Rossi et al used different methods (direct open- and closed-ended questioning vs "vignettes"), their findings are substantially similar and complementary. These studies found support for two principles hypothesized by Boulding (1962) to underlie popular distributive justice evaluations: (*a*) the "principle of disalienation"—no person in society shall be left without a claim on resources, and (*b*) the "principle of desert"—beyond the minimum claim to which all are entitled, the remainder should be distributed on the basis of merit. The common evaluation of fairness in the distribution of income is based on a balancing of need and equity (an assertion that has also been supported in a broad cross-cultural and historical context by Moore 1978).

First, there is popular agreement that all workers, regardless of job, should earn a certain minimum income. Rainwater placed this guaranteed minimum at approximately 70% of the society's median income, roughly equivalent to the "get along" level (the income to purchase the goods and services needed to feel part of the mainstream of society).

Second, there is little general support for complete equality of incomes, principally because it violates norms of equity. An unequal distribution of income based on education, occupation, marital status, and number of children is generally believed fair (Jasso & Rossi 1977; Alves & Rossi 1978). According to Rainwater's analysis, many hold with the functionalist principle that inequality serves to select and motivate people for the larger benefit of society.

Third, many people believe that an equitable earnings distribution would have a narrower range than does the present distribution (Jasso & Rossi 1977; Alves & Rossi 1978). Rainwater noted that approximately one half of his respondents believed there should be an upper limit on an individual's earnings.

Class and Class Consciousness

Class was a principal focus of the early studies of stratification beliefs, and Marx's concepts of class and particularly class consciousness have been a pervasive influence. Class consciousness in Marx's terms is the awareness of sharing a similar position in the social order with others in united opposition to this order (cf Lopreato & Hazelrigg 1972 for a discussion). This definition is complex, referring to at least four processes: (*a*) interpretation of the working of the distributive process in a society—i.e. how the stratification order has come to be and how it currently functions; (*b*) perception of one's own position in this order; (*c*) group identification and solidarity (or group consciousness); and (*d*) evaluation of the stratification order. Each of these processes is itself complex. In fact, calling attention to this complexity—to the indirectness and problematic nature of the linkage between one's objective position in society and one's corresponding beliefs and attitudes—can be seen as one of Marx's major contributions to social science.

The community studies of the 1930s (Lynd & Lynd 1929, 1937; Warner & Lunt 1941, 1947) sought to demonstrate that, counter to popular myth, class plays an important part both as a structural reality and as a factor in Americans' thinking about society. On the other hand, an article in *Fortune* magazine (1940), based on a poll, claimed that a large majority of the population saw itself as middle class, and argued by implication that Americans were not class conscious. Centers' *The Psychology of Social Classes* (1949) was written in response to this claim. Centers' principal contribution was the addition of "working class" to the list of fixed choices for class self-identification (prior studies had used just three alternatives—upper, middle and lower). Demonstrating both that roughly one half of his sample chose the working class label and that this choice had important correlates, Centers argued that class was a significant force in working-class Americans' thinking. In effect, Centers saw a near identity between choosing a working-class self-identification and class consciousness. Criticism of Centers has focused on three points: (*a*) his evidence for class consciousness was not as strong as claimed; (*b*) his methods were inadequate—specifically, the forced-choice method produced bias and the meaning of the self-applied working class label was not

clear; and (*c*) his operationalization of class consciousness did not follow Marx.

These early studies are now often viewed as flawed by their oversimplification (often by construction of simple summary measures) of the concept of class consciousness. In addition, inconsistency among the measures researchers used (e.g. cf Manis & Meltzer 1954; Glantz 1958; Leggett 1963; Lopreato & Hazelrigg 1972; Rinehart & Okralen 1974; Logan 1977; Gurin, Miller & Gurin 1980) has made it difficult to compare the results of research on class consciousness; knowledge has not cumulated. In short, for the purpose of explaining how persons come to perceive, interpret, and react to social stratification, a focus on class consciousness broadly defined seems a poor starting point.

An interest in describing popular beliefs about class has persisted in recent research on subjective inequality. Two major features characterize this work. The first is a diminished interest in broad definitions of class consciousness. Current study has been based more on Ossowski's (1963) concept of class images than on the Marxian concept of class consciousness. Interest has focused on such aspects of class perceptions as the number of classes perceived, the dimensions believed to underlie class differences, or the names used to label classes (Bulmer 1975; Coleman & Rainwater 1978; Bell & Robinson 1980; Lopreato & Hazelrigg 1972).

The second important feature of recent studies is the continued focus on measurement issues. Hiller (1973, 1975a, b) has argued that both the typical open-ended and closed-ended measurement approaches can oversimplify and distort: For example, the simple open-ended questions used in much research (Goldthorpe et al 1969; Lopreato & Hazelrigg 1972; cf Coleman & Rainwater 1978) have led to a neglect of the evaluative and relational components of class perceptions in favor of a "money model" (classes seen as distinguished solely by money or lifestyle). On the basis of unstructured interviews, Hiller (1975a) concluded that most interpretations of class include, at least as secondary components, (*a*) evaluations of the behavior and values of other classes (along a dimension of superiority-inferiority relative to one's own class), and (*b*) perceptions of how members of other classes evaluate one's own class. Jackman's (1979) survey data support similar conclusions: "[C]lass is at least as much a social as an economic phenomenon in the U.S." (p. 443).

Fixed-choice measures of class identification have also been criticized. As Hiller (1973) reiterated, the meaning of self-applied class labels for the persons who choose them is not clear in fixed-choice responses. Furthermore, class labels may not have unique and clearly interpretable referents for respondents, since fixed-choice questions with different kinds and numbers of class labels elicit different response distributions.

