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SOCIAL STATUS AND ECONOMIC CLASS:  
STRUCTURAL ANTECEDENTS OF CLASS IDENTIFICATION  
POLITICAL PARTY CHOICE, AND MATERIAL CONSUMPTION\*

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## THE PRIMACY OF WORK

One of the major points at which theories of social structure and theories of personality organization have converged is the importance of work for both society and self. Marx saw social life as a superstructure, built upon an economic base in which one's relationship to the means of production--one's job--was paramount. For Marx, work was the fundamental condition of human existence (Lefebvre, 1968: 41).

Similarly, work assumed a major role in the writings of Freud who saw it as man's strongest tie to reality. Freud's perspective has been criticized as being applicable only to industrialized western nations--those affected (or afflicted) with the "Protestant ethic". Anthropological reports of non-western, non-industrial societies, however, stress the importance of the economic role of the provider. Moreover, we have a wealth of data on the debilitating psychological effects of unemployment, above and beyond the economic reality of decreased earning power (cf. Lazarsfeld-Jahoda and Zeisel, 1933). In fact, Moore and Weiss (1955) find that most people would work even if they didn't have to.

Most recent approaches to social stratification, while emphasizing the primacy of labor, have nonetheless rejected Marx's unicausal model of social life, and have dealt with economic dimensions other than work.

For Weber (1968:926-940) class derives both from the possession of material goods and from the opportunity to get them. This is determined by a man's position in the credit, commodity and labor markets. It is noteworthy that Weber recognizes credit, viz., the ability to mobilize resources, as an important component of a man's economic position, above and beyond his salary.

#### ECONOMIC CLASS AND LIFE STYLE

Weber, unlike Marx, recognized that status or social honor does not correlate perfectly with economic position. He suggested an empirical relationship between economic class and social status, but pointed out that status groups cut across class lines as well. Unlike economic classes based on similar market positions, status groups were characterized both by a sense of membership and a common life-style.

Thorstein Veblen (1931) was more specific than Weber regarding the relationship between market position and life style. Veblen suggests that during early stages of a nation's economic development, a man's occupation provides the financial base for the accumulation of property, which in turn reflects his ability as a breadwinner. Over time, however, the accumulation of material goods becomes

a measure of social status sui generis so that, for example, goods purchased through inherited wealth come to bestow upon their owner as much status as goods purchased with earned wealth. More importantly, unproductive consumption becomes an honorable activity in its own right.

#### THE MIDDLE-MASS AND POST-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

Veblen anticipated changes in the economic structure of western nations that were not foreseen by Marx and Weber. Both of these latter theorists assumed large social and economic gaps between the working class and the middle class. The numerically small bourgeoisie possessed property and skills, were employers of labor, had high incomes and advanced education. On the other hand, the laboring masses were primarily unskilled, uneducated, propertyless, and therefore had a very different life style from that of the middle class. Veblen (1931) saw these differences disappearing.

In modern civilized communities the lines of demarcation between social classes have grown vague and transient.... The result is that members of each stratum accept as their ideal of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum....

The breakdown of clear-cut class boundaries that Veblen wrote of has come about. New technologies of production have required higher skill levels and higher levels of education of manual workers in the industrial nations. At the same

time, labor unions have played a major role in improving the economic well-being of manual workers, and property ownership has come to be increasingly widespread among the urban working classes.

In the middle class, the increased scale of production units and the increasingly specialized skills required to run them, have replaced the independent entrepreneur with a bureaucratic managerial class that, in terms of property ownership, is as alienated from the means of production as the workers are (Mills, 1951: 71-72). Additionally, the growth of bureaucracies and of service industries (as opposed to extraction and manufacturing) has produced a large corps of white-collar functionaries in the clerical and sales categories who, despite their white collar status, exist on relatively low incomes.

In 1910, 11.6 per cent of the United States civilian labor forces was in unskilled occupations. By 1956, this figure had fallen to 5.5 per cent. During this same period, the proportion of the total work forces involved in urban manual labor occupations increased slightly, primarily in the category of skilled labor.

At the same time, there has almost been a doubling of the proportion of the labor force in white-collar occupations. In 1910, 22.3 per cent of the labor force was involved in professional, managerial, clerical and sales occupations. By 1956, this figure had increased to 39.8 per cent (Wilensky

and Lebeaux, 1965:92). A little over half of this latter figure is accounted for by clerical and sales personnel.

The structure of the American labor force, then, has come to be characterized by a concentration of workers in upper-working-class and lower middle-class occupations (cf. Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). At the same time, income tax and labor policies have led to a decrease in the income differentials between upper working-class and lower middle-class families, and to an increase in discretionary income among people in these classes. We suggest that those changes in the basic occupational and income structures of American society may mitigate against social class cleavages between blue-collar and white-collar classes, as manifested in economic and political attitudes and behavior (cf. Bell, 1960).

