

lar organizations; and on a vast scale, of course, political offices and benefices or other prestigious or remunerative positions that can be secured from the political authorities—professorships included. If a group is sufficiently large in a system of parliamentary government, it can procure such support for its leaders and members, just like the political parties, for which this is essential.

In the present context we want to emphasize only the general fact that non-economic groups also establish economic organizations, especially for propaganda purposes. Many charitable activities of religious groups have such a purpose, and this is even more true of the Christian, Liberal, Socialist and Patriotic trade unions and mutual benefit funds, of savings and insurance institutes and, on a massive scale, of the consumers' and producers' co-operatives. Some Italian co-operatives, for instance, demanded the certification of confession before hiring a worker. In Germany [before 1918] the Poles organized credit lending, mortgage payments and farm acquisition in an unusually impressive fashion; during the Revolution of 1905/6 the various Russian parties immediately pursued similarly modern policies. Sometimes

commercial enterprises are established: banks, hotels (like the socialist *Hôtellerie du Peuple* in Ostende) and even factories (also in Belgium). If this happens, the dominant groups in a political community, particularly the civil service, resort to similar methods in order to stay in power, and organize everything from economically advantageous "patriotic" associations and activities to state-controlled loan associations (such as the *Preussenkasse*). The technical details of such propagandistic methods do not concern us here.

In this section we merely wanted to state in general terms, and to illustrate with some typical examples, the coexistence and opposition of expansionist and monopolist economic interests within diverse groups. We must forego any further details since this would require a special study of the various kinds of associations. Instead, we must deal briefly with the most frequent relationship between group activities and the economy: the fact that an extraordinarily large number of groups have secondary economic interests. Normally, these groups must have developed some kind of rational association; exceptions are those that develop out of the household \* \* \*.

## *The Theory of the Leisure Class\**

THORSTEIN VEBLEN

### III PECUNIARY EMULATION (*money competition*)

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[Wherever the institution of private property is found, even in a slightly developed form, the economic process bears the character of a struggle between men for the possession of goods.] It has been customary in economic theory, and especially among those economists who adhere with least faltering to the body of modernised classical doctrines, to construe this struggle for wealth as being substantially a struggle for subsistence. Such is, no doubt, its character in large part during the earlier and less efficient phases of industry. Such is also its character in all cases where the "niggardliness of nature" is so strict as to afford but a scanty livelihood to the community in return for strenuous and unremitting application to the business of getting the means of subsistence. But in all progressing communities an advance is presently made beyond

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this early stage of technological development. Industrial efficiency is presently carried to such a pitch as to afford something appreciably more than a bare livelihood to those engaged in the industrial process. It has not been unusual for economic theory to speak of the further struggle for wealth on this new industrial basis as a competition for an increase of the comforts of life,—primarily for an increase of the physical comforts which the consumption of goods affords.

The end of acquisition and accumulation is conventionally held to be the consumption of the goods accumulated—whether it is consumption directly by the owner of the goods or by the household attached to him and for this purpose identified with him in theory. This is at least felt to be the economically legitimate end of acquisition, which alone it is incumbent on the theory to take account of. Such consumption may of course be conceived to serve the consumer's physical wants—his physical comfort—or his so-called higher wants—spiritual, aesthetic, intellectual, or what not; the latter class of wants being served indirectly by an expenditure of goods, after the fashion familiar to all economic readers.

But it is only when taken in a sense far removed from its naive meaning that consumption of goods can be said to afford the incentive from which accumulation invariably proceeds. The motive that lies at the root of ownership is emulation; and the same motive of emulation continues active in the further development of the institution to which it has given rise and in the development of all those features of the social structure which this institution of ownership touches. The possession of wealth confers

honour; it is an invidious distinction. Nothing equally cogent can be said for the consumption of goods, nor for any other conceivable incentive to acquisition, and especially not for any incentive to the accumulation of wealth.

It is of course not to be overlooked that in a community where nearly all goods are private property the necessity of earning a livelihood is a powerful and ever-present incentive for the poorer members of the community. The need of subsistence and of an increase of physical comfort may for a time be the dominant motive of acquisition for those classes who are habitually employed at manual labour, whose subsistence is on a precarious footing, who possess little and ordinarily accumulate little; but it will appear in the course of the discussion that even in the case of these impecunious classes the predominance of the motive of physical want is not so decided as has sometimes been assumed. On the other hand, so far as regards those members and classes of the community who are chiefly concerned in the accumulation of wealth, the incentive of subsistence or of physical comfort never plays a considerable part. Ownership began and grew into a human institution on grounds unrelated to the subsistence minimum. The dominant incentive was from the outset the invidious distinction attaching to wealth, and, save temporarily and by exception, no other motive has usurped the primacy at any later stage of the development.

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\* \* \* A certain standard of wealth in the one case, and of prowess in the other, is a necessary condition of reputability, and anything in excess of this normal amount is meritorious.

Those members of the community who fall short of this, somewhat indefinite, normal degree of prowess or of property suffer in the esteem of their fellow-men; and consequently they suffer also in their own esteem, since the usual basis of self-respect is the respect accorded by one's neighbours. Only individuals with an aberrant temperament can in the long run retain their self-esteem in the face of the disesteem of their fellows. Apparent exceptions to the rule are met with, especially among people with strong religious convictions. But these apparent exceptions are scarcely real exceptions, since such persons commonly fall back on the putative approbation of some supernatural witness of their deeds.

So soon as the possession of property becomes the basis of popular esteem, therefore, it becomes also a requisite to that complacency which we call self-respect. In any community where goods are held in severalty it is necessary, in order to his own peace of mind, that an individual should possess as large a portion of goods as others with whom he is accustomed to class himself, and it is extremely gratifying to possess something more than others. But as fast as a person makes new acquisitions, and becomes accustomed to the resulting new standard of wealth, the new standard forthwith ceases to afford appreciably greater satisfaction than the earlier standard did. The tendency in any case is constantly to make the present pecuniary standard the point of departure for a fresh increase of wealth; and this in turn gives rise to a new standard of sufficiency and a new pecuniary classification of one's self as compared with one's neighbours. So far as concerns the present question, the end sought by accumulation is to

rank high in comparison with the rest of the community in point of pecuniary strength. So long as the comparison is distinctly unfavourable to himself, the normal, average individual will live in chronic dissatisfaction with his present lot; and when he has reached what may be called the normal pecuniary standard of the community; or of his class in the community, this chronic dissatisfaction will give place to a restless straining to place a wider and ever-widening pecuniary interval between himself and this average standard. The invidious comparison can never become so favourable to the individual making it that he would not gladly rate himself still higher relatively to his competitors in the struggle for pecuniary reputability.

In the nature of the case, the desire for wealth can scarcely be satiated in any individual instance, and evidently a satiation of the average or general desire for wealth is out of the question. However widely, or equally, or "fairly," it may be distributed, no general increase of the community's wealth can make any approach to satiating this need, the ground of which is the desire of every one to excel every one else in the accumulation of goods. If, as is sometimes assumed, the incentive to accumulation were the want of subsistence or of physical comfort, then the aggregate economic wants of a community might conceivably be satisfied at some point in the advance of industrial efficiency; but since the struggle is substantially a race for reputability on the basis of an invidious comparison, no approach to a definitive attainment is possible.

What has just been said must not be taken to mean that there are no other incentives to acquisition and accumulation than this desire

to excel in pecuniary standing and so gain the esteem and envy of one's fellow-men. The desire for added comfort and security from want is present as a motive at every stage of the process of accumulation in a modern industrial community; although the standard of sufficiency in these respects is in turn greatly affected by the habit of pecuniary emulation. To a great extent this emulation shapes the methods and selects the objects of expenditure for personal comfort and decent livelihood.

Besides this, the power conferred by wealth also affords a motive to accumulation. That propensity for purposeful activity and that repugnance to all futility of effort which belong to man by virtue of his character as an agent do not desert him when he emerges from the naïve communal culture where the dominant note of life is the unanalysed and undifferentiated solidarity of the individual with the group with which his life is bound up. When he enters upon the predatory stage, where self-seeking in the narrower sense becomes the dominant note, this propensity goes with him still, as the pervasive trait that shapes his scheme of life. The propensity for achievement and the repugnance to futility remain the underlying economic motive. The propensity changes only in the form of its expression and in the proximate objects to which it directs the man's activity. Under the régime of individual ownership the most available means of visibly achieving a purpose is that afforded by the acquisition and accumulation of goods; and as the self-regarding antithesis between man and man reaches fuller consciousness, the propensity for achievement—the instinct of workmanship—tends more and more to shape itself into a straining to

excel others in pecuniary achievement. Relative success, tested by an invidious pecuniary comparison with other men, becomes the conventional end of action. The currently accepted legitimate end of effort becomes the achievement of a favourable comparison with other men; and therefore the repugnance to futility to a good extent coalesces with the incentive of emulation. It acts to accentuate the struggle for pecuniary reputability by visiting with a sharper disapproval all shortcoming and all evidence of short-coming in point of pecuniary success. Purposeful effort comes to mean, primarily, effort directed to or resulting in a more creditable showing of accumulated wealth. Among the motives which lead men to accumulate wealth, the primacy, both in scope and intensity, therefore, continues to belong to this motive of pecuniary emulation.

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### ||| CONSPICUOUS LEISURE

If its working were not disturbed by other economic forces or other features of the emulative process, the immediate effect of such a pecuniary struggle as has just been described in outline would be to make men industrious and frugal. This result actually follows, in some measure, so far as regards the lower classes, whose ordinary means of acquiring goods is productive labour. This is more especially true of the labouring classes in a sedentary community which is at an agricultural stage of industry, in which there is a considerable subdivision of property, and whose laws and customs secure to these classes a more or less definite share of the product of their industry. These lower classes can in any case

not avoid labour, and the imputation of labour is therefore not greatly derogatory to them, at least not within their class. Rather, since labour is their recognised and accepted mode of life, they take some emulative pride in a reputation for efficiency in their work, this being often the only line of emulation that is open to them. For those for whom acquisition and emulation is possible only within the field of productive efficiency and thrift, the struggle for pecuniary reputability will in some measure work out in an increase of diligence and parsimony. But certain secondary features of the emulative process, yet to be spoken of, come in to very materially circumscribe and modify emulation in these directions among the pecuniarily inferior classes as well as among the superior class.

But it is otherwise with the superior pecuniary class, with which we are here immediately concerned. For this class also the incentive to diligence and thrift is not absent; but its action is so greatly qualified by the secondary demands of pecuniary emulation, that any inclination in this direction is practically overborne and any incentive to diligence tends to be of no effect. The most imperative of these secondary demands of emulation, as well as the one of widest scope, is the requirement of abstention from productive work. This is true in an especial degree for the barbarian stage of culture. During the predatory culture labour comes to be associated in men's habits of thought with weakness and subjection to a master. It is therefore a mark of inferiority, and therefore comes to be accounted unworthy of man in his best estate. By virtue of this tradition labour is felt to be debasing, and this tradition has never died out. On the contrary, with the advance

of social differentiation it has acquired the axiomatic force due to ancient and unquestioned prescription.

In order to gain and to hold the esteem of men it is not sufficient merely to possess wealth or power. The wealth or power must be put in evidence, for esteem is awarded only on evidence. And not only does the evidence of wealth serve to impress one's importance on others and to keep their sense of his importance alive and alert, but it is of scarcely less use in building up and preserving one's self-complacency. In all but the lowest stages of culture the normally constituted man is comforted and upheld in his self-respect by "decent surroundings" and by exemption from "menial offices." Enforced departure from his habitual standard of decency, either in the paraphernalia of life or in the kind and amount of his everyday activity, is felt to be a slight upon his human dignity, even apart from all conscious consideration of the approval or disapproval, of his fellows.

The archaic theoretical distinction between the base and the honourable in the manner of a man's life retains very much of its ancient force even to-day. So much so that there are few of the better class who are not possessed of an instinctive repugnance for the vulgar forms of labour. We have a realising sense of ceremonial uncleanness attaching in an especial degree to the occupations which are associated in our habits of thought with menial service. It is felt by all persons of refined taste that a spiritual contamination is inseparable from certain offices that are conventionally required of servants. Vulgar surroundings, mean (that is to say, inexpensive) habitations, and vulgarly productive occupations are unhesitatingly condemned

and avoided. They are incompatible with life on a satisfactory spiritual plane—with "high thinking." From the days of the Greek philosophers to the present, a degree of leisure and of exemption from contact with such industrial processes as serve the immediate every day purposes of human life has ever been recognised by thoughtful men as a prerequisite to a worthy or beautiful, or even a blameless, human life. In itself and in its consequences the life of leisure is beautiful and ennobling in all civilised men's eyes.

This direct, subjective value of leisure and of other evidences of wealth is no doubt in great part secondary and derivative. It is in part a reflex of the utility of leisure as a means of gaining the respect of others, and in part it is the result of a mental substitution. The performance of labour has been accepted as a conventional evidence of inferior force; therefore it comes itself, by a mental short-cut, to be regarded as intrinsically base.

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It has already been remarked that the term "leisure," as here used, does not connote idleness or quiescence. What it connotes is non-productive consumption of time. Time is consumed non-productively (1) from a sense of the unworthiness of productive work, and (2) as an evidence of pecuniary ability to afford a life of idleness. But the whole of the life of the gentleman of leisure is not spent before the eyes of the spectators who are to be impressed with that spectacle of honorific leisure which in the ideal scheme makes up his life. For some part of the time his life is perforce withdrawn from the public eye, and of this portion which is spent in private the gentleman of leisure should, for the

sake of his good name, be able to give a convincing account. He should find some means of putting in evidence the leisure that is not spent in the sight of the spectators. This can be done only indirectly, through the exhibition of some tangible, lasting results of the leisure so spent—in a manner analogous to the familiar exhibition of tangible, lasting products of the labour performed for the gentleman of leisure by handicraftsmen and servants in his employ.

The lasting evidence of productive labour is its material product—commonly some article of consumption. In the case of exploit it is similarly possible and usual to procure some tangible result that may serve for exhibition in the way of trophy or booty. At a later phase of the development it is customary to assume some badge or insignia of honour that will serve as a conventionally accepted mark of exploit, and which at the same time indicates the quantity or degree of exploit of which it is the symbol. As the population increases in density, and as human relations grow more complex and numerous, all the details of life undergo a process of elaboration and selection; and in this process of elaboration the use of trophies develops into a system of rank, titles, degrees and insignia, typical examples of which are heraldic devices, medals, and honorary decorations.

As seen from the economic point of view, leisure, considered as an employment, is closely allied in kind with the life of exploit; and the achievements which characterise a life of leisure, and which remain as its decorous criteria, have much in common with the trophies of exploit. But leisure in the narrower sense, as distinct from exploit and from any ostensibly productive employment of effort on objects which are

of no intrinsic use, does not commonly leave a material product. The criteria of a past performance of leisure therefore commonly take the form of "immaterial" goods. Such immaterial evidences of past leisure are quasi-scholarly or quasi-artistic accomplishments and a knowledge of processes and incidents which do not conduce directly to the furtherance of human life. So, for instance, in our time there is the knowledge of the dead languages and the occult sciences; of correct spelling; of syntax and prosody; of the various forms of domestic music and other household art; of the latest proprieties of dress, furniture, and equipage; of games, sports, and fancy-bred animals, such as dogs and race-horses. In all these branches of knowledge the initial motive from which their acquisition proceeded at the outset, and through which they first came into vogue, may have been something quite different from the wish to show that one's time had not been spent in industrial employment; but unless these accomplishments had approved themselves as serviceable evidence of an unproductive expenditure of time, they would not have survived and held their place as conventional accomplishments of the leisure class.

These accomplishments may, in some sense, be classed as branches of learning. Beside and beyond these there is a further range of social facts which shade off from the region of learning into that of physical habit and dexterity. Such are what is known as manners and breeding, polite usage, decorum, and formal and ceremonial observances generally. This class of facts are even more immediately and obtrusively presented to the observation, and they are therefore more widely and more imperatively

insisted on as required evidences of a reputable degree of leisure. \*\*\*

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Conspicuous consumption of valuable goods is a means of reputability to the gentleman of leisure. As wealth accumulates on his hands, his own unaided effort will not avail to sufficiently put his opulence in evidence by this method. The aid of friends and competitors is therefore brought in by resorting to the giving of valuable presents and expensive feasts and entertainments. Presents and feasts had probably another origin than that of naïve ostentation, but they acquired their utility for this purpose very early, and they have retained that character to the present; so that their utility in this respect has now long been the substantial ground on which these usages rest. Costly entertainments, such as the potlatch or the ball, are peculiarly adapted to serve this end. The competitor with whom the entertainer wishes to institute a comparison is, by this method, made to serve as a means to the end. He consumes vicariously for his host at the same time that he is a witness to the consumption of that excess of good things which his host is unable to dispose of single-handed, and he is also made to witness his host's facility in etiquette.

In the giving of costly entertainments other motives, of a more genial kind, are of course also present. The custom of festive gatherings probably originated in motives of conviviality and religion; these motives are also present in the later development, but they do not continue to be the sole motives. The latter-day leisure-class festivities and entertainments may continue in some slight degree to serve the religious need and in a higher degree the

needs of recreation and conviviality, but they also serve an invidious purpose; and they serve it none the less effectually for having a colourable non-invidious ground in these more avowable motives. But the economic effect of these social amenities is not therefore lessened, either in the vicarious consumption of goods or in the exhibition of difficult and costly achievements in etiquette.

As wealth accumulates, the leisure class develops further in function and structure, and there arises a differentiation within the class. There is a more or less elaborate system of rank and grades. This differentiation is furthered by the inheritance of wealth and the consequent inheritance of gentility. With the inheritance of gentility goes the inheritance of obligatory leisure; and gentility of a sufficient potency to entail a life of leisure may be inherited without the complement of wealth required to maintain a dignified leisure. Gentle blood may be transmitted without goods enough to afford a reputably free consumption at one's ease. Hence results a class of impecunious gentlemen of leisure, incidentally referred to already. These half-caste gentlemen of leisure fall into a system of hierarchical gradations. Those who stand near the higher and the highest grades of the wealthy leisure class, in point of birth, or in point of wealth, or both, outrank the remoter-born and the pecuniarily weaker. These lower grades, especially the impecunious, or marginal, gentlemen of leisure, affiliate themselves by a system of dependence or fealty to the great ones; by so doing they gain an increment of repute, or of the means with which to lead a life of leisure, from their patron. They become his courtiers or retainers, servants; and being

fed and countenanced by their patron they are indices of his rank and vicarious consumers of his superfluous wealth. Many of these affiliated gentlemen of leisure are at the same time lesser men of substance in their own right; so that some of them are scarcely at all, others only partially, to be rated as vicarious consumers. So many of them, however, as make up the retainers and hangers-on of the patron may be classed as vicarious consumers without qualification. Many of these again, and also many of the other aristocracy of less degree, have in turn attached to their persons a more or less comprehensive group of vicarious consumers in the persons of their wives and children, their servants, retainers, etc.

Throughout this graduated scheme of vicarious leisure and vicarious consumption the rule holds that these offices must be performed in some such manner, or under some such circumstance or insignia, as shall point plainly to the master to whom this leisure or consumption pertains, and to whom therefore the resulting increment of good repute of right inures. The consumption and leisure executed by these persons for their master or patron represents an investment on his part with a view to an increase of good fame. As regards feasts and largesses this is obvious enough, and the imputation of repute to the host or patron here takes place immediately, on the ground of common notoriety. Where leisure and consumption is performed vicariously by henchmen and retainers, imputation of the resulting repute to the patron is effected by their residing near his person so that it may be plain to all men from what source they draw. As the group whose good esteem is to be secured in this way grows

larger, more patent means are required to indicate the imputation of merit for the leisure performed, and to this end uniforms, badges, and liveries come into vogue. The wearing of uniforms or liveries implies a considerable degree of dependence, and may even be said to be a mark of servitude, real or ostensible. The wearers of uniforms and liveries may be roughly divided into two classes—the free and the servile, or the noble and the ignoble. The services performed by them are likewise divisible into noble and ignoble. Of course the distinction is not observed with strict consistency in practice; the less debasing of the base services and the less honorific of the noble functions are not infrequently merged in the same person. But the general distinction is not on that account to be overlooked. What may add some perplexity is the fact that this fundamental distinction between noble and ignoble, which rests on the nature of the ostensible service performed, is traversed by a secondary distinction into honorific and humiliating, resting on the rank of the person for whom the service is performed or whose livery is worn. So, those offices which are by right the proper employment of the leisure class are noble; such are government, fighting, hunting, the care of arms and accoutrements, and the like,—in short, those which may be classed as ostensibly predatory employments. On the other hand, those employments which properly fall to the industrious class are ignoble; such as handicraft or other productive labour, menial services, and the like. But a base service performed for a person of very high degree may become a very honorific office; as for instance the office of a Maid of Honour or of a Lady in Waiting to the Queen, or the

King's Master of the Horse or his Keeper of the Hounds. The two offices last named suggest a principle of some general bearing. Whenever, as in these cases, the menial service in question has to do directly with the primary leisure employments of fighting and hunting, it easily acquires a reflected honorific character. In this way great honour may come to attach to an employment which in its own nature belongs to the baser sort.

In the later development of peaceable industry, the usage of employing an idle corps of uniformed men-at-arms gradually lapses. Vicarious consumption by dependents bearing the insignia of their patron or master narrows down to a corps of liveried menials. In a heightened degree, therefore, the livery comes to be a badge of servitude, or rather of servility. Something of a honorific character always attached to the livery of the armed retainer, but this honorific character disappears when the livery becomes the exclusive badge of the menial. The livery becomes obnoxious to nearly all who are required to wear it. We are yet so little removed from a state of effective slavery as still to be fully sensitive to the sting of any imputation of servility. This antipathy asserts itself even in the case of the liveries or uniforms which some corporations prescribe as the distinctive dress of their employees. In this country the aversion even goes the length of discrediting—in a mild and uncertain way—those government employments, military and civil, which require the wearing of a livery or uniform.

With the disappearance of servitude, the number of vicarious consumers attached to any one gentleman tends, on the whole, to decrease. The like is of course true, and perhaps in a still

higher degree, of the number of dependents who perform vicarious leisure for him. In a general way, though not wholly nor consistently, these two groups coincide. The dependent who was first delegated for these duties was the wife, or the chief wife; and, as would be expected in the later development of the institution, when the number of persons by whom these duties are customarily performed gradually narrows, the wife remains the last. In the higher grades of society a large volume of both these kinds of service is required; and here the wife is of course still assisted in the work by a more or less numerous corps of menials. But as we descend the social scale, the point is presently reached where the duties of vicarious leisure and consumption devolve upon the wife alone. In the communities of the Western culture, this point is at present found among the lower middle class.

And here occurs a curious inversion. It is a fact of common observation that in this lower middle class there is no pretence of leisure on the part of the head of the household. Through force of circumstances it has fallen into disuse. But the middle-class wife still carries on the business of vicarious leisure, for the good name of the household and its master. In descending the social scale in any modern industrial community, the primary fact—the conspicuous leisure of the master of the household—disappears at a relatively high point. The head of the middle-class household has been reduced by economic circumstances to turn his hand to gaining a livelihood by occupations which often partake largely of the character of industry, as in the case of the ordinary business man

of to-day. But the derivative fact—the vicarious leisure and consumption rendered by the wife, and the auxiliary vicarious performance of leisure by menials—remains in vogue as a conventionality which the demands of respectability will not suffer to be slighted. It is by no means an uncommon spectacle to find a man applying himself to work with the utmost assiduity, in order that his wife may in due form render for him that degree of vicarious leisure which the common sense of the time demands.

The leisure rendered by the wife in such cases is, of course, not a simple manifestation of idleness or indolence. It almost invariably occurs disguised under some form of work or household duties or social amenities, which prove on analysis to serve little or no ulterior end beyond showing that she does not and need not occupy herself with anything that is gainful or that is of substantial use. As has already been noticed under the head of manners, the greater part of the customary round of domestic cares to which the middle-class housewife gives her time and effort is of this character. Not that the results of her attention to household matters, of a decorative and mundificatory character, are not pleasing to the sense of men trained in middle-class proprieties; but the taste to which these effects of household adornment and tidiness appeal is a taste which has been formed under the selective guidance of a canon of propriety that demands just these evidences of wasted effort. The effects are pleasing to us chiefly because we have been taught to find them pleasing. There goes into these domestic duties much solicitude for a proper combination of form and colour, and for other ends that are to be classed as æsthetic in

the proper sense of the term; and it is not denied that effects having some substantial æsthetic value are sometimes attained. Pretty much all that is here insisted on is that, as regards these amenities of life, the housewife's efforts are under the guidance of traditions that have been shaped by the law of conspicuously wasteful expenditure of time and substance. If beauty or comfort is achieved,—and it is a more or less fortuitous circumstance if they are,—they must be achieved by means and methods that commend themselves to the great economic law of wasted effort. The more reputable, “presentable” portion of middle-class household paraphernalia are, on the one hand, items of conspicuous consumption, and on the other hand, apparatus for putting in evidence the vicarious leisure rendered by the housewife.

The requirement of vicarious consumption at the hands of the wife continues in force even at a lower point in the pecuniary scale than the requirement of vicarious leisure. At a point below which little if any pretence of wasted effort, in ceremonial cleanness and the like, is observable, and where there is assuredly no conscious attempt at ostensible leisure, decency still requires the wife to consume some goods conspicuously for the respectability of the household and its head. So that, as the latter-day outcome of this evolution of an archaic institution, the wife, who was at the outset the drudge and chattel of the man, both in fact and in theory,—the producer of goods for him to consume,—has become the ceremonial consumer of goods which he produces. But she still quite unmistakably remains his chattel in theory; for the habitual rendering of vicarious leisure and

consumption is the abiding mark of the unfree <sup>A</sup> servant. *means to prod. / wage = freedom?*

This vicarious consumption practised by the household of the middle and lower classes can not be counted as a direct expression of the leisure-class scheme of life, since the household of this pecuniary grade does not belong within the leisure class. It is rather that the leisure-class scheme of life here comes to an expression at the second remove. The leisure class stands at the head of the social structure in point of respectability; and its manner of life and its standards of worth therefore afford the norm of respectability for the community. The observance of these standards, in some degree of approximation, becomes incumbent upon all classes lower in the scale. In modern civilized communities the lines of demarcation between social classes have grown vague and transient, and wherever this happens the norm of respectability imposed by the upper class extends its coercive influence with but slight hindrance down through the social structure to the lowest strata. The result is that the members of each stratum accept as their ideal of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum, and bend their energies to live up to that ideal. On pain of forfeiting their good name and their self-respect in case of failure, they must conform to the accepted code, at least in appearance.

The basis on which good repute in any highly organised industrial community ultimately rests is pecuniary strength; and the means of showing pecuniary strength, and so of gaining or retaining a good name, are leisure and a conspicuous consumption of goods. Accordingly, both of these methods are in vogue as far down

the scale as it remains possible; and in the lower strata in which the two methods are employed, both offices are in great part delegated to the wife and children of the household. Lower still, where any degree of leisure, even ostensible, has become impracticable for the wife, the conspicuous consumption of goods remains and is carried on by the wife and children. The man of the household also can do something in this direction, and, indeed, he commonly does; but with a still lower descent into the levels of indigence—along the margin of the slums—the man, and presently also the children, virtually cease to consume valuable goods for appearances, and the woman remains virtually the sole exponent of the household's pecuniary decency. No class of society, not even the most abjectly poor, foregoes all customary conspicuous consumption. The last items of this category of consumption are not given up except under stress of the direst necessity. Very much of squalor and discomfort will be endured before the last trinket or the last pretence of pecuniary decency is put away. There is no class and no country that has yielded so abjectly before the

pressure of physical want as to deny themselves all gratification of this higher or spiritual need.

From the foregoing survey of the growth of conspicuous leisure and consumption, it appears that the utility of both alike for the purposes of reputability lies in the element of waste that is common to both. In the one case it is a waste of time and effort, in the other it is a waste of goods. Both are methods of demonstrating the possession of wealth, and the two are conventionally accepted as equivalents. The choice between them is a question of advertising expediency simply, except so far as it may be affected by other standards of propriety, springing from a different source. On grounds of expediency the preference may be given to the one or the other at different stages of the economic development. The question is, which of the two methods will most effectively reach the persons whose convictions it is desired to affect. Usage has answered this question in different ways under different circumstances.

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## Of Our Spiritual Strivings\*

W. E. B. DU BOIS

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.

And yet, being a problem is a strange experience,—peculiar even for one who has never been anything else, save perhaps in babyhood and in Europe. It is in the early days of rollicking boyhood that the revelation first bursts upon one, all in a day, as it were. I remember well when the shadow swept

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those of the bachelor male; in particular maternity is practically forbidden her, the unmarried mother remaining an object of scandal. How, indeed, could the myth of Cinderella<sup>9</sup> not keep all its validity? Everything still encourages the young girl to expect fortune and happiness from some Prince Charming rather than to attempt by herself their difficult and uncertain conquest. In particular she can hope to rise, thanks to him, into a caste superior to her own, a miracle that could not be bought by the labor of her lifetime. But such a hope is a thing of evil because it divides her strength and her interests; this division is perhaps woman's greatest handicap. Parents still raise their daughter with a view to marriage rather than to furthering her personal development; she sees so many advantages in it that she herself wishes for it; the result is that she is often less specially trained, less solidly grounded than her brothers, she is less deeply involved in her profession. In this way she dooms herself to remain in its lower levels, to be inferior; and the vicious circle is formed: this professional inferiority reinforces her desire to find a husband.

Every benefit always has as its bad side some burden; but if the burden is too heavy, the benefit seems no longer to be anything more than a servitude. For the majority of laborers, labor is today a thankless drudgery, but in the case of woman this is not compensated for by a definite conquest of her social dignity, her freedom of behavior, or her economic independence; it is natural enough for many woman workers and employees to see in the right to work only an obligation from which marriage will deliver

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Philip Wylie: *Generation of Vipers* (Boston: Farrar, Straus & Co., 1942).

them. Because of the fact that she has taken on awareness of self, however, and because she can also free herself from marriage through a job, woman no longer accepts domestic subjection with docility. What she would hope is that the reconciliation of family life with a job should not require of her an exhausting, difficult performance. Even then, as long as the temptations of convenience exist—in the economic inequality that favors certain individuals and the recognized right of woman to sell herself to one of these privileged men—she will need to make a greater moral effort than would a man in choosing the road of independence. It has not been sufficiently realized that the temptation is also an obstacle, and even one of the most dangerous. Here it is accompanied by a hoax, since in fact there will be only one winner out of thousands in the lottery of marriage. The present epoch invites, even compels women to work; but it flashes before their eyes paradises of idleness and delight: it exalts the winners far above those who remain tied down to earth.

The privileged place held by men in economic life, their social usefulness, the prestige of marriage, the value of masculine backing, all this makes women wish ardently to please men. Women are still, for the most part, in a state of subjection. It follows that woman sees herself and makes her choices not in accordance with her true nature in itself, but as man defines her. So we must first go on to describe woman such as men have fancied her in their dreams, for what-in-men's-eyes-she-seems-to-be is one of the necessary factors in her real situation.

## Some Principles of Stratification\*

KINGSLEY DAVIS AND WILBERT E. MOORE

In a previous paper some concepts for handling the phenomena of social inequality were presented.<sup>1</sup> In the present paper a further step in stratification theory is undertaken—an attempt to show the relationship between stratification and the rest of the social order.<sup>2</sup> Starting from the proposition that no society is "classless," or unstratified, an effort is made to explain, in functional terms, the universal necessity which calls forth stratification in any social system. Next, an attempt is made to explain the roughly uniform distribution of prestige as between the major types of positions in every society. Since, however, there occur between one society and another great differences in the

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<sup>1</sup> Kingsley Davis, "A Conceptual Analysis of Stratification," *American Sociological Review*, 7: 309-321, June, 1942.

<sup>2</sup> The writers regret (and beg indulgence) that the present essay, a condensation of a longer study, covers so much in such short space that adequate evidence and qualification cannot be given and that as a result what is actually very tentative is presented in an unfortunately dogmatic manner.



degree and kind of stratification, some attention is also given to the varieties of social inequality and the variable factors that give rise to them.

Clearly, the present task requires two different lines of analysis—one to understand the universal, the other to understand the variable features of stratification. Naturally each line of inquiry aids the other and is indispensable, and in the treatment that follows the two will be interwoven, although, because of space limitations, the emphasis will be on the universals.

Throughout, it will be necessary to keep in mind one thing—namely, that the discussion relates to the system of positions, not to the individuals occupying those positions. It is one thing to ask why different positions carry different degrees of prestige, and quite another to ask how certain individuals get into those positions. Although, as the argument will try to show, both questions are related, it is essential to keep them separate in our thinking. Most of the literature on stratification has tried to answer the second question (particularly with regard to the ease or difficulty of mobility between strata) without tackling the first. The first question, however, is logically prior and, in the case of any particular individual or group, factually prior.

### ||| THE FUNCTIONAL NECESSITY OF STRATIFICATION

Curiously, however, the main functional necessity explaining the universal presence of stratification is precisely the requirement faced by any society of placing and motivating individuals in the social structure. As a functioning

mechanism a society must somehow distribute its members in social positions and induce them to perform the duties of these positions. It must thus concern itself with motivation at two different levels: to instill in the proper individuals the desire to fill certain positions, and, once in these positions, the desire to perform the duties attached to them. Even though the social order may be relatively static in form, there is a continuous process of metabolism as new individuals are born into it, shift with age, and die off. Their absorption into the positional system must somehow be arranged and motivated. This is true whether the system is competitive or non-competitive. A competitive system gives greater importance to the motivation to achieve positions, whereas a non-competitive system gives perhaps greater importance to the motivation to perform the duties of the positions; but in any system both types of motivation are required.

If the duties associated with the various positions were all equally pleasant to the human organism, all equally important to societal survival, and all equally in need of the same ability or talent, it would make no difference who got into which positions, and the problem of social placement would be greatly reduced. But actually it does make a great deal of difference who gets into which positions, not only because some positions are inherently more agreeable than others, but also because some require special talents or training and some are functionally more important than others. Also, it is essential that the duties of the positions be performed with the diligence that their importance requires. Inevitably, then, a society must have, first, some kind of rewards that it can use

as inducements, and, second, some way of distributing these rewards differentially according to positions. The rewards and their distribution become a part of the social order, and thus give rise to stratification.

One may ask what kind of rewards a society has at its disposal in distributing its personnel and securing essential services. It has, first of all, the things that contribute to sustenance and comfort. It has, second, the things that contribute to humor and diversion. And it has, finally, the things that contribute to self respect and ego expansion. The last, because of the peculiarly social character of the self, is largely a function of the opinion of others, but it nonetheless ranks in importance with the first two. In any social system all three kinds of rewards must be dispensed differentially according to positions.

In a sense the rewards are "built into" the position. They consist in the "rights" associated with the position, plus what may be called its accompaniments or perquisites. Often the rights, and sometimes the accompaniments, are functionally related to the duties of the position. (Rights as viewed by the incumbent are usually duties as viewed by other members of the community.) However, there may be a host of subsidiary rights and perquisites that are not essential to the function of the position and have only an indirect and symbolic connection with its duties, but which still may be of considerable importance in inducing people to seek the positions and fulfill the essential duties.

If the rights and perquisites of different positions in a society must be unequal, then the society must be stratified, because that is precisely what stratification means. Social inequality is thus an unconsciously evolved device by

which societies insure that the most important positions are conscientiously filled by the most qualified persons. Hence every society, no matter how simple or complex, must differentiate persons in terms of both prestige and esteem, and must therefore possess a certain amount of institutionalized inequality.

It does not follow that the amount or type of inequality need be the same in all societies. This is largely a function of factors that will be discussed presently.

### ||| THE TWO DETERMINANTS OF POSITIONAL RANK

Granting the general function that inequality subserves, one can specify the two factors that determine the relative rank of different positions. In general those positions convey the best reward, and hence have the highest rank, which (a) have the greatest importance for the society and (b) require the greatest training or talent. The first factor concerns function and is a matter of relative significance; the second concerns means and is a matter of scarcity.

#### Differential Functional Importance

Actually a society does not need to reward positions in proportion to their functional importance. It merely needs to give sufficient reward to them to insure that they will be filled competently. In other words, it must see that less essential positions do not compete successfully with more essential ones. If a position is easily filled, it need not be heavily rewarded, even though important. On the other hand, if it is important but hard to fill, the reward must be

high enough to get it filled anyway. Functional importance is therefore a necessary but not a sufficient cause of high rank being assigned to a position.<sup>3</sup>

### Differential Scarcity of Personnel

Practically all positions, no matter how acquired, require some form of skill or capacity for performance. This is implicit in the very notion of position, which implies that the incumbent must, by virtue of his incumbency, accomplish certain things.

There are, ultimately, only two ways in which a person's qualifications come about: through inherent capacity or through training. Obviously, in concrete activities both are always necessary, but from a practical standpoint the scarcity may lie primarily in one or the other, as well as in both. Some positions require innate talents of such high degree that the persons who fill them are bound to be rare. In many cases, however, talent is fairly abundant in the population but the training process is so long, costly, and elaborate that relatively few can qualify. Modern medicine, for example, is within the mental capacity of most individuals, but a medical education is so burdensome and expensive that virtually none would undertake it if

the position of the M.D. did not carry a reward commensurate with the sacrifice.

If the talents required for a position are abundant and the training easy, the method of acquiring the position may have little to do with its duties. There may be, in fact, a virtually accidental relationship. But if the skills required are scarce by reason of the rarity of talent or the costliness of training, the position, if functionally important, must have an attractive power that will draw the necessary skills in competition with other positions. This means, in effect, that the position must be high in the social scale—must command great prestige, high salary, ample leisure, and the like.

### How Variations Are to Be Understood

In so far as there is a difference between one system of stratification and another, it is attributable to whatever factors affect the two determinants of differential reward—namely, functional importance and scarcity of personnel. Positions important in one society may not be important in another, because the conditions faced by the societies, or their degree of internal development, may be different. The same conditions, in turn, may affect the question of scarcity; for in some societies the stage

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, functional importance is difficult to establish. To use the position's prestige to establish it, as is often unconsciously done, constitutes circular reasoning from our point of view. There are, however, two independent clues: (a) the degree to which a position is functionally unique, there being no other positions that can perform the same function satisfactorily; (b) the degree to which other positions are dependent on the one in question. Both clues are best exemplified in organized systems of positions built around one major function. Thus, in most complex societies the religious, political, economic, and educational functions are handled by dis-

tinct structures not easily interchangeable. In addition, each structure possesses many different positions, some clearly dependent on, if not subordinate to, others. In sum, when an institutional nucleus becomes differentiated around one main function, and at the same time organizes a large portion of the population into its relationships, the *key* positions in it are of the highest functional importance. The absence of such specialization does not prove functional unimportance, for the whole society may be relatively unspecialized; but it is safe to assume that the more important functions receive the first and clearest structural differentiation.

of development, or the external situation, may wholly obviate the necessity of certain kinds of skill or talent. Any particular system of stratification, then, can be understood as a product of the special conditions affecting the two aforementioned grounds of differential reward.

## MAJOR SOCIETAL FUNCTIONS AND STRATIFICATION

### Religion

The reason why religion is necessary is apparently to be found in the fact that human society achieves its unity primarily through the possession by its members of certain ultimate values and ends in common. Although these values and ends are subjective, they influence behavior, and their integration enables the society to operate as a system. Derived neither from inherited nor from external nature, they have evolved as a part of culture by communication and moral pressure. They must, however, appear to the members of the society to have some reality, and it is the role of religious belief and ritual to supply and reinforce this appearance of reality. Through belief and ritual the common ends and values are connected with an imaginary world symbolized by concrete sacred objects, which world in turn is related in a meaningful way to the facts and trials of the individual's life. Through the worship of the sacred objects and the beings they symbolize, and the acceptance of supernatural prescriptions that are at the same time codes of behavior, a powerful control over human conduct is exercised, guiding it along lines sustaining the institutional structure and conforming to the ultimate ends and values.

If this conception of the role of religion is true, one can understand why in every known society the religious activities tend to be under the charge of particular persons, who tend thereby to enjoy greater rewards than the ordinary societal member. Certain of the rewards and special privileges may attach to only the highest religious functionaries, but others usually apply, if such exists, to the entire sacerdotal class.

Moreover, there is a peculiar relation between the duties of the religious official and the special privileges he enjoys. If the supernatural world governs the destinies of men more ultimately than does the real world, its earthly representative, the person through whom one may communicate with the supernatural, must be a powerful individual. He is a keeper of sacred tradition, a skilled performer of the ritual, and an interpreter of lore and myth. He is in such close contact with the gods that he is viewed as possessing some of their characteristics. He is, in short, a bit sacred, and hence free from some of the more vulgar necessities and controls.

It is no accident, therefore, that religious functionaries have been associated with the very highest positions of power, as in theocratic regimes. Indeed, looking at it from this point of view, one may wonder why it is that they do not get *entire* control over their societies. The factors that prevent this are worthy of note.

In the first place, the amount of technical competence necessary for the performance of religious duties is small. Scientific or artistic capacity is not required. Anyone can set himself up as enjoying an intimate relation with deities, and nobody can successfully dispute him. Therefore, the factor of scarcity of personnel does not operate in the technical sense.