The principal conclusion of studies on methods of measuring class perceptions has been that the open-ended approach is preferable to the fixed-choice method. As expressed by Gross (1949), Lopreato & Hazelrigg (1972), and Hiller (1973), the argument behind this conclusion is that if class identification is a salient part of persons' thinking about society then it should show itself spontaneously in an answer to an open-ended question. A closed-ended question produces on the average 30–40% more working-class self-identifications than an open-ended question (from around 15–20% to 50–60%), and comparably fewer middle-class self-identifications (Gross 1953; Kahl & Davis 1955; Lopreato & Hazelrigg 1972). The implication is that among persons who give a working-class identification in response to Centers' closed-ended question, the majority either (*a*) are weak working-class identifiers or (*b*) have no particular working-class consciousness but choose the working-class label because it comes closest to expressing their perceived social rank. This implication deserves to be empirically examined, since Centers' question continues to be widely used.

ORGANIZATION OF STRATIFICATION BELIEFS

Research on stratification beliefs has tended to be segmented: We find studies of beliefs about class alone, or poverty alone, or opportunity alone, etc. The links among stratification beliefs in different areas have been little studied, though some work has proposed models and presented limited empirical evidence regarding such links. In this section we review (*a*) three sociologically based discussions that identify a certain area of belief as a central organizing principle that shapes other beliefs in a systematic fashion, (*b*) one concept borrowed from political science, and (*c*) some recent work from social psychology dealing with general principles of belief and attitude organization.

The "Dominant Ideology" Thesis

Huber & Form (1973) asserted that beliefs about opportunity play a central role in structuring the explanation and evaluation of social inequality. Specifically, they argued for the prevalence of what they called the "dominant ideology," based on the following "syllogism": First, opportunity to get ahead is available to all. Second, if opportunity is available, the position of an individual in the stratification order is a function of personal efforts, traits and abilities, not the result of economic and social factors operating at a supra-individual level (structural factors). Third, since people are personally responsible for the rewards they receive the

current distribution of rewards is fair, and therefore inequality is positively evaluated.

It is often argued that beliefs about opportunity and individualism are of wide-ranging importance for individuals' interpretation and evaluation of social inequality in general (Lane 1962; Lewis 1978; Jencks 1972; Feagin 1975). This thesis has not been put to direct empirical test. However, an exploratory study (Kluegel & Smith 1979) suggests that although there is evidence for the links proposed by the dominant ideology thesis, the theory is in some respects underdeveloped. We argue that, as Lane (1962) noted, beliefs about opportunity can have several referents: (*a*) general opportunity, or the perceived overall chance to make advancement in material well-being along one or several routes (including occupational mobility, generalized upgrading over time of the standard of living, etc); (*b*) equality of opportunity for different groups in society; and (*c*) the individual's own opportunity. Events of recent years add to this list perceived discrimination or "reverse discrimination." The dominant ideology thesis does not specify which beliefs about these different aspects of opportunity most influence an individual's interpretation and evaluation of inequality. Lane, however, does hypothesize that a belief that some opportunity exists (general opportunity) is more influential than beliefs concerning equality of opportunity. We (Kluegel & Smith 1979) find some support for Lane's version of the dominant ideology thesis; more generally, we show that beliefs about various aspects of opportunity do not correlate with other stratification beliefs in a uniform or easily summarizable manner.

Egalitarianism and Distributive Justice

The dominant ideology thesis proposes a popular "logic of opportunity" as one principle that organizes stratification beliefs. Della-Fave (1974) took a similar approach to stratification ideology in examining the "logic of egalitarianism." He hypothesized that support for reduction or elimination of economic inequality rests on a foundation of five other beliefs, all of which are necessary for egalitarianism to develop: (*a*) a feeling of deprivation (or grievance), (*b*) an attribution of blame to the organization of society (i.e. the system), (*c*) a belief that social justice requires equality, (*d*) a belief that human nature will permit equality in a complex society, and (*e*) a belief that the transition from the present society to an egalitarian one is practically possible and worth the effort. According to Della-Fave, a stratification belief system may be seen as a branching structure that begins with a sense of deprivation and can proceed to a number of different end points, depending upon factors that intervene along the way. The stages or branching points of the structure correspond

to the five beliefs required for egalitarianism. Beginning with a sense of deprivation, the individual can proceed either to a desire for social change or to a redefinition of the situation that effectively reduces the sense of deprivation. A desire for change can lead either to system blame or to individual blame. System blame in turn can lead to several different types of demand: for equality of condition, for mobility for one's group, or for equality of opportunity. Finally, the demand for equality of condition can itself have two outcomes, depending upon whether the individual believes (based on views about human nature and the like) that equality is feasible (the fully egalitarian response) or not.

Class and the Organization of Beliefs

Several recent works address questions about how perceptions of class may organize the broader perception and evaluation of social inequality. Gurin, Miller & Gurin (1980) dealt with the issue of group identification broadly, examining not only class but also race, sex, and age as potential lines defining groups. They defined "group consciousness" as a combination of (*a*) *identification* as a member of the group; (*b*) a feeling of illegitimate *deprivation* (which in turn has two ingredients: attributing one's group's position to structural rather than individual factors, and feeling that one's group has inadequate power); and (*c*) a preference for *collective action* (rather than individual action) to remedy the situation. They found group consciousness more prevalent among blacks than among working-class respondents, women, or old people, and attributed this finding to the pervasiveness of racism and racial discrimination in America and to the activities of civil-rights groups. In an analysis focused on preference for collective action as a dependent variable, these investigators found structural attributions to be a more important predictor than identification or feelings of inadequate power for both blacks and women; a comparable analysis was not reported for working-class identifiers. The authors concluded that in view of the importance of structural attributions (a factor they labeled legitimacy) for group consciousness among blacks and women, the lack of this factor among the working class is the primary barrier to class consciousness. That is, working-class identifiers are almost as likely as middle-class identifiers to accept disparities in income as based legitimately on the personal characteristics of individuals in an essentially fair system, and this belief prevents the organization of beliefs around class consciousness and collective action.

