

AFFLUENCE AND THE BRITISH CLASS STRUCTURE

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I

Until relatively recently, most discussion of change in the British class structure* has been carried on in terms of (i) shifts in the occupational distribution of the population (ii) the reduction of extreme economic inequalities and (iii) the amount and rate of intergenerational social mobility.

(i) Writers such as Cole, for example, have documented the process whereby technological advance and economic growth have greatly increased the importance of clerical, administrative, managerial and professional employments,¹ and it has often been noted how in this way the overall *shape* of the British class structure underwent significant modification from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. A broad range of 'intermediate' strata emerged to bridge the gap between the 'two nations', perceived alike by Engels and Disraeli, of the manual wage workers and the major property owning groups.²

(ii) It has been shown how also from the mid-nineteenth century, and again largely in consequence of continuing material progress, the national distribution of income and wealth slowly became somewhat less skewed; and how, eventually, with the aid of developing social welfare services, the problem of mass poverty was overcome.³ In this way then, it may be said, the *span* of social stratification in Great Britain was reduced; in other words, the range of differentiation, in basic economic terms at least, became less extended.

(iii) It has been frequently pointed out that as a result of the growing diversification of the occupational structure, the educational system, rather than kinship or 'connection', has come to act as the key agency in allocating individuals to their occupational rôles; and further, that if for no other reason than the need to utilise talent more efficiently, educational opportunity, in a formal sense at any rate, has been made less unequal. Consequently, the degree of intergenerational

* A note on concepts and terminology appears as an appendix to this paper.

social mobility, in particular, has tended to increase and in this way the *stability* of social strata has been in some degree diminished.⁴

On these lines, then, a picture has been built up—and it is one which would be generally accepted—of a system of stratification becoming increasingly fine in its gradations and at the same time somewhat less extreme and less rigid.

Of late, however, still further economic progress has resulted in a new factor entering into the discussion—that of working class 'affluence'. And this has led to the claim being made that in yet another way the British class structure is in process of change. It has been argued by a number of writers that the working class, or at least a more prosperous section of it, is losing its identity as a social stratum and is becoming merged into the middle class. In other words, the contention is that today many manual wage-earning workers and their families are becoming socially indistinguishable from the members of other groups—those of blackcoated workers, minor professionals and technicians, for example,—who were previously their social superiors.⁵

This, one should note, is to claim a far more rapid and far-reaching change in class structure than any which could ensue from secular trends in occupational distribution, in the overall distribution of income and wealth or in rates of intergenerational social mobility. It is to claim that, in course of their own lifetimes, large numbers of persons are collectively experiencing not only a marked increase in their standard of living but also a basic change in their way of life and in their status position relative to other groups with whom they are in regular contact. There are implied, thus, as well as economic changes, changes in values, attitudes and aspirations, in behavioural patterns, and in the structure of relationships in associational and community life.

Before going on to consider these implications in more detail, one further introductory remark is necessary regarding the political consequences of changes in class structure. The long-term trends of change which were referred to above have all at some time or another been adduced to help explain shifting patterns of party allegiance; notably, of course, the decline in support for the Labour Party over the past decade or more. But it is in particular the thesis of the *embourgeoisement*⁶ of the working class that has been invested with political significance, and especially in relation to the third successive electoral defeat of the Labour Party in 1959. For example, in their

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study of that election, Butler and Rose have argued that the result and the reports from the constituencies which accompanied it, 'make it plain that the swing to the Conservatives cannot be dismissed as an ephemeral veering of the electoral breeze. Long term factors were also involved. Traditional working class attitudes had been eroded by the steady growth of prosperity . . .' In their view, many manual workers are at least 'on the threshold of the middle class'.⁷ The same theme has been taken up by Labour Party 'revisionists' such as Crosland. 'The swing against Labour' the latter has written 'although quantitatively not large, must be taken seriously because it appears to reflect a long-run trend. Moreover, it seems to be causally related to certain underlying social and economic changes . . . which not merely are irreversible, but are not yet even complete.' The forces of change are 'gradually breaking down the old barriers between the working and middle classes . . .' and Labour's support is dwindling because of a crisis in class identity: 'People who would be objectively classified as working class in terms of occupation or family background have acquired a middle class income and pattern of consumption, and sometimes a middle class psychology.'⁸

It is not our purpose here to consider whether or how far the electoral trend against Labour is in fact related to processes of irreversible change. It is, however, our view that interpretations of Labour's decline of the kind referred to cannot by any means be regarded as conclusive. In the first place, there are various other ways in which Labour's lack of success at the polls might be accounted for without resorting to the thesis of the worker turning middle class. And secondly, there is the elementary point that before this thesis can be usefully introduced as an explanatory factor, it is necessary to have a clear idea of what it is that it states and also, of course, empirical confirmation of its validity. As things stand at present, the requirement of clarity, let alone of proof, has still to be met. The main objective of this paper is to set out certain considerations which may help towards more systematic thinking in this connection and to indicate some of the directions which research could most usefully take.

II

The chief sociological implications of the argument that the more prosperous of the country's manual wage workers are being assimilated into the middle class would appear to be as follows:

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- (a) That these workers and their families are acquiring a standard of living, in terms of income and material possessions, which puts them on a level with at least the lower strata within the middle class. Here one refers to certain of the specifically economic aspects of class stratification.
- (b) That these same workers are also acquiring new social perspectives and new norms of behaviour which are more characteristic of middle class than of working class groups. Here one refers to what may be termed the *normative* aspect of class.
- (c) That being essentially similar to many middle class persons in their economic position and their normative orientation, these manual workers are being accepted by the former on terms of social equality in both formal and informal social interaction. Here one refers to what may be called the *relational* aspect of class.

One would have thought it obvious that in any discussion of the thesis of *embourgeoisement* distinctions on these lines would have been regarded as indispensable. But, in fact, proponents of the thesis have generally chosen to ignore such refinements. Thus, an adequate attempt at empirical validation has been more or less ruled out from the start. For example, Zweig in his recent book, *The Worker in an Affluent Society* (1961), advances the claim that large sections of the working class find themselves 'on the move towards new middle class values and middle class existence.'⁹ Yet this proposition is never explicated in such a way that the findings of Zweig's extensive research could be systematically related to it. What is necessary, in our view, is that the economic, normative and relational aspects of the matter should each be studied as rigorously as possible, and that any conclusions concerning *embourgeoisement* should be formed on the basis of research specifically focussed on the problem in this way, rather than being merely *ad hoc* generalisations drawn from a shapeless mass of data.

The economic and relational aspects of class are the least ambiguous in their meaning and the most readily capable of being investigated in relatively simple ways. We shall, therefore, consider the approach to these aspects first and leave until afterwards the more difficult issues which arise in connection with the normative aspect.