One may assert, on the other hand, that religious ritual is often elaborate and religious lore abstruse, and that priestly ministrations require tact, if not intelligence. This is true, but the technical requirements of the profession are for the most part adventitious, not related to the end in the same way that science is related to air travel. The priest can never be free from competition, since the criteria of whether or not one has genuine contact with the supernatural are never strictly clear. It is this competition that debases the priestly position below what might be expected at first glance. That is why priestly prestige is highest in those societies where membership in the profession is rigidly controlled by the priestly guild itself. That is why, in part at least, elaborate devices are utilized to stress the identification of the person with his office—spectacular costume, abnormal conduct, special diet, segregated residence, celibacy, conspicuous leisure, and the like. In fact, the priest is always in danger of becoming somewhat discredited—as happens in a secularized society—because in a world of stubborn fact, ritual and sacred knowledge alone will not grow crops or build houses. Furthermore, unless he is protected by a professional guild, the priest's identification with the supernatural tends to preclude his acquisition of abundant worldly goods.

As between one society and another it seems that the highest general position awarded the priest occurs in the medieval type of social order. Here there is enough economic production to afford a surplus, which can be used to support a numerous and highly organized priesthood; and yet the populace is unlettered and therefore credulous to a high degree. Perhaps

the most extreme example is to be found in the Buddhism of Tibet, but others are encountered in the Catholicism of feudal Europe, the Inca regime of Peru, the Brahminism of India, and the Mayan priesthood of Yucatan. On the other hand, if the society is so crude as to have no surplus and little differentiation, so that every priest must be also a cultivator or hunter, the separation of the priestly status from the others has hardly gone far enough for priestly prestige to mean much. When the priest actually has high prestige under these circumstances, it is because he also performs other important functions (usually political and medical).

In an extremely advanced society built on scientific technology, the priesthood tends to lose status, because sacred tradition and supernaturalism drop into the background. The ultimate values and common ends of the society tend to be expressed in less anthropomorphic ways, by officials who occupy fundamentally political, economic, or educational rather than religious positions. Nevertheless, it is easily possible for intellectuals to exaggerate the degree to which the priesthood in a presumably secular milieu has lost prestige. When the matter is closely examined the urban proletariat, as well as the rural citizenry, proves to be surprisingly god-fearing and priest-ridden. No society has become so completely secularized as to liquidate entirely the belief in transcendental ends and supernatural entities. Even in a secularized society some system must exist for the integration of ultimate values, for their ritualistic expression, and for the emotional adjustments required by disappointment, death, and disaster.

### Government

Like religion, government plays a unique and indispensable part in society. But in contrast to religion, which provides integration in terms of sentiments, beliefs, and rituals, it organizes the society in terms of law and authority. Furthermore, it orients the society to the actual rather than the unseen world.

The main functions of government are, internally, the ultimate enforcement of norms, the final arbitration of conflicting interests, and the overall planning and direction of society; and externally, the handling of war and diplomacy. To carry out these functions it acts as the agent of the entire people, enjoys a monopoly of force, and controls all individuals within its territory.

Political action, by definition, implies authority. An official can command because he has authority, and the citizen must obey because he is subject to that authority. For this reason stratification is inherent in the nature of political relationships.

So clear is the power embodied in political position that political inequality is sometimes thought to comprise all inequality. But it can be shown that there are other bases of stratification, that the following controls operate in practice to keep political power from becoming complete: (a) The fact that the actual holders of political office, and especially those determining top policy must necessarily be few in number compared to the total population. (b) The fact that the rulers represent the interest of the group rather than of themselves, and are therefore restricted in their behavior by rules and mores designed to enforce this limitation of

interest. (c) The fact that the holder of political office has his authority by virtue of his office and nothing else, and therefore any special knowledge, talent, or capacity he may claim is purely incidental, so that he often has to depend upon others for technical assistance.

In view of these limiting factors, it is not strange that the rulers often have less power and prestige than a literal enumeration of their formal rights would lead one to expect.

### Wealth, Property, and Labor

Every position that secures for its incumbent a livelihood is, by definition, economically rewarded. For this reason there is an economic aspect to those positions (e.g. political and religious) the main function of which is not economic. It therefore becomes convenient for the society to use unequal economic returns as a principal means of controlling the entrance of persons into positions and stimulating the performance of their duties. The amount of the economic return therefore becomes one of the main indices of social status.

It should be stressed, however, that a position does not bring power and prestige *because* it draws a high income. Rather, it draws a high income because it is functionally important and the available personnel is for one reason or another scarce. It is therefore superficial and erroneous to regard high income as the cause of a man's power and prestige, just as it is erroneous to think that a man's fever is the cause of his disease.

The economic source of power and prestige is not income primarily, but the ownership of capital goods (including patents, good will, and professional reputation). Such ownership

should be distinguished from the possession of consumers' goods, which is an index rather than a cause of social standing. In other words, the ownership of producers' goods is properly speaking, a source of income like other positions, the income itself remaining an index. Even in situations where social values are widely commercialized and earnings are the readiest method of judging social position, income does not confer prestige on a position so much as it induces people to compete for the position. It is true that a man who has a high income as a result of one position may find this money helpful in climbing into another position as well, but this again reflects the effect of his initial, economically advantageous status, which exercises its influence through the medium of money.

In a system of private property in productive enterprise, an income above what an individual spends can give rise to possession of capital wealth. Presumably such possession is a reward for the proper management of one's finances originally and of the productive enterprise later. But as social differentiation becomes highly advanced and yet the institution of inheritance persists, the phenomenon of pure ownership, and reward for pure ownership, emerges. In such a case it is difficult to prove that the position is functionally important or that the scarcity involved is anything other than extrinsic and accidental. It is for this reason, doubtless, that the institution of private property in productive goods becomes more subject to criticism as social development proceeds toward industrialization. It is only this pure, that is, strictly legal and functionless ownership, however, that is open to attack; for some form of active ownership, whether private or public, is indispensable.

One kind of ownership of production goods consists in rights over the labor of others. The most extremely concentrated and exclusive of such rights are found in slavery, but the essential principle remains in serfdom, peonage, *encomienda*, and indenture. Naturally this kind of ownership has the greatest significance for stratification, because it necessarily entails an unequal relationship.

But property in capital goods inevitably introduces a compulsive element even into the nominally free contractual relationship. Indeed, in some respects the authority of the contractual employer is greater than that of the feudal landlord, inasmuch as the latter is more limited by traditional reciprocities. Even the classical economics recognized that competitors would fare unequally, but it did not pursue this fact to its necessary conclusion that, however it might be acquired, unequal control of goods and services must give unequal advantage to the parties to a contract.

#### Technical Knowledge

The function of finding means to single goals, without any concern with the choice between goals, is the exclusively technical sphere. The explanation of why positions requiring great technical skill receive fairly high rewards is easy to see, for it is the simplest case of the rewards being so distributed as to draw talent and motivate training. Why they seldom if ever receive the highest rewards is also clear: the importance of technical knowledge from a societal point of view is never so great as the integration of goals, which takes place on the religious, political, and economic levels. Since the technological level is concerned solely with means, a purely

technical position must ultimately be subordinate to other positions that are religious, political, or economic in character.

Nevertheless, the distinction between expert and layman in any social order is fundamental, and cannot be entirely reduced to other terms. Methods of recruitment, as well as of reward, sometimes lead to the erroneous interpretation that technical positions are economically determined. Actually, however, the acquisition of knowledge and skill cannot be accomplished by purchase, although the opportunity to learn may be. The control of the avenues of training may inhere as a sort of property right in certain families or classes, giving them power and prestige in consequence. Such a situation adds an artificial scarcity to the natural scarcity of skills and talents. On the other hand, it is possible for an opposite situation to arise. The rewards of technical position may be so great that a condition of excess supply is created, leading to at least temporary devaluation of the rewards. Thus "unemployment in the learned professions" may result in a debasement of the prestige of those positions. Such adjustments and readjustments are constantly occurring in changing societies; and it is always well to bear in mind that the efficiency of a stratified structure may be affected by the modes of recruitment for positions. The social order itself, however, sets limits to the inflation or deflation of the prestige of experts: an over-supply tends to debase the rewards and discourage recruitment or produce revolution, whereas an under-supply tends to increase the rewards or weaken the society in competition with other societies.

Particular systems of stratification show a wide range with respect to the exact position

of technically competent persons. This range is perhaps most evident in the degree of specialization. Extreme division of labor tends to create many specialists without high prestige since the training is short and the required native capacity relatively small. On the other hand it also tends to accentuate the high position of the true experts—scientists, engineers, and administrators—by increasing their authority relative to other functionally important positions. But the idea of a technocratic social order or a government or priesthood of engineers or social scientists neglects the limitations of knowledge and skills as a basic for performing social functions. To the extent that the social structure is truly specialized the prestige of the technical person must also be circumscribed.

#### ||| VARIATION IN STRATIFIED SYSTEMS

The generalized principles of stratification here suggested form a necessary preliminary to a consideration of types of stratified systems, because it is in terms of these principles that the types must be described. This can be seen by trying to delineate types according to certain modes of variation. For instance, some of the most important modes (together with the polar types in terms of them) seem to be as follows:

##### (a) The Degree of Specialization

The degree of specialization affects the fineness and multiplicity of the gradations in power and prestige. It also influences the extent to which particular functions may be emphasized in the invidious system, since a given function cannot receive much emphasis in the hierarchy until

it has achieved structural separation from the other functions. Finally, the amount of specialization influences the bases of selection. Polar types: *Specialized, Unspecialized*.

#### (b) The Nature of the Functional Emphasis

In general when emphasis is put on sacred matters, a rigidity is introduced that tends to limit specialization and hence the development of technology. In addition, a brake is placed on social mobility, and on the development of bureaucracy. When the preoccupation with the sacred is withdrawn, leaving greater scope for purely secular preoccupations, a great development, and rise in status, of economic and technological positions seemingly takes place. Curiously, a concomitant rise in political position is not likely, because it has usually been allied with the religious and stands to gain little by the decline of the latter. It is also possible for a society to emphasize family functions—as in relatively undifferentiated societies where high mortality requires high fertility and kinship forms the main basis of social organization. Main types: *Familistic, Authoritarian (Theocratic or sacred, and Totalitarian or secular), Capitalistic*.

#### (c) The Magnitude of Invidious Differences

What may be called the amount of social distance between positions, taking into account the entire scale, is something that should lend itself to quantitative measurement. Considerable differences apparently exist between different societies in this regard, and also between parts of the same society. Polar types: *Equalitarian, Inequalitarian*.

#### (d) The Degree of Opportunity

The familiar question of the amount of mobility is different from the question of the comparative equality, or inequality of rewards posed above, because the two criteria may vary independently up to a point. For instance, the tremendous divergences in monetary income in the United States are far greater than those found in primitive societies, yet the equality of opportunity to move from one rung to the other in the social scale may also be greater in the United States than in a hereditary tribal kingdom. Polar types: *Mobile (open), Immobile (closed)*.

#### (e) The Degree of Stratum Solidarity

Again, the degree of "class solidarity" (or the presence of specific organizations to promote class interests) may vary to some extent independently of the other criteria, and hence is an important principle in classifying systems of stratification. Polar types: *Class organized, Class unorganized*.

### EXTERNAL CONDITIONS

What state any particular system of stratification is in with reference to each of these modes of variation depends on two things: (1) its state with reference to the other ranges of variation, and (2) the conditions outside the system of stratification which nevertheless influence that system. Among the latter are the following:

#### (a) The Stage of Cultural Development

As the cultural heritage grows, increased specialization becomes necessary, which in turn

contributes to the enhancement of mobility, a decline of stratum solidarity, and a change of functional emphasis.

#### (b) Situation with Respect to Other Societies

The presence or absence of open conflict with other societies, of free trade relations or cultural diffusion, all influence the class structure to some extent. A chronic state of warfare tends to place emphasis upon the military functions, especially when the opponents are more or less equal. Free trade, on the other hand, strengthens the hand of the trader at the expense of the warrior and priest. Free movement of ideas generally has an equalitarian effect. Migration and conquest create special circumstances.

#### (c) Size of the Society

A small society limits the degree to which functional specialization can go, the degree of segregation of different strata, and the magnitude of inequality.

### COMPOSITE TYPES

Much of the literature on stratification has attempted to classify concrete systems into a certain number of types. This task is deceptively simple, however, and should come at the end of an analysis of elements and principles, rather than at the beginning. If the preceding discussion has any validity, it indicates that there are a number of modes of variation between different systems, and that any one system is a composite of the society's status with reference to all these modes of variation. The danger of trying to classify whole societies under such rubrics as *caste, feudal, or open class* is that one or two criteria are selected and others ignored, the result being an unsatisfactory solution to the problem posed. The present discussion has been offered as a possible approach to the more systematic classification of composite types.

## Citizenship and Social Class\*

T.H. MARSHALL

### ||| THE DEVELOPMENT OF CITIZENSHIP TO THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

I shall be running true to type as a sociologist if I begin by saying that I propose to divide citizenship into three parts. But the analysis is, in this case, dictated by history even more clearly than by logic. I shall call these three parts, or elements, civil, political and social. The civil element is composed of the rights necessary for individual freedom—liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice. The last is of a different order from the others, because it is the right to defend and assert all one's rights on terms of equality with others and by due process of law. This shows us that the institutions most directly associated with civil rights are the courts of justice. By the

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political element I mean the right to participate in the exercise of political power, as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body. The corresponding institutions are parliament and councils of local government. By the social element I mean the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society. The institutions most closely connected with it are the educational system and the social services.

In early times these three strands were wound into a single thread. The rights were blended because the institutions were amalgamated. As Maitland said: 'The further back we trace our history the more impossible it is for us to draw strict lines of demarcation between the various functions of the State: the same institution is a legislative assembly, a governmental council and a court of law. . . . Everywhere, as we pass from the ancient to the modern, we see what the fashionable philosophy calls differentiation.' Maitland is speaking here of the fusion of political and civil institutions and rights. But a man's social rights, too, were part of the same amalgam, and derived from the status which also determined the kind of justice he could get and where he could get it, and the way in which he could take part in the administration of the affairs of the community of which he was a member. But this status was not one of citizenship in our modern sense. In feudal society status was the hallmark of class and the measure of inequality. There was no uniform collection of rights and duties with which all men—noble and common, free and serf—were endowed by

virtue of their membership of the society. There was, in this sense, no principle of the equality of citizens to set against the principle of the inequality of classes. In the medieval towns, on the other hand, examples of genuine and equal citizenship can be found. But its specific rights and duties were strictly local, whereas the citizenship whose history I wish to trace is, by definition, national.

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### ||| THE EARLY IMPACT OF CITIZENSHIP ON SOCIAL CLASS

\* \* \* My aim has been to trace in outline the development of citizenship in England to the end of the nineteenth century. For this purpose I have divided citizenship into three elements, civil, political and social. I have tried to show that civil rights came first, and were established in something like their modern form before the first Reform Act was passed in 1832. Political rights came next, and their extension was one of the main features of the nineteenth century, although the principle of universal political citizenship was not recognised until 1918. Social rights, on the other hand, sank to vanishing point in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Their revival began with the development of public elementary education, but it was not until the twentieth century that they attained to equal partnership with the other two elements in citizenship.

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Citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status

is endowed. There is no universal principle that determines what those rights and duties shall be, but societies in which citizenship is a developing institution create an image of an ideal citizenship against which achievement can be measured and towards which aspiration can be directed. The urge forward along the path thus plotted is an urge towards a fuller measure of equality, an enrichment of the stuff of which the status is made and an increase in the number of those on whom the status is bestowed. Social class, on the other hand, is a system of inequality. And it too, like citizenship, can be based on a set of ideals, beliefs and values. It is therefore reasonable to expect that the impact of citizenship on social class should take the form of a conflict between opposing principles. If I am right in my contention that citizenship has been a developing institution in England at least since the latter part of the seventeenth century, then it is clear that its growth coincides with the rise of capitalism, which is a system, not of equality, but of inequality. Here is something that needs explaining. How is it that these two opposing principles could grow and flourish side by side in the same soil? What made it possible for them to be reconciled with one another and to become, for a time at least, allies instead of antagonists? The question is a pertinent one, for it is clear that, in the twentieth century, citizenship and the capitalist class system have been at war.

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\* \* \* Citizenship, even in its early forms, was a principle of equality, and that during this period it was a developing institution. Starting at the point where all men were free and, in theory, capable of enjoying rights, it grew by

enriching the body of rights which they were capable of enjoying. But these rights did not conflict with the inequalities of capitalist society; they were, on the contrary, necessary to the maintenance of that particular form of inequality. The explanation lies in the fact that the core of citizenship at this stage was composed of civil rights. And civil rights were indispensable to a competitive market economy. They gave to each man, as part of his individual status, the power to engage as an independent unit in the economic struggle and made it possible to deny to him social protection on the ground that he was equipped with the means to protect himself. Maine's famous dictum that 'the movement of the progressive societies has hitherto been a movement from Status to Contract' expresses a profound truth which has been elaborated, with varying terminology, by many sociologists, but it requires qualification. For both status and contract are present in all but the most primitive societies. Maine himself admitted this when, later in the same book, he wrote that the earliest feudal communities, as contrasted with their archaic predecessors, were 'neither bound together by mere sentiment nor recruited by a fiction. The tie which united them was Contract.' But the contractual element in feudalism coexisted with a class system based on status and, as contract hardened into custom, it helped to perpetuate class status. Custom retained the form of mutual undertakings, but not the reality of a free agreement. Modern contract did not grow out of feudal contract; it marks a new development to whose progress feudalism was an obstacle that had to be swept aside. For modern contract is essentially an agreement between men who are free and equal in status,

though not necessarily in power. Status was not eliminated from the social system. Differential status, associated with class, function and family, was replaced by the single uniform status of citizenship, which provided the foundation of equality on which the structure of inequality could be built.

\* \* \* This status was clearly an aid, and not a menace, to capitalism and the free-market economy, because it was dominated by civil rights, which confer the legal capacity to strive for the things one would like to possess but do not guarantee the possession of any of them. A property right is not a right to possess property, but a right to acquire it, if you can, and to protect it, if you can get it. But, if you use these arguments to explain to a pauper that his property rights are the same as those of a millionaire, he will probably accuse you of quibbling. Similarly, the right to freedom of speech has little real substance if, from lack of education, you have nothing to say that is worth saying, and no means of making yourself heard if you say it. But these blatant inequalities are not due to defects in civil rights, but to lack of social rights, and social rights in the mid-nineteenth century were in the doldrums. The Poor Law was an aid, not a menace, to capitalism, because it relieved industry of all social responsibility outside the contract of employment, while sharpening the edge of competition in the labour market. Elementary schooling was also an aid, because it increased the value of the worker without educating him above his station.

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\* \* \* Thus although citizenship, even by the end of the nineteenth century, had done little to

reduce social inequality, it had helped to guide progress into the path which led directly to the egalitarian policies of the twentieth century.

It also had an integrating effect, or, at least, was an important ingredient in a integrating process. \* \* \* Citizenship requires \* \* \* a direct sense of community membership based on loyalty to a civilisation which is a common possession. It is a loyalty of free men endowed with rights and protected by a common law. Its growth is stimulated both by the struggle to win those rights and by their enjoyment when won. We see this clearly in the eighteenth century, which saw the birth, not only of modern civil rights, but also of modern national consciousness. The familiar instruments of modern democracy were fashioned by the upper classes and then handed down, step by step, to the lower: political journalism for the intelligentsia was followed by newspapers for all who could read, public meetings, propaganda campaigns and associations for the furtherance of public causes. Repressive measures and taxes were quite unable to stop the flood. And with it came a patriotic nationalism, expressing the unity underlying these controversial outbursts.

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This growing national consciousness, this awakening public opinion, and these first stirrings of a sense of community membership and common heritage did not have any material effect on class structure and social inequality for the simple and obvious reason that, even at the end of the nineteenth century, the mass of the working people did not wield effective political power. By that time the franchise was fairly wide, but those who had recently received the vote had not yet learned how to

use it. The political rights of citizenship, unlike the civil rights, were full of potential danger to the capitalist system, although those who were cautiously extending them down the social scale probably did not realise quite how great the danger was. They could hardly be expected to foresee what vast changes could be brought about by the peaceful use of political power, without a violent and bloody revolution. The planned society and the welfare state had not yet risen over the horizon or come within the view of the practical politician. The foundations of the market economy and the contractual system seemed strong enough to stand against any probable assault. In fact, there were some grounds for expecting that the working classes, as they became educated, would accept the basic principles of the system and be content to rely for their protection and progress on the civil rights of citizenship, which contained no obvious menace to competitive capitalism. Such a view was encouraged by the fact that one of the main achievements of political power in the later nineteenth century was the recognition of the right of collective bargaining. This meant that social progress was being sought by strengthening civil rights, not by creating social rights; through the use of contract in the open market, not through a minimum wage and social security.

But this interpretation underrates the significance of this extension of civil rights in the economic sphere. For civil rights were in origin intensely individual, and that is why they harmonised with the individualistic phase of capitalism. By the device of incorporation groups were enabled to act legally as individu-

als. This important development did not go unchallenged, and limited liability was widely denounced as an infringement of individual responsibility. But the position of trade unions was even more anomalous, because they did not seek or obtain incorporation. They can, therefore, exercise vital civil rights collectively on behalf of their members without formal collective responsibility, while the individual responsibility of the workers in relation to contract is largely unenforceable. These civil rights became, for the workers, an instrument for raising their social and economic status, that is to say, for establishing the claim that they, as citizens, were entitled to certain social rights. But the normal method of establishing social rights is by the exercise of political power, for social rights imply an absolute right to a certain standard of civilisation which is conditional only on the discharge of the general duties of citizenship. Their content does not depend on the economic value of the individual claimant. There is therefore a significant difference between a genuine collective bargain through which economic forces in a free market seek to achieve equilibrium and the use of collective civil rights to assert basic claims to the elements of social justice. Thus the acceptance of collective bargaining was not simply a natural extension of civil rights; it represented the transfer of an important process from the political to the civil sphere of citizenship. But 'transfer' is, perhaps, a misleading term, for at the time when this happened the workers either did not possess, or had not yet learned to use, the political right of the franchise. Since then they have obtained and made full use of that right. Trade unionism has,

therefore, created a secondary system of industrial citizenship parallel with and supplementary to the system of political citizenship.

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### ||| SOCIAL RIGHTS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The period of which I have hitherto been speaking was one during which the growth of citizenship, substantial and impressive though it was, had little direct effect on social inequality. Civil rights gave legal powers whose use was drastically curtailed by class prejudice and lack of economic opportunity. Political rights gave potential power whose exercise demanded experience, organisation and a change of ideas as to the proper functions of government. All these took time to develop. Social rights were at a minimum and were not woven into the fabric of citizenship. The common purpose of statutory and voluntary effort was to abate the nuisance of poverty without disturbing the pattern of inequality of which poverty was the most obviously unpleasant consequence.

A new period opened at the end of the nineteenth century, conveniently marked by Booth's survey of Life and Labour of the People in London and the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor. It saw the first big advance in social rights, and this involved significant changes in the egalitarian principles expressed in citizenship. But there were other forces at work as well. A rise of money incomes unevenly distributed over the social classes altered the economic distance which separated these classes from one another, diminishing the gap between skilled and unskilled labour and between skilled labour

and non-manual workers, while the steady increase in small savings blurred the class distinction between the capitalist and the propertyless proletarian. Secondly, a system of direct taxation, ever more steeply graduated, compressed the whole scale of disposable incomes. Thirdly, mass production for the home market and a growing interest on the part of industry in the needs and tastes of the common people enabled the less well-to-do to enjoy a material civilisation which differed less markedly in quality from that of the rich than it had ever done before. All this profoundly altered the setting in which the progress of citizenship took place. Social integration spread from the sphere of sentiment and patriotism into that of material enjoyment. The components of a civilised and cultured life, formerly the monopoly of the few, were brought progressively within reach of the many, who were encouraged thereby to stretch out their hands towards those that still eluded their grasp. The diminution of inequality strengthened the demand for its abolition, at least with regard to the essentials of social welfare.

These aspirations have in part been met by incorporating social rights in the status of citizenship and thus creating a universal right to real income which is not proportionate to the market value of the claimant. Class-abatement is still the aim of social rights, but it has acquired a new meaning. It is no longer merely an attempt to abate the obvious nuisance of destitution in the lowest ranks of society. It has assumed the guise of action modifying the whole pattern of social inequality. It is no longer content to raise the floor-level in the basement of the social edifice, leaving the superstructure as it was. It has



begun to remodel the whole building, and it might even end by converting a skyscraper into a bungalow. It is therefore important to consider whether any such ultimate aim is implicit in the nature of this development, or whether, as I put it at the outset, there are natural limits to the contemporary drive towards greater social and economic equality. \* \* \*

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I said earlier that in the twentieth century citizenship and the capitalist class system have been at war. Perhaps the phrase is rather too strong,

but it is quite clear that the former has imposed modifications on the latter. But we should not be justified in assuming that although status is a principle that conflicts with contract, the stratified status system which is creeping into citizenship is an alien element in the economic world outside. Social rights in their modern form imply an invasion of contract by status, the subordination of market price to social justice, the replacement of the free bargain by the declaration of rights. \* \* \*

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## The Sociology of Stratification\*

C. WRIGHT MILLS

In New York City, some people taxi home at night from Madison Avenue offices to Sutton Place; others leave a factory loft in Brooklyn and subway home to East Harlem. In Detroit there is Grosse Pointe, with environs, and there is Hamtramck, without environs; in a thousand small towns the people live on either side of the railroad track. In Moscow, high party members ride cautiously in black cars to well-policed suburbs; other people walk home from factories to cramped apartments. And in the shadow of swank Washington, D. C., apartment houses, there are the dark alley dwellings.

In almost any community in every nation there is a high and a low, and in many societies, a big in-between.

If we go behind what we can thus casually observe while standing on street corners, and begin seriously to observe in detail the 24-hour cycle of behavior and experience, the 12-month cycle, the life-long biography of people in various cities and nations, we will soon be forced to classify. We might well

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*\* Note the diff. between this and Marx's/Smith's work.*

decide to make our classification of people in terms of the social distribution of valued things and experiences; to find out just which people regularly expect to and do receive how many of the available valued things and experiences, and, on every level, why. Such a classification is the basis of all work in stratification.

In any society of which we know some people seem to get most of such values, some least, others being in between. The student of stratification is bent on understanding such ranking of people, and in finding out exactly in what respects these ranks differ and why. Each ranking or stratum in a society may be viewed as a stratum by virtue of the fact that all of its members have similar chances to gain the things and experiences that are generally valued, whatever they may be: things like cars, money, toys, houses, etc.; experiences, like being given respect, being educated to certain levels, being treated kindly, etc. To belong to one stratum or to another is to share with the other people in this stratum similar chances to receive such values.

If, again, we go behind these strata of people having similar life-chances, and begin to analyze each stratum and the reasons for its formation and persistence, sooner or later we will come upon at least four factors that seem to be quite important keys to the general phenomena. We call these "dimensions of stratification." Each is a way of ranking people with respect to their different chances to obtain values, and together, if properly understood, they enable us to explain these differing chances. These four dimensions are occupation, class, status and power.

### III I

By an occupation we understand a set of activities pursued more or less regularly as a major source of income.

From the individual's standpoint, occupational activities refer to types of skill that are marketable. These skills range from arranging mathematical symbols for \$1000 a day to arranging dirt with a shovel for \$1000 a year.

From the standpoint of society, occupations as activities are functions: they result in certain end products—various goods and services—and are accordingly classified into industrial groups.

As specific activities, occupations thus (1) entail various types and levels of skill, and (2) their exercise fulfills certain functions within an industrial division of labor.

In the United States today the most publicly obvious strata consist of members of similar occupations. However it has been and may now be in other kinds of societies, in contemporary U.S.A. occupations are the most ostensible and the most available "way into" an understanding of stratification. For, most people spend the most alert hours of most of their days in occupational work. What kind of work they do not only monopolizes their wakeful hours of adult life but sets what they can afford to buy: most people who receive any direct income at all do so by virtue of some occupation.

As sources of income, occupations are thus connected with class position. Since occupations also normally carry an expected quota of prestige, on and off the job, they are relevant to status position. They also involve certain

degrees of power over other people, directly in terms of the job, and indirectly in other social areas.) Occupations are thus tied to class, status, and power as well as to skill and function; to understand the occupations composing any social stratum, we must consider them in terms of each of these interrelated dimensions.

The most decisive occupational shift in the twentieth century has been the decline of the independent entrepreneurs ("the old middle class" of businessmen, farmers, and free professionals) and the rise of the salaried employees ("the new middle class" of managers and salaried professionals, of office people and sales employees). During the last two generations the old middle class has bounded from 6 to 25 per cent, while the wage workers as a whole have levelled off, in fact declining from 61 to 55 per cent. In the course of the following remarks we will pay brief attention by way of illustration to these three occupational levels in the cities of the United States.

### III II

"Class situation" in its simplest, objective sense has to do with the amount and source of income. A class is a set of people who share similar life choices because of their similar class situations.

Today, occupation rather than property is the source of income for most of those who receive any direct income: the possibilities of selling their services in the labor market, rather than of profitably buying and selling their property and its yields, now determine the class-chances of over four fifths of the American people.) All the things money can buy and many that men

dream about are theirs by virtue of occupational level. In these occupations men work for someone else on someone else's property. This is the clue to many differences between the older, nineteenth century world of the small propertyed entrepreneur and the occupational structure of the new society. If the old middle class of free enterprisers once fought big property structures in the name of small, free properties, the new middle class of white-collar employees, like the wage-workers in latter-day capitalism, has been, from the beginning, dependent upon large properties for job security.

Wage-workers in the factory and on the farm are on the propertyless bottom of the occupational structure, depending upon the equipment owned by others, earning wages for the time they spend at work. In terms of property, the white-collar people are *not* "in between Capital and Labor;" they are in exactly the same property-class position as the wage-workers. They have no direct fiscal tie to the means of production, no prime claim upon the proceeds from property. Like factory workers—and day laborers for that matter—they work for those who do own such means of livelihood.

Yet if bookkeepers and coal miners, insurance agents and farm laborers, doctors in a clinic and crane operators in an open pit have this condition in common, certainly their class situations are not the same. To understand the variety of modern class positions, we must go beyond the common fact of source of income and consider as well the amount of income.

In the middle thirties the three urban strata, entrepreneurs, white-collar, and wage-workers, formed a distinct scale with respect to

median family income: white-collar employees had a median income of \$2,008; entrepreneurs, \$1,665; urban wage-workers, \$1,175. Although the median income of white-collar workers was higher than that of the entrepreneurs, larger proportions of the entrepreneurs received both high-level and low-level incomes. The distribution of their income was spread more than that of the white collar.

The wartime boom in incomes, in fact, spread the incomes of all occupational groups, but not evenly. The spread occurred mainly among urban entrepreneurs. As an income level, the old middle class in the city is becoming less an evenly graded income group, and more a collection of different strata, with a large proportion of lumpen-bourgeoisie who receive very low incomes, and a small, prosperous bourgeoisie with very high incomes.

In the late forties (1948, median family income) the income of all white-collar workers was \$4,058, that of all urban wage-workers, \$3,317. These averages, however, should not obscure the overlap of specific groups within each stratum: the lower white-collar people—sales-employees and office workers—earned almost the same as skilled workers and foremen,<sup>1</sup> but more than semiskilled urban wage-workers.

In terms of property, white-collar people are in the same position as wage-workers; in terms of occupational income, they are “somewhere in the middle.” Once they were considerably above the wage-workers; they have become less so; in the middle of the century they still have an edge

but, rather than adding new income distinctions within the new middle-class group, the overall rise in incomes is making the new middle class a more homogeneous income group.

Distributions of property and income are important economically because if they are not wide enough, purchasing power may not be sufficient to take the production that is possible or desirable. Such distributions are also important because they underpin the class structure and thus the chances of the various ranks of the people to obtain desired values. Everything from the chance to stay alive during the first year after birth to the chance to view fine art; the chance to remain healthy and if sick to get well again quickly; the chance to avoid becoming a juvenile delinquent; and very crucially, the chance to complete an intermediary or higher educational grade—these are among the chances that are crucially influenced by one’s position in the class structure of a modern society.

These varying, unequal chances are factual probabilities of the class structure. It does not follow from such facts that people in similar class situations will necessarily become conscious of themselves as a class or come to feel that they belong together. Nor does it follow that they will necessarily become aware of any common interests they may objectively share, or that they will become organized in some way, in a movement or in a party, in an attempt to realize such interests. Nor does it follow that they will necessarily become antagonistic to people in other class situations and struggle with them. All these—class-consciousness and awareness

of common interests, organizations and class-struggle—have existed in various times and places and, in various forms, do now exist as mental and political fact. But they do not follow logically or historically from the objective fact of class structure. In any given case, whether or not they arise from objective class situations is a matter for fresh empirical study.

### III III

Prestige involves at least two persons: one to claim it and another to honor the claim. The bases on which various people raise prestige claims, and the reasons others honor these claims, include property and birth, occupation and education, income and power—in fact almost anything that may invidiously distinguish one person from another. In the status system of a society these claims are organized as rules and expectations which regulate who successfully claims prestige, from whom, in what ways, and on what basis. The level of self-esteem enjoyed by given individuals is more or less set by this status system.

There are, thus, six items to which we must pay attention: From the claimant’s side: (1) the status claim, (2) the way in which this claim is raised or expressed, (3) the basis on which the claim is raised. And correspondingly—from the bestower’s side: (4) the status bestowal or deferences given, (5) the way in which these deferences are given, (6) the basis of the bestowal, which may or may not be the same as the basis on which the claim is raised. An extraordinary range of social phenomena are pointed to by these terms.

Claims for prestige are expressed in all those mannerisms, conventions and ways of con-

sumption that make up the styles of life characterizing people on various status levels. The “things that are done” and the “things that just aren’t done” are the status conventions of different strata. Members of higher status groups may dress in distinct ways, follow “fashions” with varying degrees of regularity, eat at certain times and places with certain people. In varying degrees, they maintain an elegance of person and specific modes of address, have dinners together, and are glad to see their sons and daughters intermarry. “Society” in American cities, debutante systems, the management of welfare activities—these often regiment the status activities of upper circles, where exclusiveness, distance, coldness, and condescending benevolence toward outsiders are characteristic.

Claims for prestige and the bestowal of prestige are often based on birth. The Negro child, irrespective of individual “achievement,” will not receive the deference which the white child may successfully claim. The immigrant, especially a member of a recent mass immigration, will not be as likely to receive the deference given the Old American, immigrant groups being generally stratified according to how long they, and their forebears, have been in America. Within “the native-born white of native parentage,” certain “Old Families” receive more deference than do other families. In each case—race, nationality and family—prestige is based on, or at least limited by, descent, which is perhaps most obviously a basis of prestige at the top and at the bottom of the social ladder. European nobilities and rigidly excluded racial minorities represent the acme of status by descent, the one high, the other low.

<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to isolate the salaried foremen from the skilled urban wage-workers in these figures. If we could do so, the

income of lower white-collar workers would be closer to that of semi-skilled workers.

Upper-class position typically carries great prestige, all the more so if the source of the money is property. Yet if the possession of wealth in modern industrial societies leads to increased prestige, rich men who are too fresh from lower class levels may experience great difficulty in "buying their ways" into upper-status circles. Often, in fact, impoverished descendants of once high level Old Families receive more deference from more people than do wealthy men without appropriate grandparents. The facts of the *nouveau riche* (high class without high prestige) and the broken-down aristocrat (high prestige without high class) refute the complete identification of upper-prestige and upper-class position, even though, in due course, the broken-down aristocrat often becomes simply broken-down, and the son of the *nouveau riche*, a man of "clean, old wealth." The possession of wealth also allows the purchase of an environment which in time often leads to the development of those "intrinsic" qualities of individuals and families that are required for higher prestige. When we say that American prestige has been fluid, one thing we mean is that high economic class position has led rather quickly to high prestige. A feudal aristocracy, based on old property and long descent, has not existed here. Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* was focused primarily upon the U. S. post-civil war period and the expressions of prestige claims raised in lavish economic ways by the *nouveau riche* of meat, railroads, and steel.

The prestige of the middle strata in America is based on many principles other than descent and property. The shift to a society of employees has made *occupation* and *education* crucially important. Insofar as occupation determines

the level of income, and different styles of life require different income levels, occupation limits the style of life. In a more direct way, different occupations require different levels and types of education, and education also limits the style of life and thus the status successfully claimed.

Some occupations are reserved for members of upper-status levels, others are "beneath their honor." In some societies, in fact, having no work to do brings the highest prestige, prestige being an aspect of property class, the female dependents of high-class husbands becoming specialists in the display of expensive idleness. But only those who do not need to work, yet have more income than those who must, are likely to obtain prestige from idleness. For those for whom work is necessary but not available, "leisure" brings disgrace. And income from property does not always bring more prestige than income from work; the amount and the ways the income is used are more important than its source. A small rentier may not enjoy esteem equal to that of a moderately paid doctor.

Among the employed, those occupations which pay more, involve more mental activities, and some power to supervise others seems to place people on higher prestige levels. But sheer power does not always lend prestige: the political boss gives up prestige, except among his machine members, for power; constitutional monarchs, on the other hand, may gain ceremonial prestige but give up political power. In offices and factories, skilled foremen and office supervisors expect and typically receive an esteem which lifts them above unskilled workers and typists. But the policeman's power

to direct street masses does not bring prestige, except among little boys.

The type of education, as well as the amount, is an important basis for prestige: "Finishing schools" and "Prep schools" turn out women and men accomplished in a style of life which guarantees deference in some circles. In others, the amount of intellectual skill acquired through education is a key point for estimation. Yet skill alone is not as uniform a basis for prestige as is skill connected with highly esteemed occupations.

The extent to which claims for prestige are honored and by whom they are honored, may vary widely. Some of those from whom an individual claims prestige may honor his claims, others may not; some deferences that are given may express genuine feelings of esteem; others may be expedient strategies for ulterior ends. A society may, in fact, contain many hierarchies of prestige, each with its own typical bases and areas of bestowal, or one hierarchy in which everyone uniformly "knows his place" and is always in it. It is in the latter that prestige groups are most likely to be uniform and continuous.

Imagine a society in which everyone's prestige is absolutely set and unambivalent; every man's claims for prestige are balanced by the prestige he receives, and both his expression of claims and the ways these claims are honored by others are set forth in understood stereotypes. Moreover, the bases of the claims coincide with the reasons they are honored; those who claim prestige on the specific basis of property or birth are honored because of their property or birth. So the exact volume and types of deference expected between any two individuals are always known, expected, and given; and each

individual's level and type of self-esteem are steady features of his inner life.

Now imagine the opposite society, in which prestige is highly unstable and ambivalent: the individual's claims are not usually honored by others. The way claims are expressed are not understood or acknowledged by those from whom deference is expected, and when others do bestow prestige, they do so unclearly. One man claims prestige on the basis of his income, but even if he is given prestige, it is not because of his income but rather, for example, because of his education or appearance. All the controlling devices by which the volume and type of deference might be directed are out of joint or simply do not exist. So the prestige system is no system, but a maze of misunderstanding, of sudden frustration and sudden indulgence, and the individual, as his self-esteem fluctuates, is under strain and full of anxiety.

American society in the middle of the twentieth century does not fit either of these projections absolutely, but it seems fairly clear that it is closer to the unstable and ambivalent model. This is not to say that there is no prestige system in the United States; given occupational groupings, even though caught in status ambivalence, do enjoy typical levels of prestige. It is to say, however, that the enjoyment of prestige is often disturbed and uneasy, that the basis of prestige, the expressions of prestige claims, and the ways these claims are honored, are now subject to great strain, a strain which often throws men and women into a virtual status panic.

As with income, so with prestige: U.S. white-collar groups are differentiated socially, perhaps more decisively than wage-workers and entrepreneurs. Wage earners certainly do

form an income pyramid and a prestige gradation, as do entrepreneurs and rentiers; but the new middle class, in terms of income and prestige, is a superimposed pyramid, reaching from almost the bottom of the first to almost the top of the second.

People in white-collar occupations claim higher prestige than wage-workers, and, as a general rule, can cash in their claims with wage-workers as well as with the anonymous public. This fact has been seized upon, with much justification, as the defining characteristic of the white-collar strata, and although there are definite indications in the United States of a decline in their prestige, still, on a nation-wide basis, the majority of even the lower white-collar employees—office workers and salespeople—enjoy a middle prestige place.

The historic bases of the white-collar employees' prestige, apart from superior income, have included (1) the similarity of their place and type of work to those of the old middle-classes which has permitted them to borrow prestige. (2) As their relations with entrepreneur and with esteemed customer have become more impersonal, they have borrowed prestige from the firm itself. (3) The stylization of their appearance, in particular the fact that most white-collar jobs have permitted the wearing of street clothes on the job, has figured in their prestige claims, as have (4) the skills required in most white-collar jobs, and in many of them the variety of operations performed and the degree of autonomy exercised in deciding work procedures. Furthermore, (5) the time taken to learn these skills and (6) the way in which they have been acquired by formal education and by close contact with the higher-ups in charge has been

important. (7) White-collar employees have monopolized high school education—even in 1940 they had completed 12 grades to the 8 grades for wage-workers and entrepreneurs. They have also (8) enjoyed status by descent: in terms of race, Negro white-collar employees exist only in isolated instances—and, more importantly, in terms of nativity, in 1930 only about 9 per cent of white-collar workers, but 16 per cent of free enterprisers and 21 per cent of wage-workers, were foreign born. Finally, as an underlying fact, (9) the limited size of the white-collar group, compared to wage-workers, has led to successful claims to greater prestige.