Two studies (Guest 1974; Vanneman 1980) consider the effects of class perceptions on political attitudes and behavior. Guest analyzed the relationship between class identification and the salience of class on the one

hand, and political attitudes and behavior on the other. Guest found that identification and salience have independent effects, such that the salience of class (indicated by a statement that a respondent thought of him- or herself as being a member of a class, either middle or working) and working-class identification are both associated with collectivist views on the role of the government and with voting for the Democratic party. Guest interpreted the "liberalizing" effect of salience among the middle class as due to an indirect recognition that the ideals of a classless and egalitarian society in America have not been realized. His analysis implies (although he did not make this point explicitly) that beliefs about class are of two sorts, and that both have potential ideological influence: (*a*) a recognition of position in the division of labor and the interests it entails, and (*b*) a recognition of the existence of a class system that deviates from an ideal of classlessness.

Like Guest, Vanneman (1980) examined the influence of subjective class identification on political behavior (voting and party affiliation), but his analysis differed from Guest's in several respects: (*a*) He did not consider the effect of class salience, (*b*) he looked at the independent effect of identification, controlling for several indicators of objective class (a manual/nonmanual occupation dichotomy) and status (prestige, income, and education), and (*c*) he compared the effect of class identification in the United States and Britain. Vanneman underscored two findings from his analyses. First, the effects of measures of objective class and status position on subjective class identification are substantially the same in both countries. Second, while in the United States subjective class has no independent effect on voting or party affiliation when measures of objective class and status are controlled, in Britain subjective class is the *strongest* single predictor of voting and party affiliation. To explain these results Vanneman proposed what may be called a "structural blockage" explanation: that perceived class position presents only a diffuse potential for class action, whose realization and organization into a broader ideology may be facilitated or blocked by aspects of the larger political structure.

Several other writers have underscored factors blocking the transition from perceived working-class membership into full class-consciousness in the Marxian sense. Lane (1962) noted the absence of an ideology to counter the dominant American individualism and channel a general feeling of dissatisfaction into specific prescriptions for political action—translate "private troubles" into "public issues" (Mills 1959). Sennett & Cobb (1972) argued that the American emphasis on individualism and opportunity directs working-class dissatisfaction into a sense of alienation, expressed in anti-student and anti-poor attitudes.

Mann (1973), however, presented the blockage thesis in its broadest scope. In a comparison of class politics between the United States and Great Britain on the one hand, and France and Italy on the other, Mann asked under what conditions class consciousness will develop from a sense of class identity to its full realization in a conception of an alternative society (i.e. socialism). Mann proposed that several factors intervene to produce "pragmatic acceptance" of the alienation of workers rather than full class consciousness. For workers' dissatisfaction to be directed toward a conception of an alternative society, an alternative ideology to that of capitalism must be articulated. According to Mann, unions play a key role in facilitating or blocking the link between class-based dissatisfaction and beliefs in the desirability of an alternative society. To the extent that unions stress simple economic reforms rather than worker control, they encourage the separation of work and nonwork in people's consciousness, thereby furthering pragmatic acceptance. Mann also noted how the level of capitalistic development affects the expression of working-class dissatisfaction: In countries that have retained features of pre-industrial society throughout the development of capitalism, class dissatisfaction is most readily translated into class politics; but, in countries where capitalism has become fully developed and the language of market bargaining is consistently applied, working-class reformist tendencies are strongly emphasized. These points find some support in Moore's (1978, ch. 14) historically based discussion of the effects of unions (or other organized groups) and the level of economic development on working-class consciousness.

Other Approaches to Belief Organization

The sociological approaches we have reviewed here argue that from a certain stratification belief other beliefs logically follow. Studies in both political science and social psychology present alternative, less "logical" approaches to belief system organization. In general, the sociological literature on stratification belief systems has ignored the implications of this work. In our view, this is a weakness of current research.

Within political science the classic statement of the "illogical" organization of beliefs is that of Converse (1964), who proposed that the political beliefs held by the masses (nonelites) are derived from beliefs held by elites. Converse asssumed that the masses are more interested in simple and straightforward than in abstract or conceptual knowledge; that they have limited political knowledge and interest; and that they may have other cognitive deficits as well (he mentions "limited horizons," "foreshortened time perspectives," and "concrete thinking"). Thus, theoreti-

cally based ideas and attitudes developed by elites may trickle down to the masses, who may not understand their rationales, since "it is easy to know that two ideas go together without knowing why" (1964:297).

Most students of stratification beliefs who have given explicit recognition to Converse's thesis (Huber & Form 1973; Della-Fave 1974) reject the extreme image of mass beliefs as illogically and uncritically founded. In addition, Converse's argument has been vigorously criticized by political scientists (e.g. Bennett 1975). Nevertheless, Converse's treatment underscored factors that may play a role in structuring the interpretations of social inequality, but that have been largely overlooked in the study of stratification beliefs. Specifically his work raises the following questions: (*a*) How does a person's level of cognitive sophistication affect the interpretation of social stratification? (*b*) Under what conditions will explanations of inequality offered by elites be accepted or challenged by the masses? (*c*) How are elite interpretations of inequality disseminated? The last question focuses attention on the role of mass media, educational institutions, and so on.