So far as income levels and the ownership of consumer durables are concerned, comparisons can be made with a fair degree of reliability between the more prosperous section of the working class

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and middle class groups. Such comparisons have in fact shown that in these respects many manual workers and their families have achieved economic parity, at least, with many members of the lower strata within the middle class.¹⁰ However, the point that we would stress here is that incomes and consumption patterns do not constitute the whole of the economic aspect of class stratification. Such factors as security and prospects for advancement are also relevant; and in this connection the evidence at present available indicates that broad differences remain between manual and non-manual employments. In relation to security, for example, the manual worker is still generally more liable than the non-manual worker to be dismissed at short notice; he is also less likely than the latter to enjoy various occupational fringe benefits, such as sickness pay and pension schemes. In relation to advancement, not only are the non-manual worker's chances of upward occupational mobility significantly greater than those of the manual worker, but in any case the former can often expect his income to rise by calculable increments throughout his working life, whereas the income of the latter is likely to rise very little once he reaches adulthood—save, of course, as a result of general improvements in wage rates gained through collective bargaining.

It is true that certain of the differences in regard to security are steadily being reduced and that the trend in this direction will probably continue. For example, fringe benefits are increasingly being extended to manual workers and it is conceivable that in the fairly near future the security of labour may be significantly advanced in some industries through the negotiation of long-term wage contracts. On the other hand, however, it appears to be often overlooked that so far as promotion is concerned, the chances of the rank-and-file worker rising above supervisory level are, on all the evidence, clearly *declining* in modern industry.¹¹ For those who leave non-selective secondary schools at the age of fifteen for a manual occupation, this kind of work is becoming more than ever before a life sentence. The same factors that are making for greater intergenerational mobility—technological progress, increasing specialisation and the growing importance of education in occupational placement—are also operating to reduce the possibility of 'working up from the bottom' in industry, and are thus indirectly re-emphasising the staff-worker dichotomy.

In the discussion of *embourgeoisement* so far, considerations of this kind have been largely ignored; chiefly, it would seem, because

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the predominant concern with the effects of affluence has directed attention towards incomes and consumption and away from other no less significant correlates of the individual's position and rôle in the division of labour. It is essential that future research should take these neglected factors into account and attempt to assess their importance. It would be interesting to know, for example, how incomes and consumption patterns of different grades of manual and non-manual workers would compare if age or number of years in gainful employment were held constant. Again, it would be useful to investigate how far, among manual occupations, those offering the highest level of earnings were also those with the greatest degree of security and best prospects for promotion. The correlation here might well be found to be less than often seems to be assumed in speaking of the 'new' working class.¹²

The treatment of the economic aspect of class in the thesis of *embourgeoisement* is then unconvincing because it is incomplete. In regard to what we have called the relational aspect of the problem, however, the neglect is more or less total. It does not appear to have occurred to those who argue that the worker is being merged into the middle class that this implies that within communities, neighbourhoods and associations long-standing social barriers are being broken down and that manual workers and their families are being accepted as equals into status groups from the which they, or their kind, were previously excluded. This is all the more serious because such an implication would not be supported by the relevant evidence at present at hand. A variety of studies carried out in different parts of Britain over the last ten years or so have pointed to a marked degree of status segregation in housing, in informal neighbourhood relations, in friendship groups, in the membership of local clubs, societies and organisations and so on. And in all cases the division between manual and non-manual workers and their families has proved to be one of the most salient.¹³ It may, of course, be held that very recently and in certain particular contexts—say the New Towns or the suburban areas of newly developed industrial regions—the extent of this segregation has begun to decline. But the point is that so far no evidence of this has been brought forward and, further, that the basic importance of such evidence to the argument concerning *embourgeoisement* has not, apparently, been recognised. For example, Zweig, in the research referred to earlier, appears to have collected little, if any, information with the specific aim of assessing how far

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the affluent manual workers he studied—supposedly on the road to 'middle-classness'—were in fact recognised and treated as social equals by, let us say, the white-collar workers with whom they came into regular contact.

In investigating questions of this kind—as one hopes future research on the 'affluent worker' will do—we would wish to draw attention to the importance of one particular issue which should, perhaps, be made the focal point of enquiry; that is, the extent to which differences in status in the occupational or work milieu carry over into community and associational contexts, and exert an influence here on the structuring of social relationships. Within industry, status distinctions and status segregation are generally more explicit and more institutionalised than in most other areas of social life. The line of cleavage that is most apparent and most resistant to change is that between manual and non-manual employees—that is, the line between 'shop' and 'office' or 'works' and 'staff'. Basically, the difference here is between those who are placed in essentially subordinate positions within the industrial organisation and those who are to some extent or other associated with the exercise of authority. But related to this is, of course, a whole range of further differentiation chiefly concerning privileges and amenities of various kinds about the plant—canteens, clubs, time-keeping arrangements, etc. Thus, even the most inferior clerk or technician, who may in fact have a minimal degree of authority, is set apart, both literally and symbolically, from the rank-and-file manual workers. An important question is, therefore, whether outside of the industrial setting this status gap can, under certain conditions at least, be nullified by other factors—similarities of income and life-styles, for example—or whether it is likely to persist as a major barrier to social intercourse on a basis of equality. To what extent does it occur, for instance, that the wages clerk and the welder, who eat in different canteens at lunch time, meet each other with their wives for a drink or a meal together in the evening? Or that the work study man and the machinist, who confront each other on the shop floor, also confront each other across the card table or tennis court?¹⁴

Finally, in this discussion, one would suggest the possibility that if a high degree of status exclusiveness continues to be a feature of British social life, then working class affluence may turn out to have political consequences the reverse of those usually attributed to it. Political sociologists have noted in a variety of contexts that the

development of marked discrepancies between income and status hierarchies tends to be productive of radical attitudes on the part of those who are unable to secure a degree of social recognition commensurate with their economic standing.¹⁵ Indeed, some evidence already exists to suggest that industrial militancy among miners and dockers in Great Britain is in part related to tensions which arise out of a relatively rapid increase in income unaccompanied by any comparable improvement in their status position.¹⁶

III

To neglect what we have termed the relational aspect of class is clearly, then, a serious omission on the part of those who would argue that with the growing prosperity of manual workers, the differentiating and divisive force of class has been weakened. The explanation—though not the justification—of this shortcoming is, we would suggest, that attention has been directed away from class *relations* as a result of a predominating emphasis upon class ‘*psychology*’: in particular, on the changing social values, attitudes and related behavioural norms of certain working class groups. In fact, apart from the statistical data on incomes and consumption, it is on evidence of changes of an attitudinal and normative character that the thesis of working class *embourgeoisement* largely rests. This evidence, which we must now examine, is of two main kinds: (i) evidence provided by enquiries—some of them field studies—into the changing patterns of the family and community life of manual workers; and (ii) evidence provided by attitude and opinion surveys of manual workers, in particular those dealing with individuals’ own estimations of their class position. We may say at the outset that in our view the arguments put forward on this basis are again generally unsatisfactory ones. The material in question, we believe, has been treated in a far too uncritical manner and does not adequately sustain many of the interpretations that have been placed upon it.