#### III IV

To be powerful is to be able to realize one's will, even against the resistance of others. The power position of groups and of individuals typically depends upon factors of class, status, and occupation, often in intricate interrelations.

Given occupations involve specific powers over other people in the actual course of work; but also outside the job area, by virtue of their relations to institutions of property as well as the typical income they afford, occupations lend power. Some occupations require the direct exercise of supervision over other employees and workers, and many white-collar employees are closely attached to this managerial cadre. They are the assistants of authority: the power they exercise is a derived power, but they do exercise it.

Property classes may involve power over job markets and commodity markets, directly and indirectly; they may also support power, because

of their property, over the state. As Franz Neumann has neatly indicated, each of these powers may be organized for execution, in employers association, cartel, and pressure group. From the underside of the property situation, propertyless wage workers may have trade unions and consumers co-ops which may be in a struggle with the organized powers of property on each of these three fronts.

When we speak of the power of classes, occupations and status groups, however, we usually refer more or less specifically to political power. This means the power of such groups to influence or to determine the policies and activities of the state. The most direct means of exercising such power and the sign of its existence are organizations, either composed of members of certain strata, or acting in behalf of their interests, or both. The power of various strata often implies a political willfulness, a "class-consciousness" on the part of members of these strata. But not always: there can be, as in the case of "un-organized, grumbling workers," a common mentality among those in common strata without organizations. And there can be, as in the case of some "pressure groups," an organization representing the interests of those in similar strata without any common mentality being notable among them.

The accumulation of political power by any stratum is generally dependent upon a triangle of factors: willful mentality, objective opportunity, and the state of organization. The opportunity is limited by the group's structural positions within the stratification of the society; the will is dependent upon the group's awareness of its interests and ways of realizing them. And both structural position and awareness

interplay with organizations, which strengthen awareness, and are made politically relevant by structural position.

#### III V

What is at issue in theories of stratification and political power is (1) the objective position of various strata with reference to other strata of modern society, and (2) the political content and direction of their mentalities. Questions concerning either of these issues can be stated in such a way as to allow, and in fact demand, observational answers only if adequate conceptions of stratification and political mentality are clearly set forth.

Often the "mentality" of strata is allowed to take predominance over the objective position.

It is, for example, frequently asserted that "there are no classes in the United States" because "psychology is of the essence of classes" or, as Alfred Bingham has put it, that "class groupings are always nebulous, and in the last analysis only the vague thing called class-consciousness counts." It is said that people in the United States are not aware of themselves as members of classes, do not identify themselves with their appropriate economic level, do not often organize in terms of these brackets or vote along the lines they provide. America, in this reasoning, is a sandheap of "middle-class individuals."

But this is to confuse psychological feelings with other kinds of social and economic reality. [The fact that men are not "class conscious" at all times and in all places does not mean that "there are no classes" or that "in America everybody is middle class."] The economic and social facts

are one thing. Psychological feelings may or may not be associated with them in rationally expected ways. Both are important, and if psychological feelings and political outlooks do not correspond to economic or occupational class, we must try to find out why, rather than throw out the economic baby with the psychological bath, and so fail to understand how either fits into the national tub. No matter what people believe, class structure as an economic arrangement influences their life chances according to their positions in it. If they do not grasp the causes of their conduct this does not mean that the social analyst must ignore or deny them.

If political mentalities are not in line with objectively defined strata, that lack of correspondence is a problem to be explained; in fact, it is the grand problem of the psychology of social strata. The general problem of stratification and political mentality thus has to do with the extent to which the members of objectively defined strata are homogeneous in their political alertness, outlook, and allegiances, and with the degree to which their political mentality and actions are in line with the interests demanded by the juxtaposition of their objective position and their accepted values.

To understand the occupation, class, and status positions of a set of people is not necessarily to know whether or not they (1) will become class-conscious, feeling that they belong together or that they can best realize their rational interests by combining; (2) will have "collective attitudes" of any sort, including those toward themselves, their common situation; (3) will organize themselves, or be open to organization by others, into associations, movements,

or political parties; or (4) will become hostile toward other strata and struggle against them. These social, political, and psychological characteristics may or may not occur on the basis of similar objective situations. In any given case, such possibilities must be explored, and "subjective" attributes must *not be used as criteria* for class inclusion, but rather, as Max Weber has made clear, stated as probabilities on the basis of objectively defined situations.

Implicit in this way of stating the issues of stratification lies a model of social movements and political dynamics. The important differences among people are differences that shape their biographies and ideas; within any given stratum, of course, individuals differ, but if their stratum has been adequately understood, we ought to be able to expect certain psychological traits to recur. Our principles of stratification enable us to do this. The probability that people will have a similar mentality and ideology, and that they will join together for action, is increased the more homogeneous they are with respect to class, occupation, and prestige. Other factors do, of course, affect the probability that ideology, organization, and consciousness will occur among those in objectively similar strata. But psychological factors are likely to be associated with *strata*, which consist of people who are characterized by an intersection of the *several* dimensions we have been using: class, occupation, status, and power. The task is to sort out these dimensions of stratification in a systematic way, paying attention to each separately and then to its relation to each of the other dimensions.

\* \* \*

## PART II

# WHO GETS WHAT?

\* The idea is to understand why change takes place and why in how?

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## Forty Acres and a Mule\*

DALTON CONLEY

The loss of wealth is the loss of dirt.

*John Heywood, circa 1564*

In 1865, at the time of the Emancipation Proclamation, African Americans owned 0.5 percent of the total worth of the United States. This statistic is not surprising; most black Americans had been slaves up to that point. However, by 1990, a full 135 years after the abolition of slavery, black Americans owned only a meager 1 percent of total wealth.<sup>1</sup> In other words, almost no progress had been made in terms of property ownership. African Americans may have won "title" to their own bodies and to their labor, but they have gained ownership over little else.

During the nineteenth century and at the start of the twentieth, this lack of assets was nothing remarkable, for the vast majority of Americans of all races owned little if any property. But over the course of the twentieth century, there has been a dispersal of wealth<sup>2</sup>—limited as it may have been—with

\* First published in 1999; from *Being Black, Living in the Red: Race, Wealth, and Social Policy in America*.

<sup>1</sup> C. Anderson, *Black Labor, White Wealth: The Search for Power and Economic Justice* (Edgewood, Md.: Duncan and Duncan, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> S. Spilerman, M. Semyonov, and N. Lewin-Epstein, "Wealth, Intergenerational Transfers, and Life Chances," in *Social Theory and Social Policy: Essays in Honor of James Coleman*, ed. A. Sorensen and S. Spilerman (New York: Praeger, 1993).

the result that the typical white American family in 1994 had a nest egg of assets totaling a median of \$72,000. With a median net worth of approximately \$9,800 in that year, the typical black family had no significant nest egg to speak of.<sup>3</sup> Unlike income or education levels, wealth has the particular attribute of tending to reproduce itself in a multiplicative fashion from generation to generation. More colloquially, "it takes money to make money." As a result, the black-white gap in assets has continued to grow since the 1960s, when civil rights victories were won.<sup>4</sup>

Black people seem to have gained little that would encourage them to maintain a realistic belief in the "American dream." In fact, this growing wealth gap may help to explain a paradox that exists with respect to race and the American dream. As a group, poor African Americans—increasingly concentrated in inner cities and relatively worse off—maintain the same level of credence in the American dream as they did in the 1960s. By contrast, the black middle class, which has achieved more in terms of income, occupation, and education since the 1960s, has grown increasingly bitter and disillusioned with the idea of the American dream. "In combination," writes Jennifer Hochschild, "these paradoxes produce the surprising result that poor blacks now believe more in the American dream than rich blacks do, which is a reversal from the 1960s."<sup>5</sup> For middle-class blacks, perhaps the promise of their higher education,

<sup>3</sup> These figures include housing and vehicle equity.

<sup>4</sup> M. Oliver and T. Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> J. L. Hochschild, *Facing Up to the American Dream: Race, Class, and the Soul of the Nation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 72.

more prestigious occupations, and even greater incomes falls flat since they still face difficulty in achieving parity with their white counterparts in the most tangible manifestation of class identity: asset accumulation (the house, the car, the business, and so on).

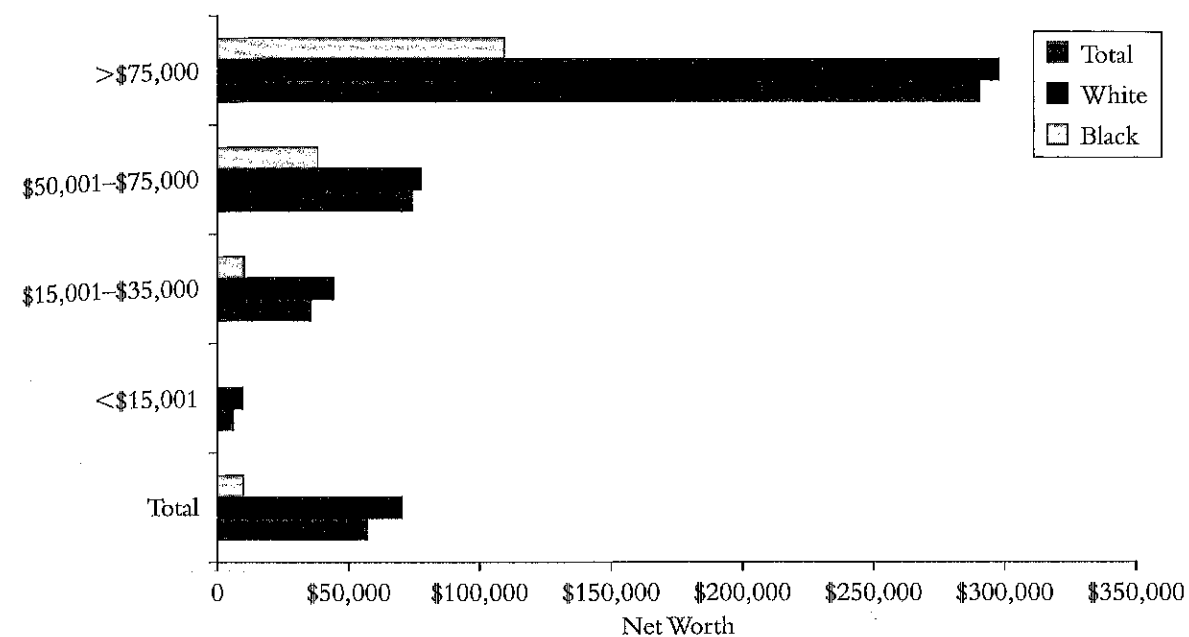
### || WEALTH BY INCOME BRACKET

Differences in wealth between blacks and whites are not a result of lower earnings among the black population. As Figure 1 shows, the story does not get much better when the lower incomes of African Americans are taken into consideration. Even with data broken down by yearly income bracket, the median and mean net worths of blacks are dramatically lower than those of whites. In fact, Francine Blau and John Graham conclude that even after taking into account the lower average incomes of African American families, as much as three-quarters of the wealth gap persists.<sup>6</sup>

When we look at the PSID wealth distribution by race and income in Figure 1 \* \* \*, we find that, at every income level, blacks have substantially fewer assets than whites. Among the poorest group (annual income of \$15,000 or less in 1992), whites have at least some wealth, with a median net worth of \$10,000 (the mean figure is \$47,214), whereas the typical black family has virtually no wealth (the median is zero, and the mean is \$15,959). A full half of all poor African American families have zero (or

<sup>6</sup> F. D. Blau and J. W. Graham, "Black-White Differences in Wealth and Asset Composition," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 105 (1990): 321-39.

FIGURE 1 MEDIAN NET WORTH IN 1994, BY RACE AND ANNUAL INCOME. AT ALL LEVELS OF ANNUAL INCOME, AFRICAN AMERICANS HAVE A LOWER MEDIAN NET WORTH THAN WHITES. \* \* \*



less than zero) assets, while slightly less than 23 percent of poor whites find themselves in this situation. In the middle of the income distribution—the \$35,001 to \$50,000 range—whites have a median figure that is slightly more than double that of blacks (\$81,000 and \$40,000, respectively; the mean figures are \$166,185 and \$74,834). At the upper end of the income ladder, whites have on average almost three times the wealth of blacks.

Examining the data graphically helps us understand the distribution by race. When viewed in this format, it becomes clear that the rate of increase of wealth as we move up the income ladder follows a curve for both blacks

and whites. At the lowest level, the percentage difference is the greatest, but the absolute difference is the lowest, given the lower amounts for both groups. The gap becomes smallest in percentage terms among the middle-income group and then widens again among the next two higher categories.

Because lower-income black families essentially have no assets, it becomes evident not only that African Americans suffer from lower asset levels as a group but also that the distribution of wealth *within* the community is far more uneven.<sup>7</sup> For example, if we were to scale down the entire white population of the United States to a total of one hundred families, we would

<sup>7</sup> Also see A. Brimmer, "Income, Wealth, and Investment Behavior in the Black Community," *A.E.A. Papers and Proceedings* 78 (1988): 151-55.



find that the tenth richest family would own wealth totaling 41.5 times the amount held by the ninetieth richest family. (The 90/10 ratio is often used as a measure of income inequality.) This number, 41.5, is a large 90/10 ratio, reflecting the fact that assets are more unevenly distributed than income. (The corresponding 90/10 ratio for income was 9.4 among whites in 1992.) But as unequal as the distribution was for whites in 1994, it was worse for African Americans. We cannot even calculate a meaningful ratio for the black community since the denominator is negative (the ninetieth richest African American family would have a net worth of minus \$200); meanwhile, the ratio of the tenth richest to the ninetieth richest black family as measured by income is 12.7, again higher than the corresponding figure for whites.

### ||| LIQUID VERSUS ILLIQUID ASSETS

Although there is no absolutely clear line between liquid and illiquid wealth, many scholars do distinguish the two types of assets. As a general rule, liquid assets can be cashed in relatively quickly, as compared to illiquid assets. Liquid assets include stocks, bonds, and cash accounts; illiquid assets range from vehicles to real estate to business ownership. Liquid assets may prove more critical during times of crisis such as spells of unemployment, whereas illiquid assets such as a home, car, and vacation property may have more of an immediate psychological effect since they are consumptive as well as being investment instruments. A car, for example, might be necessary to commute to

8 Oliver and Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth*.

work, but it can also serve as a status symbol. Owning a valuable home may place a family in a better school district and a safer neighborhood while showing off economic power as well.

In a variation of the liquid-illiquid dichotomy, Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro employ a similar distinction between net worth (NW) and net financial assets (NFA). They define net worth as total wealth minus liabilities; net financial assets are defined as net worth minus housing and vehicle equity. Employing this methodology, they demonstrate that in 1984 the black-white gap was greater for net financial assets.<sup>8</sup> When we jump ahead a decade and use a similar dichotomy with the PSID data, we find that, overall, median assets for blacks, excluding home equity, total \$2,000; the corresponding figure for whites is \$28,816 \* \* \* The sum of \$28,000 could provide substantial leeway in times of unemployment, medical crises, or other unexpected expenses. In comparison, \$2,000 would not cover many mortgage payments or months of rent. The average (mean) white family, with over \$30,000 of fungible assets, could probably sustain itself for quite a while through an income shock or other financial crisis.

### ||| SPENDING, SAVING, AND INVESTING: EXPLODING RACIAL STEREOTYPES

If African Americans saved less of their earnings than whites, this would provide a relatively simple explanation for the wealth difference by race. Certainly the popular stereotype is that African Americans are more likely to dis-

play rampant consumerism. Popular culture is flooded with images of the profligate urban black; films often depict an extreme fashion consciousness among young African Americans. Since respect and a sense of identity can be hard to come by through work in the ghetto (and since jobs themselves are hard to come by), perhaps African Americans resort to consumer spending more often than whites in order to construct an identity in today's socioeconomic landscape. Maybe African Americans react to feelings of oppression by indulging in more escapist activities and thus spend a higher proportion of their incomes. A heavier reliance on spending for consumer goods and entertainment necessarily implies a lower savings rate and thus would explain racial differences in total wealth accumulation.

However enticing this explanation may be, a look at data over a five-year period (1984-89) does not indicate that blacks save a lower percentage of income than their white counterparts. In the PSID data, we find that African Americans saved an average of 11 percent of their annual income over this period, and whites saved 10 percent (not a statistically significant difference). This finding is consistent with other research that has examined black-white savings differentials (although savings can be measured

many different ways).<sup>9</sup> For example, economist Warren Hrungr reports that when permanent income is taken into consideration, there is no difference in the savings rates of blacks and whites.<sup>10</sup> Others have found no significant "cultural" effects (such as race might be) on savings at the individual level.<sup>11</sup>

Many other demographic factors, such as family size and structure, education, age, and homeownership, affect savings levels. For instance, female-headed households tend to save less than two-parent or male-headed households. Families whose members have higher education levels tend to save more. The relationship between savings and age is curvilinear: people tend to save more as they get older, until they hit a certain point—most likely, retirement age—when their savings decline and they may even move to dissaving (that is, spending down the capital).<sup>12</sup> Race, however, is not among the demographic factors that determine savings rates. Thus, we may conclude that the highly visible black consumerism witnessed through the lens of media stereotypes may be just that—a stereotype.

Alternatively, although it may be the case that African American adolescents disproportionately spend on particular consumer goods such as sneakers and movies, it may also be the case that these spending patterns are concentrated on

9 In the case of the PSID, the amount of savings is imputed through the difference between 1984 and 1989 net worth, adjusted for inheritances received, value changes in 1984 assets, and changes in household composition (people moving in or out with assets or debts). I then take that as a percentage of the inflation-adjusted, five-year average income for that period. However, windfalls and gifts may appear to be savings in this case. Alternative measures include self-reported savings as a percentage of annual income.

10 W. Hrungr, "The Permanent Income Hypothesis and Black/

White Savings Differentials" (Department of Economics, University of California at Berkeley, 1997).

11 C. D. Carroll, B.-K. Rhee, and C. Rhee, "Are There Cultural Effects on Saving? Some Cross-Sectional Evidence," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 109 (1994): 695-99.

12 See, e.g., K. C. Land and S. T. Russell, "Wealth Accumulation Across the Life Course: Stability and Change in Socio-demographic Covariate Structures of Net Worth Data in the Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1984-1991," *Social Science Research* 25 (1996): 423-62.

very visible, recognizable consumer items that do not add up to much in figuring total expenditures and savings among the population as a whole. In other words, stereotypical "white" expenses might be less publicized but dearer in the final count.

Another stereotype is that African Americans have a lower propensity for entrepreneurship in the mainstream economy—that is, they are less likely to take on the risk of owning their own business or becoming self-employed. At the same time, blacks are more often depicted as "street hustlers," black-market or illicit entrepreneurs such as drug dealers, pimps, numbers runners, and so on. There is an obvious contradiction in portraying African Americans as averse to risk in the mainstream economy but willing to seek out even more dangerous gambles for profit in the underground economy. It is possible, however, that informal economic activities come to replace formal means of business development when attempts at legal business formation are repeatedly frustrated or when informal activities yield higher net profits.

It is beyond the scope of the data available in this study to analyze all the opportunities and activities available to African Americans and whites in the formal and informal economies (as well as the barriers). But it is possible to examine the data for an answer to the following question: are African Americans less likely than whites to be self-employed entrepreneurs in the mainstream economy? In the PSID data, the answer to this question is no. There is no significant racial difference in rates of self-employment. In fact, overall, African Americans have a slightly higher rate than whites \* \* \*.

This finding tends to obscure a more complex picture of a race-class interaction, however. When we examine the data more closely, we see that it is among the middle-income brackets that blacks are more likely to be entrepreneurs. At the highest income bracket, 10.6 percent of whites were self-employed, compared to only 2.6 percent of African Americans, a differential factor of 4. To a great extent, this group probably represents professionals such as doctors and lawyers—occupations to which blacks have only recently gained equal access. We should also keep in mind that self-employment can be defined in many ways, ranging from artisan work to business ownership to contract/temporary employee status. This variation may also explain the higher propensity of middle-income blacks to be self-employed, since those in this group may well be contract employees.

#### COMPETING EXPLANATIONS FOR BLACK-WHITE WEALTH INEQUALITY

If neither income differences, differential savings rates, nor propensity for entrepreneurship lead to racial inequalities in wealth accumulation, what is the source of the disparity? The reasons for the disparity may rest in the historical nature of race relations in the United States, in contemporary dynamics, or in both. Historically, low wages have meant a low savings rate in both absolute and percentage terms, while discrimination in the credit market has precluded African Americans from becoming business owners: "To a considerable extent [lack of wealth] can be traced to a long history of deprivation in this country," argues econo-

mist Andrew Brimmer. "This means that blacks have had much less opportunity than whites to earn, save or to inherit wealth. Because of this historical legacy, black families have had few opportunities to accumulate wealth and to pass it on to their descendants."<sup>13</sup> Whereas Brimmer attributes racial differences in wealth holdings primarily to the head start that whites have enjoyed, others claim that African Americans continue to face institutional barriers to converting their income to equity. Specifically, in their book *American Apartheid*, sociologists Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton document how black people continue to face discrimination in both housing and credit markets.<sup>14</sup>

The results of both these sets of forces are documented by sociologist John Henretta, who shows that during the 1970s blacks were much less likely than whites of similar incomes and ages to own their homes. Further, he demonstrates that even after accounting for a range of socioeconomic and demographic factors, the net worths of blacks were substantially lower than those of whites.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, Toby Parcel documents that, even among homeowners, African Americans face difficulty in converting their income to housing equity—that is, to net worth.<sup>16</sup> These data are quite dated by now, having been collected only half a generation after the passage of landmark civil rights legislation during the 1960s. Nonetheless, using simulation

techniques, Oliver and Shapiro more recently estimate that "institutional biases in the residential arena have cost the current generation of blacks about \$82 billion."<sup>17</sup> In *Assets and the Poor*, Michael Sherraden sums up the two forces leading to the black-white wealth difference:

The most obvious answer is that blacks have always earned less than whites, and, over the years, these earnings shortfalls have resulted in less savings, less investment, and less transfers to the succeeding generations. Over time, less income can result in vast differences in asset accumulation. In addition, however, there is another dimension to the explanation: social and economic institutions have systematically restricted asset accumulation among blacks.<sup>18</sup>

Most scholars would agree with Sherraden that both current and past circumstances lead to racial differences in net worth. But the question remains: how much of the wealth discrepancy is linked to wealth inheritance and how much to contemporary conditions? The answer has important theoretical and policy implications. If it is the socioeconomic disadvantage of the parents of the current African American generation that matters, then the answer may lie in inheritance and property tax policy. But if the lion's share of the black-white wealth gap remains after parental socioeconomic status (including net worth) is taken into

<sup>13</sup> Brimmer, "Income, Wealth, and Investment Behavior," p. 153.

<sup>14</sup> D. Massey and N. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> J. C. Henretta, "Race Differences in Middle-Class Lifestyle: The Role of Home Ownership," *Social Science Research* 8 (1979): 63-78; also see M. R. Jackman and R. W. Jackman,

"Racial Inequalities in Home Ownership," *Social Forces* 58 (1980): 1221-34.

<sup>16</sup> T. Parcel, "Wealth Accumulation of Black and White Men: The Case of Housing Equity," *Social Problems* 30 (1982): 199-211.

<sup>17</sup> Oliver and Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth*, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> M. Sherraden, *Assets and the Poor: A New Direction for Social Policy* (Armonk, N.Y.: Sharpe, 1991), p. 131.

consideration, then an aggressive race-based policy in the housing and credit markets may be in order. Before we directly address this issue empirically, it will be helpful to review some of the historical and contemporary issues that may be at play.

### The Historical Legacy of Deprivation

There is ample evidence to suspect that historical forces and their legacy of asset bequeathment play a role in explaining the current black-white wealth gap. While there has been a paucity of data on individual African American wealth holdings until very recently, we have ample evidence that, as a group, black people have endured a long history of asset deprivation, from the first days when Africans were wrested from their families, homes, and possessions in West Africa and brought to these shores in bondage, not "owning" even their bodies or their labor, let alone any tangible wealth. In fact, for the most part, slaves were legally prohibited from ownership of any form of wealth.<sup>19</sup>

Some theorists have argued that the social-psychological legacy of slavery prevented habits of savings and asset accrual among African Americans. "Using a cultural argument," write Oliver and Shapiro, "[conservative scholars] assert that slaves developed a habit of excessive consumerism and not one of savings and thrift."<sup>20</sup> Although there may be truth to the argument that individuals who lack an opportunity to accumulate savings would develop a

19 Oliver and Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth*, p. 37.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 E. F. Frazier, *The Free Negro Family* (Nashville: Fisk University Press, 1932), p. 35.

more consumerist outlook, it is unlikely that such a legacy would persist a century later if blacks had not been continually prevented from accumulating assets in the postslavery era. It may even be the case that especially during the rough conditions of slavery, blacks had to be thrifty and resourceful in order to survive. Further, Oliver and Shapiro claim, "while slaves were not legally able to amass wealth, they did, in large numbers, acquire assets through thrift, intelligence, industry and their owners' liberal paternalism."<sup>21</sup>

During the antebellum period, some free black people did own property that totaled an estimated \$50 million in 1860.<sup>22</sup> Historian Peter Kolchin has documented that even as early as the period between 1664 and 1677 (before the peak of slavery), in Northampton County, Virginia, "at least 13 (out of 101) blacks became free landowners, most through self-purchase."<sup>23</sup> After the Emancipation Proclamation, rhetoric floated around regarding a potential and massive land redistribution. The Freedmen's Bureau, set up by President Andrew Johnson and administered by "good Christian" General Oliver Otis Howard, had the mission of promoting economic self-sufficiency among the former slaves. The agency, however, never delivered on its promise of dividing up plantations and giving each freed slave "forty acres and a mule" as reparation for slavery.<sup>24</sup>

The importance of the lack of land redistribution cannot be overstated. Historian Paul

23 P. Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), p. 16.

24 C. F. Oubre, *Forty Acres and a Mule: The Freedman's Bureau and Black Land Ownership* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978).

Cimbala writes, "Once established on property of their own, [the former slaves] believed, they would be truly free to pursue additional goals [such as wealth accumulation and political participation] without constantly worrying about offending those who otherwise would have been paying them wages."<sup>25</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois argued that if white America had made good on its promise of land repatriation to blacks, it "would have made a basis of real democracy in the United States."<sup>26</sup>

In many southern states where land redistribution did occur, it turned out to be only a temporary phenomenon. In Georgia, for example, Cimbala describes how land given to freed slaves by General Sherman "was restored [by General Howard] to its white claimants before the ex-slaves had even one full season to test their new status."<sup>27</sup> While Commissioner Howard "believed that the freedmen should have land and that the South could become reconstructed only if it became a land of small farms," according to Claude Oubre, Howard also clung to the notion that "freedmen should earn land and not receive it as a gift. He therefore encouraged freedmen to work and save money in order to purchase land." Never mind the argument that the slaves—through their servitude—had already earned the land. In the face of white southerners who refused to sell farms to blacks even if the whites could not afford to plant

crops themselves, Howard "recommended that northerners, including bureau agents, purchase or lease farms to provide work for the freedmen."<sup>28</sup> In fact, P. S. Peirce writes that of the confiscated plantations, "the greater number went to northerners, who hired Negroes to cultivate them."<sup>29</sup> In this manner, the Freedmen's Bureau may have unwittingly become a catalyst more for the enrichment of northern "carpet-baggers" than for the promotion of southern black entrepreneurship.

It was this hesitancy to "give" land to freed black slaves, combined with the wage labor/land-lease policy, that helped to foster the system of farm tenancy that dominated the South after the Civil War. Sharecropping (tenant farming) was an arrangement in which poor black farmers were provided with housing, seed, acreage, and provisions in return for cultivating the crop.<sup>30</sup> The black farmers did not own any of the capital (that is, the acreage or supplies) and thus were dependent on their white landlords, who kept them on the land at subsistence levels. While farm tenancy was politically different from slavery, in economic terms the end result was not much different. The recollections of Moses Burge, the daughter of black sharecroppers in Georgia, attest to this fact: "We went barefooted. My feet been frost-bitten lots of times. My dad couldn't afford to buy no shoes. He'd get in debt and he'd figure every year he

25 P. Cimbala, "A Black Colony in Dougherty County: The Freedman's Bureau and the Failure of Reconstruction in Southwest Georgia," *Journal of Southwest Georgia History* 4 (1986): 72.

26 Du Bois quoted in Sherraden, *Assets and the Poor*, p. 133.

27 P. Cimbala, "The Freedman's Bureau, the Freedmen, and Sherman's Grant in Reconstruction Georgia, 1865-1867," *Journal of Southern History* 55 (1989): 597-98.

28 Oubre, *Forty Acres and a Mule*, p. xiii.

29 P. S. Peirce, *The Freedman's Bureau: A Chapter in the History of Reconstruction* (New York: Haskell House, 1904), p. 22.

30 N. Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Vintage, 1991), p. 11.

going to get out. . . ." But, she added, "[then] they'd tell you, 'You bought so and so.' They get through figuring it up you lacking \$100 of coming clear. What the hell could you do? You living on his place, you couldn't walk off."<sup>31</sup>

While many southern blacks were trapped in a cycle of debt and no assets—denied the right to make deposits and get loans by banks across the region—whites were given low-interest loans to set up farms in the middle and far western United States. Those few black individuals who managed to escape sharecropping and join the westward migration with the promise of land grants found that their ownership status was "not legally enforceable" in, for example, the state of California.<sup>32</sup> A white person could come and lay legal claim to the land that a black individual had already settled, and the white person's title would be honored over that of the African American. "Thus," according to Oliver and Shapiro, "African Americans were largely barred from taking advantage of the nineteenth-century Federal land-grant program that helped result in an astounding three quarters of families owning their farms."<sup>33</sup>

In fact, the only major nineteenth-century institution that was somewhat successful in fostering wealth accumulation among African Americans was the Freedmen's Bank, part of the Freedmen's Bureau. This bank failed in 1874, however (after the Panic of 1873), largely as a result of "highly questionable no-interest loans from the bank to white companies" doled

out by the white-controlled board of directors, according to Sherraden.<sup>34</sup> Despite its problems, the Freedmen's Bank did help some blacks acquire land and businesses. After its collapse, the rate of land ownership among black people did not rise as rapidly, and, furthermore, many blacks no longer trusted banks because many African American small investors lost all their savings when the institution failed.

Constraints on capital were not the only nineteenth-century barrier to asset accumulation for African Americans. Many southern states passed "Black Codes," laws that required blacks to have an employer or face arrest as a "vagrant." Manning Marable describes the result:

Working independently for themselves, some Black artisans were fined, jailed and even sentenced to work as convict laborers. South Carolina's legislature declared in December 1865, that 'no person of color shall pursue or practice the art, trade, or business of an artisan, mechanic, or shopkeeper, or another trade employment or business . . . on his own account and for his own benefit until he shall have obtained a license which shall be good for one year only.' Black peddlers and merchants had to produce \$100 annually to pay for the license, while whites paid nothing.<sup>35</sup>

Aside from such institutional and legal barriers, there always existed the not-so-subtle threat of lynching or other physical violence if an African American tried to open a business—

34 Sherraden, *Assets and the Poor*, p. 133.

35 M. Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy, and Society* (Boston: South End Press, 1983), pp. 142–43.

31 "From Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration, 1915–1940," Smithsonian Institution exhibition, Museum of American History, Washington, D.C., 1994.

32 Oliver and Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth*, p. 38.

33 Ibid.

particularly if the business might compete with white-owned franchises.<sup>36</sup>

Black ownership of wealth grew slowly during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and it continued to face obstacles in the twentieth century. The land holdings belonging to the majority of black title holders at the turn of the century were small, family-run farms; the advent of large-scale farming in the twentieth century hurt blacks disproportionately. The peak of farm ownership among African Americans was reached in 1910 at 218,000 units; this figure held steady until 1920. By 1930, it had dropped to 182,000, and to 173,000 by 1940. During this period of decline, which includes the Great Depression, many farmers, both black and white, were losing their land, but there appears to have been a net transfer of land from blacks to whites. August Meier and Elliot Rudwick estimate that the rate of land loss for blacks averaged 350,000 acres per year.<sup>37</sup> As the number of black-owned farms dropped over the course of the first half of the century, the numbers of African Americans who migrated to the northern industrial centers grew: between 1910 and 1970, 6.5 million black Americans moved from the South to the North; 5 million of this group made the transition after 1940.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, Old Age Insurance (Social Security), established in 1935, "virtually excluded African Americans and Latinos, for it exempted agricultural and domestic workers from coverage and marginalized low-wage workers." . . . In 1935, for example, 42 percent of black workers

in occupations covered by social insurance did not earn enough to qualify for benefits compared to 22 percent for whites.<sup>39</sup> Not receiving Social Security benefits meant that any savings that had been accumulated by retired or disabled black Americans most likely had to be spent during old age rather than being handed down to the next generation. Further, the lack of social insurance meant that many households had to care for and support indigent, elderly family members, directly diverting the next generation's resources away from savings and capital accumulation.

Perhaps the most dramatic barrier to black-white wealth equity in the twentieth century, however, has involved residential issues and institutions. For example, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), founded in 1933, helped many homeowners avoid default during the Great Depression. But it was the HOLC that institutionalized the redlining technique of associating estimated risks of loan default with neighborhoods. The HOLC invariably assigned black neighborhoods the lowest rating, ensuring that no HOLC-sponsored loans went to black residents. Thus, African Americans could not as readily refinance their mortgages during the Depression, and a greater proportion of black owners lost their homes when contrasted to their white counterparts.

The story did not change after the Great Depression. The Federal Housing Authority (FHA), established in 1937, in combination with the Veterans Administration (VA)

36 Sherraden, *Assets and the Poor*.

37 A. Meier and E. Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1970).

38 Lemann, *Promised Land*, p. 6.

39 Oliver and Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth*, p. 38.

home-lending program that was part of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, made homeownership possible for millions of Americans after World War II by guaranteeing low-interest, long-term loans for first-home buyers. But African Americans were systematically shut out of participation in these programs because loans were channeled to suburbs and away from the central cities where blacks predominantly resided. In fact, according to Massey and Denton, with FHA financing, it became "cheaper to buy new suburban homes than to rent comparable older dwellings in the central city."<sup>40</sup>

"In the suburb-shaping years between 1930 and 1960," write David Kirp, John Dwyer, and Larry Rosenthal, "fewer than one percent of all mortgages in the nation were issued to African Americans."<sup>41</sup> The FHA helped to facilitate this disparity. The *Underwriting Manual* distributed to lenders by the FHA specifically prohibited lending in neighborhoods that were changing in racial or social composition.<sup>42</sup> For example, "in a 1941 memorandum concerning St. Louis, the FHA proclaimed that 'the rapidly rising Negro population has produced a problem in the maintenance of real estate values.'"<sup>43</sup> In this manner, not only did FHA policy prevent the emergence of a new, larger class of suburban black homeowners, but the lack of loans to potential purchasers in the central city caused an accelerated decline in existing property values among African Americans, since willing sellers

could not find buyers. All these institutionalized practices set the stage for the conditions of racial segregation that are observable today and that may contribute, in large part, to the black-white wealth disparity.

### Contemporary Black-White Segregation

Over and above the historical forces that may be at work to depress the wealth levels of African Americans relative to those of whites, there is also evidence that race-based dynamics in the contemporary United States play a major role in perpetuating this type of inequality. Owning one's home is the prime method of equity accumulation for most families in the United States.<sup>44</sup> In 1997, the overall rate of homeownership was 65.7 percent, a record high (although, according to data from the Luxembourg Income Study, this rate still falls in the middle range among Western countries; the country with the highest percentage of homeownership is Australia).<sup>45</sup> But the overall U.S. figure obscures differences by race and place.

Patterns of residential segregation that lead to a disproportionate concentration of minority households in central cities mean that African Americans are less likely than whites to own the homes in which they reside. In 1997, 28 percent of whites lived in central cities, compared to 55 percent who lived in suburbs. During that same year, the corresponding figures for blacks were almost a mirror image: 64 percent for urban residence and

40 Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, p. 52.

41 D. L. Kirp, J. P. Dwyer, and L. A. Rosenthal, *Our Town: Race, Housing, and the Soul of Suburbia* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995), p. 7.

42 Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, p. 54.

43 Kirp, Dwyer, and Rosenthal, *Our Town*, p. 26.

44 F. S. Levy and R. Michel, *The Economic Future of American Families* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press, 1991);

and Spilerman, Semyonov, and Lewin-Epstein, "Wealth, Intergenerational Transfers, and Life Chances."

45 Joint Center for Housing Studies, *The State of the Nation's Housing: 1997* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1998). The Luxembourg Income Study is a dataset housed at the Centre d'Etudes de Populations, de Pauvreté et de Politiques Socio-Economiques (CEPS), Differdange, Luxembourg; see <http://lissy.ceps.lu/access.htm>.

31 percent for suburban residence. (These figures do not add up to 100 percent by race because they exclude rural residents.)<sup>46</sup> This spatial distribution is important because 72 percent of suburban residents owned their homes in 1997, compared to only 49 percent of their urban counterparts. The result of this combination is that in 1997 only 44 percent of blacks owned their homes, in contrast to 71 percent of whites, according to the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies.<sup>47</sup>

The issue of segregation is not economically benign. Housing in black neighborhoods has a lower rate of value increase (and in some cases may decrease in worth) when contrasted to similar units in predominantly white neighborhoods.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, not only do racially segregated housing markets hinder the efforts of African Americans to become homeowners, but also those individuals who do manage to buy a house may find that it is worth less than a comparable house owned by a white person purely because it is located in a black neighborhood. In this manner, the social-psychological realm (of racist ideology) may be directly linked to the economic arena (by determining the relative value of neighborhoods). \* \* \* Property has the quality of picking up the social value conferred upon an object or idea. A rare stamp or a precious metal has no inherent productive value; rather, its value is socially conferred by the market. Likewise,

black housing may be worth less because the majority group (whites) controls the market, and thus segregation is in this group's interest. White housing is worth more precisely because it is not black housing.

This dynamic is best illustrated by the process of "white flight." White flight usually occurs when the percentage of black residents in a community reaches a certain level (roughly 20 percent) and white homeowners begin to fear that their property values will drop. Why might they drop? Values fall because white flight creates a vacuum in the market—in other words, the anticipation of a market drop in housing prices becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. This pernicious circle sustains racist residential ideology and directly links it to economics in the housing market. The property value/racial segregation dynamic affects the life chances of black Americans in many realms since, as a result of residential segregation patterns, poor minorities are more likely to find themselves living among other poor families (that is, concentrated) than impoverished whites are.<sup>49</sup> Minority families are also more likely to live in areas with abandoned buildings or in units that have multiple inadequacies.<sup>50</sup> In addition, because school budgets are financed through local property taxes, the issue of school quality is tied to the value of property.

46 K. DeBarros and C. Bennett, "The Black Population in the United States: March 1997 (Update)," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 508 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998).

47 Joint Center for Housing Studies, *State of the Nation's Housing*, 1997.

48 F. Stutz and A. E. Kartman, "Housing Affordability and Spatial Price Variation in the United States," *Economic Geography* 58 (1982): 221-35; J. Adams, "Growth of U.S. Cities and Recent Trends in Urban Real Estate Values," in *Cities and*

*Their Vital Systems*, ed. J. H. Ausubel and R. Herman (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1988), pp. 108-45.

49 G. Duncan and J. L. Aber, "Neighborhood Structure and Conditions," in *Neighborhood Poverty: Context and Consequences for Child and Adolescent Development*, ed. G. Duncan, J. Brooks-Gunn, and J. L. Aber (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1997).

50 E. Rosenbaum, "Racial/Ethnic Differences in Home Ownership and Housing Quality, 1991," *Social Problems* 43 (1997): 403-26.

The existence of such a dual housing market—a market segregated by race, where African Americans suffer limited housing selections as a result of institutional and overt discrimination—is well documented.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, some researchers have used U.S. census data to demonstrate that levels of residential segregation have increased in the period since the 1960s,<sup>52</sup> although at least one study claims that residential segregation seems to have peaked in the 1970s and declined slightly since then—with the largest percentage decreases of segregation indices in newer southern and western cities.<sup>53</sup>

While there is a sizable literature tracking and documenting the importance of continued residential segregation, few researchers have addressed the issue of racial differences in rates of homeownership directly, in order to determine whether they result from class differentials or from racial dynamics. What researchers have shown is that racial segregation *per se* and the existence of dual housing markets cannot be explained by class; as Massey and Denton state, “Whereas segregation declines steadily for most minority groups as socioeconomic status rises,

levels of black-white segregation do not vary significantly by social class.”<sup>54</sup> Research by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has shown that the dual housing market is maintained by a variety of practices such as overt discrimination on the part of real estate agents and institutional discrimination on the part of lending institutions.<sup>55</sup> A local study conducted in St. Louis by HUD found that African Americans paid 15 to 25 percent more than whites for similar housing.<sup>56</sup> Since housing quality was controlled in this study, any differences in price would be a result of race, not class. If this pattern were to hold across the entire country, we should expect a contemporary effect of race on wealth levels net of parental assets and other socioeconomic measures.