Researchers in social psychology have proposed general principles that structure and organize beliefs of various kinds. These principles have been derived mainly from laboratory studies using beliefs unrelated to large-scale social issues. However, many of these principles may be applicable to stratification beliefs as defined in this review (Kluegel & Smith 1979). The general perspective taken by social psychologists is that, as Heider (1958) argued, people actively attempt to understand their social environment and their own place in it. This point applies with special force to central aspects of the social world such as economic position, occupation, or income. The active perceiver does not simply serve as a receptacle for pre-existing beliefs (Converse 1964; Borhek & Curtis 1975), nor does the individual simply generalize from personal experiences in a neutral, unbiased way. Both pre-existing beliefs and personal experiences are important, but the individual also possesses motivations, interests, and idiosyncracies of cognitive style that shape beliefs in important ways. The individual arrives at a creative accommodation of all these elements, a system of beliefs and evaluations that may be unique in certain ways but that also incorporates elements of culturally available beliefs.

Social psychologists have investigated a number of cognitive processes that apply to beliefs about stratification. First among these is the formation of factual beliefs about the world. How do individuals learn what percentage of the population is poor, or come to believe that the poor are generally lazy? In forming such beliefs people seem to rely on cultural stereotypes and to base inferences on inadequate observations. See

Nisbett & Ross (1979) for a wide-ranging review of this area, focusing particularly on cognitive biases.

Another process, a central focus of social-psychological research through the 1970s, is the perception or attribution of causation. Perceivers use information about the covariation of the event of interest with its potential causes in a logical way to determine which cause is actually effective (Kelley 1967). At the same time, people also use less logical criteria such as salience: Factors that are for some reason attention-getting are overrepresented as causes in people's perceptions (Taylor & Fiske 1978). Other determinants of causal attributions include motivational influences such as ego-defensive tendencies and effects of the perceiver's viewpoint or perspective (the "actor-observer differences" of Jones & Nisbett 1972). Pettigrew (1979) has discussed what he labels the "ultimate attributional error," which consists of a tendency to explain any poor performance by members of an outgroup (racial minority, the poor, etc) as due to internal factors such as lack of ability or genetic factors. Good performance by outgroup members, on the other hand, is accounted for in terms of good luck, exceptionally great effort, or special advantages (such as "reverse discrimination"). This pattern of causal attribution obviously facilitates beliefs that the outgroup is inferior to the ingroup in basic ability and competence.

Finally, social psychologists
other types of beliefs. Attitudes, in the prominent theory of Fishbein & Ajzen (1975), are composites of the perceiver's evaluative beliefs about the object, weighted by their importance. Thus an individual will generally respond favorably to an object believed to have more (or more important) positive than negative attributes. Attitudes may concern political parties, candidates, or issues (as investigated by political scientists), social groups (racial prejudice is often conceptualized as a negative attitude toward members of a racial outgroup), or one's own attributes (such as one's position within a hierarchy of inequality). On this last matter, the concept of "relative deprivation," a theory of perceivers' reactions to their position (originally formulated sociologically, with little psychological content) has been defined in social-psychological terms (Crosby 1976; Cook, Crosby & Hennigan 1977). Relative deprivation includes not only the direct perception of social positions, but also a feeling of entitlement to a higher level, a perception that increasing one's level is feasible, and a belief that one's current level is due to external circumstances (not one's merits). This linkage of relative deprivation to attributions is reminiscent of Gurin et al's (1980) linkage of group consciousness with "legitimacy" (external attributions; see the discussion above).

DETERMINANTS OF STRATIFICATION BELIEFS

Far more empirical and theoretical attention has been paid to the sources of beliefs about class (especially class identification, but also class consciousness) than to other beliefs. In part, this is a legacy of early focus of research on class consciousness. Questions on class identification (often the Centers question) have been asked repeatedly in national surveys, and in fact these are the only stratification beliefs on which extensive data have been gathered. Consequently, it is not surprising that the largest body of work on the determinants of beliefs concerns determinants of subjective class identification. In addition, little attention has been given to factors other than objective social position (age, income, occupation, and related constructs) as determinants of beliefs. We have no evidence on the influence of such factors as family socialization practices, personality characteristics of all sorts, cognitive complexity, nature of education, urban/rural environment, exposure to particular media, and salient personal experiences (of injustices, etc).

Determinants of Beliefs About Poverty

In general, research on beliefs about the poor (Allston & Dean 1972; Huber & Form 1973; Williamson 1974a; Feagin 1975) provides information on the sociodemographic correlates of Americans' views about the causes of poverty. These studies show rather weak correlations between most sociodemographic factors and beliefs about the poor, the only substantial exception being race. Blacks are somewhat less likely than whites to emphasize individualistic factors (Huber & Form 1973; Feagin 1975) and are much more likely to see structural factors as the cause of poverty (Feagin 1975; Gurin et al 1980). The lack of strong sociodemographic differences might be attributed to the pervasive influence of the American ideology of individualism (propagated by the media, etc). Yet it is interesting in this regard that a similar tendency to blame the poor is found in Italy (Lopreato & Hazelrigg 1972) where individualism is not as strongly emphasized. Perhaps the tendency to blame the poor is, as Feather (1974) and Pettigrew (1979) suggested, rooted in the psychology of causal attribution. Lopreato & Hazelrigg (1972) and Moore (1978) speculated that it may be a concomitant of versions of the "American Dream" that develop in all industrial and industrializing societies. Lewis (1978) suggested that it results from psychological ego-defensive mechanisms: Projecting personal responsibility for failure onto the poor allows one to feel better about one's own limited success. At any rate, the question of how best to explain the widespread censorious view of the poor remains open.