#### THE EMBOURGEOISEMENT OF THE PROLETARIAT

The decrease in importance of occupational roles and the increased importance of consumption anticipated by Veblen recurred in the writings of Schelsky (1956), who argued that the relationship between occupational roles and consumer roles was becoming weaker, and that the latter was becoming the central determinant of behavior. This theme appears also in the writings of Galbraith (1958), who sees productivity and economic security growing

increasingly independent of each other in the affluent society. In this view, the pecuniary rewards derived from work supercede all other gratifications. Since the skilled tradesman can in most instances make more money than the school teacher or clerk, the economic class distinction between them declines in relevance. The highly skilled unionized blue-collar worker can in fact maintain a more expensive material style of life than the teacher or low-level bureaucrat.

#### STATUS DIFFERENTIATION IN THE AFFLUENT SOCIETY

As economic class differences per se become less important, status distinctions may assume added import. Since economic class is subject to change through individual achievement, Weber suggested that those in privileged positions seek to dissociate class from status in order to deny social honor to the nouveaux riches. Occupations come to be differentiated on the basis of their prestige, above and beyond their economic returns (Galbraith, 1958). Similarly, claims to status based upon education, religion and ethnicity become important in social stratification. Hofstadter (1963:83-94) describes the transition from politics based upon class to politics based upon status in the modern industrial economy. For Weber, as for Veblen, these claims



to status become manifested in life styles.

#### CONSUMPTION AND POLITICS AS STATUS ATTRIBUTES.

The material expression of life style is consumption pattern. Sewell (1940) and Chapin (1935), among others, studied the association between household furnishings and socioeconomic status. More recently, Laumann and House (1970) have found a striking relationship between living-room furnishings and socioeconomic status. Contrary to the expectations of Veblen, however, the nouveaux riches do not wholly emulate the material consumption patterns of the established upper class. Where the latter have very traditional furnishings, the former seek to establish their claims to status on material living styles that are modern and chic. In our own analysis, we shall attend to this finding, and focus on quality of material consumption, rather than stylistic preferences.<sup>1/</sup>

The relationship between politics and stratification in America is somewhat weaker. The view that party or candidate choice can be viewed as a consumption process is reflected in the voting behavior studies of the Office of Radio Research (and later the Bureau of Applied Social Research) at Columbia University, under the direction of Paul Lazarsfeld. Lazarsfeld points out the parallels between studying political attitudes and consumer attitudes

in the preface to the Erie County Study (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1948:xxviii) and the later Decatur study (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955) sought explicitly to determine whether attitudes regarding style and attitudes regarding politics were formed in the same way. This latter study suggested that the processes were different, at least to the extent that the "two-step-flow" model suggested by the authors was more difficult to confirm with regard to the other spheres of influence considered. These findings notwithstanding, the view that politicians are goods to be packaged, advertised and sold has far from disappeared (see for example McGinnis, 1969).

The view that politics reflects economic class differences in modern industrial nations has been challenged by the "middle-mass" theorists (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Lane, 1965; Bell, 1960). Critics of the middle-mass perspective have argued that as an economic class becomes less important in determining party choice, other characteristics of social structure must be considered (Janowitz and Segal, 1967). Recently, Segal and Knoke (1970) have presented data suggesting that status factors have become more important in explaining differences in political party choice than economic factors, and that among economic factors, positions in the credit market and commodity market are more important than position in the labor market.

THE CLASS IDENTIFICATION OF AFFLUENT WORKERS

Centers' (1949) early study of class identification in the United States suggested that occupation was the single most important determinant of Americans' perceptions of their position in the stratification system. Recent research by Hodge and Treiman (1968) and by Segal, Segal and Knoke (1970) indicates that this is still the case.

The "middle-mass" perspective challenges the continued primacy of occupation. Wilensky (1966), for example suggests that class consciousness is a transitional phenomenon among manual workers in the industrialized nations, and that "much behavior and many attitudes said to be rooted in class are instead a matter of race, religion, ethnic origin, education, age, and stage in the family life cycle" (cf. Segal and Knoke, 1970). Wilensky points out that, with the convergence of income and life-styles between manual and non-manual occupations, about 20 per cent of manual workers regard themselves as middle-class, while more than 20 per cent of professional, business and white-collar people see themselves as working-class. The decline in working-class identification with the emergence of the "middle-mass" is documented by Tucker (1968).

The decline in working-class identification asserted by Wilensky and Tucker is challenged by Lane (1965) and by Hamilton (1966a; 1966b). Schreiber and Nygreen (1970) attempt

to resolve this difference through the analysis of the electoral series data collected by the Survey Research Center, University of Michigan. They conclude that there has been no decline in working-class identification in the United States, and that Tucker's results are an artifact of the form of the class identification question that he used.