Most research documenting the effects of a dual market has focused on community-level issues such as neighborhood quality, spatial assimilation, or suburbanization.<sup>57</sup> Spatial assimilation is the process by which minority groups seek to convert income gains to social status through improved residential conditions, typically moving out from an urban ethnic enclave into a predominantly

51 See, e.g., R. Alba and J. Logan, “Variations on Two Themes: Racial and Ethnic Patterns in the Attainment of Suburban Residence,” *Demography* 28 (1991): 431–53; Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*; R. Farley and W. H. Frey, “Changes in the Segregation of Whites from Blacks,” *American Sociological Review* 59 (1994): 23–45; E. Rosenbaum, “The Structural Constraints on Minority Housing Choices,” *Social Forces* 72 (1994): 725–47.

52 S. McKinney and A. B. Schnare, “Trends in Residential Segregation by Race: 1960–1980,” *Journal of Urban Economics* 26 (1989): 269–80.

53 Farley and Frey, “Changes in the Segregation of Whites from Blacks.”

54 Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, p. 11.

55 R. E. Weink, C. E. Reid, J. C. Simonson, and F. J. Eggers, *Measuring Racial Discrimination in American Housing Markets: The Housing Market Practices Survey* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1978).

M. Fix and R. Struyk, eds., *Clear and Convincing Evidence: Measurement of Discrimination in America* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press, 1993).

56 J. Yinger, G. Galster, B. Smith, and F. Eggers, *The Status of Research into Racial Discrimination and Segregation in American Housing Markets* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1978).

57 D. Massey and E. Fong, “Segregation and Neighborhood Quality: Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians in the San Francisco Metropolitan Area,” *Social Forces* 69 (1990): 15–32; A. Gross and D. Massey, “Spatial Assimilation Models: A Micro-Macro Comparison,” *Social Science Quarterly* 72 (1991): 349–59; L. Stearns and J. Logan, “The Racial Structuring of the Housing Market and Segregation in Suburban Areas,” *Social Forces* 65 (1986): 29–42; D. Massey and N. Denton, “Suburbanization and Segregation in U.S. Metropolitan Areas,” *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988): 592–626.

white suburb. African Americans have faced obstacles in making this transition, however. For instance, one study reports that blacks are less likely than Hispanics and Asian Americans to reside in the suburbs, even after accounting for differences in socioeconomic status.<sup>58</sup> When African Americans do manage to attain suburban residence, sociologist Emily Rosenbaum notes, the communities into which they “move tend to have lower income levels, higher unemployment, lower tax bases and more of the problems common to inner-city neighborhoods.”<sup>59</sup>

This community-level focus of the literature is a result of the impetus for housing research. Stimulated by the urban riots of the 1960s, the Kerner Commission, appointed by the president, concluded that America was “moving towards two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.”<sup>60</sup> Subsequent analysis was concerned with the nature of minority confinement to urban ghettos, the concentration of poverty, neighborhood-level effects, and the making of the underclass.<sup>61</sup> Massey and Denton write:

Residential segregation is not a neutral fact; it systematically undermines the social and economic well-being of blacks in the United States. Because of racial segregation, a significant share of black America is condemned to experience a social environment where poverty and joblessness are the norm, where a majority of children are born out of wedlock, where most families

are on welfare, where educational failure prevails, and where social and physical deterioration abound. Through prolonged exposure to such an environment, black chances for social and economic success are drastically reduced. . . . *The effect of segregation on black well-being is structural, not individual.*<sup>62</sup>

This focus on the macro-structural conditions that segregation creates has neglected the mechanisms by which housing conditions affect the individual (and in turn contribute to the maintenance and continuation of the structural conditions). One important way that housing segregation may directly affect the individual family is through its impact on individual and family wealth accumulation. Little research has addressed the role of segregation as it affects the economic well-being of individual black family units.

Instead, individual-level research on race and housing usually takes residential segregation as a given and looks at how black and white families attain housing equity. For example, Rosenbaum reports that, net of other socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, blacks in the greater New York metropolitan area are less likely to own their homes than whites (presumably as a result of spatial assimilation patterns).<sup>63</sup> Oliver and Shapiro analyze housing appreciation and find that—net of inflation, year of purchase, mortgage rate, and an indicator of hypersegregation<sup>64</sup>—housing owned by

58 D. Massey and N. Denton, “Trends in the Residential Segregation of Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians: 1970–1980,” *American Sociological Review* 52 (1987): 802–25.

59 Rosenbaum, “Racial/Ethnic Differences in Home Ownership and Housing Quality,” p. 3.

60 U.S. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *The Kerner Report* (New York: Pantheon, 1968), p. 1.

61 W. J. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chi-

cago Press, 1987); Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*. Also see C. Jencks and P. Peterson, eds., *The Urban Underclass* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1991).

62 Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, p. 2; emphasis added.

63 Rosenbaum, “Racial/Ethnic Differences in Home Ownership and Housing Quality.”

64 Massey and Denton define hypersegregation as the condition of being “very highly segregated (having a black-white

blacks appreciates at a significantly lower rate than housing owned by whites. These authors also address credit issues, developing a statistical model that holds constant a number of factors (including household income and whether the loan was financed through the FHA or the VA), and demonstrate that blacks pay significantly higher mortgage interest rates than whites.<sup>65</sup>

In the PSID data, I find racial differences that point to the saliency of current conditions in the housing and credit markets in determining black-white wealth inequity. For example, African Americans who do own homes and attempt to get financing against their equity (a second mortgage) are much more likely to be turned down, with a 4.4 percent rejection rate in contrast to a 1.1 percent rejection rate for whites \* \* \*. This may be related to the finding that 11.8 percent of white applicants have had previous business with the bank to which they applied, in contrast to only 2.4 percent of their African American counterparts. As a result, black homeowners are less likely to have refinanced their mortgage (which often allows a homeowner to save money by taking advantage of a drop in interest rates). On the other hand, contemporary black homeowners are actually more likely (46.9 percent) than whites (21.7 percent) to have a government-sponsored loan. Possibly as a result of this higher rate of government backing, African Americans are less likely to have mortgage insurance (when an institution other than the lender underwrites the loan, often because of a small down payment). Some other aspects of credit financing, such as the pro-

pensity to have a fixed-interest mortgage and the likelihood of a mortgage tax, do not show sizable racial differences in the PSID data.

While these measures of credit access center around housing, they may imply that African Americans suffer from similar disadvantages when applying for business loans (for example, not having had previous business with the bank). Also important is that homeownership not only affects the quality of one's abode and neighborhood but also directly affects the amount of money left for other investing or spending.

Put simply, owning is cheaper than renting. The PSID data show that in 1996 the median rent for tenants was \$400, while the median monthly mortgage payment for homeowners was only \$279. Although other costs such as property taxes, insurance, and repair expenses are associated with owning, these costs are generally not enough to raise the typical owner's monthly cost over that of the median renter. The Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies demonstrated that between 1982 and 1993, the proportion of income that went to mortgage payments in the average household declined from 34 percent to 20.2 percent, before rising modestly to 22 percent in 1996.<sup>66</sup> This increasing affordability of homeownership stands in contrast to rents, which have remained consistently high over the 1980s and 1990s. Thus, owning may actually free up more money for other expenses or investments. This may be part of the reason owners accumulate net worth much faster than renters.

\* \* \*

index of dissimilarity greater than 60 percent] on at least four of the five dimensions at once" (*American Apartheid*, p. 74). The five dimensions are unevenness, isolation, clustering, concentration, and urban centralization. For a technical discussion, see D. Massey and N. Denton, "Hypersegregation

in U.S. Metropolitan Areas: Black and Hispanic Segregation Along Five Dimensions," *Demography* 26 (1989): 378-79.

<sup>65</sup> Oliver and Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth*, p. 205.

<sup>66</sup> Joint Center for Housing Studies, *The State of the Nation's Housing: 1996* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1997).

## Poverty

I conclude this highly condensed paper with two further observations that may throw additional light on the relation of the sense of group position to race prejudice. Race prejudice becomes entrenched and tenacious to the extent the prevailing social order is rooted in the sense of social position. This has been true of the historic South in our country. In such a social order race prejudice tends to become chronic and impermeable to change. In other places the social order may be affected only to a limited extent by the sense of group position held by the dominant racial group. This I think has been true usually in the case of anti-Semitism in Europe and this country. Under these conditions the sense of group position tends to be weaker and more vulnerable. In turn, race prejudice has a much more variable and intermittent career, usually becoming pronounced only as a consequence of grave disorganizing events that allow for the formation of a scapegoat.

This leads me to my final observation which in a measure is an indirect summary. The sense

of group position dissolves and race prejudice declines when the process of running definition does not keep abreast of major shifts in the social order. When events touching on relations are not treated as "big events" and hence do not set crucial issues in the arena of public discussion; or when the elite leaders or spokesmen do not define such big events vehemently or adversely; or where they define them in the direction of racial harmony; or when there is a paucity of strong interest groups seeking to build up a strong adverse image for special advantage—under such conditions the sense of group position recedes and race prejudice declines.

The clear implication of my discussion is that the proper and the fruitful area in which race prejudice should be studied is the collective process through which a sense of group position is formed. To seek, instead, to understand it or to handle it in the arena of individual feeling and of individual experience seems to me to be clearly misdirected.

\* Remarks as to, between 'group' & 'ind.' levels. 'Racial prejudice' formed at group level, effects felt at ind. level.

## The Psychology of Social Stratification\*

DOUGLAS MASSEY

\* Great article to cite in 'La Caspro article'  
\* Great review of social/cultural capital.

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### III THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SOCIAL CLASSIFICATION

Although obvious and glaring, in principle the mechanisms of stratification employed in the Jim Crow South are quite general and operate at some level in all human societies. They are ultimately social in origin and predate the emergence of the market as a means of organizing human production and consumption (Massey 2005). Instead, they follow naturally from the pursuit of core social motives common to all human beings (Fiske 2004). What has changed dramatically is the societal context within which the core social motives play out. Human interactions increasingly occur within urban environments of great size, density, and heterogeneity, and the ecological settings that individuals find themselves adapting to—psychologically, socially, cultur-

\* First published in 2007; from *Categorically Unequal: The American Stratification System*.



ally, and physiologically—vary greatly depending on whether the individuals are rich or poor, light or dark, male or female.

In a very real way, stratification begins psychologically with the creation of cognitive boundaries that allocate people to social categories. Before categorical inequality can be implemented socially, categories must be created cognitively to classify people conceptually based on some set of achieved and ascribed characteristics. The roots of social stratification thus lie ultimately in the cognitive construction of boundaries to make social distinctions, a task that comes naturally to human beings, who are mentally hardwired to engage in categorical thought (Fiske 2004). Indeed, recent work shows that human intelligence works more through pattern recognition and inductive generalization than deductive logic or mathematical optimization (Dawes 1998). In contrast to the software and hardware of a digital computer, which work together to make decisions using a strict Boolean logic, the “wetware” of the human brain is messy, inconsistent, and often quite “illogical” in a strictly deductive sense (Dawes and Hastie 2001; Kahneman and Tversky 1973, 1979). Instead, human “rationality” has been shaped by evolution to depart in characteristic ways from strict adherence to the principles of logic and probability that are assumed by most rational choice models (Dawes 1998; Kahneman and Tversky 2000).

Our natural capacity for categorical thought evolved in this fashion because the human brain is an energy sink. Constituting just 2 percent of the body’s weight, the brain uses 20 percent of its total energy (Donald 1991). In the course of thousands of years of evolution, therefore, human beings evolved ingrained mental short-

cuts to conserve cognitive resources. Operating with deductive rigor to consider all possible combinations, permutations, and contingencies before making a decision is possible for a powerful electronic computer contemplating a single problem, but if the brain were to adopt such an approach to decide the myriad of choices that human beings face in daily life, humans would waste a lot of scarce energy pondering routine situations and everyday actions that have little effect on survival. Most decisions made by humans are not perfect or optimal in any real sense; they are just “good enough” to get by and live another day, yielding the human practice of “satisficing” rather than optimizing (Simon 1981).

For this reason, human beings function mentally as “cognitive misers.” They take a variety of characteristic mental shortcuts and use simple rules of thumb and shorthands to make everyday judgments (Fiske and Taylor 1991). As organisms, we tend to “satisfice” rather than optimize (Newell and Simon 1972), and we are wired cognitively to construct general categories about the world in which we live and then to use them to classify and evaluate the stimuli we encounter. These conceptual categories are collectively known as *schemas*. They represent cognitive structures that serve to interconnect a set of stimuli, their various attributes, and the relationships between them (Fiske 2004).

Since human memory is finite and cannot be expanded, if the brain is to remember more things it must combine or “chunk” bits of information into larger conceptual categories (schemas), using common properties to classify a much larger number of people, objects, and experiences into a small number of readily identifiable categories for recall. Ultimately

schemas are nothing more than well-established neural pathways that have been created through the repeated firing of particular constellations of synapses, leading to the formation of an integrated assembly of neurons that function together according to a specific sequence along specific routes to produce a consistent mental representation (LeDoux 2002).

People use schemas to evaluate themselves and the social roles, social groups, social events, and individuals they encounter, a process known as social cognition (Fiske 2004). The categories into which they divide up the world may change over time and evolve with experience, but among mature human beings they always exist and people always fall back on them when they interpret objects, events, people, and situations (Fiske 2004), and they are especially reliant on categorical judgments under conditions of threat or uncertainty. Human beings are psychologically programmed to categorize the people they encounter and to use these categorizations to make social judgments.

Social schemas do not exist simply as neutral mental representations, however; they are typically associated with emotional valences. The human brain is composed of two parallel processors that, while interconnected, function independently (Carter 1998; Konner 2002; Panksepp 1998). The emotional brain is rooted in a set of neural structures that are common to all mammals and are known collectively as the limbic system, whereas the rational brain is centered in the prefrontal cortex and other areas of the neocortex (Damasio 1994, 1999). The two portions of the brain, labeled system 1 and system 2 by Daniel Kahneman (2003), are neurally interconnected, but the number and speed of the connections running from the limbic system to the neocortex are

greater than the reverse, so that emotional memories stored in the limbic system, which are typically unconscious or implicit, greatly affect how human beings make use of categories that exist within the rational, conscious brain (LeDoux 1996; Zajonc 1998).

Emotions stored in the limbic system may be positive or negative, but when they are associated with particular classes of people or objects they contribute to prejudice, which is a predetermined emotional orientation toward individuals or objects (Fiske 2004). A prejudicial orientation for or against some social group thus contains both conscious and unconscious components (Bargh 1996, 1997). On the one hand, people may be principled racists who consciously believe that African Americans are inferior and thus rationally seek to subordinate them, consistent with their explicit beliefs. On the other hand, a person may quite sincerely believe in equal opportunity and racial justice and yet harbor unconscious anti-black sentiments and associations that were created through some process of conditioning (such as the repeated visual pairing of violent crime scenes with black perpetrators on television), even though this prejudice may be inconsistent with the person’s explicit beliefs.

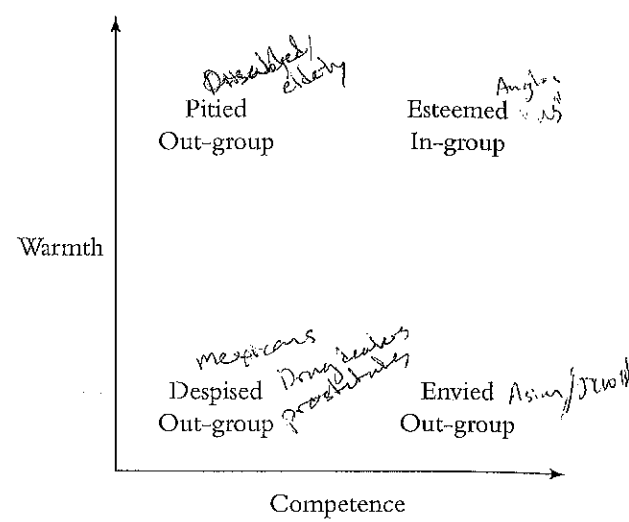
All human beings, whether they think of themselves as prejudiced or not, hold in their heads schemas that classify people into categories based on age, gender, race, and ethnicity (Stangor et al. 1992; Taylor et al. 1978). They cannot help it. It is part of the human condition, and these schemas generally include implicit memories that yield subconscious dispositions toward people and objects; leading to stereotypes (Fiske 1998). Moreover, although stereotypical notions are always present, people are more likely to fall back on them in making judgments when

✓they feel challenged, face uncertainty, or experience sensory overload (Bodenhausen and Lichtenstein 1987; Bodenhausen and Wyer 1985).

In making stereotypical judgments about others, human beings appear to evaluate people along two basic psychological dimensions: warmth and competence (Fiske et al. 2002). Warmth is how likable and approachable a person is. We are attracted to people we view as high on the warmth dimension, and we seek to interact and spend time with them. We find people who are low on the warmth dimension to be off-putting, and we generally avoid them and seek to minimize the number and range of our social contacts with them; we don't like them and find them "cold." In addition to these subjective feelings of attraction and liking, we also evaluate people in terms of competence and efficacy—their ability to act in a purposeful manner to get things done. We may or may not like people who are highly competent, but we generally respect them and admire their ability to achieve.

These two dimensions of social perception come together in the *stereotype content model*, which argues that human social cognition and stereotyping involve the cognitive placement of groups and individuals in a two-dimensional social space defined by the intersection of independent axes of warmth and competence (Fiske et al. 2002). As shown in figure 1, the social space for stereotyping has four quadrants. The top-right quadrant contains people within the person's own group, along with members of groups perceived to be similar to one's own. Naturally, we think of members of our own social group as warm and competent and, hence, approachable and worthy of respect. The relevant emotion associated with in-group social perceptions is esteem or pride.

FIGURE 1 THE STEREOTYPE CONTENT MODEL



SOURCE: Author's compilation.

The intersection of the two dimensions yields three distinct kinds of out-groups, however, which vary in terms of approachability and respect. The bottom-right quadrant contains those groups that are viewed socially as competent but not warm. They are respected but not liked, and the relevant emotion that people feel toward them is envy. This quadrant embraces the classic middleman minorities, such as Jews in medieval Europe, Chinese in Malaysia, Tutsi in Rwanda, and Indians in East Africa. In a stable social structure, people show public respect for and defer to members of envied out-groups, but if the social order breaks down, these out-groups may become targets of communal hatred and violence because they are not liked and are not perceived as people "like us."

The top-left quadrant includes out-groups that are viewed as warm, and thus likable, but as not competent. Those falling into this category include people who have experienced some misfortune but are otherwise perceived as "people like me," such as the disabled, the elderly, the blind, or the mentally retarded. One could imagine being in their shoes but for an accident of fate, and so the relevant emotion is pity. We like the members of these out-groups, but recognizing their lack of competence, we also feel sorry for them and do not respect them. In a stable social structure, members of pitied out-groups tend to be looked after and cared for, but in times of social disorder they may suffer from neglect (as seen in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans), though they generally do not become targets of intentional hatred or communal violence.

Finally, social groups occupying the bottom-left quadrant are perceived simultaneously as low in warmth and low in competence. Being neither likable nor capable, people within these out groups are socially despised, and the dominant emotion is disgust. This quadrant contains social outcasts such as drug dealers, lazy welfare recipients, sex offenders, and the chronically homeless. It also includes members of groups that have been subject to an ideological process of group formation and boundary definition that questions their humanity. African Americans in the Jim Crow South were perceived by whites as neither competent nor warm. They were socially labeled as inferior, even subhuman, and because they were perceived as less than fully human, they could be exploited, segregated, humiliated, and killed with near impunity.

Recent work in neuroscience has implicated a particular region of the brain as central to the process of social cognition (see Harris and Fiske 2006). Whenever individuals perceive a stimulus as a human being and therefore a potential social actor, an area of the brain known as the *medial prefrontal cortex* lights up when observed under functional magnetic resonance imagery (fMRI). Lasana Harris and Susan Fiske (2006) pretested a number of photographic images of social actors to establish the quadrant into which they fell; then they showed these images to experimental subjects so that each person saw a total of eighty images—twenty of in-group members, twenty of envied out-groups, twenty of pitied out-groups, and twenty of despised out-groups.

As they viewed the various social images, the brains of subjects were scanned under fMRI and centers of activity recorded. As expected, the investigators found that images of people representing in-groups, envied out-groups, and pitied out-groups triggered clear reactions in the medial prefrontal cortex. Startlingly, however, images of despised out-groups did not (Harris and Fiske 2006). Whereas out-groups triggering feelings of pity and envy were instantly perceived as human beings and social actors, those that were despised were not seen in social terms at all—at the most fundamental level of cognition. Despised out-groups thus become dehumanized at the neural level, and those who harbor these feelings thus have a license, in their own minds, to treat members of these out-groups as if they are animals or objects.

This basic feature of human social cognition provides the psychological foundations for exploitation and opportunity hoarding in the real world. It is reinforced by another

characteristic feature of human psychology known as the *fundamental attribution error*, "the general tendency to overestimate the importance of personal or dispositional factors relative to environmental influences" in accounting for behavior (Ross, Greene, and House 1977, 184). In evaluating others, all human beings have a natural tendency to attribute behavioral outcomes to characteristics of the people involved rather than the structure of the situation. Thus, the poor are poor because they are lazy, lack a work ethic, have no sense of responsibility, are careless in their choices, or are just plain immoral, not because they lost their job or were born into a social position that did not give them the resources they needed to develop. Because of the fundamental attribution error, we are all cognitively wired and prone to blame the victim—to think that people deserve their location in the prevailing stratification system.

In parallel fashion, human beings have an opposite bias when they make attributions about themselves, at least with respect to negative outcomes. Rather than blaming themselves—something about their disposition or character—they tend to attribute personal misfortunes to specific features of the situation, a proclivity known as the *actor-observer effect* (Jones and Nisbett 1972). When someone else ends up on welfare, it is because he or she is lazy, careless, or irresponsible; when I end up on welfare, however, it is through no fault of my own but because of events beyond my control: I lost my job, got sick, was injured, got pregnant accidentally, got divorced, was widowed. Because of the actor-observer effect, we are also cognitively prone to explain our own misfortunes and outcomes in terms of the structure of the situation.

### III THE CREATION OF CAPITAL

The position of a group within the social space defined by warmth and competence is not fixed but malleable, varying across time, space, and culture (Leslie, Constantine, and Fiske 2006). Although social categories are ultimately constructed and maintained by individuals within their own minds, the process by which boundaries are expressed is ultimately social. Group identities and boundaries are negotiated through repeated interactions that establish working definitions of the categories in question, including both objective and subjective content, a process that sociologists have labeled *boundary work* (Gieryn 1983; Lamont and Molnar 2002). When social actors succeed in establishing the limits and content of various social categories in the minds of others, psychologists refer to the process as *framing* (Kahneman and Tversky 2000). In essence, boundary work involves defining categories in the social structure, and framing involves defining them in human cognition.

People naturally favor boundaries and framings that grant them greater access to material, symbolic, and emotional resources, and they seek to convince others to accept their favored version of social reality (Lakoff 2002; Lakoff and Johnson 2003). In general, social actors who control more resources in society—those toward the top of the stratification system—have the upper hand in framing and boundary work. Whites historically have perpetuated negative stereotypes of African Americans as unintelligent, violent, hyper-sexual, and shiftless, and rich people likewise have promoted a view of the poor as lazy, unmotivated, undisciplined, and undeserving. To the extent

that such stereotypes become a part of everyday social cognition, individual members of the stereotyped out-group tend to experience discrimination and exclusion.

Nonetheless, exclusionary social distinctions and demeaning framings are always contested by people on the receiving end (Barth 1969). Those subject to exploitation by a particular framing of social reality work to oppose it and substitute an alternative framing more amenable to their interests. Likewise, when they encounter categorical boundaries that prevent them from accessing a desired resource, people work actively to resist and subvert the social definitions as best they can. Members of subjugated groups have their own expectations about how they should be perceived and treated, and even if they outwardly adapt to the social preconceptions of more powerful others, they generally work inwardly to undermine the dominant conceptual and social order in small and large ways.

Through such two-way interactions, however asymmetric they may be, people on both sides of a stratified social divide actively participate in the construction of the boundaries and identities that define a system of stratification. No matter what their position in the system, people seek to define for themselves the content and meaning of social categories, embracing some elements ascribed to them by the dominant society and rejecting others, simultaneously accepting and resisting the constraints and opportunities associated with their particular social status. Through daily interactions with individuals and institutions, people construct an understanding of the lines between specific social groups (Barth 1981).

The reification of group boundaries within human social structures creates two important

resources that are widely deployed in the process of social stratification: *social capital* and *cultural capital* (Bourdieu 1986). In classical economics, of course, capital refers to anything that can be used in the production of other resources, is human-made, and is not fully consumed in the process of production (Ricardo 1996). Common examples are *financial capital*, which can be invested to generate income, and *physical capital*, which can be applied in production to increase output. Economists later generalized the concept by defining *human capital* as the skills and abilities embodied in people, notably through education and training (Schultz 1963). By investing in education, parents and societies thus create human capital in their children, and when individuals forgo income and incur costs to gain additional training, they invest in their own human capital. Individuals recoup this investment through higher lifetime earnings; societies recoup it through higher taxes and enhanced productivity; and parents recoup it by enjoying the economic independence and financial security of their adult children (Becker 1975).

Sociologists have broadened the concept of capital to embrace resources derived from social ties to people and institutions (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988). *Social capital* comes into existence whenever a social connection to another person or membership in a social organization yields tangible benefits with respect to material, symbolic, or emotional resources, such as getting a job that offers higher income, greater prestige, and more access to attractive sexual partners. Most "good" jobs are not found through formal mechanisms such as paid advertisements but through informal connections with other social actors who provide information and leads (Granovetter 1974).

Because ties to friends and family do not extend very far and mostly yield redundant information, weak ties to casual acquaintances are generally more important in getting a job than close relationships to close friends or kin (Granovetter 1973).

The use of framing and boundary work to construct an advantaged social group with privileged access to resources and power creates the potential for social capital formation. Having a tie to a member of a privileged elite increases the odds of being able to access resources and power oneself. Elites implicitly recognize this fact and generally take steps to restrict social ties to other members of the elite. Marriage outside the group is discouraged; friendships are turned inward through exclusive organizations such as clubs, fraternities, and lodges; and rules of inheritance conserve elite status along family lines. To the extent that group members are successful in confining social ties to other group members, they achieve social closure. Outsiders trying to break into elite circles are labeled bounders or interlopers, and they are derided for acting "uppity" or "above their station."

Social closure within elite networks and institutions also creates the potential for another valuable resource known as cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986). In contrast to human capital, which includes knowledge, skills, and abilities that make people directly productive as individuals, cultural capital consists of knowledge and manners that do not make individuals more productive in and of themselves, but that permit them to be more effective as actors within a particular social context—in this case, elite settings. Because members of an elite tend to go to the same schools, read the same books, peruse the same periodicals,

learn the same stylized manners, follow the same fashions, and develop the same accents and speech patterns, they are easily able to acquire a common set of socially defined markers that designate "good taste" and "high class," so that elite members are quickly recognizable to one another and to the masses.

The possession of cultural capital makes an individual more productive not because he or she can perform a given operation better or faster, but because he or she can navigate structures of power with greater ease, feeling relaxed and comfortable in the social settings they define and thus interacting with other persons of influence to get things done. Cultural capital represents a symbolic resource that privileged groups can manipulate through opportunity hoarding to perpetuate stratification and increase inequality.

### ||| SPATIAL BOUNDARIES

To this point, I have argued that stratification stems from a social process wherein individuals form categorical mental representations of in-groups and out-groups through framing; translate these representations into social categories through boundary work; and then establish institutional structures for exploitation and opportunity hoarding that correspond to categorical boundaries, thereby generating unequal access to resources such as financial capital, human capital, social capital, and cultural capital. To function, this system need only exist in the social and cognitive spheres. Position in a cognitively and institutionally defined social order need not correspond to any real location in physical space. If, however, social boundaries can be made to conform to geographic boundaries through a system-

atic process of segregation, then the fundamental processes of stratification become considerably more efficient and effective (Massey 2005).

If out-group members are spatially segregated from in-group members, then the latter are put in a good position to use their social power to create institutions and practices that channel resources away from the places where out-group members live, thus facilitating exploitation. At the same time, they can use their social power to implement other mechanisms that direct resources systematically toward in-group areas, thus facilitating opportunity hoarding. Spatial segregation renders stratification easy, convenient, and efficient because simply by investing or disinvesting in a place, one can invest or disinvest in a whole set of people (Massey and Denton 1993).

Stratification thus becomes more effective to the degree that social and spatial boundaries can be made to overlap. When members of an out-group are well integrated spatially, stratification is more difficult and costly because disinvestment in the out-group must occur on a person-by-person, family-by-family basis. Throughout history, therefore, whenever the powerful have sought to stigmatize and subordinate a particular social group, they have endeavored to confine its members to specific neighborhoods by law, edict, or practice (Wirth 1928).

The overlapping of social, cultural, economic, and spatial boundaries yields what Peter Blau (1977) calls a consolidation of parameters. When social parameters are consolidated—when social, economic, and spatial characteristics correlate strongly with one another—the process of stratification becomes sharper and more acute. Within a hypothetical social space made up of cells defined by the intersection of spatial status, social status,

economic status, and cultural status, within-cell relations intensify and between-cell interactions attenuate. Over time, inter-cell mobility withers, social categories reify and reproduce themselves, and the social structure as a whole grows rigid. A society defined by consolidated parameters is thus one in which the categorical mechanisms of inequality operate very effectively and social boundaries are salient and difficult to cross, yielding "durable inequality," a structural state wherein stratification replicates and reproduces itself more or less automatically over time.

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## Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection\*

PATRICIA HILL COLLINS

\* \* \* While many of us have little difficulty assessing our own victimization within some major system of oppression, whether it be by race, social class, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age or gender, we typically fail to see how our thoughts and actions uphold someone else's subordination. Thus, white feminists routinely point with confidence to their oppression as women but resist seeing how much their white skin privileges them. African-Americans who possess eloquent analyses of racism often persist in viewing poor White women as symbols of white power. The radical left fares little better. "If only people of color and women could see their true class interests," they argue, "class solidarity would eliminate racism and sexism." In essence, each group identifies the type of oppression with which it feels most comfortable as being fundamental and classifies all other types as being of lesser importance.

Oppression is full of such contradictions. Errors in political judgment that we make concerning how we teach our courses, what we tell our children, and which organizations are worthy of our time, talents and financial support

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flow smoothly from errors in theoretical analysis about the nature of oppression and activism. Once we realize that there are few pure victims or oppressors, and that each one of us derives varying amounts of penalty and privilege from the multiple systems of oppression that frame our lives, then we will be in a position to see the need for new ways of thought and action.

To get at that "piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us," we need at least two things. First, we need new visions of what oppression is, new categories of analysis that are inclusive of race, class, and gender as distinctive yet interlocking structures of oppression. Adhering to a stance of comparing and ranking oppressions—the proverbial, "I'm more oppressed than you"—locks us all into a dangerous dance of competing for attention, resources, and theoretical supremacy. Instead, I suggest that we examine our different experiences within the more fundamental relationship of damnation and subordination. To focus on the particular arrangements that race or class or gender take in our time and place without seeing these structures as sometimes parallel and sometimes interlocking dimensions of the more fundamental relationship of domination and subordination may temporarily ease our consciences. But while such thinking may lead to short term social reforms, it is simply inadequate for the task of bringing about long term social transformation.

While race, class and gender as categories of analysis are essential in helping us understand the structural bases of domination and subordination, new ways of thinking that are not accompanied by new ways of acting offer incomplete prospects for change. To get at that

"piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us," we also need to change our daily behavior. Currently, we are all enmeshed in a complex web of problematic relationships that grant our minor images full human subjectivity while stereotyping and objectifying those most different than ourselves. We often assume that the people we work with, teach, send our children to school with, and sit next to in conferences such as this, will act and feel in prescribed ways because they belong to given race, social class or gender categories. These judgments by category must be replaced with fully human relationships that transcend the legitimate differences created by race, class and gender as categories of analysis. We require new categories of connection, new visions of what our relationships with one another can be.

Our task is immense. We must first recognize race, class and gender as interlocking categories of analysis that together cultivate profound differences in our personal biographies. But then we must transcend those very differences by reconceptualizing race, class and gender in order to create new categories of connection.

My presentation today addresses this need for new patterns of thought and action. I focus on two basic questions. First, how can we reconceptualize race, class and gender as categories of analysis? Second, how can we transcend the barriers created by our experiences with race, class and gender oppression in order to build the types of coalitions essential for social exchange? To address these questions I contend that we must acquire both new theories of how race, class and gender have shaped the experiences not just of women of color, but of all groups. Moreover, we must see the connections between these cat-

egories of analysis and the personal issues in our everyday lives, particularly our scholarship, our teaching and our relationships with our colleagues and students. As Audre Lorde points out, change starts with self, and relationships that we have with those around us must always be the primary site for social change.

#### HOW CAN WE RECONCEPTUALIZE RACE, CLASS AND GENDER AS CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS?

To me, we must shift our discourse away from additive analyses of oppression (Spelman 1982; Collins 1989). Such approaches are typically based on two key premises. First, they depend on either/or, dichotomous thinking. Persons, things and ideas are conceptualized in terms of their opposites. For example, Black/White, man/woman, thought/feeling, and fact/opinion are defined in oppositional terms. Thought and feeling are not seen as two different and interconnected ways of approaching truth that can coexist in scholarship and teaching. Instead, feeling is defined as antithetical to reason, as its opposite. In spite of the fact that we all have "both/and" identities, (I am both a college professor and a mother—I don't stop being a mother when I drop my child off at school, or forget everything I learned while scrubbing the toilet), we persist in trying to classify each other in either/or categories. I live each day as an African-American woman—a race/gender specific experience. And I am not alone. Everyone in this room has a race/gender/class specific identity. Either/or, dichotomous thinking is especially troublesome when applied to theo-

ries of oppression because every individual must be classified as being either oppressed or not oppressed. The both/and position of simultaneously being oppressed and oppressor becomes conceptually impossible.

A second premise of additive analyses of oppression is that these dichotomous differences must be ranked. One side of the dichotomy is typically labeled dominant and the other subordinate. Thus, Whites rule Blacks, men are deemed superior to women, and reason is seen as being preferable to emotion. Applying this premise to discussions of oppression leads to the assumption that oppression can be quantified, and that some groups are oppressed more than others. I am frequently asked, "Which has been most oppressive to you, your status as a Black person or your status as a woman?" What I am really being asked to do is divide myself into little boxes and rank my various statuses. If I experience oppression as a both/and phenomenon, why should I analyze it any differently?

Additive analyses of oppression rest squarely on the twin pillars of either/or thinking and the necessity to quantify and rank all relationships in order to know where one stands. Such approaches typically see African-American women as being more oppressed than everyone else because the majority of Black women experience the negative effects of race, class and gender oppression simultaneously. In essence, if you add together separate oppressions, you are left with a grand oppression greater than the sum of its parts.

I am not denying that specific groups experience oppression more harshly than others—lynching is certainly objectively worse than



being held up as a sex object. But we must be careful not to confuse this issue of the saliency of one type of oppression in people's lives with a theoretical stance positing the interlocking nature of oppression. Race, class and gender may all structure a situation but may not be equally visible and/or important in people's self-definitions. In certain contexts, such as the antebellum American South and contemporary South America, racial oppression is more visibly salient, while in other contexts, such as Haiti, El Salvador and Nicaragua, social class oppression may be more apparent. For middle class White women, gender may assume experiential primacy unavailable to poor Hispanic women struggling with the ongoing issues of low paid jobs and the frustrations of the welfare bureaucracy. This recognition that one category may have salience over another for a given time and place does not minimize the theoretical importance of assuming that race, class and gender as categories of analysis structure all relationships.

In order to move toward new visions of what oppression is, I think that we need to ask new questions. How are relationships of domination and subordination structured and maintained in the American political economy? How do race, class and gender function as parallel and interlocking systems that shape this basic relationship of domination and subordination? Questions such as these promise to move us away from futile theoretical struggles concerned with ranking oppressions and towards analyses that assume race, class and gender are all present in any given setting, even if one appears more visible and salient than the others. Our task becomes redefined as one of reconceptualizing oppression by uncovering the connec-

tions among race, class and gender as categories of analysis.

### 1. Institutional Dimension of Oppression

Sandra Harding's contention that gender oppression is structured along three main dimensions—the institutional, the symbolic, and the individual—offers a useful model for a more comprehensive analysis encompassing race, class and gender oppression (Harding 1989). Systemic relationships of domination and subordination structured through social institutions such as schools, businesses, hospitals, the work place, and government agencies represent the institutional dimension of oppression. Racism, sexism and elitism all have concrete institutional locations. Even though the workings of the institutional dimension of oppression are often obscured with ideologies claiming equality of opportunity, in actuality, race, class and gender place Asian-American women, Native American men, White men, African-American women, and other groups in distinct institutional niches with varying degrees of penalty and privilege.

\* \* \* Let us assume that the institutions of American society discriminate, whether by design or by accident. While many of us are familiar with how race, gender and class operate separately to structure inequality, I want to focus on how these three systems interlock in structuring the institutional dimension of oppression. To get at the interlocking nature of race, class and gender, I want you to think about the antebellum plantation as a guiding metaphor for a variety of American social institutions. Even though slavery is typically analyzed as a racist institution, and occasionally as

a class institution, I suggest that slavery was a race, class, gender specific institution. Removing any one piece from our analysis diminishes our understanding of the true nature of relations of domination and subordination under slavery.

Slavery was a profoundly patriarchal institution. It rested on the dual tenets of White male authority and White male property, a joining of the political and the economic within the institution of the family. Heterosexism was assumed and all Whites were expected to marry. Control over affluent White women's sexuality remained key to slavery's survival because property was to be passed on to the legitimate heirs of the slave owner. Ensuring affluent White women's virginity and chastity was deeply intertwined with maintenance of property relations.

Under slavery, we see varying levels of institutional protection given to affluent White women, working class and poor White women, and enslaved African women. Poor White women enjoyed few of the protections held out to their upper class sisters. Moreover, the devalued status of Black women was key in keeping all White women in their assigned places. Controlling Black women's fertility was also key to the continuation of slavery, for children born to slave mothers themselves were slaves.

African-American women shared the devalued status of chattel with their husbands, fathers and sons. Racism stripped Blacks as a group of legal rights, education, and control over their own persons. African-Americans could be whipped, branded, sold, or killed, not because they were poor, or because they were women, but because they were Black. Racism ensured that Blacks would continue to serve Whites and

suffer economic exploitation at the hands of all Whites.

So we have a very interesting chain of command on the plantation—the affluent White master as the reigning patriarch, his White wife helpmate to serve him, help him manage his property and bring up his heirs, his faithful servants whose production and reproduction were tied to the requirements of the capitalist political economy, and largely propertyless, working class White men and women watching from afar. In essence, the foundations for the contemporary roles of elite White women, poor Black women, working class White men, and a series of other groups can be seen in stark relief in this fundamental American social institution. While Blacks experienced the most harsh treatment under slavery, and thus made slavery clearly visible as a racist institution, race, class and gender interlocked in structuring slavery's systemic organization of domination and subordination.

Even today, the plantation remains a compelling metaphor for institutional oppression. Certainly the actual conditions of oppression are not as severe now as they were then. To argue, as some do, that things have not changed all that much denigrates the achievements of those who struggled for social change before us. But the basic relationships among Black men, Black women, elite White women, elite White men, working class White men and working class White women as groups remain essentially intact.

A brief analysis of key American social institutions most controlled by elite White men should convince us of the interlocking nature of race, class and gender in structuring the institu-

tional dimension of oppression. For example, if you are from an American college or university, is your campus a modern plantation? Who controls your university's political economy? Are elite White men over represented among the upper administrators and trustees controlling your university's finances and policies? Are elite White men being joined by growing numbers of elite White women helpmates? What kinds of people are in your classrooms grooming the next generation who will occupy these and other decision-making positions? Who are the support staff that produce the mass mailings, order the supplies, fix the leaky pipes? Do African-Americans, Hispanics or other people of color form the majority of the invisible workers who feed you, wash your dishes, and clean up your offices and libraries after everyone else has gone home?

If your college is anything like mine, you know the answers to these questions. You may be affiliated with an institution that has Hispanic women as vice-presidents for finance, or substantial numbers of Black men among the faculty. If so, you are fortunate. Much more typical are colleges where a modified version of the plantation as a metaphor for the institutional dimension of oppression survives.