(i) Studies of the ‘new’ working class way of life have focussed for the most part either on workers employed by progressive firms in generally prosperous and expanding industries (as in Zweig’s investigation) or on workers and their families recently rehoused, as part of urban redevelopment programmes, in new estates or satellite towns.¹⁷ Both kinds of study have led to many similar conclusions and these are by now sufficiently familiar to be recalled here simply by reference to the following major themes: the decline of the gregar-

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iousness and of the communal form of sociability characteristic of the traditional type of urban working class locality; the emergence, by contrast, of a home- and family-centred mode of existence; the growing preoccupation with money and with the acquisition of material possessions; the emphasis on the welfare of children and the rising aspirations that parents hold for them; and, finally, the increasing concern with status gradations in place of a former sense of communal—and class—solidarity.

The consistency with which these themes have recurred in recent research leaves little room for doubt that among certain sections of the working class, at least, important changes *are* taking place in family and community life. The question is, however, whether these changes are indeed so fundamental as has sometimes been made out, and, further, whether they can be validly interpreted as changes in the direction of 'middle-classness'.

To begin with, we would note that certain of the features of the 'new' working class way of life, which have been frequently commented upon, were by no means entirely foreign to the 'old', or traditional, subculture of the urban working class. For example studies of this subculture have almost invariably referred not only to the norms of 'friendliness' and 'neighbourliness' but also to the norm of 'keeping yourself to yourself' and to the high value set on the privacy of the home.¹⁸ Furthermore, these same studies have often described the existence of status distinctions, most commonly that drawn between 'rough' and 'respectable' families. And among the latter, at any rate, there can be little doubt of the pride customarily taken in a well-kept house and well-turned-out children.¹⁹ In these respects, at least, then, it is possible, we feel, to exaggerate the extent to which affluence, new homes and new communities have changed the normative basis of working class life—significant though the change may be. Residential, and perhaps to a lesser degree occupational mobility have in many cases led to the disruption of the kinship networks and the ties of lifelong familiarity between persons which gave the older working class areas their 'sense of community'; and this in turn has had the result of forcing the nuclear family into greater self-sufficiency as a unit and its individual members into greater social and psychological interdependence. At the same time, moreover, improvements in housing and incomes have helped greatly towards the generalisation of 'respectability' and towards the heightening of social expectations, aspirations and sensitivities. Neverthe-

less, on the basis of the existing evidence, the totality of this change may be best understood, we would suggest, not as a movement towards 'middle-classness', but rather as a far-reaching adaptation and development of the traditional working class way of life under greatly altered economic and physical conditions.

A further observation serves to confirm this view. This is that, among the 'new' workers studied so far, certain patterns of social behaviour which could be regarded as characteristically middle class are not generally to be found. Most notably, in this respect, mutual entertainment between couples would appear to be relatively rare. Zweig, for example, states that among the workers he interviewed, visiting between neighbours was in the main discouraged and similarly the entertaining of workmates was little favoured and little practised; home and family absorbed the individual's time and interest.²⁰ It is strange, one would add, that Zweig does not see here any contradiction of his view of manual workers increasingly adopting a middle class mode of existence. It has also been noted, by Zweig and others, that a further consequence of 'home-centredness' is a marked lack of enthusiasm for joining local clubs and societies. Here again, then, there is a divergence from what is at least the generally accepted idea of the nature of middle class sociability. Studies have consistently shown that a relatively high rate of participation in the affairs of voluntary associations is a feature which importantly differentiates middle class from working class life-styles.²¹

It must be the task of future research, we believe, to avoid facile comparisons between working and middle class subcultures and to aim at providing what might be termed 'genotypical' rather than 'phenotypical' analyses of the new life-styles that manual workers and their families are at present creating for themselves.²² This will entail going beyond the mere surface description of 'home-centredness', 'money-mindedness', 'status-striving' and so on, and seeking some understanding of how the behavioural patterns in question are related to, and take meaning from, the life-histories and life-situations of the individuals and groups concerned. What are also required, of course, are similarly penetrating analyses of middle class life-styles, particularly of those of lower middle class groups which may be regarded as socially adjacent to the more prosperous section of the working class. Only through research on these lines will more significant and rewarding comparisons become possible.

(ii) The evidence of opinion and attitude surveys that have been

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taken as relevant to the thesis of *embourgeoisement* can be briefly summarised as follows. In a number of studies carried out in recent years, and covering relatively large numbers of manual workers, some sizeable proportion of the latter—ranging from 10 to over 40 per cent—have in each instance claimed to belong to the middle class.²³ In some of the studies, though by no means in all, it has then also been shown how this claim in some degree correlates with other expressions of 'middle classness'—for example, voting Conservative. On this basis the argument has been advanced that working class consciousness is weakening and that many manual workers are now no longer willing to identify themselves with others in basically the same objective class position, but see themselves, rather, as forming part of a higher social stratum along with white-collar workers, independents and so on.

Our criticism of this argument is directed primarily at the method of investigation that is chiefly involved, that is, the attempt to ascertain individuals' perception of their position in the class structure and their class identification by means of a poll-type interview. The inadequacy of this technique was recognised by more methodologically sophisticated students of social class some considerable time ago²⁴; yet a number of sociologists in this country, at least, continue to apply it and to attach some importance to the results it provides. There are, therefore, grounds for restating here its major deficiencies.

In the first place, it is known that responses to such a question as 'To which social class would you say you belonged?' may vary significantly depending on whether the respondent is given a pre-determined choice of class categories or whether categorisation is left 'open'.²⁵ Secondly, it is also known that where pre-determined categories are used (which is usually the case), wide variations can again be produced in the pattern of response according to the particular class designations which are offered—for example, according to whether 'lower class' is used instead of, or in addition to, 'working class' or not at all.²⁶ Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it has become evident that responses to questions on class identification which are nominally similar, and which will thus be grouped together by the investigator, may in fact have very different meanings for the various persons making them. This is because such responses will be influenced not only by the form of question that is put, which can for any given sample be held constant, but *also* by respondents' own images of their society and of its class structure, which, it is known, tend to be

highly variable. Thus, the same question will be answered in terms of many different, and perhaps widely different, frames of reference. For instance, in the case of a manual worker claiming to be 'middle class', it is possible that this statement might mean, among other things, any of the following:

- (a) that the respondent does not identify with, and wishes to distinguish himself from, those he sees as forming the lowest strata in society; such as, for example, casual labourers or those on the verge of poverty.²⁷
- (b) that he sees his position as being in the middle of a broadly defined working class (from an objective point of view) which largely constitutes his own social world; that is to say, he regards himself, for example as being superior to less skilled or less well paid workers but as below such persons as foremen, policemen, garage superintendents and so on.²⁸
- (c) that he feels he is at least the equal of many white-collar workers, small businessmen, etc. in *economic* terms—that is, in terms of income and material possessions.²⁹
- (d) that he has aspirations towards a *style of life* which he realises is at least different from what would usually be thought of as working class.³⁰

or finally

- (e) that he has a *family background* which he regards as middle class.³¹

With these considerations in mind, then, it can only be concluded that the findings of class identification studies conducted via poll-type questioning are of very little sociological value. It would seem virtually impossible to interpret such data in any way that would provide reliable indications of respondents' class awareness or class consciousness; the scope for arbitrary variation and ambiguity is far too great. And certainly, we would claim, there can be no valid basis here for the argument that significant numbers of manual workers are now seeking to present themselves as members of 'authentic' middle class groups, or that they are even aspiring to such membership.