More important than the persistence or decline of working-class identification among affluent manual workers for our purposes is the relationship between class identification and life style. Tallman and Morgner (1970) suggest that controlling for background factors such as income, blue-collar workers living in suburban areas are more likely to adopt middle-class life styles than are blue-collar workers in urban areas. This is not in itself surprising, since suburban residence is a frequent component of middle-class life style. More important, relationships between residence and life-style were not attenuated by controlling for class identification. That is, men in manual occupations living in urban areas, who identified with the middle-class, nonetheless manifested working-class life styles. Thus, the important reference group for the anchoring of political and economic orientations is the neighborhood (cf. Segal and Wildstrom, 1970), not an economic class. There is reason to believe, then, that if the propensity of manual workers to identify with the working class is not

diminishing, the strength of the relationship between class identification and life style may be. As Wilensky (1966) aptly points out, Americans may subscribe to Marx' precepts at their places of work, but they live according to Veblen's principles at home.

#### CROSS-NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE EMBOURGEOISEMENT PROBLEM.

Studies of the relative effects of occupation and income have been carried out in the contexts of British, French, German and American society. Janowitz and Segal (1967) have shown that the importance of social class varies greatly among modern industrial nations. We shall therefore review the results of these previous studies prior to turning to our own data. We hope thereby to place our own findings in a broader perspective, and at the same time sensitize ourselves to the limitations on the degree to which we may generalize from our own findings.

England. Social class has historically been of greater importance in England than in other western nations (Janowitz and Segal, 1967), and we would expect that increased affluence would be slow in affecting the status attributes of English workers. In a study of workers in three factories, Goldthorpe et al. (1968a; 1968b), found that, like less affluent manual workers, the high-income manual workers in their sample preferred the Labour Party, and were likely to give class-based reasons for their preference. With regard to political behavior,

then, the authors conclude that no process of embourgeoisement is evident. With regard to economic orientation, however, the picture is somewhat different. Here the affluent worker tends to view his work as a means to an end, and the end is a basic change in his standard of living and his social identity. Thus, while his class identification and politics remain working-class, his material style of life is taking on a Veblenesque quality.

France. Hamilton (1967) has explored the embourgeoisement problem using data collected by the Institut Francais d'Opinion Publique and the Institut National d'Etudes Demographiques. He found that while manual workers experienced some gains in material style of life during the 1950's, white-collar workers gained even more, so that the gap between the two widened. Similarly, desires for ownership of material goods differ between white-collar and blue-collar groups. Surprisingly, Hamilton leaves one with the impression of a more rigid status system in France than in England insofar as material possessions are concerned. Among French workers, there were differences between skilled and unskilled workers in income, but the gaps in purchases of consumer goods were much smaller, and did not approximate the standards of the middle-class.

Despite the affluence of rapid industrialization, French working-class politics have retained a leftist character. Indeed, in many ways increased affluence has been related to structural changes that increase radicalism. Moreover,

even those workers whose consumption patterns approximate those of the middle-class differ greatly from the middle-class in their political attitudes. As in the case of England, economic embourgeoisement is not generalized to the political realm according to Hamilton. Crozier (1965, 1966) by contrast sees a convergence of upper working and lower middle classes through the unionization of white-collar salaried employees who, in times of crisis, align themselves politically with the workers.

Germany. Janowitz and Segal (1967) suggest that Germany is characterized by greater social class differentiation than the United States, but by less such cleavage than England. We have noted above the changes in the life style of the affluent English worker despite his subscription to traditional working-class politics. We would anticipate that the change in life style would be even greater among German workers, and might be accompanied by political convergence as well. Surprisingly, Hamilton's (1965a) secondary analysis of data collected in 1959 by the Institut für Demoskopie from a quota sample of Germans living within randomly selected areas suggests the opposite. Rather, affluent workers were much closer to less well-to-do workers than they were to middle-class groups with incomes similar to their own with regard to durable goods consumption. The working-class members of the sample seemed to avoid buying major luxury

goods. There were also clear-cut differences in economic and political attitudes between the working-class and the middle-class, with occupation rather than income dominating one's orientation. Crozier (1965:64-65) concurs with this analysis.

United States. We have noted above the debate between Hamilton and Tucker with regard to the class identification of American workers (see especially Tucker, 1966 and Hamilton, 1966a, 1966b), and pointed out that a trend analysis by Schrieber and Nygreen (1970) supported Hamilton's findings.

Hamilton's conclusions contradict expectations drawn from both the "middle-mass" perspective of western society in general, and from Janowitz and Segal's (1970) conclusions regarding the relative absence of class-based cleavage in the United States in particular. Since these notions have also been challenged by findings based on German data, Hamilton's findings in the American case warrant further consideration.

In an early article, Hamilton (1964) attempts to refute the assumed income convergence between skilled manual workers and white-collar workers in clerical and sales occupations. Analysis of the 1/10,000 sample of the United States Census revealed that the median income for skilled workers (\$5,282) was in fact \$1,893 greater than that for clerical and sales personnel (\$3,389). When females, foremen and students were omitted from the sample, the difference was reduced to \$133,



still favoring the skilled workers. By imposing a further restriction based on age upon the data, and considering only people from 21 to 59 years old, Hamilton was able to reverse the direction of the difference: \$88 in favor of the clerical and sales workers (\$5,272 vs. \$5,360). He then argues that this figure underestimates the income superiority of the white-collar group. We believe that on the contrary, Hamilton's data provide strong support for the overlap in income between upper blue-collar and lower white-collar categories regardless of the direction of differences between means. Let us therefore move on to his findings on the consequences of this convergence, which he denies and we affirm.