Distributive Justice

Only one published study has explicitly tested hypotheses concerning the determinants of beliefs about distributive justice within a multivariate framework (Robinson & Bell 1978; cf Kerckhoff & Parker 1979; Robinson & Bell 1970). Using small purposive samples of London and the New Haven area in the United States, Robinson & Bell examined judgments about distributional fairness and unfairness. Their independent variables were several sociodemographic characteristics, and perceptions of class position, of the possibility of monetary success, and of the equality of one's personal standard of living. Three sources of beliefs about economic equality were hypothesized: (*a*) the "underdog" principle—i.e. that those who rank low in the stratification order will be most likely to see economic redistribution aimed at equality as just; (*b*) the principle of enlightenment—that the more educated will tend to see such redistribution as just, and (*c*) an historical shift toward an egalitarian zeitgeist, or a secular trend toward greater support of institutionalized economic equality. In both the United States and Britain Robinson & Bell found support for the underdog principle. In Britain, but not the United States, the effect of education conforms to the enlightenment principle. Younger persons in the United States, but not in Britain, are more likely than older persons to see equalization as fair; thus the idea of a secular trend is supported only in the United States.

Class Identification

A substantial literature has accumulated on the determinants of subjective class identification (Hodge & Treiman 1968; Jackman & Jackman 1973; Ritter & Hargens 1975; Vanneman & Pampel 1977; Kluegel et al 1977; Robinson & Kelly 1979; Vanneman 1980). In contrast to literatures on other aspects of stratification beliefs, this body of work has a cumulative quality. Multivariate modeling techniques have been routinely employed, and analyses have been based on data drawn from nationally representative surveys with standard measures of variables. Hodge & Treiman's (1968) analysis of the effect of objective status measures on subjective class placement has served as the starting point for the recent literature on this topic.

Hodge & Treiman focused on the moderate to weak predictive relationship between objective status measures and subjective class placement and offered what Jackman & Jackman (1973) characterized as a pluralistic interpretation. Hodge & Treiman criticized Centers (1949) for an overemphasis on economic status and relationship to the means of production as determinants of perceived class membership. They concluded that

interclass association among relatives, friends, and neighbors of different socioeconomic statuses limits formation of consensus of placement along class lines.

Jackman & Jackman (1973) focused on the same possible determinants of subjective class placement and used the same data as Hodge & Treiman. However, their analysis differed in two respects, producing results they used to question the pluralist perspective. First, they allowed for the possibility that blacks differ from whites in the way that objective status measures influence subjective class. With this model specification the authors found blacks less likely than whites to identify with the middle class. This result, they claimed, "runs contrary to pluralist expectations that in American society no single cleavage will be powerful enough to break one group off from the rest of society in its perceptions of its relationship to the socioeconomic structure" (1973:580). Second, using a different operationalization of interclass association, they found a weaker effect of this variable on class identification than did Hodge & Treiman. Since Jackman & Jackman (like Hodge & Treiman) found no significant effects of property ownership or union membership, they concluded in favor of the modified Marxian or interest-group perspective.

Although Hodge & Treiman proposed that a person's relationship to the means of production weakly affects perceived class standing, and Jackman & Jackman proposed to evaluate the Marxian perspective on class identification, neither study included a direct measure of objective class. Studies by Vanneman & Pampel (1977) and Robinson & Kelley (1979) introduced such measures as possible determinants of perceived class position. These two studies differ in their operationalizations of objective class.

Vanneman & Pampel used a crude measure based on the distinction between manual and nonmanual occupations. Comparing the relative effects of objective class versus occupational prestige, they found that: (*a*) in general, objective class is a better predictor of subjective class than is occupational prestige, and (*b*) while prestige has a significant effect on class identification among nonmanual workers, its effect among manual workers is not significant. They found income and education to have sizeable effects, but the effect of education is roughly twice as large among nonmanual as among manual workers. Vanneman & Pampel concluded that subjective class identification implies more for a respondent than a crude ranking along a status hierarchy; it reflects a recognition of belonging to a bounded social group.

Robinson & Kelley (1979) examined the influence of objective class as defined by Marx (control of the means of production) and by Dahrendorf (authority position). They found that in both the United States and Brit-

ain, control and supervisory authority have statistically significant influences among men (but not among women in the United States) on subjective class placement; persons with control or authority are more likely to identify with the middle class than are persons without these factors. They also noted that the effects of control and authority are small relative to the effect of occupational status among American men, leading them to conclude (contrary to Vanneman & Pampel) that Americans are more status than class conscious.

Three studies have considered sex as a possible determinant of class perceptions. Ritter & Hargens (1975) analyzed the subjective class placement of married working women and showed that subjective class identification among working wives is influenced by both their own and their husbands' occupations, with a slightly stronger influence of the latter. Vanneman & Pampel and Robinson & Kelley also presented findings concerning sex differences in the determination of perceived class placement. Vanneman & Pampel showed that (*a*) for women working full time the manual-nonmanual distinction has no significant effect on class identification, and occupational prestige has a stronger influence than among men; and (*b*) among wives of working men, husband's job has the same effects shown for men. Robinson and Kelley found that among women working full time neither control nor authority significantly affects perceived class. Neither Robinson & Kelley nor Vanneman & Pampel attempted any detailed explanation of these sex differences.

Since all of these studies employ the fixed-choice method of measuring class identification they are all subject to the criticisms of this method discussed earlier. Whether or not a clear interpretation can be given to respondents' choice of a class label is thus of special importance. Some of these studies (Jackman & Jackman 1973; Vanneman 1980) explicitly recognize that the choice of class label does not necessarily imply anything about class consciousness but is best interpreted as indicating group consciousness. Kluegel et al (1977) analyzed validity and reliability issues in the measurement of class identification. Seeking to identify the factors around which group consciousness centers, they tested the hypothesis that in keeping with the presumed multidimensional bases of objective position, subjective class may itself be multidimensional; differences in perceived class position may exist along different dimensions of stratification. They tested the fit of alternative models for the correlations among Centers' question and multiple indicators of subjective class placement along the different Weberian dimensions and formulated two major conclusions. First, perceived class is best seen as *unidimensional;* persons are generally consistent in class self-placement along different dimensions. Second, Centers' question is of generally acceptable reliability and valid-

ity as an indicator of perceived class. Thus, it appears that the standard fixed-choice method does elicit perceptions of differences between groups in American society that are based on the similarity of income, education, power, and life-style considered as a package of attributes.