It follows from this, furthermore, that the correlations reported in some studies between 'self-upgrading' among manual workers and other expressions of 'middle classness' must now also be regarded in a doubtful light. Abrams, in recent publications, has made a good deal of his finding that manual workers who regarded themselves as

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middle class were more likely to vote Conservative, or at least not to vote Labour, than those who regarded themselves as working class. Largely on this basis he has been prepared to offer confident diagnoses of the Labour Party's present ills and prescriptions for its future health and survival.³² However, we would point out in this respect, firstly, that the correlation in question is a rather weak one—as Abrams himself recognises³³—and, secondly, that for reasons set out above, it is difficult to form any clear idea of its sociological meaning let alone of its political implications.³⁴ For example, it may well be the case that many of the manual workers who describe themselves as middle class and who voted Conservative were moved in both instances by much the same set of considerations—that is, considerations of a largely *economic* character. There is in fact as yet little evidence which would help in deciding how far the Conservative vote of the manual worker (excluding the 'deference' voter) is due to his conception of himself as 'middle class' simply in material terms (the hypothetical 'prosperity' voter), or how far it represents a claim to be accepted as a middle class person in a full social sense (the hypothetical 'identification' voter). This distinction is, however, of obvious relevance in the assessment of future voting patterns. In a time of economic uncertainty or recession, the 'prosperity' voter might be expected to abandon his support of the Conservative Party, far more readily than would the 'identification' voter.³⁵

It is our view, then, that if questions of class identification and class norms are to be at all usefully investigated through interview techniques, the pollster's overriding concern with easily obtainable and easily quantifiable results must be abandoned and an effort made to do justice to the complexity of the issues involved. Research has in fact already been carried out which gives a promising lead in this respect. In particular, one would cite here the studies of Popitz in Germany, of Willener in Switzerland and of Bott in England, which, although conducted entirely independently of each other, are essentially comparable both in their approach and their findings.³⁶ In each case it was in effect recognised that the problem of the 'meaning' of respondents' statements on class and cognate questions could only be overcome by interpreting these statements in relation to respondents' overall perception, or image, of their society. Thus, in all three studies the elucidation of these images became a central focus of interest. It was generally found that as an idea was built up of the way in which a respondent saw his society, and especially its class

structure, the more clearly the rationale of his answers to particular questions would appear. One was dealing, in other words, with a *Gestalt*, not with a series of separate and unconnected responses. A close interrelationship was seen to prevail between the individual's perception of his society, his general value system and (insofar as these were investigated) the attitudes he took towards more specific social issues. Furthermore, it was in each case revealed that among groups of individuals occupying comparable positions within the social hierarchy, a broadly similar 'social imagery' tended to occur, together with a more or less distinctive normative orientation.

In the findings of these studies we have in fact probably the clearest indications that are available of the basic differences in the social perspectives of working and middle class persons and, thus, an important guide to the core distinctions which would be relevant to any discussion of their respective life-styles. For this reason it may be useful to set out here—if only in a very simplified way—certain of the major conclusions which were arrived at in all three investigations.

- (a) The majority of people have a more or less clearly defined image of their society as being stratified in some way or other; that is to say, they are aware of inequalities in the distribution of wealth, prestige and power.
- (b) One 'polar' type of image is that of society as being sharply divided into two contending sections, or classes, differentiated primarily in terms of the possession or non-possession of power (the 'dichotomous' or 'power' model). Contrasting with this is an image of society as comprising an extended hierarchy of relatively 'open' strata differentiated primarily in terms of prestige (the 'hierarchical' or 'prestige' model).
- (c) The 'power' model is that most frequently approximated in the images of working class persons—that is, wage-earning, manual workers. The 'prestige model' on the other hand, is that most frequently approximated in the images of middle class persons—that is, salaried or independent non-manual workers.
- (d) Those images, at least, which approach at all closely to one or other of the two polar types serve as the focus of distinctive complexes of social values and attitudes.
- (e) The distinction between these two complexes is chiefly that between two basic themes which may be called the *collectivistic* and the *individualistic* (these being understood not as political

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ideologies, but rather as the raw materials of social consciousness which political ideologies may articulate).

The rationale of this linking of collectivistic and individualistic orientations to 'power' and 'prestige' models respectively is not difficult to appreciate. On the basis of the research in question, and of earlier studies of class values and attitudes,³⁷ it may be illustrated in the following schematic and, we would stress, ideal-typical manner.

| | <i>Working class perspective</i> | <i>Middle class perspective</i> |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| General beliefs | <p>The social order is divided into 'us' and 'them': those who do not have authority and those who do.</p> <p>The division between 'us' and 'them' is virtually fixed, at least from the point of view of one man's life chances.</p> <p>What happens to you depends a lot on luck; otherwise you have to learn to put up with things.</p> | <p>The social order is a hierarchy of differentially rewarded positions: a ladder containing many rungs.</p> <p>It is possible for individuals to move from one level of the hierarchy to another.</p> <p>Those who have ability and initiative can overcome obstacles and create their own opportunities. Where a man ends up depends on what he makes of himself.</p> |
| General values | <p>'We' ought to stick together and get what we can as a group.</p> <p>You may as well enjoy yourself while you can instead of trying to make yourself 'a cut above the rest'.</p> | <p>Every man ought to make the most of his own capabilities and be responsible for his own welfare.</p> <p>You cannot expect to get anywhere in the world if you squander your time and money. 'Getting on' means making sacrifices.</p> |
| Attitudes on more specific issues | <p>(on the best job for a son) 'A trade in his hands'. 'A good steady job'. (towards people needing social assistance) 'They have been unlucky'. 'They never had a chance'. 'It could happen to any of us'. (on Trade unions) 'Trade Unions are the only means workers have of protecting themselves and of improving their standard of living'.</p> | <p>'As good a start as you can give him'. 'A job that leads somewhere'. 'Many of them had the same opportunities as others who have managed well enough'. 'They are a burden on those who are trying to help themselves'. 'Trade Unions have too much power in the country'. 'The Unions put the interests of a section before the interests of the nation as a whole'.</p> |

One has here, thus, two sharply contrasting social perspectives, each of which comprises a set of internally consistent beliefs, values and attitudes. Whether the same degree of logic would be found in the case of any particular individual may well be doubted: so too may any exact correspondence between 'collectivism' and manual workers and 'individualism' and non-manual workers, especially in regard to occupational groups on the manual/non-manual frontier.