Secondary analysis of studies conducted in 1955 and 1956 by the National Opinion Research Center, and in 1956 by the Survey Research Center was undertaken to determine the relationship between skill level and politics among manual workers (Hamilton, 1965b). Comparing percent Republican support among skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers, Hamilton notes that the greatest difference between skilled and unskilled workers was 14%.

We constructed 2 x 2 tables from Hamilton's data, comparing Republicans and non-Republicans between the skilled and unskilled categories. Yule's Q was computed for each table. The relationship was indeed absent for the 1955 data ( $Q=.04$ ), but 1955 was not a presidential election year. In 1956, the relationship was stronger ( $Q=.12$ ) and the relationship

between skill level and party identification in 1956 (the 14% difference to which Hamilton refers) was .29. While Hamilton's control for race (to which he attributed much of the relationship) decreased all Q values, the relationship between skill level and party identification among non-southern whites in the 1956 SRC study was still  $Q=.23$ . Thus it is reasonable to conclude that higher-paid skilled workers are more conservative.

Hamilton argued further that some of the conservatism of the skilled workers was due to their age, and compared respondents over 45 years old with those under 45. However, it is among the young rather than the old that the relationship between skill level and conservatism is increased. The older workers are far more politically homogeneous regardless of skill differences. We take these findings as indicative of a process of embourgeoisement of skilled workers that was ongoing during the 1950's.

Hamilton (1966a) also presents data on the convergence phenomenon from the white-collar side of the stratification system. His analysis of the Survey Research Center's 1956 election study revealed that a little more than half of the clerical and sales workers considered themselves working-class, rather than middle-class. Moreover, those workers who identified with the working class were the low-income people in the clerical and sales categories. Thus, income was shown to have an effect on class identification above and

beyond the effect of occupation. This finding was challenged by Tucker (1966), but reaffirmed by Hamilton (1966b) on the basis of the Survey Research Center's 1964 election study.

We have considerably less data on status-linked economic behavior in the United States. Economists have studied the process of family budgeting, but by and large they have focused on how much money is spent, rather than what it is spent on. This reflects their primary concern with the condition of the national economy rather than with individual behavior (see for example Schipper, 1964). Where ownership of specific consumption items is considered, the variables that are used to predict to such ownership are almost wholly restricted to those that can be measured in standard monetary units (see for example Cramer, 1962:29; Perrot, 1960).

Morgan et al. (1966) have developed an index of new product use that comes close to our notion of status-linked expenditures. This index is then used as component of a more general index of receptivity to change, rather than being subjected to intensive analysis in its own right. Morgan et al. find that the most important predictors of receptivity to change are total family income, education of head of family, and social participation. Unfortunately, occupation was not included in the analysis of receptivity to change. Thus, the relative importance of occupation and income was not evaluated.

In discussing the emergence of the "middle-mass" then, we are left with the following tentative conclusions:

1. In England the workers are undergoing an economic but not a political embourgeoisement.
2. In Germany the gap between the middle and working classes remains in both economic and political realms.
3. In France both the middle and working classes have experienced economic gains, but both have been politically radicalized in the process.
4. In the United States there has been a convergence between the upper working-class and the lower middle-class, but it is unclear whether this is due more to the embourgeoisement of the working-class or the proletarianization of a middle-class that has come to be alienated from control of productive enterprise (cf. Berle, 1959).

Our discussion to this point has been based upon a patchwork collection of findings. We shall now turn to an empirical analysis of the general problem of convergence, and the processes of embourgeoisement and proletarianization in the United States.

#### DATA

The Sample. Between November 9, 1966 and January 31, 1967, the field staff of the Survey Research Center, University of Michigan, interviewed a random probability sample of 1,291 citizens of voting age in the continental United States,

excluding residents of Alaska, institutionalized persons, and persons residing in hotels, rooming houses, etc. This survey was the ninth in the Survey Research Center's electoral series.

Combined with this survey was the Quarterly Survey of Consumer Finances, conducted by the Economic Behavior Program of the Survey Research Center. Through this combination of surveys, extensive economic data were obtained for 1127 members of the electoral behavior sample. The data from these two elements of the survey were coded, punched and filed independently, but respondent identification numbers were kept constant. We were therefore able to merge these data files, producing a single data set containing extensive documentation on economic behavior, political attitudes, and social class identification.

Index Construction. In this attempt to move away from Marxian interpretations of the economic underpinnings of society we constructed indexes to measure the three economic markets that Weber argued were important.

The Weberian dichotomy between debtors and creditors is not the relevant issue in our modern credit market. Rather, the important distinction is that between people who can mobilize resources in our credit market and those who cannot. Since not all resources that are convertible to credit are highly liquid, the same people tend to be both debtors and creditors.