### The Symbolic Dimension of Oppression

Widespread, societally-sanctioned ideologies used to justify relations of domination and subordination comprise the symbolic dimension of oppression. Central to this process is the use of stereotypical or controlling images of diverse race, class and gender groups. In order to assess the power of this dimension of oppression, I want you to make a list, either on paper or

in your head, of "masculine" and "feminine" characteristics. If your list is anything like that compiled by most people, it reflects some variation of the following:

<b>Masculine</b>	<b>Feminine</b>
aggressive	passive
leader	follower
rational	emotional
strong	weak
intellectual	physical

Not only does this list reflect either/or dichotomous thinking and the need to rank both sides of the dichotomy, but ask yourself exactly which men and women you had in mind when compiling these characteristics. This list applies almost exclusively to middle class White men and women. The allegedly "masculine" qualities that you probably listed are only acceptable when exhibited by elite White men, or when used by Black and Hispanic men against each other or against women of color. Aggressive Black and Hispanic men are seen as dangerous, not powerful, and are often penalized when they exhibit any of the allegedly "masculine" characteristics. Working class and poor White men fare slightly better and are also denied the allegedly "masculine" symbols of leadership, intellectual competence, and human rationality. Women of color and working class and poor White women are also not represented on this list, for they have never had the luxury of being "ladies." What appear to be universal categories representing all men and women instead are unmasked as being applicable to only a small group.

It is important to see how the symbolic images applied to different race, class and gender

groups interact in maintaining systems of domination and subordination. If I were to ask you to repeat the same assignment, only this time, by making separate lists for Black men, Black women, Hispanic women and Hispanic men, I suspect that your gender symbolism would be quite different. In comparing all of the lists, you might begin to see the interdependence of symbols applied to all groups. For example, the elevated images of White womanhood need devalued images of Black womanhood in order to maintain credibility.

While the above exercise reveals the interlocking nature of race, class and gender in structuring the symbolic dimension of oppression, part of its importance lies in demonstrating how race, class and gender pervade a wide range of what appears to be universal language. Attending to diversity in our scholarship, in our teaching, and in our daily lives provides a new angle of vision on interpretations of reality thought to be natural, normal and "true." Moreover, viewing images of masculinity and femininity as universal gender symbolism, rather than as symbolic images that are race, class and gender specific, renders the experiences of people of color and of non-privileged White women and men invisible. One way to dehumanize an individual or a group is to deny the reality of their experiences. So when we refuse to deal with race or class because they do not appear to be directly relevant to gender, we are actually becoming part of someone else's problem.

Assuming that everyone is affected differently by the same interlocking set of symbolic images allows us to move forward toward new analyses. Women of color and White women have different relationships to White male authority

and this difference explains the distinct gender symbolism applied to both groups. Black women encounter controlling images such as the mammy, the matriarch, the mule and the whore, that encourage others to reject us as fully human people. Ironically, the negative nature of these images simultaneously encourages us to reject them. In contrast, White women are offered seductive images, those that promise to reward them for supporting the status quo. And yet seductive images can be equally controlling. Consider, for example, the views of Nancy White, a 73-year old Black woman, concerning images of rejection and seduction:

My mother used to say that the black woman is the white man's mule and the white woman is his dog. Now, she said that to say this: we do the heavy work and get beat whether we do it well or not. But the white woman is closer to the master and he pats them on the head and lets them sleep in the house, but he ain't gon' treat neither one like he was dealing with a person. (Gwaltney, 148)

Both sets of images stimulate particular political stances. By broadening the analysis beyond the confines of race, we can see the varying levels of rejection and seduction available to each of us due to our race, class and gender identity. Each of us lives with an allotted portion of institutional privilege and penalty, and with varying levels of rejection and seduction inherent in the symbolic images applied to us. This is the context in which we make our choices. Taken together, the institutional and symbolic dimensions of oppression create a structural backdrop against which all of us live our lives.

### The Individual Dimension of Oppression

Whether we benefit or not, we all live within institutions that reproduce race, class and gender oppression. Even if we never have any contact with members of other race, class and gender groups, we all encounter images of these groups and are exposed to the symbolic meanings attached to those images. On this dimension of oppression, our individual biographies vary tremendously. As a result of our institutional and symbolic statuses, all of our choices become political acts.

Each of us must come to terms with the multiple ways in which race, class and gender as categories of analysis frame our individual biographies. I have lived my entire life as an African-American woman from a working class family and this basic fact has had a profound impact on my personal biography. Imagine how different your life might be if you had been born Black, or White, or poor, or a different race/class/gender group than the one with which you are most familiar. The institutional treatment you would have received and the symbolic meanings attached to your very existence might differ dramatically from what you now consider to be natural, normal and part of everyday life. You might be the same, but your personal biography might have been quite different.

I believe that each of us carries around the cumulative effect of our lives within multiple structures of oppression. If you want to see how much you have been affected by this whole thing, I ask you one simple question—who are your close friends? Who are the people with whom you can share your hopes, dreams, vul-

nerabilities, fears and victories? Do they look like you? If they are all the same, circumstance may be the cause. For the first seven years of my life I saw only low income Black people. My friends from those years reflected the composition of my community. But now that I am an adult, can the defense of circumstance explain the patterns of people that I trust as my friends and colleagues? When given other alternatives, if my friends and colleagues reflect the homogeneity of one race, class and gender group, then these categories of analysis have indeed become barriers to connection.

I am not suggesting that people are doomed to follow the paths laid out for them by race, class and gender as categories of analysis. While these three structures certainly frame my opportunity structure, I as an individual always have the choice of accepting things as they are, or trying to change them. As Nikki Giovanni points out, "we've got to live in the real world. If we don't like the world we're living in, change it. And if we can't change it, we change ourselves. We can do something" (Tate 1983, 68). While a piece of the oppressor may be planted deep within each of us, we each have the choice of accepting that piece or challenging it as part of the "true focus of revolutionary change."

\* \* \*

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## Broken Bloodlines: The External Gender Environment\*

ORLANDO PATTERSON

### THE EXTERNAL GENDER ENVIRONMENT: ASPECTS OF THE DOUBLE BURDEN

Afro-American women writers and leaders have long claimed that they share a double burden, being victims of both their gender and their ethnicity. This sociological trope originated in the middle of the nineteenth century with the ex-slave writer Harriet A. Jacobs when she wrote of Afro-American women in general: "Superadded to the burden common to all, *they* have wrongs, and sufferings, and mortifications peculiarly their own."<sup>1</sup> In today's terms, added to the burden of racism is the "double jeopardy" of mainstream gender discrimination.<sup>2</sup> All this is well taken.

\* First published in 1998; from *Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries*.

<sup>1</sup> Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 77.

<sup>2</sup> Frances Beale, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," in Toni Cade Bambara, ed., *The Black Woman* (New York: New American Library, 1970), 90-100.

My only problem with this view is the assumption that it applies exclusively to Afro-American women. It was always the case in America that "superadded" to the burden of being a male slave or a male laborer was the burden of the assault on Afro-American men's integrity and identity as men. \* \* \* Racist oppressors were virulently obsessed with the maleness of the Afro-American male and brutally sought to extinguish any hint of manhood in him.

With the remarkable changes in the attitudes of Euro-Americans and the condition of Afro-Americans over recent decades, the situation has now become rather more complex. When we examine the facts carefully, we find that Afro-American men are now, by many indicators, the gender at greater risk among Afro-Americans, while by others Afro-American women clearly continue to bear the greater burden. These factors affect the lives of Afro-Americans separately and interactively in complex ways. We must attempt to sort them out prior to our examination of the history and present internal problems of gender relations between Afro-American men and women.

There can be no denying what has been called the feminization of poverty for a large minority of Afro-American women.<sup>3</sup> As Figure 1 shows, in both individual and familial terms, women of all ethnic groups experience higher levels of poverty than men. As is well known, households headed by single women,

which now constitute the single largest category among Afro-Americans, are at high risk of poverty compared with other kinds of households: 46.4 and 53.5 percent for Afro-American and Latino ethnicities, respectively. There is no doubt that there is a gender burden here, but whether an added "racial" burden can be claimed is questionable.

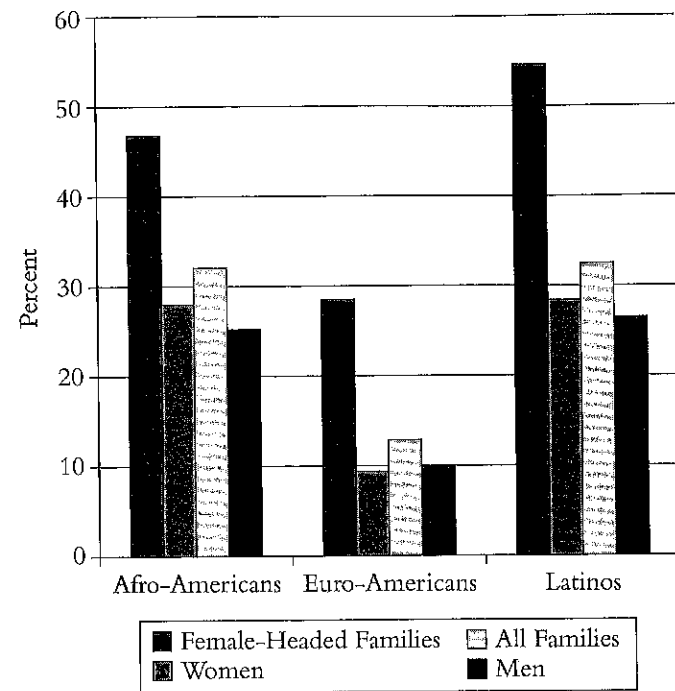
As I argued in *The Ordeal of Integration*, while "race" is obviously the decisive factor in explaining the origins of the acute problems of the Afro-American poor, it is not at all clear that it has much to do with explaining contemporary poverty levels among either men or women. Latinos were never enslaved here; the majority of them are of European ancestry; and a substantial minority descended from slaveholders—uncomfortable facts too often glossed over in multicultural rhetoric—yet, as Figure 1 shows, their poverty levels are higher than Afro-Americans'.

What about the majority of Afro-American women, who are not poor? In terms of equal pay for equal work and qualifications, how do they fare in the labor market when compared with men and Euro-American women? This is a complex issue. In most respects Afro-American women share with their Euro-American counterparts a persistent burden of gender prejudice. In one or two areas there is also an ethnic discrepancy. However, in most respects there is little evidence of a double burden of gender and ethnic prejudice. When cur-

<sup>3</sup> See Orlando Patterson, *The Ordeal of Integration: Progress and Resentment in America's "Racial" Crisis* (Washington, DC: Civitas/Counterpoint, 1997), chap. 1; Rebecca M. Blank, *It Takes a Nation: A New Agenda for Fighting Poverty* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1997); Irwin Garfinkel and Sara

S. McLanahan, *Single Mothers and Their Children: The New American Dilemma* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press, 1986); Diane Pearce, "The Feminization of Poverty: Women, Work, and Welfare," *Urban and Social Change Review* 11: 1/2 (1978), 28-36.

FIGURE 1 PERCENTAGES OF INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES IN POVERTY BY GENDER, MARCH 1997



SOURCE: Author's tabulation of data from U.S. Bureau of the Census (Internet release, June 26, 1997).

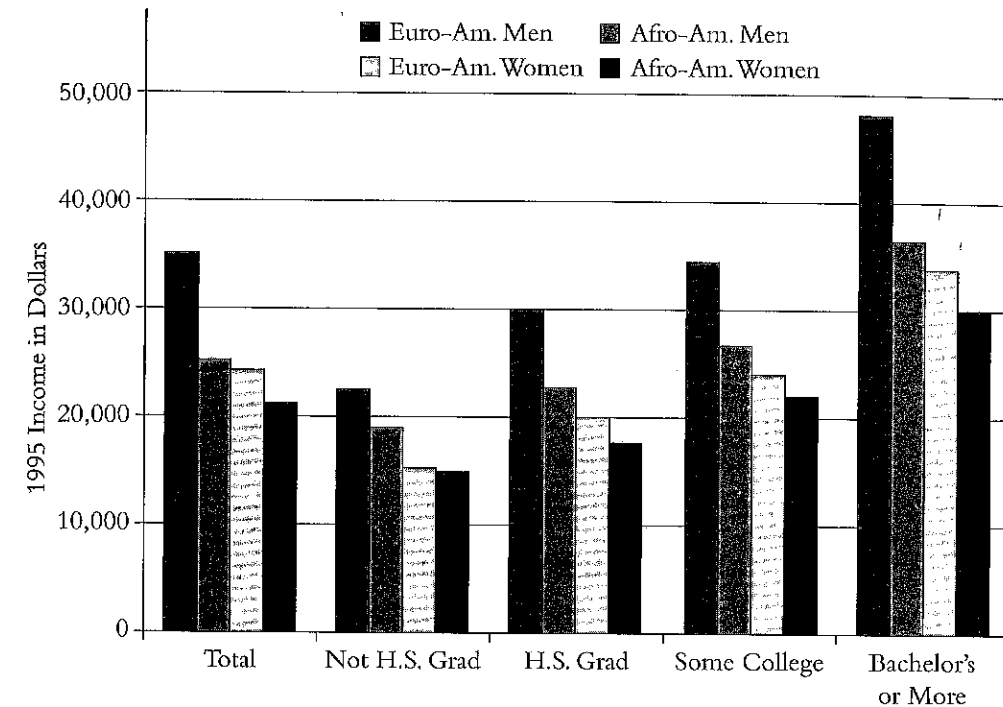
rent trends are projected, there is every reason to believe that Afro-American women will soon surpass Afro-American men in median income. Indeed, when we take account not just of median income but of the numbers and proportions of Afro-American women in desirable occupations, it is already the case that they have outperformed Afro-American men in absolute terms and Euro-American women in relative terms.

Figure 2 shows an unambiguous pattern of gender discrepancy in annual earnings for both groups of women at every educational level. This, of course, is not necessarily proof of gender prejudice; much depends on the work his-

stories, as well as the occupational and industrial locations, of men and women. However, there is now good reason to believe that even after controlling for these factors, substantial gender discrepancies remain between the earnings of equally educated full-time working men and women.

We see also that for each educational level there is a discrepancy between the earnings of Afro-American and Euro-American women, albeit much smaller than the gender discrepancy for either group. Figure 3 recalculates, in terms of income ratios, the absolute figures given in Figure 2. Is this evidence of a double burden? Seen in static terms, the answer is "yes." But the

FIGURE 2 MEDIAN EARNINGS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, ETHNICITY, AND GENDER, 1995



SOURCE: Author's tabulation of data from U.S. Bureau of the Census (Internet release, June 26, 1997).

discrepancy between the incomes of the two women's groups is largely a reflection of past ethnic prejudices in favor of Euro-American women, especially at the higher educational levels. The proportion of Euro-American women with college degrees who are now at or near their maximum earning capacity is much larger than that of Afro-American women. The impressive growth in the numbers and proportions of Afro-American women with "some college" or "bachelor's degree or more" levels of education, discussed below, is a post-1970 phenomenon. In fact, young Afro-American

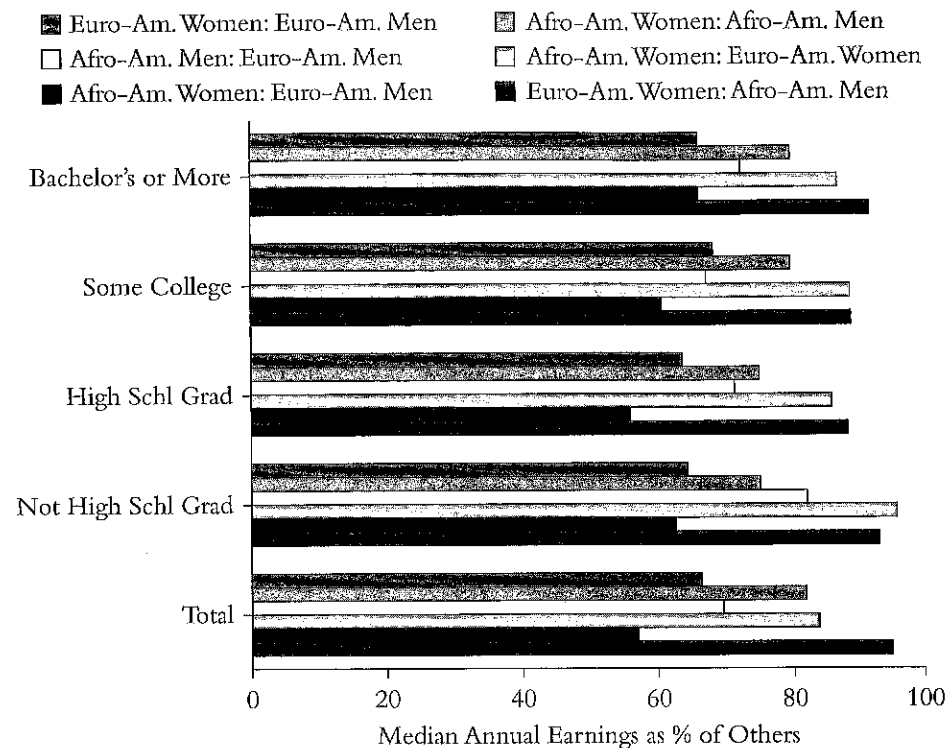
female college graduates now earn more than their Euro-American counterparts.

Comparing the economic returns to women of different groups is difficult because of important differences in their economic activities. Thus, Afro-American women have traditionally had higher labor-force participation rates, but higher unemployment rates, than Euro-American women; they work more hours per week but roughly the same number of hours per year.<sup>4</sup> A lot depends on what measures one uses to make comparisons between the two groups. Using mean, rather than median,

4 See "Blacks in the Economy," in Gerald D. Jaynes and Robin M. Williams, Jr., eds., *A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1989),

*Society* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1989),

FIGURE 3 GENDER AND ETHNIC RATIOS IN MEDIAN EARNINGS, BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, MARCH 1996



NOTE: Includes only year-round, full-time workers, ages 25 or older.

SOURCE: Author's tabulation of data from U.S. Bureau of the Census (Internet release, June 26, 1997).

earnings, one can show that there is no remaining gap. Emphasizing income rather than earnings reveals persisting ethnic differences. On yet another measure, estimated lifetime earnings, the gap has nearly vanished. On the whole, it is safe to say that ethnic differences in the economic experiences of Afro-American and Euro-American women have either disappeared or are on the verge of becoming insignificant. Afro-American women continue to suffer serious gender biases in the economy, but

they suffer them equally with Euro-American women. Appearances to the contrary, there is no double burden of race and gender in economic matters.

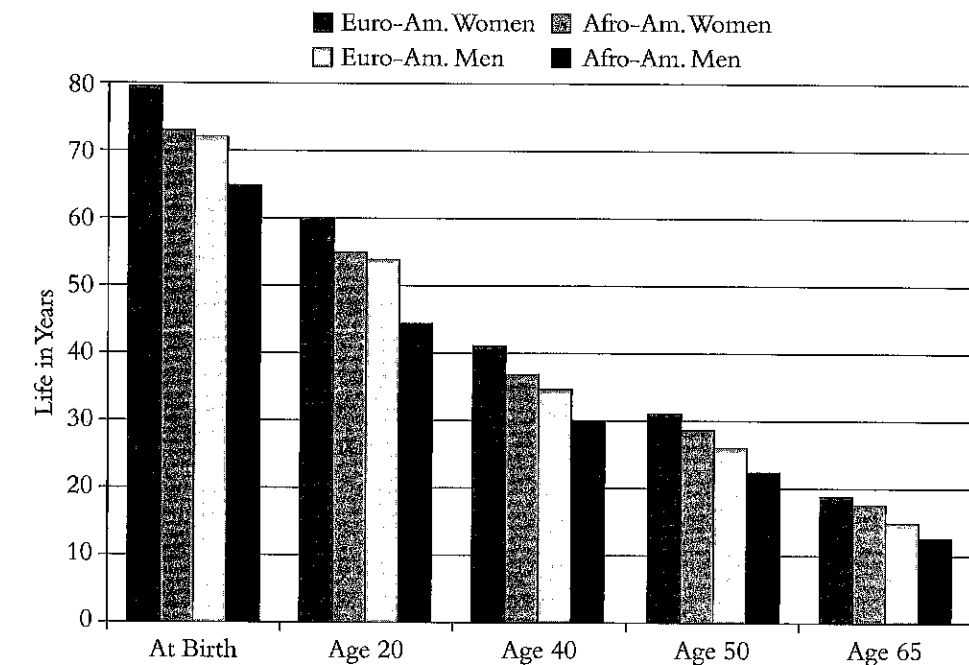
Life, however, is a great deal more than economic activity. When we compare the life-chances and actual experience of Afro-American men and women in recent years, we are forced to question the conventional wisdom that Afro-American women are somehow more destructively burdened by the system than

their male counterparts. It cannot be denied that when it comes to evaluating life's burdens, vital statistics are the ultimate tests. How long we live, the rate at which we can expect to die at given years of life, and the rate of survival—all are bottom-line assessments of just how well or badly a given group is doing in relation to others. On every one of these indicators, Afro-American men are not only far behind their Euro-American counterparts but also significantly worse off than Afro-American women. In contrast, Afro-American women not only have far better life-chances than Afro-American and Euro-American men but are

fast catching up with Euro-American women on most indicators, and in a few cases are doing better.

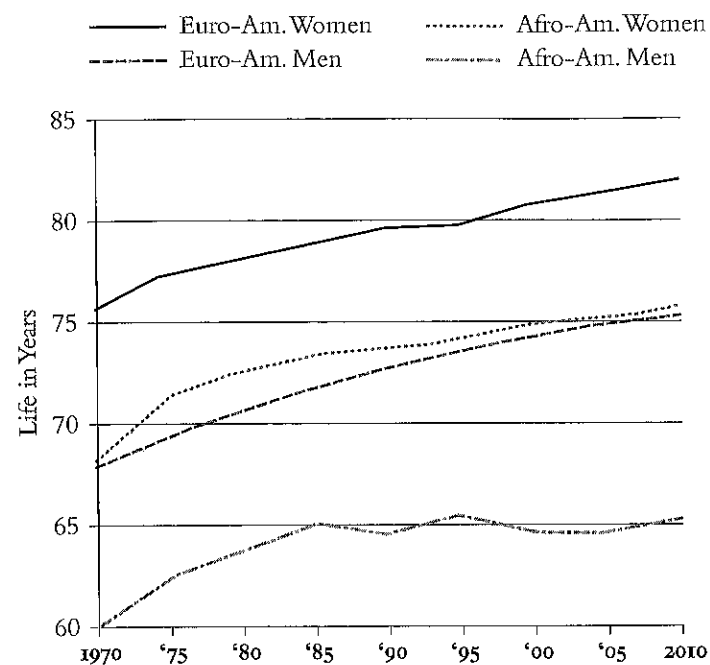
Thus, as Figure 4 shows, in 1994 (the most recent data available), Afro-American male life expectancy at birth was 64.9 years, which was 8.4 years less than for Euro-American men, 9 years less than for Afro-American women, and 14.7 years less than for Euro-American women. This figure is not only shocking for an advanced industrial society, it is, in fact, significantly lower than that for men of several Third World societies such as Cuba and the Afro-Caribbean states of Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad—all

FIGURE 4 AVERAGE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH, BY GENDER AND ETHNICITY, 1994



SOURCE: Author's tabulation of data from U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, "Births and Deaths: United States, 1996," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report* 46:1, Suppl. 2 (Sept. 1997).

FIGURE 5 EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH, BY GENDER AND ETHNICITY, 1970-1995, AND PROJECTIONS FOR 1995-2010



SOURCE: Author's tabulation of data from National Center for Health Statistics, "Births and Deaths, United States, 1995," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report* 46: 1, Suppl. 2 (Sept. 1997).

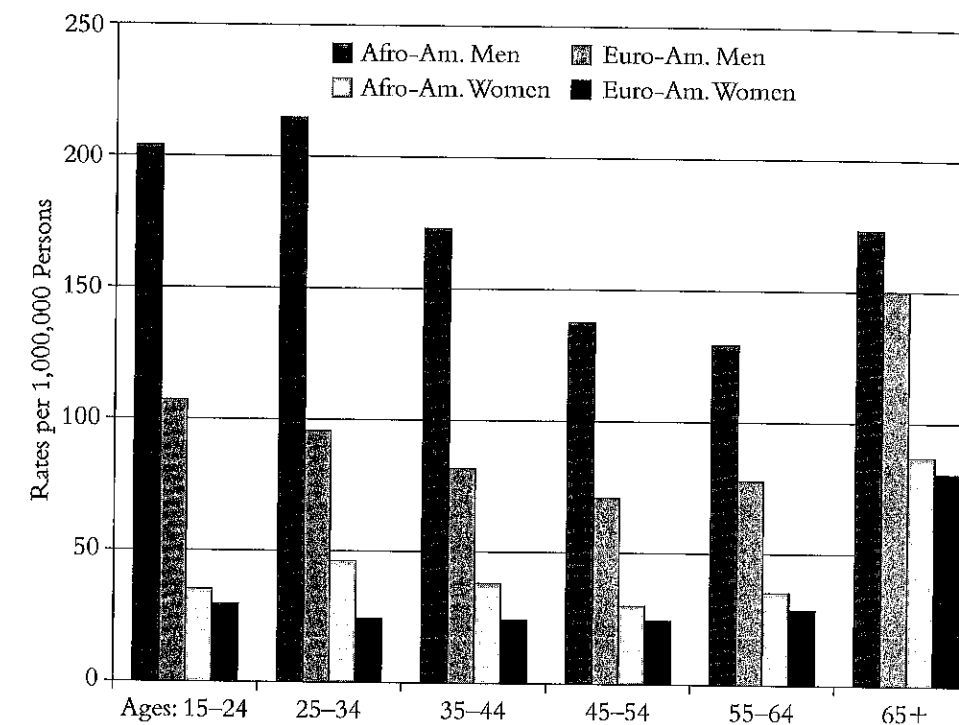
with populations that originated in exactly the same regions of West Africa, and with almost identical Afro-European levels of miscegenation, as Afro-Americans. Furthermore, while this vital rate has been improving over the years for all other groups in the United States, it has remained flat for Afro-American men since 1985 (see Figure 5).

Equally distressing are the differences in expected death rates per year. For every 1,000 live male Afro-American births in 1990, almost

20 were expected to die by 1991, compared with 16 Afro-American females, between 8 and 9 Euro-American males, and between 6 and 7 Euro-American females. At age twenty the differences are even greater; 3.8 times as many Afro-American men as Afro-American women could expect to die within the year.<sup>5</sup> A major factor contributing to both the low life-expectancy rates and the high death rates is the much higher rate of death from violence and accidents among Afro-American men. Fre-

<sup>5</sup> U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, *Life Tables, Actuarial Tables, and Vital Statistics for 1990* (Washington, DC: U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, 1998).

FIGURE 6 DEATH RATES FROM ACCIDENTS AND VIOLENCE, BY AGE GROUP, GENDER, AND ETHNICITY, 1990



SOURCE: Author's tabulation of data from Center for Health Statistics, "Report of Final Mortality Statistics, 1995," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report* 45: 11, Suppl. 2 (1997):Table 7.

quent public commentary has tended to focus attention on violence among youth, but as Figure 6 demonstrates, Afro-American men die from violent and accidental causes at disproportionately greater levels throughout all age categories. Note, in contrast, that the gap between Euro-American and Afro-American women is negligible for most age groups and virtually disappears after age sixty-five.

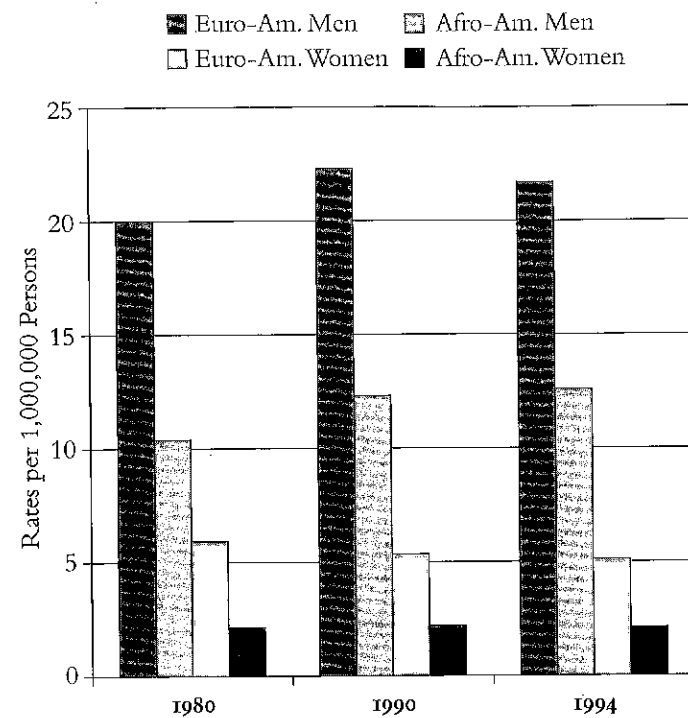
Among the causes of death, suicide is often

single out as especially indicative of social anomie and despair, and there has been anguished recent commentary on the growing rate among young Afro-American men. However, suicide rates, as all sociologists know from one of the discipline's founding fathers,<sup>6</sup> are complex and must be treated with great caution. In nearly all Western societies, more prosperous classes have tended to experience higher suicide rates than less prosperous ones. Because they have less to

<sup>6</sup> I refer to the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, whose classic study, *Suicide*, published in 1897, is a virtual foundation text of the discipline. Although most of Durkheim's empiri-

cal findings have been either rejected or sharply qualified, the theoretical issues he raised are still central to sociology.

FIGURE 7 SUICIDE RATES, BY GENDER AND ETHNICITY, 1980-1994



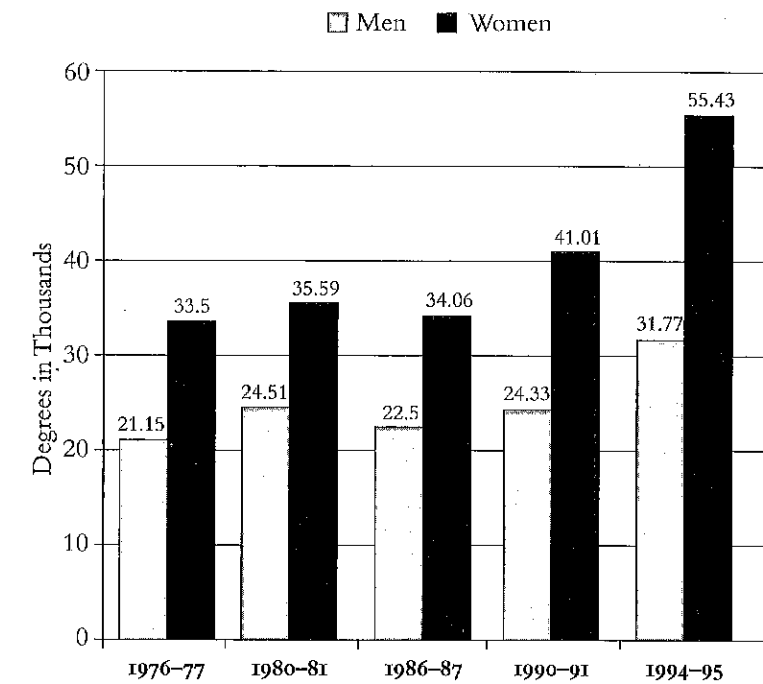
SOURCE: Author's tabulation of data from U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, "Report of Final Mortality Statistics, 1995," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, 45: 11, Suppl. 2 (June 1997).

lose and make fewer demands on themselves, poorer people tend to experience catastrophic feelings of failure and despair less often. Partly for this reason too, men have typically experienced much higher rates than women. Nonetheless, even after taking all these factors into account, the suicide rate for Afro-American men is unusually high. Figure 7 shows that in 1994 the Euro-American male rate was 4.3 times that for Euro-American females, while Afro-American men committed suicide at 6.2

times the rate at which Afro-American women did. What is more, Afro-American men are the only group for whom the rate is rising steadily. As dismal as these figures are, it is likely that the situation is actually much worse, not only because of underreporting for Afro-American youth, which according to J. T. Gibbs and A. M. Hines may be as high as 82 per 100,000,<sup>7</sup> but because of the masking effect of what R. H. Seiden calls "victim precipitated" homicide, in which young Afro-American men

<sup>7</sup> J. T. Gibbs and A. M. Hines, "Factors Related to Sex Differences in Suicidal Behavior among African-American Youth," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 4: 2 (1989):152-72.

FIGURE 8 BACHELOR'S DEGREES CONFERRED ON AFRO-AMERICANS, BY GENDER, 1976-1995



SOURCE: Author's tabulation of data from U.S. Dept. of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (HEGIS) (Internet data release, 1997).

commit suicide the "macho" way by inciting violence against themselves.<sup>8</sup> The gender difference, according to specialists on the subject, stems from the much greater involvement of women with institutions in the Afro-American community, such as church organizations, other support networks, and remaining kin ties. Indeed, the suicide rate for Afro-American women is among the lowest in the nation.

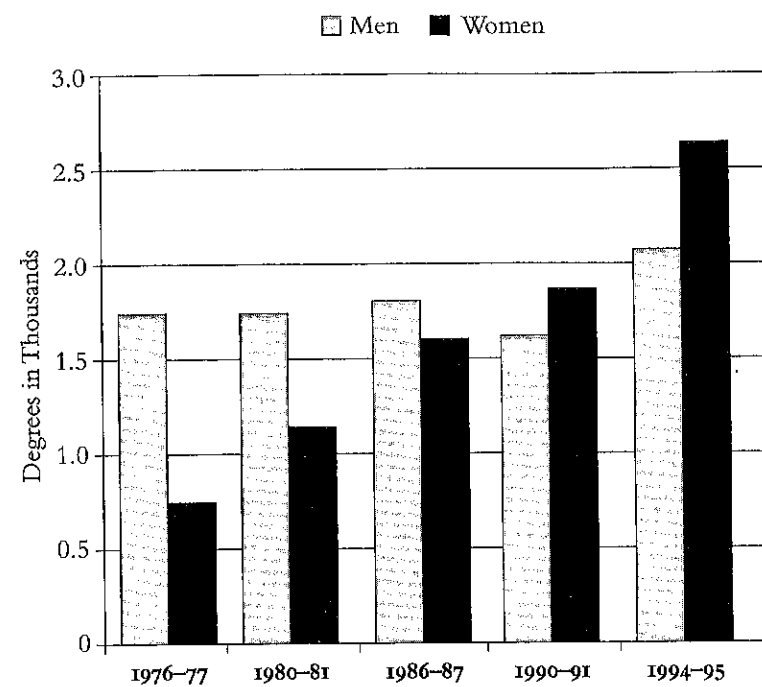
Beyond these vital statistics, we find that in almost every area of educational and skills acquisition Afro-American women are far

outperforming Afro-American men. It is well known that females do better than males in the primary, secondary, and, more recently, undergraduate levels of the educational system. However, the gender differences between Afro-American men and women now bear little comparison with those in other groups. Between 1977 and 1995, Afro-American women almost doubled the gender gap in bachelor's degrees conferred, from 12,300 to 23,600 (see Figure 8). In all other ethnic groups, women have been catching up with, and surpassing, men in the

<sup>8</sup> R. H. Seiden, "We're Driving Young Blacks to Suicide," *Psychology Today*, vol. 4 (1970): 24-28.



FIGURE 9 FIRST PROFESSIONAL DEGREES CONFERRED ON AFRO-AMERICANS, BY GENDER, 1976-1995



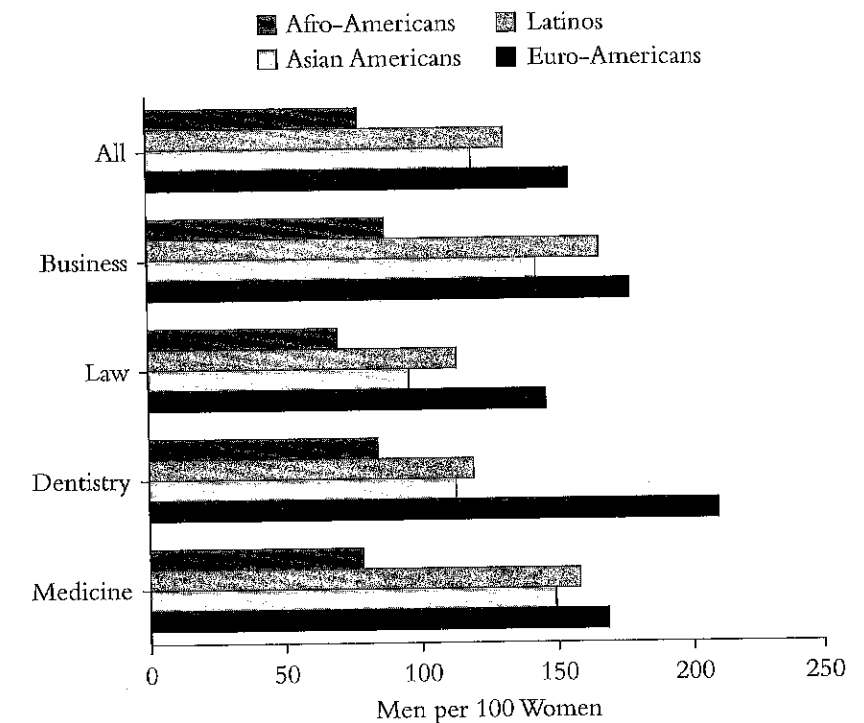
SOURCE: Author's tabulation of data from U.S. Dept. of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (HEGIS) (Internet data release, 1997).

acquisition of bachelor's degrees since about the early eighties. Afro-American women had passed this milestone years earlier and simply widened the gap with the enhanced opportunities that came with the seventies.

There are many other respects in which the Afro-American gender differences in education depart from those of other ethnic groups. Thus, Afro-Americans are the only ethnic group in which women outperform men in most of the hard sciences, especially physics, math, and computer science; engineering is an exception, but Afro-American women are fast catching up. Of even greater significance for the future

gender composition of the Afro-American middle class is the unusual trend in the acquisition of first professional degrees. In 1977 Afro-American men received twice as many professional degrees as women (see Figure 9). A decade later, women took the lead, and since then the gap has been widening substantially each year. Figure 10 indicates that this trend is unique among ethnic groups. With the exception of Asian Americans in the legal profession, where both genders are near parity, only among Afro-Americans do we find men substantially below parity in the fields of medicine, dentistry, law, and business.

FIGURE 10 MALE/FEMALE RATIOS IN ATTAINMENT OF SELECTED PROFESSIONAL DEGREES, BY ETHNICITY, 1995



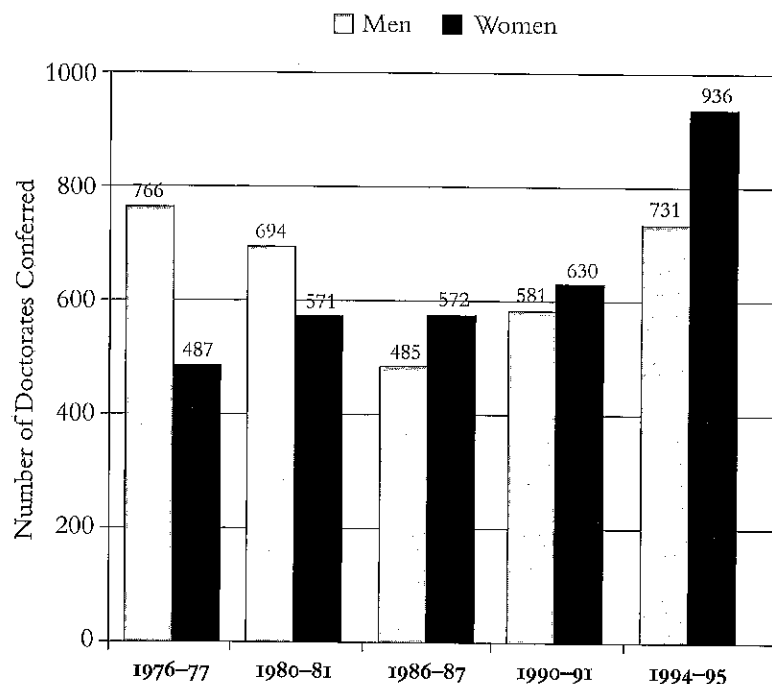
SOURCE: Author's tabulation of data from U.S. Dept of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics (IPEDS) (Internet data release, 1997).

The same trends hold for the acquisition of doctorates between 1977 and 1995. Afro-American women are at the head of a trend toward gender parity in the attainment of doctorates. Their situation is unique in two respects. First, in 1987 they became the first women to outperform the men of their group in achieving doctorates. Second, the Afro-American gender gap comes not only from women gaining more doctorates but, as Figure 11 shows, from men gaining fewer such advanced degrees. Between 1977 and 1987 there was a 37 percent fall in the

number of Afro-American men gaining doctorates, a disastrous decline from which Afro-American men are yet to recover fully; in 1995 they still obtained 35 fewer doctorates than they did in 1977.

How do we explain all this? Why are the fortunes of Afro-American men declining so precipitously while those of Afro-American women are getting better? Why, in particular, are Afro-American women now poised to assume leadership in almost all areas of the Afro-American community and to outperform

FIGURE 11 DOCTORATES CONFERRED ON AFRO-AMERICANS, BY GENDER, 1976-1995



NOTE: Includes Ph.D., Ed.D., and comparable degrees at the doctoral level.

SOURCE: Author's tabulation of data from U.S. Dept of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (IPEDS) (Internet data release, 1997).

Afro-American men at middle- and upper-middle-class levels of the wider society and economy? Has the double burden been eliminated for Afro-American women?