However, in the light of the evidence available, it would seem likely that approximations to one or other of the ideal-type perspectives outlined do regularly occur among social groups with less ambiguous class and status positions.

Our concluding argument here is, then, that in investigating the the possibility of a shift in the ethos of manual workers in the direction of 'middle classness', what is required are further studies on the lines of those that have been referred to; studies, that is, which probe into individuals' basic social imagery and their related normative predispositions. Is it in fact the case that the more affluent members of the working class are now ceasing to think in terms of 'us' and 'them' and are coming to see the class structure as being more differentiated and more 'open'? Are they at the same time becoming less convinced that the only way they can improve their social position is through collective action and growing more aware of, and concerned with, opportunities for individual advancement? And are they, furthermore, or are, at least, their children, becoming more adapted to the pursuit of such advancement by developing longer time-perspectives, the ability to 'defer gratification' and so on? These are the kinds of question, we believe, that researchers should now be grappling with, rather than performing the all too easy exercise of discovering how many manual workers are willing to 'upgrade' themselves by uttering three syllables.^{3a}

IV

We have now set out as systematically as appeared possible what we see as the main theoretical issues and research requirements in regard to the economic, relational and normative aspects of the argument concerning *embourgeoisement*. In the last section of this paper we wish to consider the implications of this argument from another point of view: to attempt to clarify, in fact, the nature of the transition which the idea of 'the worker turning middle class' might be said to entail.

For the purposes of this discussion, we shall start by assuming economic parity between groups of working and middle class persons, and thus concentrate on the other two aspects of the problem that we have distinguished; that is, the relational and the normative. These two components of class, as we have treated them, may, it so happens, be directly related to a pair of concepts which by now have wide currency in sociological literature: namely, 'membership group' and 'reference group'. The group with which an individual directly asso-

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ciates is, from his point of view, a membership group: a group with whose norms an individual identifies is a reference group. These groups will, of course, in many cases coincide; but the case that is relevant to our problem is that in which a person progressively dissociates himself, or is dissociated, from the norms of a membership group, and comes to take as his reference group some other group into which he may or may not be socially accepted. In our view, it is according to this pattern that changes in class structure, in other than a narrow economic sense, must ultimately be understood—as being, that is, a specific form of the general process by which individuals are attached to and detached from social groups. The following section from Merton's essay on reference groups is specially pertinent in this connection and may be quoted at length:

'What the individual experiences as estrangement from a group of which he is a member tends to be experienced by his associates as repudiation of the group, and this ordinarily evokes a hostile response. As social relations between the individual and the rest of the group deteriorate, the norms of the group become less binding for him. For since he is progressively seceding from the group and being penalized by it, he is less likely to experience rewards for adherence to the group norms. Once initiated, this process seems to move toward a cumulative detachment from the group, in terms of attitudes and values as well as in terms of social relations. And to the degree that he orients himself toward out-group values, perhaps affirming them verbally and expressing them in action, he only widens the gap and reinforces the hostility between himself and his in-group associates. Through the interplay of disassociation and progressive alienation from the group values, he may become doubly motivated to orient himself towards the values of another group and to affiliate himself with it. There then remains the distinct question of the objective possibility of affiliating himself with his reference group. If the possibility is negligible or absent, then the alienated individual becomes socially rootless. But if the social system realistically allows for such change in group affiliations, then the individual estranged from the one group has all the more motivation to belong to the other.'³⁹

Interpreted in class terms, this analysis clearly indicates that the problem of 'the worker turning middle class' involves a complex process of *social* change, rather than some straightforward reaction of the individual to altered economic circumstances. It may well be the case that a certain level of affluence is a prerequisite of working class *embourgeoisement*, being the essential means of supporting a middle class style of life and participation in middle class society. But it is an error to take up a naive economic determinism, as some writers appear to have done, and to regard working class prosperity as providing in itself a *sufficient* basis for *embourgeoisement*. This, we would suggest, may be considered as a real possibility only under the following, rather more specific, conditions.

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- (a) When working class persons are in some way motivated to reject working class norms and are exposed to, and come to identify with, the norms of middle class groups.
- (b) When they are able, furthermore, to resist the pressure to conformity within their working class membership groups, either by withdrawing from them or as a result of these groups for some reason or other losing their cohesiveness and thus their control over individuals.
- (c) When there are genuine opportunities for them of gaining acceptance into the middle class groups to which they aspire to belong.

Following from this, the actual process of transition could then be seen in terms of a model such as that set out below. This is based on the four different positions which result from a cross-classification of the relational and normative aspects of class.

FIGURE 1. 'Assimilation through Aspiration'

| | | <i>Reference Group</i> | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| | | (a) 'Working Class' Normative Identification | (b) 'Middle Class' Normative Identification |
| <i>Membership Group</i> | (d) 'Isolated' Relationship | (B) PRIVATISED WORKER | (C) SOCIALLY ASPIRING WORKER |
| | (c) 'Integrated' Relationship | (A) TRADITIONAL WORKER | (D) ASSIMILATED WORKER |

The two sets of alternatives in the worker's class situation are postulated as follows:

- (a) that he has a set of norms which are primarily 'working class'
- or (b) that he has a set of norms which are primarily 'middle class'
- and (c) that he is socially integrated into a membership group of the class whose norms he shares
- or (d) that he is socially isolated from membership groups of the class whose norms he shares.

Understood in terms of this model, then, the process of *embourgeoisement* takes the form of a threefold movement: from (A) to (B), from (B) to (C), and from (C) to (D).

Through using a model of this kind it thus becomes possible to reduce the thesis of *embourgeoisement* to some relatively systematic

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and unambiguous form, and one in which it could conceivably be tested by empirical research. Moreover, a schematic presentation of this nature has a further merit: that of helping to reveal in the argument various pre-suppositions and assumptions which, on consideration, may be recognised as unwarranted or as unjustifiably crude. Of these, and there are several, probably the most basic is the idea, implicit in all discussion of *embourgeoisement* so far, that this process entails the *assimilation* of working class persons to middle class life-styles and middle class society—which are themselves taken as ‘given’. There are two points, at least, arising in connection with this assumption, which call for comment.

In the first place, one connotation of the thesis of *embourgeoisement*, explicated in this way, is that the ‘new’ working class is moving towards a middle class which is *unchanging* and *homogeneous*. This, however, is an idea which has only to be stated to be seen as untenable. Apart from the major ‘vertical’ distinction between the entrepreneurs and independents on the one hand and the salaried employees on the other, stratification within the middle class is obviously highly developed, though at the same time subtle and far from static. Thus, as we have already implied, it is important that a focus of future research should be on the relationship between the working class and those *specific* middle class groups which appear socially least distant from it. There are reasons for believing, for example, that among lower white-collar workers the individualistic orientation outlined above is today somewhat less pronounced than it was previously or still remains in other middle class groups. If this is in fact so, and if it is with this section of the middle class that the aspiring worker tends to identify, then in this case the occurrence of *embourgeoisement* is rendered a good deal more plausible: certainly more plausible than where *embourgeoisement* must be taken to imply a radical shift in social perspective from the collectivistic to the individualistic pole.