We considered the following variables for inclusion in the credit mobilization index: (1) ownership of stock; (2) borrowing of money; (3) purchasing of bonds; (4) withdrawal of money from banks; (5) ownership of house and/or a farm; (6) ownership of a certificate of deposit; (7) amount (in dollars) saved or invested. The interrelationships among these items are presented in Table 1.

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Table 1. Interrelationships (tau-b) among items in credit mobilization index.

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	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. stock ownership	-.038	.187	.197	.138	.192	.414
2. borrowing		-.003	.073	.064	-.084	*
3. bond purchase			.071	.132	.076	.295
4. bank withdrawal				.003	.125	.190
5. home and/or farm ownership					.023	.217
6. certificate of deposit						.180
7. amount saved/invested						

\*Variable was dropped before this statistic computed.

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Items 1 - 6 represent the heterogeneity of resources available either for liquidation or for use as collateral. Item 7, which was coded in 7 categories, reflects the amount that could be easily mobilized.

Among the first six items, stock ownership (item 1) was the most highly correlated with the others, and was double-weighted. Borrowing money (item 2) was the least correlated, and was dropped from the index. Points were awarded for the number of types of bonds purchased (up to 2), withdrawal of

money from banks, ownership of a certificate of deposit, a farm or a home, and for the total amount of money saved or invested. The resulting index ranged from 0-14 with a mean of 3.63 and a standard deviation of 2.90. Where necessary for statistical analysis, a square root transformation was used to approximate the normal distribution. Table 2 describes the distributions of the raw and transformed indexes.

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Table 2. Characteristics of credit mobilization index  $x$  and  $\sqrt{x + 1}$

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	$x$	$\sqrt{x + 1}$
mean	3.63	2.04
standard deviation	2.90	.69
skewness	.548	.008
kurtosis	-.635	-1.085

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We also adapted Weber's notion of the structure of the commodity market to fit modern economic conditions. Weber initially distinguished between those people who produce goods and those who do not. Following in Weber's tradition, but reflecting a view of industrial organization that could benefit from hindsight, Lipset and Rokkan (1967:14) suggested that the real cleavage was between the primary economy based on extraction (landed interests) and the secondary economy, based on manufacturing (industrial entrepreneurs). Data presented by Murphy and Morris (1961) suggest that the distinction between secondary and tertiary

economic organization (service) may be equally important, with location in the secondary sector being related to working-class identification and Democratic Party preference, while the tertiary situses are related to middle-class identification and Republican Party preference (see also Morris and Murphy, 1959). Given these considerations, we specified whether our respondents were employed in the primary, secondary, or tertiary sectors of the economy. The distribution of our sample across these sectors of the economy is presented in Table 3.

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Table 3. Distribution of sample across the economic structure

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	<u>Primary (extractive)</u>	<u>Secondary (manufacturing)</u>	<u>Tertiary (service)</u>
Per cent	13.2	32.0	54.7
(n) *	116	281	480

\*Excluding the unemployed.

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Position in the labor market was indexed by the dichotomy mentioned by both Marx and Weber: employers (including self-employed) and employees. Almost thirteen per cent of our respondents were members of households whose head was self-employed. An additional 1.7 per cent of the household heads were both self-employed and worked for someone else. They were coded as self-employed.

In addition to these measures of economic class position,



we included measures of three achieved status attributes in our analysis: occupational prestige, income, and education.

Occupational prestige was measured both by a crude blue collar-white collar distinction and by the Duncan Index of Socioeconomic Status (Duncan, 1961). For statistical analysis involving assumptions of normality, a logarithmic transformation of Duncan's index was taken as a better approximation. Table 4 presents the characteristics of the Duncan Index of Socioeconomic Status (SES), raw and transformed.

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Table 4. Characteristics of Duncan's Index of Socioeconomic Status  $x$  and  $\log (x+1)$

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	<u><math>x</math></u>	<u><math>\log (x+1)</math></u>
mean	51.8	1.50
standard deviation	30.0	.31
skewness	.43	-.475
kurtosis	-.97	-.531

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Respondents had been asked to estimate their expected 1966 income in terms of a ten-category scheme ( $<$ \$1,000; \$1,000 - \$1,999; \$2,000 - \$2,999; \$3,000 - \$3,999; \$4,000 - \$4,999; \$5,000 - \$7,499; \$7,500 - \$9,999; \$10,000 - \$14,999; \$15,999 - \$24,999;  $>$  \$25,000). Although income data in dollar terms could not be recaptured, we treated this variable as continuous. Where necessary for analysis, a logarithmic transformation was used as a better approximation of normality.

The characteristics of our income distribution and its log are presented in Table 5.

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Table 5. Characteristics of income distribution  
x and log (x+1)

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	<u>x</u>	<u>log (x+1)</u>
mean	19.06	1.25
standard deviation	6.63	.15
skewness	.473	.005
kurtosis	-.837	-1.147

---

Education was originally coded in terms of years completed and degree earned. We recoded these data in terms of the following eleven categories: 0-2 years; 3-4 years; 5-6 years; 7 years; 8 years; 9-11 years; 12 years; 12 years + non-college training; some college; bachelor's degree; advanced degree. The distribution of this recoded variable had a mean of 6.69, a standard deviation of 2.18, skewness of -.396 and kurtosis of -.092. No transformation of this variable was found to yield a closer approximation of normality.