The accumulated work in this area leads to the conclusion that the choice of class label for oneself is influenced by aspects of status and rank, objective class position, sex, and race. But other conclusions about the determinants of perceived class position are not so unambiguous. The question of whether Americans are more status than class conscious has motivated much of the study of class images and class identification, but as indicated by the differing conclusions of Vanneman & Pampel and of Robinson & Kelley, there is no consensus on this question. Also, the three studies cited hint at substantial sex differences without seeking to explain such differences in any detail.

Class Images and Class Consciousness

The question of the effects of increasing affluence on class consciousness among the working class, initially posed some forty years ago, continues to be a focus of interest. Although the weight of opinion in recent times (Anderson 1974; Hamilton 1972; Braverman 1974) has been largely against the thesis of embourgeoisement, in one respect knowledge on this issue remains incomplete. The thesis of embourgeoisement—that the working class is becoming more like the middle class—makes two major assertions: (*a*) that the objective class conditions, particularly the income, of the working class have become similar to those of the middle class; and (*b*) that because of increasing affluence, working class beliefs about inequality have become more like those of the middle class. Thus the thesis is based on diminished *relative* inequality of class conditions and increasing *absolute* level of affluence in the working class. It has been relatively easy to disprove the assumption of a large decrease in the relative inequality of objective class conditions—lifestyle, working conditions, and income (Goldthorpe et al 1969; Massey 1975; US Bureau of the Census 1977). However, the effects of an increasing absolute level of affluence prove harder to assess, and we currently lack a compelling study of this issue. In particular, for stratification beliefs neither time series data for a single society nor comparative data for many societies are available at present.

In the absence of such data some effort has been made to weigh the effects of increasing absolute affluence by examining single critical cases, recent instances of increased affluence among a group of workers (Goldthorpe et al 1969; Logan 1977, 1978). Goldthorpe et al found evidence for two effects of increased affluence in their sample of manual workers: (*a*) the adoption of a "money model" of class; that is, the percep-

tion of the class structure as composed of one large central (or middle) class with one or more residual or elite classes differentiated by wealth, income, and consumption standards. Accompanying this image of class is a new mode of social consciousness, distinguished from either status or class consciousness, which they call "commodity consciousness." "Differences in prestige and power, as expressed through actual social relationships, take on less significance than differences in wealth, income and standards of consumption seen as the quantitative attributes of individuals or aggregates" (p. 156). (*b*) A declining commitment to collective means of achieving economic goals and to trade unionism.

However, Logan (1977) offered results that seem to qualify these conclusions. He argued that when increased affluence among workers is accompanied by perceived barriers to upward interclass mobility, affluent workers may become *more* class conscious. Here Logan appeals to a dynamic of blocked aspirations along the lines of Germani's (1966) concept of "partial upward mobility" or Davies' (1969) thesis of the "revolution of rising expectations." Logan tested his hypothesis in an analysis of data from a sample of factory workers from Barcelona province in Spain. Consistent with his hypothesis, he found that increases in affluence among workers who perceive blocked interclass mobility (measured by the perceived availability of public education) are accompanied by increases in the perceived need for political change or reform. Other results are largely consistent with his hypothesis.

A recent series of studies (Bulmer 1975) examined the images of class structure held by different segments of the British working class, focusing on Lockwood's (1966) general propositions about the sources of variation in working-class images. Lockwood described three ideal types of workers, each with a different image of society and of the class structure in particular: (*a*) "proletarians" with a dichotomous "us" vs "them" (or power) image; (*b*) "deferentials" with a prestige or status image of the class hierarchy; and (*c*) "privatized" workers with a pecuniary image or "money model." Lockwood proposed that the industrial and community milieu of manual workers produces these types and hence produces variations among workers' images of class structure. In summary, Lockwood proposed that (*a*) the proletarian worker's beliefs are shaped by industrial conditions that concentrate workers in solidary communities, isolated from the influences of wider society—e.g. mining, docking, and shipbuilding; (*b*) the deferential worker is molded by work roles that lead to direct contact with the employer and inhibit formation of strong ties to others in a similar market position—e.g. independent craft workers, workers in small-scale "family" enterprises, or workers in certain service occupations; (*c*) the privatized worker is produced by work situations in which

involvement in the job, attachment to the work enterprise, and fellowship with other workers are all slight—e.g. workers in large factories with mass-production technologies, who perform jobs that are highly specialized, repetitive, and lacking autonomy.

Two general points may be abstracted from the six studies of different working class groups reported in Bulmer (1975). First, Lockwood appears to have oversimplified the relationships between workers' class imagery and the industrial and community milieu. There is both less difference between the various segments of the working-class and more heterogeneity of beliefs within them than would be expected under Lockwood's propositions. Class imagery appears to be affected more by the immediate conditions of work (e.g. managerial-worker relationships at a specific firm) than by Lockwood's gross distinctions among categories of workers. Second, class ideology is inconsistent, even within individuals; workers often hold seemingly contradictory images of the class structure (see especially Blackburn & Mann 1975).

The most ambitious study of the determinants of class consciousness is that of Lopreato & Hazelrigg (1972). After extensively reviewing the literature on class consciousness, they identified five aspects underlying the formation of class consciousness: "(1) *social perceptivity;* or the awareness of differences in individual skills and distributed rewards in society; (2) *class awareness,* or the identification of crystallized economic and political interest groups in society; (3) *dimensional awareness,* or conceptions of factors underlying class division and membership; (4) *class placement,* or self location of the individual within a subjectively conceived class structure; and (5) *class solidarity,* or the congruence of location and image with interests, as represented by . . . expressions of unity in ideas and needs with other members of the self-assessed class" (p. 126).