It clearly has not, but it is perhaps time to think again, more carefully, about the nature of the burdens that each gender has had to face. Being burdened, having to work harder than others, is not in itself a necessarily bad thing, as the workaholic behavior of the nation's Fortune 500 executives attests. From the days of the Puritan founders, Americans have always prided themselves on being hardworking; people have

competed with each other for the privilege of being burdened with great responsibilities and with the necessity to work long hours. Some burdens, in other words, we not only welcome but consider generative and empowering.

Without in any way underplaying the enormous problems that poor Afro-American women face, I want to suggest that the burdens of poor Afro-American men have always been oppressive, dispiriting, demoralizing, isolating, and soul killing, whereas those of women, while physically and emotionally no doubt as great, have always also been at least *partly* gener-

ative, empowering, and humanizing. Furthermore, as I will document later, the experience of Afro-American women during both the past and the present has nearly always entailed their incorporation into the norms, values, and work habits of the dominant culture, while the experience of Afro-American men has been until recently one of unmitigated exclusion.

Take, first, the role of mother. As Patricia Hill Collins correctly observes: "Some women view motherhood as a truly burdensome condition that stifles creativity, exploits their labor, and makes them partners in their own oppression. Others see motherhood as providing a base for self-actualization, status in the Black community, and a catalyst for social activism."<sup>9</sup> One of the great tragedies of Afro-American men was that for the great majority of them, for most of their history, fatherhood was rarely a "base for self-actualization." Indeed, to the degree that slavery, and later racial discrimination in the employment sector, prevented them from meeting their material obligations as providers, and to the degree that their own inner failings and distorted masculine values (on which more later) prevented them from meeting their social and emotional obligations to their offspring, to that extent was fatherhood a site of shame and humiliation.

Second, even under slavery and Jim Crow, the Afro-American woman, in her roles as domestic, nanny, nurse, and clerk, has always had greater access to the wider, dominant Euro-American world. As Fran Sanders has

written, with little exaggeration, "For two hundred years it was she who initiated the dialogue between the white world and the African American."<sup>10</sup> Today, Afro-American scholars and intellectuals are inclined to speak contemptuously about the job of domestic, but it is clearly wrong to project such attitudes onto the past. In spite of its unpleasant association with slavery and the often exploitative terms of employment, what Afro-American and Euro-American domestics always hated was not the job itself but live-in domestic work. When done on a regular basis with civilized employers and a decent wage in both kind and money, the job was a modestly secure one in which the Afro-American woman, unlike her male counterpart in the fields or factories, to quote Jacqueline Jones, "wielded an informal power that directly affected the basic human services provided within the white households."<sup>11</sup>

Domestic and other employment in the service sector also brought the Afro-American woman into direct contact with the most intimate areas of the dominant culture. This intimacy was sometimes deepened by another factor peculiar to women: that in America, as in most human societies, women of different statuses and ethnic groups can and often do establish close relationships, where men so separated cannot or will not. The knowledge thus acquired was valuable cultural capital, a point explicitly stated by many of the domestics interviewed by Bonnie Thornton Dill; these women "saw work as an ability rather than a

9 Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 118.

10 Fran Sanders, "Dear Black Man," in Cade Bambara, ed., *The Black Woman*, 73.

11 Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 134.

burden. Work was a means for attaining [their] goals; it provided [them] with the money [they] needed to be an independent person, and it exposed [them] and [their] children to 'good' things—values and a style of life which [they] considered important."<sup>12</sup>

It has been suggested that this cultural capital was selectively transmitted only to daughters and not to sons, for reasons that were complex but may have had to do with the differing realistic expectations Afro-American mothers had of their daughters and sons in light of the dominant labor market and its gender and ethnic biases. The less successful daughter could be expected to pursue a job as a domestic; the more successful daughter, to become a schoolteacher or nurse. In both cases, the cultural skills acquired from the dominant culture would be an asset. No such transmissions were considered important for lower-class boys, who had few prospects beyond manual work. Some ethnographic and psychological studies suggest that this pattern continues today among the lower classes.<sup>13</sup> However, the most recent survey data I have analyzed indicate that, at least in expressed attitudes, this is no longer the case. When asked in the HWPK survey conducted in the fall of 1997 whether parents should have different expectations for boys and girls, the

great majority of Afro-Americans responded that parents should have the same expectations. Men did respond positively to this question nearly twice as often as women (22 percent versus 11.8 percent), but the difference was not statistically significant in this sample. However, the question whether boys and girls should be raised differently yielded a significant difference in responses according to income group. A third of the poorest Afro-Americans thought they should be raised differently, while nearly all better off Afro-Americans thought they should be raised alike.<sup>14</sup> The responses of the poorest Afro-Americans may well be a vestige of a time, not so long ago, when all Afro-American parents raised boys and girls with different sets of expectations.

The attitudes and prejudices of the dominant group have also played an important role in generating gender disparities among Afro-Americans. Euro-Americans have always been more willing to accept Afro-American women than Afro-American men. Greater fear of Afro-American men, induced by racist sexual attitudes,<sup>15</sup> and greater familiarity with Afro-American women in the course of growing up made it much easier for Afro-American women to find jobs in clerical, and later in professional, Euro-American settings.

There is good evidence that these attitudes and expectations persist toward all classes of Afro-Americans. The economist Harry J. Holzer recently documented a marked preference for Afro-American women over Afro-American men among suburban and inner-city employers. This preference is most striking where noncollege jobs require cognitive-interactive skills. The difference in employment cannot be explained solely in terms of qualifications (although this is indeed a factor) because less skilled and educated Afro-American women and Latino men are persistently placed ahead of Afro-American men in urban job queues.<sup>16</sup> In middle-class occupations this preference may well be interacting with affirmative action to reinforce the traditional bias in favor of Afro-American women. It is not simply that firms under pressure to meet affirmative action guidelines can achieve both gender and ethnic targets when they employ Afro-American women. Even more important, it has been found that in the professional and corporate world the intersection of "race" and gender benefits Afro-American career women, when compared not only with Afro-American men but with Euro-American women. Corporate Euro-American men are less inclined to view Afro-American women as sex objects, as women "out to get a husband," and are therefore more inclined to take them seriously as fellow professionals. The highly successful Afro-American women interviewed by sociologist Cynthia Epstein in the early 1970s almost

all agreed that being female "reduced the effect of the racial taboo" against Afro-Americans in corporate positions and that the combination of being Afro-American, female, and educated created a unique social space for them, enhancing their self-confidence and motivation.<sup>17</sup>

In the quarter of a century since Epstein's study, Afro-American women have expanded that social space impressively, in the process not only catching up with Euro-American women in many important areas but numerically surpassing Afro-American men in all the top occupational categories (see Figure 12). Among executive, administrative, and managerial workers, there are now 127 Afro-American women for every 100 Afro-American men; among professionals, 151 for every 100. By way of contrast, there are, respectively, only 64 and 85 Euro-American women for every 100 Euro-American men in these two categories of occupations.

From what has been said, it should now be clear that the claim that Afro-American women peculiarly and uniquely suffer a double burden in this society both misleads and obscures the realities of the Afro-American condition. For some Afro-American women, especially among the poor, the assertion is correct; but it is equally true that for an equally substantial minority of Afro-American men, a similar double burden can be claimed. As we have seen, the intersection of ethnicity and gender has deadly consequences for a large and growing minority of lower-class Afro-American men,

12 Bonnie Thornton Dill, "The Means to Put My Children Through": Child-Rearing Goals and Strategies among Black Female Domestic Servants," in La Frances Rodgers-Rose, ed., *The Black Woman* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980), 115.

13 See P. J. Bowman and C. Howard, "Race-Related Socialization, Motivation, and Academic Achievement: A Study of Black Youths in Three-Generation Families," *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry* 24: 2 (1985): 131-141. Diane K. Lewis admits that there was a strong preference for and greater tendency to promote girls in the past but speculates that, with growing economic opportunities for men,

this should change: "The Black Family: Socialization and Sex Roles," *Phylon* 36: 3 (1975):221-231.

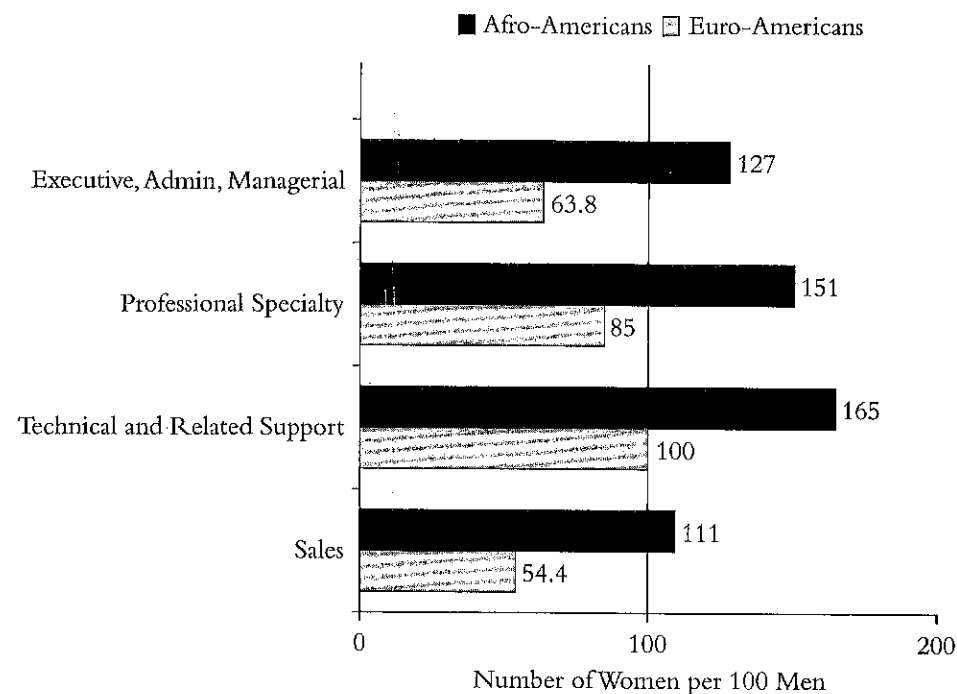
14 The relationship between income and attitude to child rearing was significant at the .03 probability level. It was not significant for other groups. Bear in mind though, that two-thirds of even the poorest group of Afro-Americans did hold that boys and girls should be raised alike.

15 For the classic exploration of such racist fears and fantasies about Afro-American men, see John Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* (1937; reprint, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1949), 160-163 and, more generally, chaps. 15-16.

16 Harry J. Holzer, *What Employers Want: Job Prospects for Less-Educated Workers* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1996), 80-105.

17 Cynthia F. Epstein, "Positive Effects of the Multiple Negatives: Explaining the Success of Black Professional Women," *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1973):912-935.

FIGURE 12 FEMALE/MALE RATIOS IN TOP FOUR CATEGORIES OF OCCUPATIONS OF LONGEST JOB, BY ETHNICITY



SOURCE: Author's tabulation of data from U.S. Bureau of the Census (Internet release, 1997).

reflected in the Third World levels of their vital statistics. Afro-American women, like their Euro-American counterparts, suffer serious gender discrimination. But, ironically, when gender and ethnicity interact, this sometimes works to the benefit of Afro-American women, especially those of the middle classes, as their increasing outperformance of Afro-American men in higher learning, white collar occupations, and the professions attests.

But as I suggested earlier, the very success of Afro-American women in the wider world exacerbates what is their greater gender problem—that between them and Afro-American males in all their sex roles and at all periods of the lifespan.

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## Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families\*

ANNETTE LAREAU

In recent decades, sociological knowledge about inequality in family life has increased dramatically. Yet, debate persists, especially about the transmission of class advantages to children. Kingston (2000) and others question whether disparate aspects of family life cohere in meaningful patterns. Pointing to a "thin evidentiary base" for claims of social class differences in the interior of family life, Kingston also asserts that "class distinguishes neither distinctive parenting styles or distinctive involvement of kids" in specific behaviors (p. 134).

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I draw on findings from a small, intensive data set collected using ethnographic methods. I map the connections between parents' resources and their children's daily lives. My first goal, then, is to challenge Kingston's (2000) argument that social class does not distinguish parents' behavior or children's daily lives. I seek to show empirically that social class does indeed create distinctive parenting styles. I demonstrate that parents differ by class in the ways they define their own roles in their children's lives as well as in how they perceive the nature of childhood. The middle-class parents, both white

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and black, tend to conform to a cultural logic of childrearing I call "concerted cultivation." They enroll their children in numerous age-specific organized activities that dominate family life and create enormous labor, particularly for mothers. The parents view these activities as transmitting important life skills to children. Middle-class parents also stress language use and the development of reasoning and employ talking as their preferred form of discipline. This "cultivation" approach results in a wider range of experiences for children but also creates a frenetic pace for parents, a cult of individualism within the family, and an emphasis on children's performance.

The childrearing strategies of white and black working-class and poor parents emphasize the "accomplishment of natural growth." These parents believe that as long as they provide love, food, and safety, their children will grow and thrive. They do not focus on developing their children's special talents. Compared to the middle-class children, working-class and poor children participate in few organized activities and have more free time and deeper, richer ties within their extended families. Working-class and poor parents issue many more directives to their children and, in some households, place more emphasis on physical discipline than do the middle-class parents. These findings extend Kohn and Schooler's (1983) observation of class differences in parents' values, showing that differences also exist in the *behavior* of parents and children.

Quantitative studies of children's activities offer valuable empirical evidence but only limited ideas about how to conceptualize the mechanisms through which social advantage is

transmitted. Thus, my second goal is to offer "conceptual umbrellas" useful for making comparisons across race and class and for assessing the role of social structural location in shaping daily life.

Last, I trace the connections between the class position of family members—including children—and the uneven outcomes of their experiences outside the home as they interact with professionals in dominant institutions. The pattern of concerted cultivation encourages an *emerging sense of entitlement* in children. All parents and children are not equally assertive, but the pattern of questioning and intervening among the white and black middle-class parents contrasts sharply with the definitions of how to be helpful and effective observed among the white and black working-class and poor adults. The pattern of the accomplishment of natural growth encourages an *emerging sense of constraint*. Adults as well as children in these social classes tend to be deferential and outwardly accepting in their interactions with professionals such as doctors and educators. At the same time, however, compared to their middle-class counterparts, white and black working-class and poor family members are more distrustful of professionals. These are differences with potential long-term consequences. In an historical moment when the dominant society privileges active, informed, assertive clients of health and educational services, the strategies employed by children and parents are not equally effective across classes. In sum, differences in family life lie not only in the advantages parents obtain for their children, but also in the skills they transmit to children for negotiating their own life paths.

### ||| METHODOLOGY

#### Study Participants

This study is based on interviews and observations of children, aged 8 to 10, and their families. The data were collected over time in three research phases. Phase one involved observations in two third-grade classrooms in a public school in the Midwestern community of "Lawrenceville."<sup>1</sup> After conducting observations for two months, I grouped the families into social class (and race) categories based on information provided by educators. I then chose every third name, and sent a letter to the child's home asking the mother and father to participate in separate interviews. Over 90 percent of parents agreed, for a total of 32 children (16 white and 16 African American). A black graduate student and I interviewed all mothers and most fathers (or guardians) of the children. Each interview lasted 90 to 120 minutes, and all took place in 1989–1990.

Phase two took place at two sites in a northeastern metropolitan area. One school, "Lower Richmond," although located in a predominantly white, working-class urban neighborhood, drew about half of its students from a nearby all-black housing project. I observed one third-grade class at Lower Richmond about twice a week for almost six months. The second site, "Swan," was located in a suburban neighborhood about 45 minutes from the city center. It was 90 percent white; most of the remaining 10 percent were middle-class black children.

There, I observed twice a week for two months at the end of the third grade; a research assistant then observed weekly for four more months in the fourth grade. At each site, teachers and parents described their school in positive terms. The observations took place between September 1992 and January 1994. In the fall of 1993, I drew an interview sample from Lower Richmond and Swan, following the same method of selection used for Lawrenceville. A team of research assistants and I interviewed the parents and guardians of 39 children. Again, the response rate was over 90 percent but because the classrooms did not generate enough black middle-class children and white poor children to fill the analytical categories, interviews were also conducted with 17 families with children aged 8 to 10. (Most of these interviews took place during the summers of 1996 and 1997.) Thus, the total number of children who participated in the study was 88 (32 from the Midwest and 56 from the Northeast).

### ||| FAMILY OBSERVATIONS

Phase three, the most intensive research phase of the study, involved home observations of 12 children and their families in the Northeast who had been previously interviewed. Some themes, such as language use and families' social connections, surfaced mainly during this phase. Although I entered the field interested in examining the influence of social class on children's daily lives, I incorporated new themes as they

<sup>1</sup> All names of people and places are pseudonyms. The Lawrenceville school was in a white suburban neighborhood in a university community a few hours from a metropolitan area.

The student population was about half white and half black; the (disproportionately poor) black children were bused from other neighborhoods.

"bubbled up" from the field observations. The evidence presented here comes mainly from the family observations, but I also use interview findings from the full sample of 88 children where appropriate.

Nine of the 12 families came from the Northeastern classroom sample. The home observations took place, one family at a time, from December 1993 to August 1994. Three 10-year-olds (a black middle-class boy and girl and a white poor boy) who were not part of the classroom sample were observed in their homes during the summer of 1995.

The research assistants and I took turns visiting the participating families daily, for a total of about 20 visits to each home, often in the space of one month. The observations went beyond the home: Fieldworkers followed children and parents as they participated in school activities, church services and events, organized play, visits to relatives, and medical appointments. Observations typically lasted three hours, but sometimes much longer (e.g., when we observed an out-of-town funeral, a special extended family event, or a long shopping trip). Most cases also involved one overnight visit. We often carried tape recorders and used the audiotapes for reference in writing field notes. Writing field notes usually required 8 to 12 hours for each two- or three-hour home visit. Participating families each were paid \$350, usually at the end of the visits.

\* \* \*

### CONCERTED CULTIVATION AND NATURAL GROWTH

The interviews and observations suggested that crucial aspects of family life *cohered*. Within

the concerted cultivation and accomplishment of natural growth approaches, three key dimensions may be distinguished: the organization of daily life, the use of language, and social connections. ("Interventions in institutions" and "consequences" are addressed later in the paper.) These dimensions do not capture all important parts of family life, but they do incorporate core aspects of childrearing (Table 1). Moreover, our field observations revealed that behaviors and activities related to these dimensions dominated the rhythms of family life. Conceptually, the organization of daily life and the use of language are crucial dimensions. Both must be present for the family to be described as engaging in one childrearing approach rather than the other. Social connections are significant but less conceptually essential.

All three aspects of childrearing were intricately woven into the families' daily routines, but rarely remarked upon. As part of everyday practice, they were invisible to parents and children. Analytically, however, they are useful means for comparing and contrasting ways in which social class differences shape the character of family life. I now examine two families in terms of these three key dimensions. I "control" for race and gender and contrast the lives of two black boys—one from an (upper) middle-class family and one from a family on public assistance. I could have focused on almost any of the other 12 children, but this pair seemed optimal, given the limited number of studies reporting on black middle-class families, as well as the aspect of my argument that suggests that race is less important than class in shaping childrearing patterns.

TABLE 1 SUMMARY OF DIFFERENCES IN CHILDRERING APPROACHES

Dimension Observed	Childrearing Approach	
	Concerted Cultivation	Accomplishment of Natural Growth
Key elements of each approach	Parent actively fosters and assesses child's talents, opinions, and skills	Parent cares for child and allows child to grow
Organization of daily life	Multiple child leisure activities are orchestrated by adults	Child "hangs out" particularly with kin
Language use	Reasoning/directives Child contestation of adult statements	Directives Rare for child to question or challenge adults
Social connections	Extended negotiations between parents and child Weak extended family ties Child often in homogenous age groupings	General acceptance by child of directives Strong extended family ties Child often in heterogeneous age groupings
Interventions in institutions	Criticisms and interventions on behalf of child Training of child to intervene on his or her own behalf	Dependence on institutions Sense of powerlessness and frustration Conflict between childrearing practices at home and at school
Consequences	Emerging sense of entitlement on the part of the child	Emerging sense of constraint on the part of the child

### Developing Alexander Williams

Alexander Williams and his parents live in a predominantly black middle-class neighborhood. Their six-bedroom house is worth about \$150,000. Alexander is an only child. Both parents grew up in small towns in the South, and both are from large families. His father, a tall, handsome man, is a very successful trial lawyer who earns about \$125,000 annually in a small firm specializing in medical malpractice cases. Two weeks each month, he works very long hours (from about 5:30 A.M. until midnight)

preparing for trials. The other two weeks, his workday ends around 6:00 P.M. He rarely travels out of town. Alexander's mother, Christina, is a positive, bubbly woman with freckles and long, black, wavy hair. A high-level manager in a major corporation, she has a corner office, a personal secretary, and responsibilities for other offices across the nation. She tries to limit her travel, but at least once a month she takes an overnight trip.

Alexander is a charming, inquisitive boy with a winsome smile. Ms. Williams is pleased that Alexander seems interested in so many things:

Alexander is a joy. He's a gift to me. He's very energetic, very curious, loving, caring person, that, um . . . is outgoing and who, uh, really loves to be with people. And who loves to explore, and loves to read and . . . just do a lot of fun things.

The private school Alexander attends has an on-site after-school program. There, he participates in several activities and receives guitar lessons and photography instruction.

#### Organization of Daily Life

Alexander is busy with activities during the week and on weekends (Table 2). His mother describes their Saturday morning routine. The day starts early with a private piano lesson for Alexander downtown, a 20-minute drive from the house:

It's an 8:15 class. But for me, it was a tradeoff. I am very adamant about Saturday morning TV. I don't know what it contributes. So . . . it was . . . um . . . either stay at home and fight on a Saturday morning [laughs] or go do something constructive. . . . Now Saturday mornings are pretty booked up. You know, the piano lesson, and then straight to choir for a couple of hours. So, he has a very full schedule.

Ms. Williams's vehement opposition to television is based on her view of what Alexander needs to grow and thrive. She objects to TV's passivity and feels it is her obligation to help her son cultivate his talents.

Sometimes Alexander complains that "my mother signs me up for everything!" Generally, however, he likes his activities. He says they make him feel "special," and without them life would be "boring." His sense of time

is thoroughly entwined with his activities: He feels disoriented when his schedule is not full. This unease is clear in the following field-note excerpt. The family is driving home from a Back-to-School night. The next morning, Ms. Williams will leave for a work-related day trip and will not return until late at night. Alexander is grumpy because he has nothing planned for the next day. He wants to have a friend over, but his mother rebuffs him. Whining, he wonders what he will do. His mother, speaking tersely, says:

You have piano and guitar. You'll have some free time. [Pause] I think you'll survive for one night. [Alexander does not respond but seems mad. It is quiet for the rest of the trip home.]

Alexander's parents believe his activities provide a wide range of benefits important for his development. In discussing Alexander's piano lessons, Mr. Williams notes that as a Suzuki student, Alexander is already able to read music. Speculating about more diffuse benefits of Alexander's involvement with piano, he says:

I don't see how any kid's adolescence and adulthood could not but be enhanced by an awareness of who Beethoven was. And is that Bach or Mozart? I don't know the difference between the two! I don't know Baroque from Classical—but he does. How can that not be a benefit in later life? I'm convinced that this rich experience will make him a better person, a better citizen, a better husband, a better father—certainly a better student.

Ms. Williams sees music as building her son's "confidence" and his "poise." In interviews and casual conversation, she stresses "exposure."

TABLE 2 PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL: BOYS

Boy's Name/Race/Class	Activities Organized by Adults	Informal Activities
<b>MIDDLE CLASS</b>		
Garrett Tallinger (white)	Soccer team Traveling soccer team Baseball team Basketball team (summer) Swim team Piano Saxophone (through school)	Plays with siblings in yard Watches television Plays computer games Overnights with friends
Alexander Williams (black)	Soccer team Baseball team Community choir Church choir Sunday school Piano (Suzuki) School plays Guitar (through school)	Restricted television Plays outside occasionally with two other boys Visits friends from school
<b>WORKING CLASS</b>		
Billy Yanelli (white)	Baseball team	Watches television Visits relatives Rides bike Plays outside in the street Hangs out with neighborhood kids
Tyrec Taylor (black)	Football team Vacation Bible School Sunday school (off/on)	Watches television Plays outside in the street Rides bikes with neighborhood boys Visit relatives Goes to swimming pool
<b>POOR</b>		
Karl Greeley (white)	Goes to swimming pool Walks dogs with neighbor	Watches television Plays Nintendo Plays with siblings
Harold McAllister (black)	Bible study in neighbor's house (occasionally) Bible camp (1 week)	Visits relatives Plays ball with neighborhood kids Watches television Watches videos

She believes it is her responsibility to broaden Alexander's worldview. Childhood activities provide a learning ground for important life skills:

Sports provide great opportunities to learn how to be competitive. Learn how to accept defeat, you know. Learn how to accept winning, you know, in a gracious way. Also it gives him the opportunity to learn leadership skills and how to be a team player. . . . Sports really provides a lot of really great opportunities.

Alexander's schedule is constantly shifting; some activities wind down and others start up. Because the schedules of sports practices and games are issued no sooner than the start of the new season, advance planning is rarely possible. Given the sheer number of Alexander's activities, events inevitably overlap. Some activities, though short-lived, are extremely time consuming. Alexander's school play, for example, requires rehearsals three nights the week before the opening. In addition, in choosing activities, the Williamses have an added concern—the group's racial balance. Ms. Williams prefers that Alexander not be the only black child at events. Typically, one or two other black boys are involved, but the groups are predominantly white and the activities take place in predominantly white residential neighborhoods. Alexander is, however, part of his church's youth choir and Sunday School, activities in which all participants are black.

Many activities involve competition. Alex must audition for his solo performance in the school play, for example. Similarly, parents and children alike understand that participation on "A," "B," or "All-Star" sports teams signal different skill levels. Like other middle-class chil-

dren in the study, Alexander seems to enjoy public performance. According to a field note, after his solo at a musical production in front of over 200 people, he appeared "contained, pleased, aware of the attention he's receiving."

Alexander's commitments do not consume *all* his free time. Still, his life is defined by a series of deadlines and schedules interwoven with a series of activities that are organized and controlled by adults rather than children. Neither he nor his parents see this as troublesome.

#### Language Use

Like other middle-class families, the Williamses often engage in conversation that promotes reasoning and negotiation. An excerpt from a field note (describing an exchange between Alexander and his mother during a car ride home after summer camp) shows the kind of pointed questions middle-class parents ask children. Ms. Williams is not just eliciting information. She is also giving Alexander the opportunity to develop and practice verbal skills, including how to summarize, clarify, and amplify information:

As she drives, [Ms. Williams] asks Alex, "So, how was your day?"

Alex: "Okay. I had hot dogs today, but they were burned! They were all black!"

Mom: "Oh, great. You shouldn't have eaten any."

Alex: "They weren't *all* black, only half were. The rest were regular."

Mom: "Oh, okay. What was that game you were playing this morning? . . ."

Alex: "It was [called] 'Whatcha doin?'"

Mom: "How do you play?"

Alexander explains the game elaborately—fieldworker doesn't quite follow. Mom asks

Alex questions throughout his explanation, saying, "Oh, I see," when he answers. She asks him about another game she saw them play; he again explains. . . . She continues to prompt and encourage him with small giggles in the back of her throat as he elaborates.

Expressions of interest in children's activities often lead to negotiations over small, home-based matters. During the same car ride, Ms. Williams tries to adjust the dinner menu to suit Alexander:

Alexander says, "I don't want hot dogs tonight."

Mom: "Oh? Because you had them for lunch."

Alexander nods.

Mom: "Well, I can fix something else and save the hot dogs for tomorrow night."

Alex: "But I don't want any pork chops either."

Mom: "Well, Alexander, we need to eat something. Why didn't you have hamburgers today?"

Alex: "They don't have them any more at the snack bar."

Mom asks Alexander if he's ok, if he wants a snack. Alexander says he's ok. Mom asks if he's sure he doesn't want a bag of chips?

Not all middle-class parents are as attentive to their children's needs as this mother, and none are *always* interested in negotiating. But a general pattern of reasoning and accommodating is common.

#### Social Connections

Mr. and Ms. Williams consider themselves very close to their extended families. Because

the Williams's aging parents live in the South, visiting requires a plane trip. Ms. Williams takes Alexander with her to see his grandparents twice a year. She speaks on the phone with her parents at least once a week and also calls her siblings several times a week. Mr. Williams talks with his mother regularly by phone (he has less contact with his stepfather). With pride, he also mentions his niece, whose Ivy League education he is helping to finance.

Interactions with cousins are not normally a part of Alexander's leisure time. (As I explain below, other middle-class children did not see cousins routinely either, even when they lived nearby.) Nor does he often play with neighborhood children. The huge homes on the Williams's street are occupied mainly by couples without children. Most of Alexander's playmates come from his classroom or his organized activities. Because most of his school events, church life, and assorted activities are organized by the age (and sometimes gender) of the participants, Alexander interacts almost exclusively with children his own age, usually boys. Adult-organized activities thus define the context of his social life.

Mr. and Ms. Williams are aware that they allocate a sizable portion of time to Alexander's activities. What they stress, however, is the time they *hold back*. They mention activities the family has chosen *not* to take on (such as traveling soccer).

#### Summary

Alexander's parents engaged in concerted cultivation. They fostered their son's growth through involvement in music, church, athletics, and academics. They talked with him at length, seeking his opinions and encouraging



his ideas. Their approach involved considerable direct expenses (e.g., the cost of lessons and equipment) and large indirect expenses (e.g., the cost of taking time off from work, driving to practices, and foregoing adult leisure activities). Although Mr. and Ms. Williams acknowledged the importance of extended family, Alexander spent relatively little time with relatives. His social interactions occurred almost exclusively with children his own age and with adults. Alexander's many activities significantly shaped the organization of daily life in the family. Both parents' leisure time was tailored to their son's commitments. Mr. and Ms. Williams felt that the strategies they cultivated with Alexander would result in his having the best possible chance at a happy and productive life. They couldn't imagine themselves *not* investing large amounts of time and energy in their son's life. But, as I explain in the next section, which focuses on a black boy from a poor family, other parents held a different view.

#### Supporting the Natural Growth of Harold McAllister

Harold McAllister, a large, stocky boy with a big smile, is from a poor black family. He lives with his mother and his 8-year-old sister, Alexis, in a large apartment. Two cousins often stay overnight. Harold's 16-year-old sister and 18-year-old brother usually live with their grandmother, but sometimes they stay at the McAllister's home. Ms. McAllister, a high school graduate, relies on public assistance (AFDC). Hank, Harold and Alexis's father, is a mechanic. He and Ms. McAllister have never married. He visits regularly, sometimes weekly, stopping by after work to watch television or nap. Harold (but

not Alexis) sometimes travels across town by bus to spend the weekend with Hank.

The McAllister's apartment is in a public housing project near a busy street. The complex consists of rows of two- and three-story brick units. The buildings, blocky and brown, have small yards enclosed by concrete and wood fences. Large floodlights are mounted on the corners of the buildings, and wide concrete sidewalks cut through the spaces between units. The ground is bare in many places; paper wrappers and glass litter the area.

Inside the apartment, life is humorous and lively, with family members and kin sharing in the daily routines. Ms. McAllister discussed, disdainfully, mothers who are on drugs or who abuse alcohol and do not "look after" their children. Indeed, the previous year Ms. McAllister called Child Protective Services to report her twin sister, a cocaine addict, because she was neglecting her children. Ms. McAllister is actively involved in her twin's daughters' lives. Her two nephews also frequently stay with her. Overall, she sees herself as a capable mother who takes care of her children and her extended family.

#### Organization of Daily Life

Much of Harold's life and the lives of his family members revolve around home. Project residents often sit outside in lawn chairs or on front stoops, drinking beer, talking, and watching children play. During summer, windows are frequently left open, allowing breezes to waft through the units and providing vantage points from which residents can survey the neighborhood. A large deciduous tree in front of the McAllister's apartment unit provides welcome shade in the summer's heat.

Harold loves sports. He is particularly fond of basketball, but he also enjoys football, and he follows televised professional sports closely. Most afternoons, he is either inside watching television or outside playing ball. He tosses a football with cousins and boys from the neighboring units and organizes pick-up basketball games. Sometimes he and his friends use a rusty, bare hoop hanging from a telephone pole in the housing project; other times, they string up an old, blue plastic crate as a makeshift hoop. One obstacle to playing sports, however, is a shortage of equipment. Balls are costly to replace, especially given the rate at which they disappear—*theft of children's play equipment, including balls and bicycles, is an ongoing problem.* During a field observation, Harold asks his mother if she knows where the ball is. She replies with some vehemence, "They stole the blue and yellow ball, and they stole the green ball, and they stole the other ball."

Hunting for balls is a routine part of Harold's leisure time. One June day, with the temperature and humidity in the high 80's, Harold and his cousin Tyrice (and a fieldworker) wander around the housing project for about an hour, trying to find a basketball:

We head to the other side of the complex. On the way . . . we passed four guys sitting on the step. Their ages were 9 to 13 years. They had a radio blaring. Two were working intently on fixing a flat bike tire. The other two were dribbling a basketball.

Harold: "Yo! What's up, ya'll."

Group: "What's up, Har?" "What's up?" "Yo."

They continued to work on the tire and dribble the ball. As we walked down the hill, Harold asked, "Yo, could I use your ball?"

The guy responded, looking up from the tire, "Naw, man. Ya'll might lose it."

Harold, Tyrice, and the fieldworker walk to another part of the complex, heading for a makeshift basketball court where they hope to find a game in progress:

No such luck. Harold enters an apartment directly in front of the makeshift court. The door was open. . . . Harold came back. "No ball. I guess I gotta go back."

The pace of life for Harold and his friends ebbs and flows with the children's interests and family obligations. The day of the basketball search, for example, after spending time listening to music and looking at baseball cards, the children join a water fight Tyrice instigates. It is a lively game, filled with laughter and with efforts to get the adults next door wet (against their wishes). When the game winds down, the kids ask their mother for money, receive it, and then walk to a store to buy chips and soda. They chat with another young boy and then amble back to the apartment, eating as they walk. Another afternoon, almost two weeks later, the children—Harold, two of his cousins, and two children from the neighborhood—and the fieldworker play basketball on a makeshift court in the street (using the fieldworker's ball). As Harold bounces the ball, neighborhood children of all ages wander through the space.

Thus, Harold's life is more free-flowing and more child-directed than is Alexander Williams's. The pace of any given day is not so much planned as emergent, reflecting child-based interests and activities. Parents intervene in specific areas, such as personal grooming, meals, and occasional chores, but they do not continuously direct and monitor their children's leisure

activities. Moreover, the leisure activities Harold and other working-class and poor children pursue require them to develop a repertoire of skills for dealing with much older and much younger children as well as with neighbors and relatives.

#### *Language Use*

Life in the working-class and poor families in the study flows smoothly without extended verbal discussions. The amount of talking varies, but overall, it is considerably less than occurs in the middle-class homes. Ms. McAllister jokes with the children and discusses what is on television. But she does not appear to cultivate conversation by asking the children questions or by drawing them out. Often she is brief and direct in her remarks. For instance, she coordinates the use of the apartment's only bathroom by using one-word directives. She sends the children (there are almost always at least four children home at once) to wash up by pointing to a child, saying one word, "bathroom," and handing him or her a washcloth. Wordlessly, the designated child gets up and goes to the bathroom to take a shower.

Similarly, although Ms. McAllister will listen to the children's complaints about school, she does not draw them out on these issues or seek to determine details, as Ms. Williams would. For instance, at the start of the new school year, when I ask Harold about his teacher, he tells me she is "mean" and that "she lies." Ms. McAllister, washing dishes, listens to her son, but she does not encourage Harold to support his opinion about his new teacher with more examples, nor does she mention any concerns of her own. Instead, she asks about last year's teacher, "What

was the name of that man teacher?" Harold says, "Mr. Lindsey?" She says, "No, the other one." He says, "Mr. Terrene." Ms. McAllister smiles and says, "Yeah. I liked him." Unlike Alexander's mother, she seems content with a brief exchange of information.

#### *Social Connections*

Children, especially boys, frequently play outside. The number of potential playmates in Harold's world is vastly higher than the number in Alexander's neighborhood. When a fieldworker stops to count heads, she finds 40 children of elementary school age residing in the nearby rows of apartments. With so many children nearby, Harold could choose to play only with others his own age. In fact, though, he often hangs out with older and younger children and with his cousins (who are close to his age).

The McAllister family, like other poor and working-class families, is involved in a web of extended kin. As noted earlier, Harold's older siblings and his two male cousins often spend the night at the McAllister home. Celebrations such as birthdays involve relatives almost exclusively. Party guests are not, as in middle-class families, friends from school or from extracurricular activities. Birthdays are celebrated enthusiastically, with cake and special food to mark the occasion; presents, however, are not offered. Similarly, Christmas at Harold's house featured a tree and special food but no presents. At these and other family events, the older children voluntarily look after the younger ones: Harold plays with his 16-month-old niece, and his cousins carry around the younger babies.

The importance of family ties—and the contingent nature of life in the McAllister's world—

is clear in the response Alexis offers when asked what she would do if she were given a million dollars:

Oh, boy! I'd buy my brother, my sister, my uncle, my aunt, my nieces and my nephews, and my grandpop, and my grandmom, and my mom, and my dad, and my friends, not my friends, but mostly my best friend—I'd buy them all clothes . . . and sneakers. And I'd buy some food, and I'd buy my mom some food, and I'd get my brothers and my sisters gifts for their birthdays.

#### *Summary*

In a setting where everyone, including the children, was acutely aware of the lack of money, the McAllister family made do. Ms. McAllister rightfully saw herself as a very capable mother. She was a strong, positive influence in the lives of the children she looked after. Still, the contrast with Ms. Williams is striking. Ms. McAllister did not seem to think that Harold's opinions needed to be cultivated and developed. She, like most parents in the working-class and poor families, drew strong and clear boundaries between adults and children. Adults gave directions to children. Children were given freedom to play informally unless they were needed for chores. Extended family networks were deemed important and trustworthy.

#### **The Intersection of Race and Class in Family Life**

I expected race to powerfully shape children's daily schedules, but this was not evident (also see Conley 1999; Pattillo-McCoy 1999). This is not to say that race is unimportant. Black par-

ents were particularly concerned with monitoring their children's lives outside the home for signs of racial problems. Black middle-class fathers, especially, were likely to stress the importance of their sons understanding "what it means to be a black man in this society" (J. Hochschild 1995). Mr. Williams, in summarizing how he and his wife orient Alexander, said:

[We try to] teach him that race unfortunately is the most important aspect of our national life. I mean people look at other people and they see a color first. But that isn't going to define who he is. He will do his best. He will succeed, despite racism. And I think he lives his life that way.

Alexander's parents were acutely aware of the potential significance of race in his life. Both were adamant, however, that race should not be used as "an excuse" for not striving to succeed. Mr. Williams put it this way:

I discuss how race impacts on my life as an attorney, and I discuss how race will impact on his life. The one teaching that he takes away from this is that he is never to use discrimination as an excuse for not doing his best.

Thus far, few incidents of overt racism had occurred in Alexander's life, as his mother noted:

Those situations have been far and few between. . . . I mean, I can count them on my fingers.

Still, Ms. Williams recounted with obvious pain an incident at a birthday party Alexander had attended as a preschooler. The grandparents of the birthday child repeatedly asked, "Who is

that boy?" and exclaimed, "He's so dark!" Such experiences fueled the Williams's resolve always to be "cautious":

We've never been, uh, parents who drop off their kid anywhere. We've always gone with him. And even now, I go in and—to school in the morning—and check [in]. . . . The school environment, we've watched very closely.

Alexander's parents were not equally optimistic about the chances for racial equality in this country. Ms. Williams felt strongly that, especially while Alexander was young, his father should not voice his pessimism. Mr. Williams complained that this meant he had to "watch" what he said to Alexander about race relations. Still, both parents agreed about the need to be vigilant regarding potential racial problems in Alexander's life. Other black parents reported experiencing racial prejudice and expressed a similar commitment to vigilance.

Issues surrounding the prospect of growing up black and male in this society were threaded through Alexander's life in ways that had no equivalent among his middle-class, white male peers. Still, in fourth grade there were no signs of racial experiences having "taken hold" the way that they might as Alexander ages. In terms of the number and kind of activities he participated in, his life was very similar to that of Garrett Tallinger, his white counterpart (see Table 2). That both sets of parents were fully committed to a strategy of concentrated cultivation was apparent in the number of adult-organized activities the boys were enrolled in, the hectic pace of family life, and the stress on reasoning in parent-child negotiations. Likewise, the research assistants and I saw no striking differ-

ences in the ways in which white parents and black parents in the working-class and poor homes socialized their children.

Others (Fordham and Ogbu 1986) have found that in middle school and high school, adolescent peer groups often draw sharp racial boundaries, a pattern not evident among this study's third- and fourth-grade participants (but sometimes present among their older siblings). Following Tatum (1997:52), I attribute this to the children's relatively young ages (also see "Race in America," *The New York Times*, June 25, 2000, p. 1). In sum, in the broader society, key aspects of daily life were shaped by racial segregation and discrimination. But in terms of enrollment in organized activities, language use, and social connections, the largest differences between the families we observed were across social class, not racial groups.