Three status attributes were considered as dependent variables: social class identification, consumer behavior, and political party choice. Our respondents were asked whether they belonged to the working class or the middle class, and then whether they belonged to the average or upper working (or middle) class. For purposes of analysis, we combined those respondents who refused to answer the second

part of the question (less than 4 per cent of the sample) with those who said they were average, producing the distribution in Table 6.

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Table 6. Distribution of class identification

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<u>Class identification</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>
average working-class	48.0	525
upper working-class	10.2	112
average middle-class	33.0	361
upper middle-class	8.8	96
<hr/>		
TOTAL	100.0%	1094*

\*33 respondents were coded D.K. or N.A.

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Obviously this distribution is far from normal, and no conventional transformation could normalize it. A square root logarithmic transformation reduced the skewness of the distribution, as shown in Table 7, but only at the cost of accentuating bimodality, as reflected in the change in kurtosis (cf. Darlington, 1970). We, of course, are attributing interval characteristics to an ordinal variable (cf. Labovitz, 1970).

Political party affiliation was measured in terms of a simple Republican-Democratic dichotomy. Respondents who regarded themselves as strong partisans, weak partisans, or independents leaning toward one of the parties were considered to be identifiers with that party (cf. Segal and Hikel, 1970).

Table 7. Characteristics of class identification distribution  $x$  and  $\sqrt{\log x}$

	$x$	$\sqrt{\log x}$
mean	2.03	.35
standard deviation	1.08	.34
skewness	.371	-.02
kurtosis	-1.392	-1.926

Fifty-four per cent of our sample was Democratic, 32 per cent Republican, and 14 per cent (160 respondents) were independents with no leaning, supporters of other parties, D.K. or N.A. This latter 14 per cent was omitted from the analysis of partisanship.

In measuring consumption, we were attempting to measure the quality of life style, rather than simply the amount of money spent on consumer goods. The items that we initially considered for inclusion in this index were: plans to buy a home; plans for home improvement; plans to buy a car and whether it will be new or used; automobiles bought in the past year and whether they were new or used; plans to buy various durable goods (furniture, refrigerator, stove, washing machine, air conditioner, television set, other).

On the basis of analysis of relationships among these items, they were combined and weighted in the following manner: planned purchases of durable goods (up to 2 coded) were given 3 points each, regardless of the nature of the goods;

automobile purchases either in the last year or planned for the current year were given 2 points (used car), 4 points (new car) or 6 points (2 cars in 2 year period); 2 points were assigned for a planned home purchase; 1 point was assigned for planned home improvements.

The points were cumulated for each respondent, with index values ranging from 0-15. The mean score was 2.75 with a standard deviation of 3.18. A square-root logarithmic transformation was used to reduce skewness, as shown in Table 8.

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Table 8. Characteristics of consumer behavior index  $x$  and  $\sqrt{\log(x+1)}$

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	<u><math>x</math></u>	<u><math>\sqrt{\log(x+1)}</math></u>
mean	2.75	.74
standard deviation	3.18	.18
skewness	1.159	.153
kurtosis	.781	-1.491

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## RESULTS

Since our measures of the labor market and commodity market were nominal scales, we performed our initial analysis using Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA). MCA is a linear analysis model capable of handling missing data, non-linear data, and nominal independent variables with the accuracy of least squares methods. It can be conceived of as a form of dummy variable multiple regression (see Suits, 1957).

The coefficients obtained through MCA are analogous to those obtained through dummy variable regression, and indeed the coefficients derived by either of these techniques may easily be converted to the other by the addition or subtraction of a constant for each predictor. MCA has the advantage of requiring no conversion of basic data. All variables are automatically dealt with as dummy variables (Andrews et al., 1967).

One analysis was performed using each of our status attributes (party choice, consumer behavior and class identification) as dependent variables. The measures of class and status position were defined as independent variables. Tables 9-11 present the results of these analyses.

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Table 9. MCA Analysis of Social Class Identification

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<u>Independent Variable</u>	<u>eta<sub>1</sub></u>	<u>beta<sub>2</sub></u>
labor market	.036	.025
commodity market	.166	.061
credit market	.322*	.104
education	.516*	.328*
income	.387*	.210*
Duncan SES	.484*	.216*

Multiple  $r^2 = .331^*$   
\* $p < .05$   
1. eta measures gross relationships  
2. beta measures partial relationships

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Neither position in the labor market nor position in the commodity market have an affect on class identification (Table 9.) Position in the credit market has a significant relationship to class identification at the zero-order. When other factors are taken into account, however, the relationship disappears. The zero-order and the partial relationships of our 3 status indicators to social class identification are all significant, indicating that class identification really is a status rather than a class attribute. While it is conventional in MCA to take the relative magnitude of beta as an indication of relative importance in the explanation of variance, we were unable to establish that the differences among our 3 significant beta coefficients were significantly different from each other.