Lopreato & Hazelrigg presented a detailed examination of the correlations among several measures of social position (occupation, authority, income, education, etc) and measures of the above aspects of class consciousness, considered individually and in combination. Their analysis of determinants of the individual aspects treated features identified in other descriptive work on class images (cf Hiller 1975b) such as the perceived number of classes, the content of class imagery (whether based on perceived economic differences, occupation, political factors, etc), perceptions of the nature of interclass relationships, and so on. They also examined potential determinants of overall patterns of class consciousness based on the combinations of the five aspects.

It is difficult to summarize the main conclusions of Lopreato & Hazelrigg's work, largely because they made little attempt to do so themselves. Unfortunately, there is also a serious lack of rigor in their data

analysis. They did not apply tests of significance and thus imputed meaning to differences that appear not to be statistically significant; where multivariate analyses seem required none were provided. For example, in the treatment of mobility effects on stratification beliefs, where methodological issues are of clear importance (Hope 1971), they remain unconsidered.

In spite of these problems this work is a valuable contribution for two reasons. First, it identified a number of factors that deserve attention in the study of determinants of class images or consciousness. For example, it underscored the need to consider perceived or "subjective" mobility in research on the consequences of mobility. Virtually all other studies of mobility effects have looked only at objective mobility. (Coleman & Rainwater 1978 stands as an exception but presents only impressionistic data on subjective mobility.) Second, it exemplifies the kind of research that is needed in the study of stratification beliefs: a study explicitly focused on and covering a wide range of beliefs about inequality, in contrast to the segmented and "by-product" quality of much research on stratification beliefs.

Research on the antecedents of stratification beliefs thus provides a catalog of relatively weak effects. Class images or self-placement are not, any more than beliefs about opportunity or poverty, immediately and directly determined by the perceiver's social or economic position. This basic point is expressed differently in the different literatures reviewed here. It is inherent in the discussion by Mann, Moore, Della-Fave, and others of mechanisms that block the progression from simple dissatisfaction to politically oriented class consciousness. The social psychologists Nisbett & Ross refer to the same idea when they discuss the "theory-based" nature of perception and the human inability simply to register facts about the world in a neutral, unbiased way. Lane (1962) made the same point by referring to the need for an ideology to "translate" everyday grievances into a demand for political redress. However, in this literature the ideological determinants of beliefs are rarely studied, while the objective determinants, with their relatively weak effects, are extensively researched. The cataloging of ideologies and investigation of their social distribution and effects should be an important priority for research on stratification beliefs.

CONSEQUENCES OF STRATIFICATION BELIEFS

Beliefs about social inequality are potentially consequential for a range of behaviors and attitudes. An individual's assessment of his position in the stratification order affects his evaluation of his life chances; stratifica-

tion beliefs should play a role in his evaluation of his place in the social order, and thus in his sense of social integration/alienation. Furthermore, beliefs about social inequality as a property of society should influence (*a*) beliefs about the desirability and necessity of social change, and (*b*) perceptions of what kind of social change (if any) is needed.

Unfortunately, little research exists on the links between individuals' interpretations of the stratification order and their other behaviors and attitudes. Some research efforts have investigated the influence of particular aspects of stratification beliefs on the evaluation of social policies directly dealing with social inequality. Feagin (1975) substantiated a link between an individual's explanation of poverty (i.e. whether it results from individual attributes or structural causes) and his attitudes toward welfare spending and welfare recipients. Gurin et al (1980) linked a similar variable to preferences for collective versus individual political actions. Other research (Rainwater 1974; Robinson & Bell 1978) has sought to explain the influence of stratification beliefs on the evaluation of income equalization policies.

Other aspects of social policy involving inequality have gone largely unexamined in this context. Two areas of current interest are the evaluation of programs to equalize opportunity (e.g. affirmative action policies) and programs for redistributing income through taxation. Research has also neglected the links between individuals' beliefs about stratification and their behaviors and attitudes on matters less directly related to social inequality. For example, research on stratification belief systems is relevant to several aspects of political behavior and attitudes. The sources of political passivity (alienation) are of persistent interest (Campbell 1976). Although it has been well established that a lack of political participation characterizes the less educated and poorer segments of society, the question of why they participate less is still unresolved. How individuals in these circumstances view the stratification order may be an important factor in accounting for their lesser participation.

Several research questions derive from the resource mobilization perspective on social movements (McCarthy & Zald 1977; Ferree & Miller 1980). For example, this perspective stresses the importance of "conscience constituents" (McCarthy & Zald 1977, p. 1222) to the success of social movements; "conscience constituents" are defined as supporters of social movements who do not stand to benefit directly from the movement. Research on perceived position in the stratification order, explanations of aspects of social inequality (such as poverty or wealth), and commitment to social movements affecting various aspects of inequality (e.g. the women's movement) should contribute to our understanding of the basis of conscience constituencies and other forms of involvement in social

movements. Social movements also deserve study from another point of view: as catalysts, as providers of the belief systems or ideologies that people seem to need to interpret their own experiences in politically relevant terms (Lenin 1966; Moore 1978). Labor unions in particular, but also other groups have frequently played a central role in theories of social change for exactly this reason (cf Tilly, Tilly & Tilly 1975).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The principal accomplishment of the current body of work on stratification beliefs has been a description of what is believed about stratification, but even in this regard there are limitations. First, much of this description is based on small samples from single communities or narrow geographical areas, implying that questions about rural-urban and regional differences in stratification beliefs have been unexamined. Second, research on stratification beliefs has failed to represent adequately the beliefs of key subpopulations—most importantly, elites and blacks (Huber & Form's 1973 study is one exception); representative samples of the usual size produce elite and black subsamples too small to support reliable analyses. Third, the measurement of certain beliefs and attitudes has been overemphasized, especially those concerning the respondent's own position in society (e.g. class *self*-placement, fairness of one's *own* income or opportunity), to the relative neglect of beliefs about properties of society in general, despite some evidence that general beliefs are more consequential than self-referent ones for certain types of dependent measures (Lau et al 1978; McConahay & Hawley 1977). Fourth, and perhaps most important, the description of interrelated systems of beliefs has been underrepresented in favor of description of isolated aspects of stratification beliefs. It is obvious, but still deserving of emphasis, that links among beliefs cannot be studied if beliefs about different aspects of inequality are studied in isolation.