However, once one recognises the possibility that the social outlook of some sections of the middle class may represent a movement away from the ‘individualism’ which has been found characteristic of this class as a whole, then a further and more fundamental issue arises. The idea of *embourgeoisement* as entailing a process of ‘assimilation through aspiration’ to middle class values and norms must now be regarded as but one way of interpreting any ongoing modifications of the class frontier. An alternative hypothesis which

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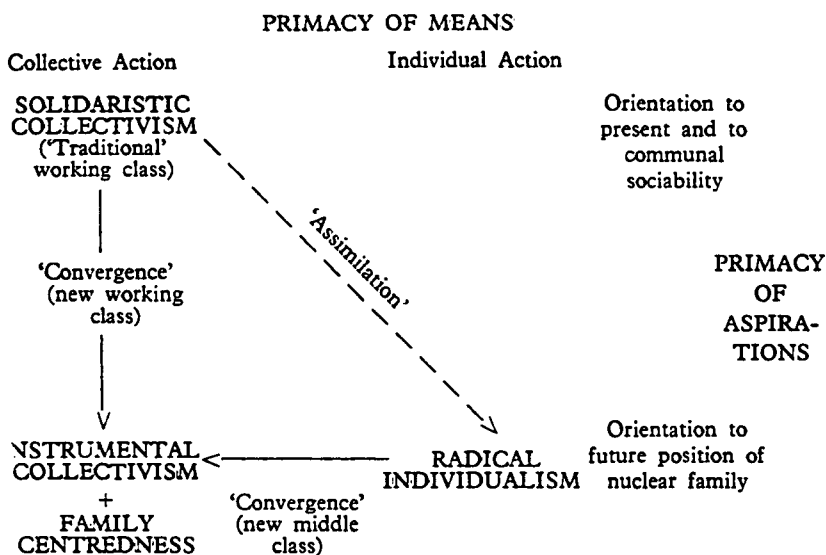
suggests itself is that this change may be in the nature of *independent convergence* between the 'new' working class and the 'new' middle class, rather than the merging of the one into the other.

There are several considerations which would lend support to this point of view. Firstly, as we have already noted, it has not been established that the attitudes and behaviour of the 'new' working class are related to aspirations for 'middle class' status. Secondly, no convincing case has been put forward to suggest how such aspirations might be generated out of the structure of social relationships in which the workers in question are implicated. Thirdly, there are facts such as the continuing strength of trade union organisation, and the growth especially of white-collar unionism, which cannot easily be accommodated into the conception of *embourgeoisement* as this has been developed so far. If the 'convergence' argument is adopted, however, not only does it account for these facts very readily but it is also quite unaffected by the 'new' worker's apparent lack of concern with middle class membership. Spelled out in more detail, this argument would claim that convergence in attitudes and behaviour between certain working and middle class groups is the result, primarily, of changes in economic institutions and in the conditions of urban life, which have weakened simultaneously the 'collectivism' of the former and the 'individualism' of the latter. On the side of the working class, twenty years of near full employment, the gradual erosion of the traditional, work-based community, the progressive bureaucratisation of trade unionism and the institutionalisation of industrial conflict, have all operated in the same direction to reduce the solidary nature of communal attachments and collective action. At the same time, there has been greater scope and encouragement for a more individualistic outlook so far as expenditure, use of leisure time and general levels of aspiration are concerned. Within the white-collar group, on the other hand, a trend in the opposite direction has been going on. Under conditions of rising prices, increasingly large-scale units of bureaucratic administration and reduced chances of upward 'career' mobility, lower level white-collar workers, at any rate, have now become manifestly less attached to an unqualified belief in the virtues of 'individualism' and more prone to collective, trade union, action of a deliberately apolitical and instrumental type⁴⁰—especially as the nature of many manual workers' philosophy of unionism is steadily coming nearer to that which they themselves find acceptable.

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Further clarification of the idea of 'convergence' may be obtained if we modify our original individualistic-collectivistic dichotomy in the way shown in Fig. II. Here we incorporate a distinction between the 'primacy of means' and the 'primacy of aspirations'. Means may be primarily collective action or individual effort: aspirations may be primarily orientated to the present and to communal sociability, or to the future position of the nuclear family. The original ideal-type perspectives are now designated as 'solidaristic collectivism' and 'radical individualism'.⁴¹

FIGURE II. 'Normative Convergence'



Understood in this context, then, solidaristic collectivism implies collectivism (mutual aid) as an end and not just as a means. It is typified by an affective attachment to a local class community as opposed to the utilitarian attachment to a specific economic association which is characteristic of what we have called 'instrumental collectivism'. In this latter case, the means are still collective action but they are subordinate to the primary goal of the economic and social advancement of the individual nuclear family. The degree to which this family orientation develops, and particularly the degree to which advancement is seen in social rather than in simply economic terms, will of course vary. But in general it may be defined as an orientation to consumption (of goods, time, educational facilities, etc.) which in-

volves the family as an independent unit in decisions about its own future.

Although then it may be suggested that the social perspectives of the 'new' working and the 'new' middle classes are tending to converge in the way indicated, the proviso must at this point be entered that convergence should not be taken to imply identity. It is reasonable to suppose that instrumental collectivism and family-centredness are present in both strata: but it is also reasonable to expect that the relative emphasis given to the two elements will differ from one stratum to the other. This is because for the 'new' working class convergence largely means an adaptation of ends, while for the 'new' middle class an adaptation of means. In the former case, convergence implies primarily an attenuation of collectivism of the solidaristic kind, of which an incipient family-centredness is a by-product. In the latter case, the by-product is instrumental collectivism, resulting from an attenuation of radical individualism. Thus, both the new 'individualism' of the working class and the new 'collectivism' of the middle class, though bringing the two strata into closer approximation, are still likely to remain distinct, in more or less subtle ways, from the attenuated individualism of the middle class and the attenuated collectivism of the working class.

This will perhaps be the more true of the element of individualism; for it would seem most probable that the shift in aspirations among the 'new' working class will occur more gradually than the corresponding modification of means among the 'new' middle class. We would expect, thus, that the main difference within the area of convergence will be that the new individualism of working class groups will take the form primarily of a desire for the *economic* advancement of the nuclear family, while the attenuated individualism of middle class groups will still be distinguished by a greater sensitivity to status group association and dissociation.

At this point we may return to our earlier distinction between the 'privatised' and the 'socially aspiring' worker. This, it will be recalled, depends on whether the worker, isolated from his traditional class environment, comes, for whatever reasons, to identify with a middle class status group. In Fig. II both the privatised and the socially aspiring worker belong in the lower left-hand box; in both cases, their social perspectives are seen as converging with those of the 'new' middle class. They may, however, be distinguished from each other, we would suggest, by the nature of their individualism. In the

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case of the privatised worker, whatever individualistic outlook he has developed may be regarded as the result of negative factors (the attenuation of solidaristic collectivism) and as tending thus to centre on economic advancement in terms of commodity consumption. In the case of the socially aspiring worker, on the other hand, there is, in addition, a positive identification with middle class individualism and thus a greater awareness of, and concern with, the consequences of total life-style for status differentiation and status enhancement.