The importance of status and affluence, as opposed to class position, in defining life style, is shown in Table 10. Education and income are the only attributes related to material consumption at the zero-order, and when other factors are controlled, income stands alone as a determinant of consumption.

Table 10. MCA Analysis of Consumption

<u>Independent variable</u>	<u>eta</u>	<u>beta</u>
labor market	.006	.030
commodity market	.111	.098
credit market	.170	.076
education	.283*	.214
income	.325*	.285*
Duncan SES	.212	.089

multiple  $r^2 = .104^*$

\* $p < .05$

Political party choice also emerges as a status rather than a class attribute, although here, as Table 11 demonstrates, affluence, as measured by income, does not have a significant effect, even at the zero-order. Education and Duncan's index of socioeconomic status are the only significant zero-order correlates. When all factors are taken into account simultaneously, none of the partials attains statistical significance at the .05 level.

Table 11. MCA Analysis of Political Party Identification

<u>Independent variable</u>	<u>eta</u>	<u>beta</u>
labor market	.063	.072
commodity market	.061	.018
credit market	.163	.091
education	.250*	.181
income	.188	.137
Duncan SES	.236*	.168

multiple  $r^2 = .047^*$

\* $p < .05$



Because our first MCA analysis had shown social class identification to be a subjective indicator of social status, we added this variable to our analyses of consumer behavior and political party choice. In both instances, class identification was significantly related to the dependent variable ( $p < .05$ ) at the zero-order. The betas for class identification were not significant, however, and the multiple  $r^2$  was not increased significantly in either case.

On the basis of these results, we decided to reject the labor and commodity markets as explanatory variables, and to reclaim the data lost by imposing an assumption of nominal scaling on interval variables by turning to regression analysis.

Hodge and Treiman's (1968) multiple regression analysis of class identification had produced a multiple  $r^2$  of .196 with education, occupation of household head, and family income entered as independent variables. With our credit index added to these, our multiple  $r^2$  was .268. The betas suggest that education is the most important determinant of class identification, but the betas must be interpreted in the light of a multicollinearity problem, the magnitude of which is suggested by the magnitude of the zero-order correlations presented in Table 12. These data do suggest, however, that status, as measured by education and Duncan SES, is a more important determinant

Table 12. Regression coefficients and zero-order correlations for analysis of social class identification

	<u>beta</u>	<u>zero-order correlation</u>				
		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. education	.272		.524	.421	.135	.446
2. Duncan SES	.175			.432	.400	.411
3. income	.096				.412	.339
4. credit	.130					.328
5. class identification						

of class identification than such economic variables as income and ability to mobilize credit. These findings are similar to the results of our earlier multiple classification analysis.

Hodge and Treiman (1968) suggest that the status of the people one associates with is at least as important a determinant of one's class identification as one's own characteristics are. This is consistent with Tallman and Morgner's (1970) findings regarding the class identification of blue-collar workers living in suburbs, discussed above. These latter findings in turn are contradicted by Berger (1968) who found suburban dwelling not to effect the class identification of blue-collar workers. By adding urbanization to our regression analysis as a dummy variable, we increased multiple  $r^2$  to .290, again suggesting that class identification is really a reflection of status rather than of class.

Our earlier analysis had suggested that, unlike social class identification, consumption was primarily determined by income. Our regression analysis confirms this finding. The regression of our consumer index on education, income, Duncan SES, and position in the credit market yielded a multiple  $r^2$  of .193. The betas for income and education, respectively, were .408 and .111. Adding class identification to the equation increased  $r^2$  to .195, an insignificant increment. Neither did urbanization, as a dummy variable, add explanatory power.

Our findings with regard to consumption, then, agree with that of economists concerned with the effects of affluence, viz., how much a person spends depends on how much he earns. As a corollary, we suggest that increases in income will be matched by increases in consumption spending (cf. Katona and Mueller, 1968). Given the income convergence between upper-working-class and lower-middle-class occupations, we can argue that material life styles have converged as well.

Our regression analysis was least successful in explaining political partisanship. This was to be expected, since previous research has shown that the greater part of the variance in partisanship that can be accounted for is attributable to regional and religious differences; variables that we did not take into account in this analysis (Segal and Knoke, 1970). Regressing party identification on education,

income, Duncan SES, and credit market position, we achieved a multiple  $r^2$  of .037. Adding class identification to the equation increased this to only .040. Adding urbanization as a dummy variable, however, increased multiple  $r^2$  to .083. The betas are presented in Table 13. Urbanization and education appear to be the primary determinants of party choice among these variables.

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Table 13. Regression coefficients for the analysis of party choice.