#### DIFFERENCES IN CULTURAL PRACTICES ACROSS THE TOTAL SAMPLE

The patterns observed among the Williams and McAllister families occurred among others in the 12-family subsample and across the larger group of 88 children. Frequently, they also echoed established patterns in the literature. These patterns highlight not only the amount of time spent on activities but also the quality of family life and the ways in which key dimensions of childrearing intertwine.

#### Organization of Daily Life

In the study as a whole, the rhythms of family life differed by social class. Working-class and poor children spent most of their free time in

informal play; middle-class children took part in many adult-organized activities designed to develop their individual talents and interests. For the 88 children, I calculated an average score for the most common adult-directed, organized activities, based on parents' answers to interview questions. Middle-class children averaged 4.9 current activities (N = 36), working-class children averaged 2.5 activities (N = 26), and poor children averaged 1.5 (N = 26). Black middle-class children had slightly more activities than white middle-class children, largely connected to more church involvement, with an average of 5.2 (N = 18) compared with 4.6 activities for whites (N = 18). The racial difference was very modest in the working-class group (2.8 activities for black children [N = 12] and 2.3 for white children [N = 14]) and the poor group (1.6 activities for black children [N = 14] and 1.4 for white children [N = 12]). Middle-class boys had slightly more activities than middle-class girls (5.1 versus 4.7, N = 18 for both) but gender did not make a difference for the other classes. The type of activity did however. Girls tended to participate in dance, music, and Scouts, and to be less active in sports. This pattern of social class differences in activities is comparable to other, earlier reports (Medrich et al. 1982): Hofferth and Sandberg's (2001a, 2000b) recent research using a representative national sample suggests that the number of children's organized activities increases with parents' education and that children's involvement in organized activities has risen in recent decades.

The dollar cost of children's organized activities was significant, particularly when families had more than one child. Cash outlays included

paying the instructors and coaches who gave lessons, purchasing uniforms and performance attire, paying for tournament admission and travel to and from tournaments, and covering hotel and food costs for overnight stays. Summer camps also were expensive. At my request, the Tallingers added up the costs for Garrett's organized activities. The total was over \$4,000 per year. Recent reports of parents' expenditures for children's involvement in a single sport (e.g., hockey) are comparably high (Schemari 2002). Children's activities consumed time as well as money, co-opting parents' limited leisure hours.

The study also uncovered differences in how much time children spent in activities controlled by adults. Take the schedule of Melanie Handlon, a white middle-class girl in the fourth grade (see Table 3). Between December 8 and December 24, Melanie had a piano lesson each Monday, Girl Scouts each Thursday, a special Girl Scout event one Monday night, a special holiday musical performance at school one Tuesday night, two orthodontist appointments, five special rehearsals for the church Christmas pageant, and regular Sunday commitments (an early church service, Sunday school, and youth choir). On weekdays she spent several hours after school struggling with her homework as her mother coached her step-by-step through the worksheets. The amount of time Melanie spent in situations where her movements were controlled by adults was typical of middle-class children in the study.

The schedule of Katie Brindle, a white fourth-grader from a poor family, contrasts sharply, showing few organized activities between December 2 and 24. She sang in the

TABLE 3 PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL: GIRLS

Girl's Name/Race/Class	Activities Organized by Adults	Informal Activities
<b>MIDDLE CLASS</b>		
Melanie Handlon (white)	Girl Scouts Piano Sunday school Church Church pageant Violin (through school) Softball team	Restricted television Plays outside with neighborhood kids Bakes cookies with mother Swims (not on swim team) Listens to music
Stacey Marshall (black)	Gymnastics lessons Gymnastic teams Church Sunday school Youth choir	Watches television Plays outside Visits friends from school Rides bike
<b>WORKING CLASS</b>		
Wendy Driver (white)	Catholic education (CCD) Dance lessons School choir	Watches television Visits relatives Does housework Rides bike Plays outside in the street Hangs out with cousins
Jessica Irwin (black father/ white mother)	Church Sunday school Saturday art class School band	Restricted television Reads Plays outside with neighborhood kids Visit relatives
<b>POOR</b>		
Katie Brindle (white)	School choir Friday evening church group (rarely)	Watches television Visits relatives Plays with Barbies Rides bike Plays with neighborhood kids
Tara Carroll (black)	Church Sunday school	Watches television Visits relatives Plays with dolls Plays Nintendo Plays with neighborhood kids

school choir. This involved one after-school rehearsal on Wednesdays; she walked home by herself after these rehearsals. Occasionally, Katie attended a Christian youth group on Friday nights (i.e., December 3). Significantly, all her activities were free. She wanted to enroll in ballet classes, but they were prohibitively expensive. What Katie did have was unstructured leisure time. Usually, she came home after school and then played outside with other children in the neighborhood or watched television. She also regularly visited her grandmother and her cousins, who lived a few minutes away by bus or car. She often spent weekend nights at her grandmother's house. Overall, Katie's life was centered in and around home. Compared with the middle-class children in the study, her life moved at a dramatically less hectic pace. This pattern was characteristic of the other working-class and poor families we interviewed.

In addition to these activities, television provided a major source of leisure entertainment. All children in the study spent at least some free time watching TV but there were differences in when, what, and how much they watched. Most middle-class parents we interviewed characterized television as actually or potentially harmful to children; many stressed that they preferred their children to read for entertainment. Middle-class parents often had rules about the amount of time children could spend watching television. These concerns did not surface in interviews with working-class and poor parents. Indeed, Ms. Yanelli, a white working-class mother, objected to restricting a child's access to television, noting, "You know, you learn so much from television." Working-class and poor parents did monitor the content

of programs and made some shows off-limits for children. The television itself, however, was left on almost continuously (also see Robinson and Godbey 1997).

### Language Use

The social class differences in language use we observed were similar to those reported by others (see Bernstein 1971; Hart and Risley 1995; Heath 1983). In middle-class homes, parents placed a tremendous emphasis on reasoning. They also drew out their children's views on specific subjects. Middle-class parents relied on directives for matters of health and safety, but most other aspects of daily life were potentially open to negotiation: Discussions arose over what children wore in the morning, what they ate, where they sat, and how they spent their time. Not all middle-class children were equally talkative, however. In addition, in observations, mothers exhibited more willingness to engage children in prolonged discussions than did fathers. The latter tended to be less engaged with children overall and less accepting of disruptions (A. Hochschild 1989).

In working-class and poor homes, most parents did not focus on developing their children's opinions, judgments, and observations. When children volunteered information, parents would listen, but typically they did not follow up with questions or comments. In the field note excerpt below, Wendy Driver shares her new understanding of sin with the members of her white working-class family. She is sitting in the living room with her brother (Willie), her mother, and her mother's live-in boyfriend (Mack). Everyone is watching television:

Wendy asks Willie: "Do you know what mortal sin is?"

Willie: "No."

Wendy asks Mom: "Do you know what mortal sin is?"

Mom: "What is it?"

Wendy asks Mack: "Do you know what it is?"

Mack: "No."

Mom: "Tell us what it is. You're the one who went to CCD [Catholic religious education classes]."

Wendy: "It's when you know something's wrong and you do it anyway."

No one acknowledged Wendy's comment. Wendy's mother and Mack looked at her while she gave her explanation of mortal sin, then looked back at the TV.

Wendy's family is conversationally cooperative, but unlike the Williamses, for example, no one here perceives the moment as an opportunity to further develop Wendy's vocabulary or to help her exercise her critical thinking skills.

Negotiations between parents and children in working-class and poor families were infrequent. Parents tended to use firm directives and they expected prompt, positive responses. Children who ignored parental instructions could expect physical punishment. Field notes from an evening in the home of the white, working-class Yanelli family capture one example of this familiar dynamic. It is past 8:00 P.M. Ms. Yanelli, her son Billy, and the fieldworker are playing *Scrabble*. Mr. Yanelli and a friend are absorbed in a game of chess. Throughout the evening, Billy and Ms. Yanelli have been at odds. She feels Billy has not been listening to

her. Ms. Yanelli wants her son to stop playing *Scrabble*, take a shower, and go to bed.

Mom: "Billy, shower. I don't care if you cry, screams."

Billy: "We're not done with the *Scrabble* game."

Mom: "You're done. Finish your homework earlier." That evening, Billy had not finished his homework until 8:00 P.M. Billy remains seated.

Mom: "Come on! Tomorrow you've got a big day." Billy does not move.

Mom goes into the other room and gets a brown leather belt. She hits Billy twice on the leg.

Mom: "Get up right now! Tomorrow I can't get you up in the morning. Get up right now!"

Billy gets up and runs up the steps.

Ms. Yanelli's disciplinary approach is very different from that of the middle-class parents we observed. Like most working-class and poor parents we observed, she is directive and her instructions are nonnegotiable ("Billy, shower" and "You're done."). Using a belt may seem harsh, but it is neither a random nor irrational form of punishment here. Ms. Yanelli gave Billy notice of her expectations and she offered an explanation (it's late, and tomorrow he has "a big day"). She turned to physical discipline as a resource when she felt Billy was not sufficiently responsive.

#### Social Connections

We also observed class differences in the context of children's social relations. Across the sample of 88 families, middle-class children's involvement in adult-organized activities led to mainly

weak social ties. Soccer, photography classes, swim team, and so on typically take place in 6 to 8 week blocks, and participant turnover rates are relatively high. Equally important, middle-class children's commitment to organized activities generally pre-empted visits with extended family. Some did not have relatives who lived nearby, but even among those who did, children's schedules made it difficult to organize and attend regular extended-family gatherings. Many of the middle-class children visited with relatives only on major holidays.

Similarly, middle-class parents tended to forge weak rather than strong ties. Most reported having social networks that included professionals: 93 percent of the sample of middle-class parents had a friend or relative who was a teacher, compared with 43 percent of working-class parents and 36 percent of poor families. For a physician friend or relative, the pattern was comparable (70 percent versus 14 percent and 18 percent, respectively). Relationships such as these are not as deep as family ties, but they are a valuable resource when parents face a challenge in childrearing.

Working-class and poor families were much less likely to include professionals in their social networks but were much more likely than their middle-class counterparts to see or speak with kin daily. Children regularly interacted in casually assembled, heterogeneous age groups that included cousins as well as neighborhood children. As others have shown (Lever 1988), we observed gender differences in children's activities. Although girls sometimes ventured outside to ride bikes and play ball games, compared with boys they were more likely to stay inside the house to play. Whether inside or outside,

the girls, like the boys, played in loose coalitions of kin and neighbors and created their own activities.

Interactions with representatives of major social institutions (the police, courts, schools, and government agencies) also appeared significantly shaped by social class. Members of white and black working-class and poor families offered spontaneous comments about their distrust of these officials. For example, one white working-class mother described an episode in which the police had come to her home looking for her ex-husband (a drug user). She recalled officers "breaking down the door" and terrifying her eldest son, then only three years old. Another white working-class mother reported that her father had been arrested. Although by all accounts in good spirits, he had been found dead in the city jail, an alleged suicide. Children listened to and appeared to absorb remarks such as these.

Fear was a key reason for the unease with which working-class and poor families approached formal (and some informal) encounters with officials. Some parents worried that authorities would "come and take [our] kids away." One black mother on public assistance interviewed as part of the larger study was outraged that school personnel had allowed her daughter to come home from school one winter day without her coat. She noted that if she had allowed that to happen, "the school" would have reported her to Child Protective Services for child abuse. Wendy Driver's mother (white working-class) complained that she felt obligated to take Wendy to the doctor, even when she knew nothing was wrong, because Wendy had gone to see the school nurse. Ms. Driver

felt she had to be extra careful because she didn't want "them" to come and take her kids away. Strikingly, no middle-class parents mention similar fears about the power of dominant institutions.

Obviously, these three dimensions of childrearing patterns—the organization of daily life, language use, and social connections—do not capture all the class advantages parents pass to their children. The middle-class children in the study enjoyed relatively privileged lives. They lived in large houses, some had swimming pools in their backyards, most had bedrooms of their own, all had many toys, and computers were common. These children also had broad horizons. They flew in airplanes, they traveled out of state for vacations, they often traveled an hour or two from home to take part in their activities, and they knew older children whose extracurricular activities involved international travel.

Still, in some important areas, variations among families did *not* appear to be linked to social class. Some of the middle-class children had learning problems. And, despite their relatively privileged social-class position, neither middle-class children nor their parents were insulated from the realities of serious illness and premature death among family and friends. In addition, some elements of family life seemed relatively immune to social class, including how orderly and tidy the households were. In one white middle-class family, the house was regularly in a state of disarray. The house was cleaned and tidied for a Christmas Eve gathering, but it returned to its normal state shortly thereafter. By contrast, a black middle-class family's home was always extremely tidy, as were some, but

not all, of the working-class and poor homes. Nor did certain aspects of parenting, particularly the degree to which mothers appeared to "mean what they said," seem linked to social class. Families also differed with respect to the presence or absence of a sense of humor among individual members, levels of anxiety, and signs of stress-related illnesses they exhibited. Finally, there were significant differences in temperament and disposition among children in the same family. These variations are useful reminders that social class is not fully a determinant of the character of children's lives.

#### IMPACT OF CHILDBEARING STRATEGIES ON INTERACTIONS WITH INSTITUTIONS

Social scientists sometimes emphasize the importance of reshaping parenting practices to improve children's chances of success. Explicitly and implicitly, the literature exhorts parents to comply with the views of professionals (Bronfenbrenner 1966; Epstein 2001; Heimer and Staffen 1998). Such calls for compliance do not, however, reconcile professionals' judgments regarding the intrinsic value of current childrearing standards with the evidence of the historical record, which shows regular shifts in such standards over time (Aries 1962; Wrigley 1989; Zelizer 1985). Nor are the stratified, and limited, possibilities for success in the broader society examined.

I now follow the families out of their homes and into encounters with representatives of dominant institutions—institutions that are directed by middle-class professionals. Again, I focus on Alexander Williams and Harold

McAllister. (Institutional experiences are summarized in Table 1.) Across all social classes, parents and children interacted with teachers and school officials, healthcare professionals, and assorted government officials. Although they often addressed similar problems (e.g., learning disabilities, asthma, traffic violations), they typically did not achieve similar resolutions. The pattern of concerted cultivation fostered an *emerging sense of entitlement* in the life of Alexander Williams and other middle-class children. By contrast, the commitment to nurturing children's natural growth fostered an *emerging sense of constraint* in the life of Harold McAllister and other working-class or poor children. (These consequences of childrearing practices are summarized in Table 1.)

Both parents and children drew on the resources associated with these two childrearing approaches during their interactions with officials. Middle-class parents and children often customized these interactions; working-class and poor parents were more likely to have a "generic" relationship. When faced with problems, middle-class parents also appeared better equipped to exert influence over other adults compared with working-class and poor parents. Nor did middle-class parents or children display the intimidation or confusion we witnessed among many working-class and poor families when they faced a problem in their children's school experience.

#### Emerging Signs of Entitlement

Alexander Williams's mother, like many middle-class mothers, explicitly teaches her son to be an informed, assertive client in interactions with professionals. For example, as she

drives Alexander to a routine doctor's appointment, she coaches him in the art of communicating effectively in healthcare settings:

Alexander asks if he needs to get any shots today at the doctor's. Ms. Williams says he'll need to ask the doctor. . . . As we enter Park Lane, Mom says quietly to Alex: "Alexander, you should be thinking of questions you might want to ask the doctor. You can ask him anything you want. Don't be shy. You can ask anything."

Alex thinks for a minute, then: "I have some bumps under my arms from my deodorant."

Mom: "Really? You mean from your new deodorant?"

Alex: "Yes."

Mom: "Well, you should ask the doctor."

Alexander learns that he has the right to speak up (e.g., "don't be shy") and that he should prepare for an encounter with a person in a position of authority by gathering his thoughts in advance.

These class resources are subsequently *activated* in the encounter with the doctor (a jovial white man in his late thirties or early forties). The examination begins this way:

Doctor: "Okay, as usual, I'd like to go through the routine questions with you. And if you have any questions for me, just fire away." Doctor examines Alex's chart: "Height-wise, as usual, Alexander's in the ninety-fifth percentile."

Although the physician is talking to Ms. Williams, Alexander interrupts him:

Alex: "I'm in the what?" Doctor: "It means that you're taller than more than ninety-five

out of a hundred young men when they're, uh, ten years old."

Alex: "I'm not ten."

Doctor: "Well, they graphed you at ten . . . they usually take the closest year to get that graph."

Alex: "Alright."

Alexander's "Alright" reveals that he feels entitled to weigh-in with his own judgment.

A few minutes later, the exam is interrupted when the doctor is asked to provide an emergency consultation by telephone. Alexander listens to the doctor's conversation and then uses what he has overheard as the basis for a clear directive:

Doctor: "The stitches are on the eyelids themselves, the laceration? . . . Um . . . I don't suture eyelids . . . um . . . Absolutely not! . . . Don't even touch them. That was very bad judgment on the camp's part. . . . [Hangs up.] I'm sorry about the interruption."

Alex: "Stay away from my eyelids!"

Alexander's comment, which draws laughter from the adults, reflects this fourth grader's tremendous ease interacting with a physician.

Later, Ms. Williams and the doctor discuss Alexander's diet. Ms. Williams freely admits that they do not always follow nutritional guidelines. Her honesty is a form of capital because it gives the doctor accurate information on which to base a diagnosis. Feeling no need for deception positions mother and son to receive better care:

Doctor: Let's start with appetite. Do you get three meals a day?"

Alex: "Yeah."

Doctor: "And here's the important question: Do you get your fruits and vegetables too?"

Alex: "Yeah."

Mom, high-pitched: "Oooooo. . ."

Doctor: "I see I have a second opinion." [laughter]

Alex, voice rising: "You give me bananas and all in my lunch every day. And I had cabbage for dinner last night."

Doctor: "Do you get at least one or two fruits, one or two vegetables every day?"

Alex: "Yeah."

Doctor: "Marginally?"

Mom: "Ninety-eight percent of the time he eats pretty well."

Doctor: "OK, I can live with that. . ."

Class resources are again activated when Alexander's mother reveals she "gave up" on a medication. The doctor pleasantly but clearly instructs her to continue the medication. Again, though, he receives accurate information rather than facing silent resistance or defiance, as occurred in encounters between healthcare professionals and other (primarily working-class and poor) families. The doctor acknowledges Ms. Williams's relative power: He "argues for" continuation rather than directing her to execute a medically necessary action:

Mom: "His allergies have just been, just acted up again. One time this summer and I had to bring him in."

Doctor: "I see a note here from Dr. Svensson that she put him on Vancinace and Benadryl. Did it seem to help him?"

Mom: "Just, not really. So, I used it for about a week and I just gave up." Doctor, sitting for-

ward in his chair: "OK, I'm actually going to argue for not giving up. If he needs it, Vancinace is a very effective drug. But it takes at least a week to start. . ."

Mom: "Oh. OK. . ."

Doctor: "I'd rather have him use that than heavy oral medications. You have to give it a few weeks. . ."

A similar pattern of give and take and questioning characterizes Alexander's interaction with the doctor, as the following excerpt illustrates:

Doctor: "The only thing that you really need besides my checking you, um, is to have, um, your eyes checked downstairs."

Alex: "Yes! I love that, I love that!"

Doctor laughs: "Well, now the most important question. Do you have any questions you want to ask me before I do your physical?"

Alex: "Um. . . only one. I've been getting some bumps on my arms, right around here [indicates underarm]."

Doctor: "Underneath?"

Alex: "Yeah."

Doctor: "OK. . . Do they hurt or itch?"

Alex: "No, they're just there."

Doctor: "OK, I'll take a look at those bumps for you. Um, what about you—um . . ."

Alex: "They're barely any left."

Doctor: "OK, well, I'll take a peek. . . Any questions or worries on your part? [Looking at the mother]"

Mom: "No. . . He seems to be coming along very nicely."

Alexander's mother's last comment reflects her view of him as a project, one that is pro-

gressing "very nicely." Throughout the visit, she signals her ease and her perception of the exam as an exchange between peers (with Alexander a legitimate participant), rather than a communication from a person in authority to his subordinates. Other middle-class parents seemed similarly comfortable. During Garrett Tallinger's exam, for example, his mother took off her sandals and tucked her legs up under her as she sat in the examination room. She also joked casually with the doctor.

Middle-class parents and children were also very assertive in situations at the public elementary school most of the middle-class children in the study attended. There were numerous conflicts during the year over matters small and large. For example, parents complained to one another and to the teachers about the amount of homework the children were assigned. A black middle-class mother whose daughters had not tested into the school's gifted program negotiated with officials to have the girls' (higher) results from a private testing company accepted instead. The parents of a fourth-grade boy drew the school superintendent into a battle over religious lyrics in a song scheduled to be sung as part of the holiday program. The superintendent consulted the district lawyer and ultimately "counseled" the principal to be more sensitive, and the song was dropped.

Children, too, asserted themselves at school. Examples include requesting that the classroom's blinds be lowered so the sun wasn't in their eyes, badgering the teacher for permission to retake a math test for a higher grade, and demanding to know why no cupcake had been saved when an absence prevented attendance at a classroom party. In these encounters,

children were not simply complying with adults' requests or asking for a repeat of an earlier experience. They were displaying an emerging sense of entitlement by urging adults to permit a customized accommodation of institutional processes to suit their preferences.

Of course, some children (and parents) were more forceful than others in their dealings with teachers, and some were more successful than others. Melanie Handlon's mother, for example, took a very "hands-on" approach to her daughter's learning problems, coaching Melanie through her homework day after day. Instead of improved grades, however, the only result was a deteriorating home environment marked by tension and tears.

### Emerging Signs of Constraint

The interactions the research assistants and I observed between professionals and working-class and poor parents frequently seemed cautious and constrained. This unease is evident, for example, during a physical Harold McAllister has before going to Bible camp. Harold's mother, normally boisterous and talkative at home, is quiet. Unlike Ms. Williams, she seems wary of supplying the doctor with accurate information:

Doctor: "Does he eat something each day—either fish, meat, or egg?"

Mom, response is low and muffled: "Yes."

Doctor, attempting to make eye contact but mom stares intently at paper: "A yellow vegetable?"

Mom, still no eye contact, looking at the floor: "Yeah."

Doctor: "A green vegetable?" Mom, looking at the doctor: "Not all the time." [Fieldworker has not seen any of the children eat a green or yellow vegetable since visits began.]

Doctor: "No. Fruit or juice?"

Mom, low voice, little or no eye contact, looks at the doctor's scribbles on the paper he is filling out: "Ummh humn."

Doctor: "Does he drink milk everyday?" Mom, abruptly, in considerably louder voice: "Yeah."

Doctor: "Cereal, bread, rice, potato, anything like that?"

Mom, shakes her head: "Yes, definitely." [Looks at doctor.]

Ms. McAllister's knowledge of developmental events in Harold's life is uneven. She is not sure when he learned to walk and cannot recall the name of his previous doctor. And when the doctor asks, "When was the last time he had a tetanus shot?" she counters, gruffly, "What's a tetanus shot?"

Unlike Ms. Williams, who urged Alexander to share information with the doctor, Ms. McAllister squelches eight-year-old Alexis's overtures:

Doctor: "Any birth mark?"

Mom looks at doctor, shakes her head no.

Alexis, raising her left arm, says excitedly: "I have a birth mark under my arm!"

Mom, raising her voice and looking stern: "Will you cool out a minute?" Mom, again answering the doctor's question: "No."

Despite Ms. McAllister's tension and the marked change in her everyday demeanor, Har-

old's whole exam is not uncomfortable. There are moments of laughter. Moreover, Harold's mother is not consistently shy or passive. Before the visit begins, the doctor comes into the waiting room and calls Harold's and Alexis's names. In response, the McAllisters (and the fieldworker) stand. Ms. McAllister then beckons for her nephew Tyrice (who is about Harold's age) to come along *before* she clears this with the doctor. Later, she sends Tyrice down the hall to observe Harold being weighed; she relies on her nephew's report rather than asking for this information from the healthcare professionals.

Still, neither Harold nor his mother seemed as comfortable as Alexander had been. Alexander was used to extensive conversation at home; with the doctor, he was at ease initiating questions. Harold, who was used to responding to directives at home, primarily answered questions from the doctor, rather than posing his own. Alexander, encouraged by his mother, was assertive and confident with the doctor. Harold was reserved. Absorbing his mother's apparent need to conceal the truth about the range of foods he ate, he appeared cautious, displaying an emerging sense of constraint.

We observed a similar pattern in school interactions. Overall, the working-class and poor adults had much more distance or separation from the school than their middle-class counterparts. Ms. McAllister, for example, could be quite assertive in some settings (e.g., at the start of family observations, she visited the local drug dealer, warning him not to "mess with" the black male fieldworker). But throughout the fourth-grade parent-teacher conference, she kept her winter jacket zipped

up, sat hunched over in her chair, and spoke in barely audible tones. She was stunned when the teacher said that Harold did not do homework. Sounding dumbfounded, she said, "He does it at home." The teacher denied it and continued talking. Ms. McAllister made no further comments and did not probe for more information, except about a letter the teacher said he had mailed home and that she had not received. The conference ended, having yielded Ms. McAllister few insights into Harold's educational experience.

Other working-class and poor parents also appeared baffled, intimidated, and subdued in parent-teacher conferences. Ms. Driver, who was extremely worried about her fourth-grader's inability to read, kept these concerns to herself. She explained to us, "I don't want to jump into anything and find it is the wrong thing." When working-class and poor parents did try to intervene in their children's educational experiences, they often felt ineffectual. Billy Yanelli's mother appeared relaxed and chatty in many of her interactions with other adults. With "the school," however, she was very apprehensive. She distrusted school personnel. She felt bullied and powerless. Hoping to resolve a problem involving her son, she tried to prepare her ideas in advance. Still, as she recounted during an interview, she failed to make school officials see Billy as vulnerable:

Ms. Yanelli: I found a note in his school bag one morning and it said, "I'm going to kill you . . . you're a dead mother-f-er. . . ." So, I started shaking. I was all ready to go over there. [I was] prepared for the counselor. . . . They said



the reason they [the other kids] do what they do is because Billy makes them do it. So they had an answer for everything.

Interviewer: How did you feel about that answer?

Ms. Yanelli: I hate the school. I hate it.

Working-class and poor children seemed aware of their parents' frustration and witnessed their powerlessness. Billy Yanelli, for example, asserted in an interview that his mother "hate[d]" school officials.

At times, these parents encouraged their children to resist school officials' authority. The Yanellis told Billy to "beat up" a boy who was bothering him. Wendy Driver's mother advised her to punch a male classmate who pestered her and pulled her ponytail. Ms. Driver's boyfriend added, "Hit him when the teacher isn't looking."

In classroom observations, working-class and poor children could be quite lively and energetic, but we did not observe them try to customize their environments. They tended to react to adults' offers or, at times, to plead with educators to repeat previous experiences, such as reading a particular story, watching a movie, or going to the computer room. Compared to middle-class classroom interactions, the boundaries between adults and children seemed firmer and clearer. Although the children often resisted and tested school rules, they did not seem to be seeking to get educators to accommodate their own *individual* preferences.

Overall, then, the behavior of working-class and poor parents cannot be explained as a manifestation of their temperaments or of overall passivity; parents were quite energetic in inter-

vening in their children's lives in other spheres. Rather, working-class and poor parents generally appeared to depend on the school (Lareau 2000), even as they were dubious of the trustworthiness of the professionals. This suspicion of professionals in dominant institutions is, at least in some instances, a reasonable response. The unequal level of trust, as well as differences in the amount and quality of information divulged, can yield unequal *profits* during an historical moment when professionals applaud assertiveness and reject passivity as an inappropriate parenting strategy (Epstein 2001). Middle-class children and parents often (but not always) accrued advantages or profits from their efforts. Alexander Williams succeeded in having the doctor take his medical concerns seriously. Ms. Marshall's children ended up in the gifted program, even though they did not technically qualify. Middle-class children expect institutions to be responsive to *them* and to accommodate their individual needs. By contrast, when Wendy Driver is told to hit the boy who is pestering her (when the teacher isn't looking) or Billy Yanelli is told to physically defend himself, despite school rules, they are not learning how to make bureaucratic institutions work to their advantage. Instead, they are being given lessons in frustration and powerlessness.

### ||| WHY DOES SOCIAL CLASS MATTER?

Parents' economic resources helped create the observed class differences in child-rearing practices. Enrollment fees that middle-class parents dismissed as "negligible" were formidable expenses for less affluent families. Parents also

paid for clothing, equipment, hotel stays, fast food meals, summer camps, and fundraisers. In 1994, the Tallingers estimated the cost of Garrett's activities at \$4,000 annually, and that figure was not unusually high. Moreover, families needed reliable private transportation and flexible work schedules to get children to and from events. These resources were disproportionately concentrated in middle-class families.

Differences in educational resources also are important. Middle-class parents' superior levels of education gave them larger vocabularies that facilitated concerted cultivation, particularly in institutional interventions. Poor and working-class parents were not familiar with key terms professionals used, such as "tetanus shot." Furthermore, middle-class parents' educational backgrounds gave them confidence when criticizing educational professionals and intervening in school matters. Working-class and poor parents viewed educators as their social superiors.

Kohn and Schooler (1983) showed that parents' occupations, especially the complexity of their work, influence their childrearing beliefs. We found that parents' work mattered, but also saw signs that the experience of adulthood itself influenced conceptions of childhood. Middle-class parents often were preoccupied with the pleasures and challenges of their work lives. They tended to view childhood as a dual opportunity: a chance for play, and for developing talents and skills of value later in life. Mr. Tallinger noted that playing soccer taught Garrett to be "hard nosed" and "competitive," valuable workplace skills. Ms. Williams mentioned the value of Alexander learning to work with others by playing on a sports team. Middle-class parents, aware of the "declining

fortunes" of the middle class, worried about their own economic futures and those of their children (Newman 1993). This uncertainty increased their commitment to helping their children develop broad skills to enhance their future possibilities.

Working-class and poor parents' conceptions of adulthood and childhood also appeared to be closely connected to their lived experiences. For the working class, it was the deadening quality of work and the press of economic shortages that defined their experience of adulthood and influenced their vision of childhood. It was dependence on public assistance and severe economic shortages that most shaped poor parents' views. Families in both classes had many worries about basic issues: food shortages, limited access to healthcare, physical safety, unreliable transportation, insufficient clothing. Thinking back over their childhoods, these parents remembered hardship but also recalled times without the anxieties they now faced. Many appeared to want their own youngsters to concentrate on being happy and relaxed, keeping the burdens of life at bay until they were older.

Thus, childrearing strategies are influenced by more than parents' education. It is the interweaving of life experiences and resources, including parents' economic resources, occupational conditions, and educational backgrounds, that appears to be most important in leading middle-class parents to engage in concerted cultivation and working-class and poor parents to engage in the accomplishment of natural growth. Still, the structural location of families did not fully determine their child-rearing practices. The agency of actors and the indeterminacy of social life are inevitable.

In addition to economic and social resources, are there other significant factors? If the poor and working-class families' resources were transformed overnight so that they equaled those of the middle-class families, would their cultural logic of childrearing shift as well? Or are there cultural attitudes and beliefs that are substantially independent of economic and social resources that are influencing parents' practices here? The size and scope of this study preclude a definitive answer. Some poor and working-class parents embraced principles of concerted cultivation: They wished (but could not afford) to enroll their children in organized activities (e.g., piano lessons, voice lessons), they believed listening to children was important, and they were committed to being involved in their children's schooling. Still, even when parents across all of the classes seemed committed to similar principles, their motivations differed. For example, many working-class and poor parents who wanted more activities for their children were seeking a safe haven for them. Their goal was to provide protection from harm rather than to cultivate the child's talents *per se*.

Some parents explicitly criticized children's schedules that involved many activities. During the parent interviews, we described the real-life activities of two children (using data from the 12 families we were observing). One schedule resembled Alexander Williams's: restricted television, required reading, and many organized activities, including piano lessons (for analytical purposes, we said that, unlike Alexander, this child disliked his piano lessons but was not allowed to quit). Summing up the attitude of the working-class and poor parents who

rejected this kind of schedule, one white, poor mother complained:

I think he wants more. I think he doesn't enjoy doing what he's doing half of the time (light laughter). I think his parents are too strict. And he's not a child.

Even parents who believed this more regimented approach would pay off "job-wise" when the child was an adult still expressed serious reservations: "I think he is a sad kid," or, "He must be dead-dog tired."

Thus, working-class and poor parents varied in their beliefs. Some longed for a schedule of organized activities for their children and others did not; some believed in reasoning with children and playing an active role in schooling and others did not. Fully untangling the effects of material and cultural resources on parents and children's choices is a challenge for future research.

### ||| DISCUSSION

The evidence shows that class position influences critical aspects of family life: time use, language use, and kin ties. Not all aspects of family life are affected by social class, and there is variability within class. Still, parents do transmit advantages to their children in patterns that are sufficiently consistent and identifiable to be described as a "cultural logic" of childrearing. The white and black middle-class parents engaged in practices I have termed "concerted cultivation"—they made a deliberate and sustained effort to stimulate children's development and to cultivate their cognitive and social skills. The working-class and poor parents

viewed children's development as spontaneously unfolding, as long as they were provided with comfort, food, shelter, and other basic support. This commitment, too, required ongoing effort; sustaining children's natural growth despite formidable life challenges is properly viewed as an accomplishment.

In daily life, the patterns associated with each of these approaches were interwoven and mutually reinforcing. Nine-year-old middle-class children already had developed a clear sense of their own talents and skills, and they differentiated themselves from siblings and friends. They were also learning to think of themselves as special and worthy of having adults devote time and energy to promoting them and their leisure activities. In the process, the boundaries between adults and children sometimes blurred; adults' leisure preferences became subordinate to their children's. The strong emphasis on reasoning in middle-class families had similar, diffuse effects. Children used their formidable reasoning skills to persuade adults to acquiesce to their wishes. The idea that children's desires should be taken seriously was routinely realized in the middle-class families we interviewed and observed. In many subtle ways, children were taught that they were entitled. Finally, the commitment to cultivating children resulted in family schedules so crowded with activities there was little time left for visiting relatives. Quantitative studies of time use have shed light on important issues, but they do not capture the interactive nature of routine, everyday activities and the varying ways they affect the texture of family life.

In working-class and poor families, parents established limits; within those limits, children

were free to fashion their own pastimes. Children's wishes did not guide adults' actions as frequently or as decisively as they did in middle-class homes. Children were viewed as subordinate to adults. Parents tended to issue directives rather than to negotiate. Frequent interactions with relatives rather than acquaintances or strangers created a thicker divide between families and the outside world. Implicitly and explicitly, parents taught their children to keep their distance from people in positions of authority, to be distrustful of institutions, and, at times, to resist officials' authority. Children seemed to absorb the adults' feelings of powerlessness in their institutional relationships. As with the middle class, there were important variations among working-class and poor families, and some critical aspects of family life, such as the use of humor, were immune to social class.

The role of race in children's daily lives was less powerful than I had expected. The middle-class black children's parents were alert to the potential effects of institutional discrimination on their children. Middle-class black parents also took steps to help their children develop a positive racial identity. Still, in terms of how children spend their time, the way parents use language and discipline in the home, the nature of the families' social connections, and the strategies used for intervening in institutions, white and black middle-class parents engaged in very similar, often identical, practices with their children. A similar pattern was observed in white and black working-class homes as well as in white and black poor families. Thus my data indicate that on the childrearing dynamics studied here, compared with social class, race was less important in children's daily lives. As

they enter the racially segregated worlds of dating, marriage, and housing markets, and as they encounter more racism in their interpersonal contact with whites (Waters 1999), the relative importance of race in the children's daily lives is likely to increase.

Differences in family dynamics and the logic of childrearing across social classes have long-term consequences. As family members moved out of the home and interacted with representatives of formal institutions, middle-class parents and children were able to negotiate more valuable outcomes than their working-class and poor counterparts. In interactions with agents of dominant institutions, working-class and poor children were learning lessons in constraint while middle-class children were developing a sense of entitlement.

\* \* \*

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## Increasing Class Disparities among Women and the Politics of Gender Equity\*

LESLIE MCCALL

Issues of gender and class inequality are rarely considered together. This chapter's primary objective is to make the case for why they should be. In particular, I focus on the need for contemporary gender inequality to be understood within the context of rising earnings and income inequality in the United States, or what I will refer to as rising class inequality because I consider earnings and income to be among the central components of one's class position (along with assets, education, and occupation, which I also discuss briefly).

Income and earnings inequalities among women, men, and families are greater now than they were three decades ago, and by some measures, more than they have been since the eve of World War II. As women's experiences in the paid labor force and in the families in which they live have become more divergent by class, so potentially has the nature of gendered economic inequality. Economic justice for women may therefore require more of an emphasis on class-specific strategies than now exists. This includes class-specific strategies that are tailored to reducing the high and rising levels of

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earnings and income inequality that the United States and many other countries around the world are experiencing.

To demonstrate the increasing importance of class inequality in understanding recent shifts in gender inequality, this chapter provides an overview of trends in both forms of inequality over the past three decades. \* \* \*

Because this is a large agenda for a short chapter, my approach is to provide a brief review of existing research in each of these areas through the particular lens of class disparities among women. This lens is useful because it incorporates two additional themes alongside the more typical theme of women's changing economic status relative to men: (1) differences in the absolute progress of women in different class positions, and (2) differences in the pathways to achieving relative equality with men for women in different class positions.

By absolute progress, I am referring to women's achievement of significant increases in earnings, educational, and occupational attainment even if men have had similar increases. Such a scenario implies a decline in some forms of absolute discrimination—through, for example, wider opportunities for women to enter the professions—even as substantial relative discrimination appears to persist when comparisons are made to similarly situated men. A contrasting scenario is one in which absolute progress among women is more limited but relative progress is greater as a result of disproportionate losses among similarly situated men—through, for example, the decline in real earnings for men in the bottom half of the earnings distribution. Both scenarios have in fact occurred in the United States. I therefore

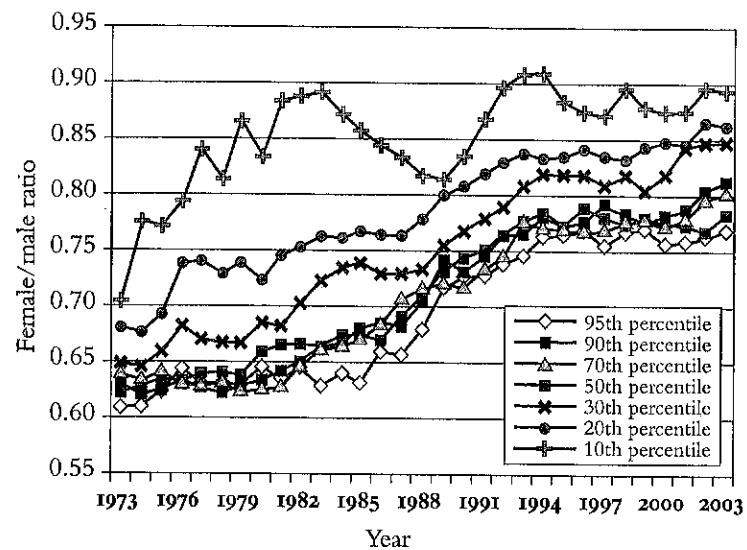
give equal attention and weight to the achievement of women's absolute and relative progress and to the differences by class in the pathways to greater gender equity that these imply.

\* \* \*

### ||| EARNINGS INEQUALITY BY GENDER

The resurgence in class inequality and women's faster growth in earnings do not mean that gender inequality has been eliminated or reduced to trivial levels. Women's wages are still lower than men's, by approximately 20 percent at the median. This represents a 50 percent decline in the median gender gap since 1973. Unfortunately, there has been little attention to whether (and if so, why) the earnings gap between men and women differs for different classes (cf. Blau and Kahn 1997, 2004; McCall 2001). The bulk of the evidence suggests that such differences in the gender gap are *less* now than they were several decades ago, so that the average gender gap is more similar to the gap at the top and bottom than it used to be. Much more research needs to be done to clarify these trends, however, and the increasing similarity in the gender gap across class lines is not the entire story. Something different is occurring at the extremes, among low-wage workers and workers with an advanced degree as well as among racial/ethnic groups. This redirects our attention once again away from an analysis of average trends and levels and toward an analysis of differences in the character of gender inequality by class as well as race. I first examine trends at the median, then at the bottom and among racial/ethnic groups, and finally at the top.

FIGURE 1 CHANGES IN THE RATIO OF FEMALE TO MALE HOURLY WAGES BY WAGE PERCENTILE, 1973-2003

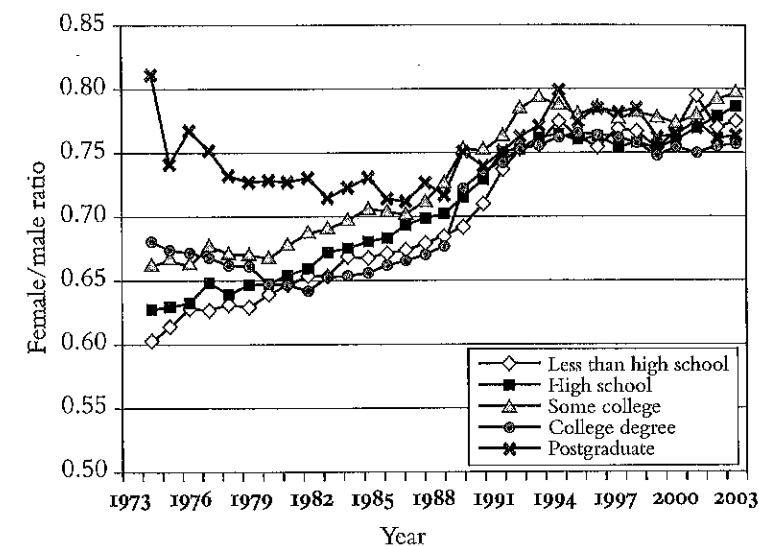


**NOTE:** The sample includes part-time and full-time, 18- to 64-year-old individuals with valid wage and salary earnings. The unincorporated self-employed are excluded (see Mishel Bernstein, and Allegretto 2005, app. B).  
**SOURCE:** Data from Mishel, Bernstein, and Allegretto (2005, tables 2.7 and 2.8).