Methodological Issues

With the principal exception of the literature on subjective class identification, research on the determinants and consequences of stratification beliefs has relied on analyses of bivariate correlations for testing hypotheses. Two major contributions of the sociological literature on status attainment have been to underscore the need for multivariate analytic models and to increase the stock of useful statistical tools, which should be applied to investigating beliefs.

Far too little attention has been given to measurement issues. With the exception of issues surrounding the use of open- vs closed-ended questions

to measure beliefs about class, the validity and reliability of measures of dimensions of stratification beliefs have rarely been examined. There is a proclivity among researchers in this area to construct new measures of concepts. The failure to establish measures with a record of repeated use and with known properties of validity and reliability, like the absence of model building, has blocked the cumulation of knowledge; differences among studies that nominally deal with the same concept can be plausibly attributed either to true differences in effects or to differences in what is actually being measured. (Thus the "institutionalization" of Centers' class measure as a standard feature of national surveys has been of some value, despite its weaknesses.)

Measurement issues should therefore be high on the agenda for future work in this area. In addition to the improvements in accuracy of measurement that should result, a focus on measurement issues should also result in greater conceptual clarity, since a concern with validity involves concern with the meanings of concepts.

Towards a Broadening of Theoretical Perspective

Marx's writings on class consciousness have provided the major theoretical basis of research on beliefs about social inequality. They have identified factors that may play important roles in shaping interpretations and evaluations of the stratification order. Yet in the long run a continued, nearly exclusive focus on Marx's work will limit theoretical development in this area, for two major reasons. First, a predominant focus on class consciousness limits attention to one aspect of individuals' interpretation and evaluation of inequality. Indeed, it limits attention to a phenomenon that is rare (Lopreato & Hazelrigg 1972) if it has ever existed at all in the terms specified by Marx (Mann 1973). Second, it must be recognized that Marx's theory is psychologically and social-psychologically underdeveloped. The psychological and social-psychological processes intervening between objective class position and beliefs about inequality have been little scrutinized, even in more recent research, in favor of a broader concern with such questions as why American workers are not class conscious.

This point is by no means new. Kornhauser (1939) offered it over forty years ago, arguing that a "simple automatic economic determinism of social opinion is psychologically pure fiction" (247). Yet his call for a redirection of the field to give it greater social-psychological content seems to have gone unheeded until quite recently. Despite its title, even Centers' work, *The Psychology of Social Classes,* contains little that is psychological or social-psychological. There are indications that the theoretical perspective of the field is broadening. Recently published work

attempts to apply exchange theory (Tallman & Ihinger-Tallman 1979), equity theory (Jasso & Rossi 1977; Jasso 1978), and attribution theory (Kluegel & Smith 1979) to the interpretation of social stratification.

The Comparative and Longitudinal Dimension

Data obtained from a cross-sectional survey of a single society at a single point in time are inadequate for studying the influence of certain social structural factors, such as the political structure, the history of class relationships, the degree of income or class inequality, and so on. The need to pursue cross-national comparative research, and study over time of the same societies to address questions about social structural influences is, of course, well recognized. The literature on stratification beliefs has a comparative dimension, but it lacks a longitudinal one.

Some basis for comparative analysis exists in studies based on data from different countries, particularly Japan and the European countries (notably Poland; cf Wesolowski 1979, Narojek 1976). Furthermore, some studies offer direct comparisons of beliefs in two countries (Scase 1972, 1974; Robinson & Bell 1978; Tallman & Ihinger-Tallman 1979; Vanneman 1980; Bell & Robinson 1980). Unfortunately, this literature is often handicapped by the use of undersized samples, by differences between countries in the segments of the populations represented, and by a lack of comparability of measures.

We currently lack all but tentative speculations about trends over time in beliefs about most aspects of inequality. Since there are frequently replicated measurements of class identification, it is only in this area that useful time series can be constructed (cf Schreiber & Nygreen 1970; Tucker 1968). Studies have reported significant differences between broad age cohorts in the explanation of poverty (Feagin 1975; Williamson 1974a) and beliefs about equality. However, definitive conclusions about cohort effects are confounded by the possibility that one's stage in the life-cycle affects stratification beliefs. Strengthening the longitudinal dimension of research on stratification beliefs could be accomplished by two means. First, the features Duncan (1969) recommended for social reporting (social indicators), particularly the establishment of a broadly representative baseline study and a focus on exact replication of measurement, should be incorporated in work in this area. At present the authors of this review are carrying out a nationally representative study of a wide range of stratification beliefs that should provide a useful baseline. Second, research on the development of beliefs through the life-cycle—what may be called "stratification socialization," paralleling the study of political socialization—should be encouraged. [Simmons & Rosenberg (1971) ex-

amined a few beliefs about stratification among children, and Stern & Searing (1976) among adolescents.]

People's beliefs about inequality are significant phenomena, particularly for social theory (especially theories of social change, such as Marx's) and for social policy (for example, consider the widespread public definition of affirmative action as "reverse discrimination" and its consequent rejection). Stratification beliefs are also of potential importance to social psychology, as a field in which to test laboratory-derived theories and predictions. The study of such beliefs should continue to break free of the inadequate methods and confining theoretical orientations that have often limited research in the past.

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