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<u>Variable</u>	<u>Beta</u>
education	.127
income	.022
Duncan SES	.019
credit market	.033
class identification	.060
urbanization	-.172

---

These data suggest, then, that party choice, above and beyond its basis in traditional cleavages in American society, is a function of social status, rather than either economic class or affluence based upon earned income. We once again, therefore, find our results in contradiction to those of Berger (1968), who argued that suburbanization did not effect the political party choice of blue-collar workers. Rather, our findings are more strongly in accord with those scholars who argue that a "suburban conversion" takes place (cf. Wood, 1958: 134-153; Greenstein and Wolfinger, 1958) and more generally with earlier findings that suggest that the politics of

working-class people are determined largely by the communities in which they reside (Segal and Meyer, 1969; Segal and Wildstrom, 1970). We find ourselves in disagreement with those who see conditions in the workplace as the primary determinants of political orientation (Lipsitz, 1964).

#### EMBOURGEOISEMENT OR PROLETARIANIZATION?

While the primacy of income in determining consumption attests to the convergence in life-style between the upper working-class and the lower middle-class, we have not yet defined the nature of the life-style that they share. Does the affluent working class manifest a bourgeois life-style, or does the lower middle-class, alienated from the means of production, live like the working class?

The low partial correlation between occupation and consumption suggests that the question is moot, and a close inspection of the data confirms this. The fact is that the relationship between income and consumption is a single function, regardless of occupation. We inspected the graphs of consumer index by income for white-collar and blue-collar occupations. The two lines did not differ significantly in the range \$1,000-15,000 expected 1966 income. Mean consumer index scores within this range are presented in Table 14.

Table 14. Mean consumer index scores ( $\bar{C}$ ), by occupational class and income.

Income	Blue Collar		White Collar	
	C	N	C	N
\$1,000	.52	25	.75	4
\$1,000-\$1,999	.93	60	1.29	14
\$2,000-\$2,999	.79	48	1.64	14
\$3,000-\$3,999	1.81	69	2.17	24
\$4,000-\$4,999	2.20	66	2.00	31
\$5,000-\$7,499	3.02	128	2.84	85
\$7,500-\$9,999	3.94	107	3.20	101
\$10,000-\$14,999	4.88	51	4.51	83

Above this range, there were only 16 blue-collar respondents, and no comparisons were possible.

The identity of the functions for working-class and middle-class occupations was demonstrated by regression analysis as well. The regression of consumer index (Y) on income (X) for blue-collar workers was

$$Y = -1.066 + 1.260X.$$

For white-collar workers, the equation was

$$Y = -0.855 + 1.075X.$$

The standardized betas for blue-collar and white-collar workers respectively were .441 and .362.

We conclude from these data that consumption is a continuous function of income, with no major inflections due to occupational differences.

## CONCLUSION

We have been concerned with the explanation of three attributes that were assumed to reflect social status: class identification, material life style, and political party identification. We have considered a variety of models, ranging from Marx' unicausal labor market model, through Weber's more differentiated economic structure, to a set of theories that predict the convergence of working-class and middle-class life styles and attitudes.

We have found that none of these perspectives is wholly correct, and that our three dependent variables, while related to each other, are in fact to be explained by different models. Class identification we have found not to be an attribute of economic class, but rather of social status and reference group. These concepts are of course interrelated, the former helping to provide the context for the latter (Merton, 1957:368). Material standard of living, on the other hand, seems to be a function of affluence (as measured in terms of annual income), and only secondarily to status factors. Education bore a much weaker relationship to consumption than did income, and social class identification did not contribute significantly to the explanation of consumption.

While talk about the politics of class or the politics of status is common, our analysis suggests that political partisanship is a reflection of neither. Political movements may in fact reflect these elements of social

stratification, but the infrastructure of party support seems to be rooted in historical cleavages in American society not reflected today in class or status factors.

These findings have interesting implication regarding the emergence of a consensual middle-majority in American society.

First, the increasing affluence of American manual workers portends increasing convergence in material life styles between manual and non-manual workers. Second, the fact that manual workers can, through their affluence purchase status mobility for their children, i.e., education, and geographical mobility to the suburbs for themselves suggests the potential for convergence in class identification between manual and non-manual groups. We note that the existence of "status cultures" provides an obstacle to such convergence in that seeking higher education and homes in the suburbs are functions not only of affluence but also of reference group values.

Third, since partisan cleavage in the United States is affected in only a minor way by status and class considerations, we find no reason to argue that as the "middle-majority" in the American stratification system expands, American politics will become more consensual. Indeed, it seems reasonable to argue that as the middle-majority expands, political resources will come to be more equitably distributed between opposing political positions, and the level of political conflict will be heightened.



Finally, we note that neither our findings nor our projections are necessarily generalizable to other nations. Different patterns of class conflict, and traditional alliances between trade unions and political parties in the European nations may well create greater obstacles to convergence rooted in affluence in those nations than is the case in the United States.

#### FOOTNOTE

1. There are in fact two important senses in which the quality of material consumption can be seen as a status attribute. On the one hand, consumption may be merely a reflection of a man's position--achieved or ascribed--in the stratification system. On the other hand, it may be a claim to increased status through conspicuous consumption. We did not initially differentiate between these positions, and our data do not allow us to choose between them.

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