In conclusion, we may attempt to pull together the threads of our argument by using the discussion of this paper as a basis for the following, necessarily tentative, views, concerning the probable effects so far of working class affluence on the British class structure.

- (a) The change which would seem most probable is one which may be best understood as a process of normative convergence between certain sections of the working and middle classes; the focus of the convergence being on what we have termed 'instrumental collectivism' and 'family centredness'. There is as yet, at least, little basis for the more ambitious thesis of *embourgeoisement* in the sense of the large-scale assimilation of manual workers and their families to middle class life-styles and middle class society in general. In particular, there is no firm evidence either that manual workers are consciously aspiring to middle class society, or that this is becoming any more open to them.
- (b) The groups which appear involved in normative convergence cannot be distinguished in terms of economic factors alone. Certainly, on the working class side, affluence is not to be regarded as sufficient in itself to bring about the attenuation of solidaristic collectivism. The process of convergence must rather be seen as closely linked to changes in the structure of social relationships in industrial, community and family life, which are in turn related not only to growing prosperity but also to advances in industrial organisation and technology, to the process of urban development, to demographic trends, and to the evolution of mass communications and 'mass culture'.⁴²
- (c) Even among the 'new' working class groups in which instrumental collectivism and family centredness are manifested, status goals seem much less in evidence than economic goals: in other words, the privatised worker would appear far more typical than the socially aspiring worker. The conditions under which status aspirations are generated may be regarded as

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still more special than those which are conducive to a more individualistic outlook. Thus, we return to the point that normative convergence has to be understood as implying as yet only a rather limited modification of the class frontier.

- (d) Finally, it is consistent with the above views to believe further that the political consequences of working class influence are so far, at least, indeterminate.

The link between 'affluence' and 'vote' is mediated by the social situation in which the affluent worker finds himself. If this situation is, as we believe, in a great many instances one of 'privatisation', and if the prevailing attitudes are those of 'instrumental collectivism' and 'family centredness', the worker's attachment to the party of his choice is (to follow Duverger) more likely to be 'associational' rather than 'communal'. That is, his instrumental attitude to trade unionism is likely to spill over into politics, and his vote will go to the highest bidder. It is in this section of the working class that Conservative voting, under present circumstances, is likely to be 'prosperity voting'. But calculative and opportunistic voting of this kind implies a very tenuous political link, and one does not have to conjure up pictures of widespread unemployment to visualise how it might be severed. For once the worker has experienced a rising standard of living, he comes to have certain expectations about the rightfulness of a continuing improvement in the future. Thus, his present political allegiance may readily be switched if his failure to realize these expectations is associated with existing governmental policy. The same logic of 'relative deprivation' may also be operative in the case of the socially aspiring worker although the nature of the aspirations here is rather different. But in so far as his aspirations for a rising social status (and not simply a rising standard of living) are not recognised by the status groups to which he orients himself, the radicalisation of his political outlook is one possible consequence of affluence and aspiration which must enter into any estimation of the future alignment of party allegiance.

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NOTE ON CONCEPTS AND TERMINOLOGY

In writing this paper we have experienced difficulties, no doubt like others before us, arising from the conceptual and terminological confusion that abounds in this field of sociology, and this note is an attempt to make clear our own position.

1. Much of the present confusion would appear to stem from a gross misunderstanding of certain distinctions which were originally introduced by Max Weber: namely, the concepts of 'class situation' and 'status situation' on the one hand, and of 'classes' and 'status groups' on the other. (The most recent, though by no means the only, example of this is the article by D. E. G. Plowman *et al.*: 'Local Status Systems in England and Wales', *Sociological Review*, July 1962.) Most obviously, the set of terms—class, status, and power—which is now almost universally attributed to Weber was in fact never used by him. Indeed, the association of 'power' in this way with 'class' and 'status' not only introduces a logical untidiness, but also runs counter to his explicit assertion that classes, status groups, and parties are *all* 'phenomena of the distribution of *power* in a community'. Failure to appreciate this point has led especially to a trivialization of his ideas of 'status situation' and 'status group'. More fundamentally, there is an abiding failure to realise that, while 'class situation' and 'status situation' are analytical distinctions referring to different aspects of the position of an individual or category of individuals in a society, the concepts of 'classes' and 'status groups' refer to variable properties of the society itself. The problems which arise in connection with these two distinct pairs of concepts are also, correspondingly, different. Weber's idea of 'class situation' is very similar to that of Marx: it includes not only opportunities to gain sustenance and income through the possession of property or skill in different economic systems (primarily those in which the market is highly developed), but also the life experiences arising from the way in which such opportunities are organised (eg., 'the necessity of complying with the discipline of a capitalist proprietor's workshop'). 'Status situation', on the other hand, embraces not only the chances of certain social groups receiving 'positive or negative social honour', but also those life chances (including opportunities to own certain types of property and to pursue certain types of occupation) that result from the status prerogatives of such groups. In contradistinction to these two concepts, the concepts of 'class formation' and 'status group stratification' are, as we have said, variable properties of societies. Societies may be classified in terms of their degree of class formation (of which 'communal' and 'societalized' class actions are the main forms) or status group stratification (of which conventional, legalized, and ritualized status groups are the main forms). Now although Weber was much concerned with the relationship between different aspects of inequality within a given society (primarily the inter-connections between 'class' and 'status' situation), it would seem clear from his work that a more fundamental interest was in investigating the conditions which determined whether, and in what form, class formation or status group stratification would be predominant. (In this sense, for modern industrial societies, T. H. Marshall's analysis of the impact of 'citizenship' on both the possibilities of class- and status group stratification represents the most significant advancement of the kind of generalization in which Weber was engaged.)

This is the perspective we have sought to maintain in formulating our own, more limited, problem. For example, certain forms of class formation and status group stratification may co-exist in the same society and may be jointly affected by the same underlying processes of change. From this point of view, our interest is in the nature and causes of change in the position of the manual wage-earner that involves simultaneously a weakening of 'communal' forms of class consciousness and class behaviour and (possibly) a modification of the predominant lines of 'conventional' status group stratification within the local community.

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2. While the above distinctions, properly understood, are of great use, it is at the same time extremely difficult to find a general term in the literature which covers both 'class' and 'status' aspects of inequality—although such a term is all the more needful in discussing modern industrial societies which exhibit the characteristics of neither extreme class formation nor extreme status group stratification. To meet the need, we have fallen back on the conventional term *class stratification*. By this we refer to the overall differentiation of populations in terms of both 'life chances' and 'life styles', i.e., to a system of broadly correlated socio-economic inequalities and subcultural differences. This, we believe, does correspond to the common meaning which is attached to the word 'class' or 'social class' in both popular and some sociological writing. A related term which is used is *class structure*. By this we refer to the *specific ordering* of a system of class stratification at a particular point in time. One can then, of course, speak of changes in the class structure of a society without necessarily implying that it is ceasing to be class stratified.