Except for a few notable exceptions, wage growth over the last three decades of the twentieth century was greater for women than for men throughout the entire distribution of workers, leading to a near universal decline in the gender gap between men and women and an increase in the ratio of female to male wages (the typical measure of gender inequality that is used here as well). As shown in figures 1 and 2, there is a remarkable degree of similarity in the female/male wage ratio for the upper 50 percent of the distribution and for all education groups but the top one (those with an advanced degree). For these groups, the ratio grew by at least fifteen percentage points—a sign that women's wages

were becoming more similar to men's and thus inequality was declining—from a range of 0.61–0.63 in the early 1970s to a range of 0.77–0.81 in 2003. The ratio was relatively stable in the 1970s, increased substantially in the 1980s, and leveled off in the late 1990s. Because the spreading out of wages for women was similar to the spreading out of wages for men in the top half of the distribution \* \* \*, there were similar proportionate increases in the ratio of women's to men's wages as well. At the median, this occurred through modest growth in women's wages and declines in men's wages, whereas, at the 90th percentile, it occurred through faster growth rates for women than for men.

FIGURE 2 CHANGES IN RATIO OF FEMALE TO MALE HOURLY WAGES BY EDUCATION, 1973-2003



**NOTE:** The sample includes part-time and full-time, 18- to 64-year-old individuals with valid wage and salary earnings. The unincorporated self-employed are excluded (see Mishel Bernstein, and Allegretto 2005, app. B).  
**SOURCE:** Data from Mishel, Bernstein, and Allegretto (2005, tables 2.18 and 2.19).

We get a different picture if we look at low-wage workers, however. First of all, gender inequality is lower at the bottom than at the top or in the middle. The female/male ratio is particularly distinctive at the 10th percentile. This ratio increased dramatically over the 1970s and early 1980s and then decreased precipitously over the rest of the 1980s. This roller-coaster pattern is explained by changes in the minimum wage, which greatly affects women's wages at the bottom (Dinardo, Fortin, and Lemieux 1996). The minimum wage was raised several times in the 1970s and then was not raised at all until 1990. The roller-coaster pattern is also explained by the steep declines in men's wages at the bottom, which were con-

centrated in the early 1980s. Wage equity for low-wage women, then, is highly sensitive to wage-setting policies and is somewhat illusory because low-wage men—the comparison group—have fared so poorly in the labor market.

This latter point also pertains to interpretations of gender equity within minority racial groups, in which minority male wages are relatively low as well. Because the gender gap tends to be lower among low-wage and minority groups, a more appropriate standard of comparison is needed for low-wage and minority women. For example, the median for white men rather than same-race/ethnicity men can be used to gauge the economic progress of

TABLE 1 MEDIAN ANNUAL EARNINGS FOR U.S. WOMEN AND MEN BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 1999<sup>a</sup>

Race/ethnicity	Women (dollars)	Men (dollars)	Women's earnings as percentage of	
			Men's of same race/ ethnicity	White men's
White (only)	28,000	40,000	70	70
African American	25,000	30,000	83	63
Hispanic (any)	21,000	25,000	84	53
Mexican	20,000	23,900	84	50
Puerto Rican	25,000	30,000	83	63
Central American	18,000	22,500	80	45
South American	24,000	30,000	80	60
Cuban	26,000	31,000	84	65
Dominican	20,000	24,700	81	50
Asian (any)	30,000	40,000	75	75
Chinese	34,000	43,000	79	85
South Asian	30,300	35,000	87	76
Filipina	32,300	50,000	65	81
Southeast Asian	23,100	30,000	77	58
Korean	35,000	48,500	72	88
Japanese	27,700	38,000	73	69
American Indian	24,000	30,000	80	60
Pacific Islander	25,000	30,000	83	63

SOURCE: Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman (2004).

<sup>a</sup>Earnings calculated for men and women ages 25–54, employed full-time/year-round.

minority racial and ethnic groups of women. Table 1 provides these comparisons.

For many groups, the ratio of women's to men's earnings is much higher within the same racial/ethnic group than it is across racial/ethnic groups, with white men as the cross-racial/ethnic comparison group. For example, the median earnings of Mexican American women are 84 percent of the earnings of Mexican American men but only 50 percent of the earnings of white men. We find differences of this

kind that are at least twenty percentage points in magnitude for women who are African American, Hispanic, Southeast Asian, American Indian, and Pacific Islander. Although some of these ratios would increase if differences in human capital were accounted for, they would remain substantial nonetheless. For several Asian groups, however, earnings ratios within racial/ethnic groups are either comparable to or less than those with white men. Filipinas, for example, earn 65 and 81 percent of the earn-

ings of Filipinos and white men, respectively, because Filipinos earn more than white men. Clearly, then, there is much variation in the economic standing of different racial/ethnic groups of women that a simple mean or median analysis between whites and nonwhites would miss.

One of the reasons why some Asian groups of women have earnings that are comparable to those of white men is that they have very high levels of education. If we were to compare such groups with comparably educated groups of whites, it is not clear that they would fare as well. This is suggested by the seemingly atypical lack of improvement—let alone substantial improvement—in the hourly wage ratio between men and women with advanced degrees (refer again to fig. 2). In fact, the ratio fell from 0.81 in 1973 to 0.76 in 2003. At the beginning of the period, the ratio was nearly 20 percentage points higher than the median ratio, whereas at the end of the period it was lower. Thus, in relative terms—that is, if we think of gender equity as a relative achievement rather than an absolute one—the most educated women, whose average earnings are at the 90th percentile but include women across a wider range, have fared the worst of all in the past three decades. They have made strong absolute progress but virtually no relative progress.

What are we to make of these patterns, and, most important, what are the implications for gender wage justice today? One possible explanation for (or speculation about) the lack of progress toward relative gender equity among those with advanced degrees is disquieting. The argument begins with the observation that the working women who were most

like working men in the earlier period and who are most like working men today are those with advanced degrees. Because of their substantial investment in education and strong earnings potential, their commitment to work has been relatively high and constant. A change in the female/male ratio for that group, then, is more likely to reflect changes in how they are compensated relative to men and less likely to reflect the impact of increasing education and experience, factors that are more consequential for other groups of women (Mulligan and Rubenstein 2004). It follows, then, that the stable level of gender inequality among those with an advanced degree reflects a stable level of relative discrimination. As Blau and Kahn (1997) put it in an analogous study of the wage distribution by percentile (rather than by education group), women in the top percentiles have been “swimming upstream” to keep up with a moving target (men in the top percentiles), one that is more and more distant from the middle or even upper-middle ranks in an increasingly unequal hierarchy.

In contrast, the closing of the gender pay gap in the rest of the distribution is more readily attributable to improvements in women's human capital in both absolute terms and relative to the human capital of similar men. Once these improvements have been made in the population of women workers as a whole, however, and more educated and experienced cohorts replace less educated and experienced cohorts, relative progress may stall. This is especially likely if the disadvantages faced by men at the bottom and in the middle reverse, as they did in the late 1990s, leaving the bulk of working women to swim upstream as their upper-class

sisters did beginning in the 1980s. According to this explanation, then, the gender gap has narrowed because women's skills and orientation toward work have grown more similar to those of men and not because women are treated more equitably relative to men of the same caliber.

In sum, one of the key distinctions that is easier to appreciate today than a generation ago is the difference between relative and absolute progress for women. On the one hand, a remarkably similar level of relative gender inequality exists across education groups today. Yet those with the most education have made the least relative progress, and the relative progress that has been made appears to be slowing. From this perspective, there has been a consolidation of a particular regime of relative gender discrimination, especially for women in the higher-income brackets. What some are increasingly identifying as the lynchpin of this regime—the gender difference in family care, or family-based discrimination—is perhaps more visible today than in the past when other barriers were just as formidable. On the other hand, progress has been substantial for women at the top, in absolute terms and relative to all other groups (including most men).

In contrast, the greatest disparities for women at the bottom are not with men of their same standing but with women and men in more privileged class and racial/ethnic groups. Moreover, the gender pay gap at the very bottom, although smaller than for other groups,

has not changed much since the early 1980s when men's wages bottomed out and increases in the minimum wage topped out. From this view, absolute progress and mobility for women at the bottom have been stymied by increasing class inequality in tandem with ongoing racial and gender discrimination. Consequently, the problems that women at the bottom face cannot be attributed solely to the workings of gender-based discrimination.

### INCOME INEQUALITY AMONG FAMILIES

Because the economic needs of individuals are met by the earnings of the people they live with in addition to their own earnings, we need to consider whether rising inequality has permeated family life as much as it has work life. On the one hand, transformations in the family could have offset the growing level of inequality among individuals in U.S. society. Specifically, the increasing share of wives and mothers in the paid work force could have been concentrated in the families that were most exposed to the fall in men's earnings potential; in that case, income inequality among families may be less of an issue than the earnings inequality among individuals.<sup>1</sup> If so, the more salient issue may be a time squeeze between family and work. If widespread enough, the time squeeze—and the lack of family-friendly policies that would alleviate family-based discrimination against

<sup>1</sup> Roughly 40 percent of all mothers with children under 18 were in the paid work force in 1970; this increased to 70 percent in 2000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2006, table 579).

women—could serve as the basis for increasing similarities in the gender dynamics of families (Williams 2000).

On the other hand, some transformations in family life tend to reinforce rather than topple existing social conventions such as class distinctions. An important way this is accomplished is through homogamy (or assortative mating), the propensity to marry someone with like education, family background, race, or other characteristics (Sweeney and Cancian 2004). Increasing individual inequality can therefore serve as a source of increasing bifurcation in the residential, educational, and social environments of U.S. families (e.g., Lareau 2003). This growing inequality and segregation could in turn shape how families from different class backgrounds resolve the time bind between work and family. In particular, the affluent may be more likely to support the current system of private care because it provides high-quality services by costly but still relatively low-paid workers. Consequently, inequality—in the form of a low-wage, deregulated, private-care market, on the one hand, and a high-wage class of consumers of care work, on the other—could minimize the potential for commonalities among families in their orientation toward the time squeeze (Morgan 2005; Duffy 2005).

So which of these predictions is the more accurate one? Have increasing class inequalities among individuals been attenuated or accentuated by gendered and class shifts in the family? Overall, income inequality among families

has in fact increased as a result of increasing inequality among individuals, especially husbands. The good news, however, is that this growth was attenuated by the equalizing effect of wives' increasing contribution to family income. Women in the top two-fifths of families log more hours of work per year (roughly 1,450) than women in the bottom two-fifths (between 800 and 1,200), but these disparities have been decreasing over time. Unquestionably, wives' earnings have contributed to absolute increases in real family income, countering declines in the earnings of husbands at the bottom and in the middle (Mishel, Bernstein, and Boushey 2003, 107, 110–111; Cancian, Danziger, and Gottschalk 1993).

Yet there are countervailing trends. A relative increase in single motherhood among low-income groups, an increase in assortative mating, and a relative increase in the rates of employment of wives with high-earning husbands can each spur further growth in inequality among families. All of these have occurred. First, single parenthood has increased most for women with low education and low income, due in part to the falling economic position of low-education men and thus their declining attractiveness as marriage partners (Ellwood and Jencks 2004). Second, there has been an increase in the correlation of both earnings and educational attainment among spouses over time.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, and perhaps most important, despite a net equalizing effect thus far of increasing employment among wives, the rate of increase

<sup>2</sup> Preliminary work by Schwartz and Mare (2005) suggests that overall educational homogamy seems to have stabilized in the

1990s. This appears to be true as well for marital homogamy by income (McCaill 2007).

in employment since the 1960s has been the greatest for wives with high-income husbands. This reverses the historical pattern in which the wives of low-income husbands were the most likely to work and the wives of high-income husbands were the least likely, a clear indication that when choices were limited married women worked out of necessity rather than choice.<sup>3</sup>

Although it is hard to predict, the labor force attachment of the high-skilled wives of high-income husbands is not likely to decline, except among the highest income families that can get by just fine without two earners (Goldin 2006). As we saw in the previous section, women with college and advanced degrees are more likely to work and to work longer hours than those with less education because their investment in education and earnings power is so high. Moreover, managerial and professional jobs are more rewarding and also demand more hours of work per week than most other jobs, setting in motion a time divide between overworked high-status workers and underworked low-status workers that results in an even greater income divide (Jacobs and Gerson 2004). The heroic increase in work by married mothers appears to be approaching a plateau in which these hours disparities may become locked in. For all income groups, the rate of growth in wives' hours declined in the 1990s, relative to the 1980s, by at least one-third. Overall, then, women's work behavior has tended to mitigate the class gap among families so far, but it may not do so in the future.

<sup>3</sup> Cancian, Danziger, and Gottschalk (1993) show that these shifts are for whites only. The employment rate for wives of husbands in the 10th, 50th, and 90th percentiles of income

### III EXPLANATIONS

In this section, I explore some of the reasons for recent changes in the contemporary class and gender structure of U.S. society. As shown in table 2, I present only two categories of explanations: gender-specific explanations that have been developed to explain gender inequality and class-specific explanations that have been developed to explain rising class inequality. Some factors have had cross-over effects into the other domain. Although both are important and their effects are difficult to empirically measure, I argue that gender-specific factors have been more important in advancing women's absolute progress at the top, whereas class-specific factors have been more important in advancing women's relative progress in the middle and at the bottom. Put another way, absolute progress has been greater than relative progress for women at the top, but the converse has been true for women at the bottom and in the middle. This suggests that, in the future, relative progress will be a more important goal for women at the top and absolute progress will be a more important goal for women in the middle and at the bottom.

At the top, absolute improvements dominate relative ones. Women with high education and earnings potential entered the labor force at a faster rate than other women despite the fact that the men they tended to marry had the highest earnings growth, especially over the 1970s and 1980s. Moreover, because of a greater

were roughly 32, 30, and 15 percent in 1959, respectively; 43, 41, and 25 percent in 1969; and 58, 68, and 60 percent in 1989 (Juhn and Murphy 1997, 85).

TABLE 2 EXPLANATIONS OF IMPROVEMENTS IN ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE GENDER EQUALITY

Explanations	Improvements in women's economic status	
	Absolute progress	Relative progress
Gender-specific (e.g., anti-discrimination law and affirmative action)	Declining discrimination in managerial and professional schools and occupations leads to occupational gender integration and earnings growth for women at the top.	Globalization, deunionization, and postindustrial employment shifts disadvantage men and favor women in the middle.
Class-specific (e.g., shifts in wage structure and wage-setting institutions)	Rising returns to and demand for high skills draws high-skill women into the paid labor force.	Minimum wage benefits women more than men at the bottom and tight labor markets benefit both men and women in the middle and bottom.

increase in supply, such women ought to have had lower earnings growth than other women, but they did not, suggesting a strong demand for high-skilled women. These women also delayed childbearing more than women with middle and lower levels of education, an indication that the relative payoffs to pursuing work versus family shifted in favor of the former more for women at the top than for others.

It is therefore likely that eroding discriminatory barriers in education and employment worked in tandem with expanding managerial and professional opportunities—including increasing returns to working in these occupations as a result of rising inequality—to spur greater labor force preparation and attachment among women who were best able to take advantage of this new environment (Black and Juhn 2000). Other evidence supports this conclusion as well, such as a greater decline in

occupational segregation in middle-class occupations than in the working-class occupations that grew less rapidly (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman 2004; Charles and Grusky 2005). Relative inequality persists, however, and by some accounts never declined, in part because men at the top have been advancing at a fast pace as well and because of persistent practices of exclusion in high-powered positions that demand extremely long hours of work.

In contrast, at the bottom and in the middle of the distribution, relative improvements dominate absolute ones, with gender-specific factors appearing to be less important than they are in explaining women's progress at the top. The most significant absolute increases in earnings for women in the middle (at the median) and at the bottom (at the 10th percentile) came during the tight labor markets of the late 1990s. For women at the bottom, increases in



the minimum wage in the 1970s also meant absolute increases as well as reduced inequality with men at the bottom and with women at the median. Declines in the gender pay gap were also helped by declining real wages among men in the entire bottom half of the distribution in the 1980s. These declines were the result of industrial shifts, an increase in globalization, and a decline in unionization that all disproportionately hurt men relative to women in the lower half (Blau and Kahn 1997, 2004; Black and Brainerd 2004). The only period in which absolute improvements were greater than relative ones was in the late 1990s, when both women's and men's earnings improved at the bottom. The dynamic that characterizes the top throughout the entire period, in which women are swimming upstream to catch up to high-achieving men, becomes a possibility for women in the bottom half only in the late 1990s.

Thus, women's absolute progress in the bottom half occurred in fits and starts, but was modest compared to that of women at the top. Despite the early intent of antidiscrimination advocates to open up male-dominated blue-collar jobs to women, neither the absolute nor relative long-term progress of women in the bottom half appears to be linked in any strong way to an opening up of job opportunities because of a decline in gender discrimination. New job opportunities for working-class women were concentrated in sectors that were either already female-dominated, such as clerical and office work, or were becoming less remunerative as they became less male-dominated (Reskin and Roos 1991). For women outside the top rung, both absolute and relative progress is strongly affected by federal policies

that are non-gender-specific and structural economic factors that are either detrimental to men or relatively constant, such as the declining earnings of low-income and minority men. Overall, then, a burning issue for women in the middle and at the bottom is absolute job quality, including, most significantly, absolute wage growth, concerns that they share with men in similar class positions.

\* \* \*

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## Gender and Race Discrimination in Retail Car Negotiations\*

IAN AYRES AND PETER SIEGELMAN

Of the "untitled" retail markets, the new car market is particularly ripe for civil rights scrutiny for three reasons. First, it is an important market. The acquisition of a new car is a substantial purchase: apart from buying a home, new car purchases represent for most Americans their largest consumer investment.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the transportation that automobiles provide is often necessary for a number of other major life activities (such as driving to work). Second, competition among sellers and purposive sorting by buyers may not be effective in driving out discrimination. \* \* \* The private results of individualized negotiations might prevent consumers from discovering whether dealers discriminate, thus giving dealers the discretion to do so. Third, controlled audit testing is relatively straightforward. The fact that new

\* First published in 2001; from *Pervasive Prejudice? Unconventional Evidence of Race and Gender Discrimination*.

<sup>1</sup> See Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Dep't of Commerce, *The National Income and Product Accounts of the United States, 1929-82*, at 105 (1986) (table 2.3) (showing annual personal expenditures on cars consistently to be one of the largest categories of expenditures); see also Bureau of the Census, U.S. Dep't of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 465 (119th ed. 1999) (same, with respect to 1990-97). In 1997, for example, American consumers spent \$86.2 billion on new cars. See id.

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## Explaining American Exceptionalism\*

JILL QUADAGNO

Half a century ago the Carnegie Foundation invited the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal to take a hard look at American race relations. Myrdal was not only an eminent scholar but also a foreigner, capable of scrutinizing American society with an objectivity no native could muster. Captivated by a nation he saw as simultaneously energetic, moral, rational, pragmatic, and above all, optimistic, Myrdal nonetheless discerned a disturbing contradiction between what he termed "the American creed" and the treatment of blacks.<sup>1</sup> Rooted in an abiding liberal ethos, the American creed embodied ideals of liberty, justice, and equality of opportunity. Americans espoused this creed with a remarkable unanimity, regardless of national origin, race, or social class. Their country, they proudly told Myrdal, was the land of the free, the cradle of liberty, the home of democracy. How then, Myrdal puzzled, could these champions of liberty and equality of opportunity engage in rigid

\* First published in 1996; from *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty*.

<sup>1</sup> Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1944), Chapter 1.

racial discrimination that negated every aspect of the creed? How could a nation that espoused a democratic ideology and adhered to a constitution that provided the most democratic state structure in the world establish political, social, and economic institutions around a deep racial divide? For Myrdal, "The subordinate position of the Negro [was] perhaps the most glaring conflict in the American conscience and the greatest unsolved task for American democracy."<sup>2</sup>

Although Myrdal, a foreigner, readily identified this fundamental characteristic of American society, it has been disregarded by most other observers. Political theorists who attempt to trace the grand panorama of American politics generally fail to recognize how racial inequality has continually reshaped the nation's social, economic, and political institutions. James Morone, for example, argues that the central dynamic of American society is the expansion of the state bureaucracy and the resultant democratic impulse to limit this threat to civic liberty.<sup>3</sup> For Walter Dean Burnham, it is the arrested development of political parties.<sup>4</sup> For Kevin Phillips, it is an intensification in the concentration of wealth.<sup>5</sup>

I believe that only Gunnar Myrdal has correctly identified the more important motor of change, the governing force from the nation's founding to the present: the politics of racial inequality. The upheavals that periodically alter the nation's institutional arrangements stem

from the contradictions between an egalitarian ethos and anti-democratic practices that reproduce racial inequality.

The pattern can be observed during the decades from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War. In those years, an industrialized North with an expanding base of free labor contained within its borders a separate nation, a cotton-producing South dependent for profit on slave labor. After the Civil War officially ended slavery, American state formation remained fettered by the unique configuration of North and South. The North had an organized working class, full political democracy (after 1920), and a competitive two-party system. A nation within a nation, the South remained primarily agricultural, distinguished politically by a one-party system and disfranchisement of blacks and economically by sharecropping, an arrangement that guaranteed planters control over a subservient, primarily black labor force. Few workers in the South organized into unions, and the unions that did exist were greatly weakened by their refusal to admit black workers.

The New Deal represented a breakthrough toward a more social democratic, Keynesian welfare state. It also set in motion a great migration of blacks out of the South. The migration undermined the political compromise that had allowed the South to function as a separate nation and forced all Americans to confront the impediments to racial equality that had previ-

ously been considered "the southern problem." That confrontation occurred during the 1960s when the civil rights movement demanded that Americans live up to their political ideology and guarantee full democratic rights to all, regardless of race. In the following section, I analyze what happened during the nation's one attempt to reconstruct its racial politics in the context of other theories of American exceptionalism.

### RACE AND THEORIES OF AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

#### The Polity-Centered Approach

Polity-centered theorists view the sequence of democratization and bureaucratization as crucial to understanding the timing and structure of the welfare state. They argue that in nations where government bureaucracies were installed before citizens won the right to vote, state bureaucrats instituted regulations that protected their positions from partisan use. As a result, when the working class began to mobilize politically, party activists could not use the "spoils of office" to attract voters. Instead parties had to rely on programmatic appeals to the emerging electorate.<sup>6</sup> Because national welfare provisions had wide programmatic appeal, they became a resource for securing party loyalty.

By contrast, in the United States electoral democratization preceded state bureaucratization. The civil administration was not protected

from partisan use, and parties and factions used government jobs and resources to mobilize their personal clienteles and reward activists. Instead of attracting the electorate through programmatic appeals such as national welfare benefits, politicians waged battles over the spoils of office, which were distributed in a particularistic manner to loyal constituents.<sup>7</sup>

This argument helps explain the late onset of a national welfare state in the United States. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, patronage abuses in Civil War pensions made Americans suspicious of allowing the federal government to administer any national spending programs. The legacy of patronage abuses continued to haunt New Deal reformers, who only partially succeeded in instituting civil service reforms and extending the bureaucracy. Some programs of the Social Security Act of 1935 did set national regulations and national eligibility criteria but significant departures from these standards were allowed in other programs. Ann Orloff argues that this failure to create uniformity

reflected the inability of Roosevelt administration officials to overcome the deep resistance of Congress and some congressional constituencies to reform and, ultimately, the large obstacles represented by the legacies of American state-building and state structure. . . . The patronage practices initially encouraged by early mass democracy and the

<sup>2</sup> Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> James Morone, *The Democratic Wish: Popular Participation and the Limits of American Government* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Walter Dean Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970).

<sup>5</sup> Kevin Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor: Wealth and the American Electorate in the Reagan Aftermath* (New York: Random House, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> Ann Shola Orloff, *The Politics of Pensions: A Comparative Analysis of Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1880-1940* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), p. 88.

<sup>7</sup> See Ann Shola Orloff and Theda Skocpol, "Why Not Equal Protection: Explaining the Politics of Public Social Spending in Britain, 1900-1911 and the United States, 1880s-1920s."

*American Sociological Review*, 49 (December, 1984): 726-750; Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

lack of bureaucratic state-building deprived reformers of readily available institutional capacities for carrying out new social spending activities.<sup>8</sup>

The federal bureaucracy's incomplete authority over the New Deal welfare state was not primarily a legacy of patronage politics, however, but rather a legacy of incomplete democracy. The confrontations between the New Deal bureaucracy and the states were not struggles over regulating patronage *per se* but struggles over the way patronage inhibited basic democratic rights. A limited bureaucracy allowed the southern states to operate autonomously from central government authority and to deprive African Americans of the social rights extended to other citizens. Programs with national regulations and national eligibility criteria excluded African Americans; programs for which blacks were eligible remained under the jurisdiction of local welfare authorities. Other New Deal programs actively used the federal bureaucracy to suppress democracy. Federal housing programs tacitly endorsed racial segregation, while federal labor laws ignored racial discrimination by employers and trade unions.

The second phase of bureaucratic state-expansion occurred during the 1960s. Instead of building upon the New Deal, the War on Poverty challenged its bureaucratic legacies. It established new patronage networks that bypassed anti-democratic political structures. In distributing federal funds for job training, housing, and community improvement, the War on Poverty helped extend social rights to

<sup>8</sup> Orloff, *The Politics of Pensions*, p. 298.

African Americans. However, these resources also unintentionally fueled struggles over civil and political rights—the right to work and the right to participate in politics. Ironically, then, whereas bureaucracy repressed democracy, patronage provided the means for democratic institutions to emerge.

Polity-centered theorists rightly argue that the development of the welfare state must be analyzed in the context of broader processes of state formation. But in concentrating on the war against patronage abuse, they neglect the war waged for democracy. Among the distinctive features of American state formation, none is more salient than the failure to extend full citizenship to African Americans. It is this characteristic, more than any other, that has influenced the development of the welfare state. The battle over racial equality delayed national welfare programs, limited the reach of the federal bureaucracy, and shaped the structure of the programs that were developed in the two key periods—the New Deal and the War on Poverty

#### Working Class Weakness

A second explanation of American exceptionalism is the legacy of a weak working class. Andrew Martin captures the essence of this argument:

[T]he failure of organized labor to develop sufficiently to provide the basis for a union-party formation . . . has been a decisive factor in the failure of cohesive parties to develop. In the absence of such parties, it is difficult

to see what can substantially overcome the fragmented, or archaic, character of public authority in the United States. Under the circumstances, it can hardly be surprising that the role of the public sector in the American economy has lagged behind that in the industrially advanced West European countries.<sup>9</sup>

But when we consider the unique role race has played in American working-class politics, it becomes clear that this view ignores the importance of racial conflict in weakening the labor movement and undermining support for the welfare state.

From the Civil War to the New Deal, workers fought a losing battle to organize into trade unions. Factors that weakened labor included the consolidation of corporate power, the emergence of new industries—rubber, automobiles, chemicals—that depended largely on unskilled labor, and the migration of older industries to the South.<sup>10</sup> During the New Deal, resistance by skilled workers to integrating trade unions thwarted working-class solidarity and divided the labor movement. Trade union discrimination festered for decades until complaints from civil rights advocates forced the AFL to confront its discriminatory policies. Even then the skilled trades refused to yield.

These practices made it impossible for trade unions to institute a pro-labor political agenda during its one historic opportunity. That opportunity arose during the 1960s when, according

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Martin, "The Politics of Economic Policy in the United States: A Tentative View from a Comparative Perspective." *Comparative Politics Series*, Sage Professional Papers in Comparative Politics (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1973), p. 47.

to J. David Greenstone, organized labor's political influence most closely approximated the European model:

[T]he American labor movement's role in the national Democratic party represented a partial equivalence to the Social Democratic [formerly socialist] party-trade union alliances in much of Western Europe. This equivalence obtained with respect to its activities as a party campaign [and lobbying] organization, its influence as a party faction, and its welfare state objectives.<sup>11</sup>

Yet instead of realizing a full employment policy and new social programs to fill in the gaps in the welfare state, organized labor made no gains in the 1960s. Instead, the government first instituted tax cuts and then embarked on an anti-poverty effort targeted to African Americans.

The failure of the working class to unite behind the welfare state resulted from racial tensions that surfaced over job training programs and housing policy. The skilled trade unions opposed federal job training programs for several reasons. The programs not only provided an alternative to union apprenticeships, they also became the means by which the government could pressure the skilled trades to integrate. The consequences were harmful to the long-term vitality of the union movement. In taking the indefensible position of defending racist policies, the skilled trade unions undermined union solidarity and provided a

<sup>10</sup> Jill Quadagno, *The Transformation of Old Age Security: Class and Politics in the American Welfare State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 55.

<sup>11</sup> J. David Greenstone, *Labor in American Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 361.

Republican administration with a weapon to further intervene in union prerogatives.

Racial tension also sapped working class strength in another more subtle way. In the United States working-class politics have largely been played out in the community rather than at the workplace.<sup>12</sup> From the 1930s to the present, high levels of neighborhood racial concentration have eroded the basis for a racially integrated working-class politics. Yet when the federal government sought to integrate housing, resistance to the programs undermined working-class support for national housing policy. The result was increased racial concentration in urban ghettos, or hyperghettos, and further isolation of poor blacks. As sociologists Loic Wacquant and William Julius Wilson write:

If the "organized" or institutional ghetto of forty years ago described so graphically by Drake and Cayton imposed an enormous cost on blacks collectively, the "disorganized" ghetto, or hyperghetto, of today carries an even larger price. For now, not only are ghetto residents, as before, dependent on the will and decisions of outside forces that rule the field of power—the mostly white, dominant class, corporations, realtors, politicians, and welfare agencies—they have no control over and are forced to rely on services and institutions that are massively inferior to those of the wider society.<sup>13</sup>

The creation of hyperghettos, in turn, has isolated black political leaders, prevented them

<sup>12</sup> Ira Katznelson, *City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 19.

from keeping federal funds flowing to the cities, and destroyed possibilities for wider political coalitions between the city and suburbs. Thus, when the federal government abandoned efforts to integrate the suburbs, a new era of racial politics was established, one based on concentrated isolation of the poor.

Has the weakness of the American labor movement allowed opponents of big government to thwart efforts to expand the welfare state? Certainly, some evidence supports this argument. During the War on Poverty, however, labor's own resistance proved to be the greater impediment to welfare state expansion. Organized labor's opposition originated in racial divisions, which made the movement hostile to programs that pursued equality of opportunity. One outcome of the confrontation over social policy was the loss of working-class support for job training and for housing programs. Another outcome was further fragmentation of the labor movement.

The weakness of the American labor movement has thus been both a product and a producer of racial divisions. And a divided labor movement has been less capable of promoting social programs that enhance working-class solidarity.

#### Liberal Values

There is a long tradition in political theory that states that Americans oppose government intervention of all forms because of a legacy of strong, liberal values. According to the "values"

<sup>13</sup> Loic J. D. Wacquant and William Julius Wilson, "The Cost of Racial and Class Exclusion in the Inner City," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 501 (January, 1989), p. 15.

argument, America's classic liberal tradition was born in rebellion against British rule, as the lack of strong class divisions or a feudal heritage nurtured an encompassing liberal culture. In liberal thought individual rights are sacred, private property is honored, and state authority is distrusted. It is this distrust of state authority that has been the chief obstacle to the development of American social programs.<sup>14</sup>

But as I noted previously, Americans have often supported massive government intervention in the form of social programs such as veteran's pensions, Social Security, and Medicare. Conflicts over the welfare state derive not from a deeply ingrained distrust of the state but from competing definitions of liberty: liberty as the positive freedom to act on one's conscious purposes versus the negative freedom from external constraints on speech, behavior, and association.<sup>15</sup>

The experience of the War on Poverty shows that public antagonism to most of the anti-poverty programs only minimally concerned opposition to government intervention *per se*. Reducing government intervention became a rallying point only when social programs threatened the negative liberties of white Americans. But the evidence also indicates a more complex historical transformation, a redefinition of the very meaning of liberalism.

The Democrats took office in 1932 with a popular mandate to develop a new approach to economic and social problems that the Depres-

sion had brought painfully into focus. As government began monitoring malpractice among corporations, supporting the rights of workers to organize into unions, and using the state to alleviate the suffering of poor children, the unemployed, the elderly, and the disabled, the New Deal liberalism of the Democratic party came to mean active, positive intervention for the public good. Public support was high for programs that protected the many against the abuses of the few and taxed the few for the benefit of the many.<sup>16</sup>

During the 1960s, liberalism was redefined. Instead of government intervention for the common good, what defined the new liberalism, racial liberalism, was the premise of government intervention for civil rights. Government intervention for civil rights meant that the struggle for equal opportunity came to permeate issues of social policy. Nearly every social program—welfare, job training, community action, housing—became more than components of the welfare state that one supported or reviled depending upon whether one favored government intervention (a liberal) or opposed it (a conservative). Rather, because the reconstruction of race relations became inextricably woven into the very fabric of the Great Society, support for social programs came to mean support for integration. It also meant that if one opposed government intervention on behalf of civil rights, then one also opposed the social programs that helped enforce them.

<sup>14</sup> An excellent summary of this perspective appears in Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, pp. 15–23.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Lockhart, *Gaining Ground: Tailoring Social Programs to American Values* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 48.

<sup>16</sup> Kevin Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), p. 38.

This reconstruction of liberalism had concrete political consequences, for the War on Poverty activated the inherent conflict between positive and negative liberty. The positive liberties it extended to African Americans were viewed by the working class as infringements on their negative liberties, the liberty for trade unions to discriminate in the selection of apprentices and to control job training programs; the liberty to exclude minorities from representation in local politics; the liberty to maintain segregated neighborhoods. The resentment these infringements triggered destroyed the New Deal coalition of northern wage workers and southern racial conservatives, the stable Democratic party base for three decades.

As this coalition splintered over the racial issue, Republicans learned to capitalize on the racial hostilities civil rights enforcement had generated. In the 1964 election Barry Goldwater opposed federal intervention to end segregation and won only five states. Just four years later, Richard Nixon staked out a middle ground, remaining publicly committed to racial equality while opposing forceful implementation of civil rights legislation. By 1980 Republicans had artfully forged racial hostility with conservative economic policy into a New Right coalition, and their candidate Ronald Reagan "articulated a public philosophy directed at drawing into the Republican party citizens with the kinds of economic, social and racial concerns that could be addressed in terms of a free-market conservative doctrine."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Edsall and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), p. 138.

Republicans became the party of racial conservatism, while Democrats retained the liberal label inherited from their New Deal grandparents, expanded to include racial connotations.<sup>18</sup>

Over the past three decades, opponents of government spending for social welfare have found an anti-government ideology effective in undermining support for the welfare state. But opposition to government invention is not the central element in public antagonism to social programs. Initially, public approval of the War on Poverty was high. It was not until the anti-poverty programs became linked to the pursuit of civil rights that support waned. The idea that liberal values have inhibited the development of the American welfare state remains, at best, an overly simple explanation of how values are connected to the formation of social programs. An anti-government ideology has generated most antagonism to the welfare state when it has been associated with racial issues.

### III AMERICA'S WELFARE REGIMES

Over the past century the United States has instituted three "welfare state regimes." Each has had different consequences for racial equality. The first national welfare programs of the New Deal protected the working class against the exigencies of old age and unemployment. The price of this protection was a compromise with the American creed. As this compromise proved unworkable, the programs of the War on Poverty provided the means to undo the

<sup>18</sup> Edsall and Edsall, *Chain Reaction*, p. 198; Chandler Davidson, *Race and Class in Texas Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); E. J. Dionne, *Why Americans Hate Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991).

New Deal legacy and extend equal opportunity. Instead of finally instituting full democratic rights, however, the policies enacted in that turbulent decade left a disturbing legacy of "what might have been."

The community action programs that might have provided a precedent for extensive intervention in the inner cities and prevented the spiral of decline so painfully visible to observers on all sides of the political spectrum became instead embroiled in the task of extending political rights to African Americans. That proved their undoing. Rather than responding to the need for jobs, housing, and social services that the black migration brought to the urban centers, the nation turned its back on the cities.

The job training programs might have bolstered a full employment policy. They could have established a partnership between the federal government and given the trade unions a solid footing in national policymaking. Instead, job training became the source of internecine warfare within the trade union movement and between skilled workers and African Americans, hastening the decline of trade unionism. The irony of this historical outcome is that a nation that most abhors government handouts does least to prepare its citizens for work.

The funds for housing that briefly poured into the inner cities might have improved the quality and expanded the quantity of the nation's housing supply. However, the racial

backlash that ensued when integration became linked to housing undermined public support for a national housing agenda.

No social programs could better have served the families of the emerging postindustrial order than a guaranteed annual income and national child care. Yet demands for welfare reform were triggered by the expanding welfare rolls and the threat of urban disorder. And child care was inextricably linked to welfare reform. When the policy agenda turned from the expansion of the welfare state to the repression of disorder, this grand opportunity to protect the family, especially families headed by women, was lost. Instead of initiating a new era of race relations, the War on Poverty became a transitional phase on the road to benign neglect. The equal opportunity welfare state was replaced by a welfare state that encouraged racial isolation and the concentration of the black poor in inner cities.

The failure of America's domestic policy agenda reflects a failure to live up to the values of the American creed, to create a nation that not only guarantees liberty but also democratic rights—the right to work, the right to participate in the political process, and the right to economic security. In the 1960s Americans sought to resolve the American dilemma and grant these basic rights. Three decades later that task remains unfinished.

## INTRODUCTION TO PART V

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The chapters in Part V examine some aspects of the global character of contemporary inequalities. Economist Robert Pollin's chapter provides a broad and incisive overview of the historical trends and major sources of global inequality today. He starts by mapping the rise of the "neoliberal" era of the present, in which free trade and governmental austerity have been successfully promoted by the major lending institutions (the World Bank and the IMF in particular) in the developing world. Pollin shows that aside from China, which has experienced extraordinary growth in the last 20 years, and a few other countries (such as India and Brazil), most of the less-developed world has experienced economic stagnation since the 1980s (and the rise of the "neoliberal" system). Pollin then charts the contours of the new economies that have emerged in these countries, highlighting the role of sweatshops in creating a new international division of labor, with very low-wage jobs becoming increasingly important in poor countries.

Virtually, all analysts of the contemporary era of globalization agree that increasing trade and changing patterns of economic development and technology tend to create winners and losers. Two contrasting images of these patterns are reflected in the chapters by sociologists Douglas Massey and Glenn Firebaugh. Massey argues that one critical aspect of the process of creating winners and losers has been the growing *concentration* of wealth and poverty. Increasingly, he argues, the world's rich live in gated enclaves, while the poor are huddled together in growing urban ghettos. The concentration of poverty in low-income urban areas is of special importance. There are a number of especially deleterious consequences of such concentration, including exposing residents to poor schools, high risk of crime, poor environmental and health conditions, and few economic opportunities. The concentration of advantage and disadvantage becomes self-perpetuating because disadvantages interact with one another. For example, as a neighborhood gets a reputation for a high crime rate,



businesses may flee or choose not to locate in the area, depriving residents of economic opportunities.

The careful recent research of Glenn Firebaugh on the patterning of global inequality provides something of an alternative view to Pollin and Massey's stark visions, endorsing some but also challenging some of the theoretical claims in the globalization literature. Firebaugh agrees with Pollin and Massey that intracountry inequalities are increasing. But he disagrees that this means that inequalities across the globe are rising, and he also highlights how long-run trends across the globe have led to improved living standards. One of Firebaugh's critical insights is that in trying to assess the overall pattern of inequality across the globe, we should adjust for population size when making comparisons among countries. Because some very large previously poor but very large countries like China and India are growing very rapidly, their vast populations (currently around 1.2 billion in China and 900 million in India) have seen their average incomes approach the worldwide average. With nearly one-third of the world's population in these two countries, the fact that many small countries have not all seen the same improvements does not undercut Firebaugh's point that the world's population as a whole is actually getting more equal on average.

## The Landscape of Global Austerity\*

ROBERT POLLIN

"The decadent international but individualistic capitalism, in the hands of which we found ourselves after the War, is not a success. It is not intelligent, it is not beautiful, it is not just, it is not virtuous—and it doesn't deliver the goods. In short, we dislike it and are beginning to despise it."

*John Maynard Keynes 1933*

"When I give food to the poor they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a Communist."

*Brazilian Archbishop Dom Helder Camara*

### ||| FROM DEVELOPMENTAL STATE TO NEOLIBERALISM

Why speak about a landscape of global austerity in the year 2003? For most people today, including those living in developing countries, living standards are well above what would have seemed possible a hundred years ago. For example,

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