However, we have not wished in this way to abandon the use of 'class' in a more technical sense after the manner of Marx and Weber. For this reason we have used the term *class position* in order to refer to the position of an individual or group in terms of their economic resources and power, and the related constraints upon their conduct, (e.g., such as having to work overtime in order to maintain a certain level of income and all that this implies for family and leisure time activities) in so far as these arise from their rôle in the social division of labour. The connection between class position, so defined, and class stratification is fairly apparent: class position can be taken as the most important determinant of the general life situation of an individual or group within a system of class stratification.

In our paper we have sought to avoid confusion by using the full terms 'class stratification' and 'class position' wherever this appeared advisable. However, in cases where the context makes the intended meaning obvious, we have used 'class' *tout court*.

3. The term 'status' has much the same kind of ambiguity as that of 'class'. Following Weber, one can regard 'status group stratification' as an analytical alternative to 'class formation' in considering the structure of total societies: e.g., an extreme form of status group stratification in this sense would be a fully developed caste system. However, confining attention to economically advanced and predominantly class stratified societies, status group stratification may, for the most part, with the exception perhaps of the highest (national) status groups, be regarded as a property of *local communities* within the total society. This, at least, is how it has been treated in the present paper. Understood in this way, then, status group stratification refers to the differentiation of populations in terms of groups which are ordered in a publicly recognised hierarchy of prestige and deference, with a distinctive style of life, and which tend in some degree towards 'closure' (as for example in regard to informal 'social' activities, friendship, marriage, etc.). Where, therefore, the term *status* is used in relation to an individual or group, it is meant to refer to 'status position' within, usually local, status group structures.

It may be reiterated at this point that class stratification, as defined above, embraces also the phenomena of local status group stratification: these are taken as forming one aspect of class stratification. As we have said, this practice is convenient in the absence of any alternative comprehensive term and we have followed it: notably, in referring to the 'relational' aspects of class. However, in using the overall term class stratification, we have tried not to lose sight of the interrelationship between the elements of which it is composed. The structuring of local status groups and the allocation of individuals between them is importantly related to the form of the division of labour and the distribution of economic power and resources in the wider society. At the same time stratification by economic position and status

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group stratification may be in tension with each other. Conventional status group stratification, especially in the local context, implies some measure of consensus about the way in which individuals and groups are to be evaluated: the claim to prestige and deference by one party must be honoured by another if the system is to be at all stable. But stratification by class position tends empirically, especially in the wider, non-local context, to be associated with a clash of values, and of interests, between those in basically different class positions. Local status hierarchies may function, as Mayer has suggested, to stabilise the existing class structure by legitimating class positions; but alternatively, these status systems may be disrupted as a consequence of the 'intrusion' of conflicts arising from differences in class position that are not capable of being assimilated into the local systems.

4. Turning now to more descriptive categories, we have used the terms *working class* and *middle class*. Here we refer to collectivities within the total society, the members of which have basically similar class positions. For the purposes of this paper, we have regarded the rough dividing line between the working and middle classes as being that—equally rough—between manual and non-manual workers and their families. This is conventional but this is not the only justification. As we try to show in the body of the paper, manual and non-manual employments tend to be differentiated in a variety of ways which will significantly affect the life-chances of their occupants. We also suggest that there are broadly correlated differences in belief and value systems and in behavioural patterns. Furthermore, it would appear from the available evidence that at the level of the local community, the manual/non-manual division tends commonly to be also a line of status group demarcation—this enabling us, incidentally, to refer to 'working class' and 'middle class' status groups. There is, then, we feel, an adequate basis for speaking of 'working class' and 'middle class' in the way in which we have chosen to understand these terms.

One further point arises in this connection. We have sometimes referred to the existence of strata *within* the working and middle classes or have implied this in such terms as 'lower middle class'. In making such refinements we are taking into account the fact that within the classes we have defined, some variation in life chances will be found—as, for example, between manual workers who have scarce skills to offer in the market and those who have no more than mere physical labour power. More important, though, we also recognise that at a local level status group stratification may occur not only *between* but also *among* those who have basically comparable class positions.

5. One final point about all these concepts and definitions. We attach no special importance to the actual terms themselves. The distinctions we have made in the course of this paper have arisen from the needs of the problem we have been discussing. The vital question is whether the concepts used advance the understanding of our problem.

¹ G. D. H. Cole: *Studies in Class Structure*, 1955, Chs. II-IV.

² *Ibid.* Cf. also D. C. Marsh: *The Changing Social Structure of England and Wales, 1871-1951*, 1958, Chs. VI and VIII.

³ See, for example, H. Campion and G. W. Daniels: *The Distribution of National Capital*, 1936; B. S. Rowntree and G. R. Lavers: *Poverty and the Welfare State*, 1951; and the various studies summarised in Marsh, *op. cit.*, Ch. IX and in A. M. Carr-Saunders, D. Caradog Jones and C. A. Moser: *A Survey of Social Conditions in England and Wales*, 1958, Chs. 11 and 13.

⁴ Cf., for example, Robert J. Havighurst: 'Education and Social Mobility in Four Societies' in A. H. Halsey, Jean Floud and C. Arnold Anderson (eds.): *Education, Economy and Society*, 1961. Taking a long view, from

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the early nineteenth century to the present day, one might also safely say that through changes in occupational structure alone, the net movement has been an upward one. For a more general discussion of the factors tending to increase the rate of social mobility as societies industrialise, see S. M. Lipset and R. Bendix: *Social Mobility in Industrial Society*, 1959, pp. 57-60.

⁵ The very latest expression of this view is to be found in a semi-official document, *Social Changes in Britain*, issued by the Central Office of Information in December, 1962. This stresses the major shift that occurred during the 1950's from low level to middle level incomes, chiefly among wage-earning manual workers, and goes on to claim that British society today is characterised by 'a swelling middle class'. 'The only certainty to be drawn from the 1950's', the report concludes, 'seems to be that Britain could not lapse back into working class poverty as during the 1930's. The average man now has much more to lose, and has made too great an investment in his own future as a middle class citizen and householder.' The report is reproduced in *New Society*, Vol. 1, No. 13, 27th December, 1962, pp. 26-29.

⁶ This term is inappropriate insofar as the concepts of 'bourgeoisie' and 'middle class' may usefully be kept distinct. However, we use it here purely as a matter of convenience to refer to the process of change adumbrated two paragraphs earlier.

⁷ D. E. Butler and Richard Rose: *The British General Election of 1959*, 1960, pp. 2, 15.

⁸ C. A. R. Crosland: *Can Labour Win?*, Fabian Tract 324, 1960, pp. 4, 11-13.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. ix.

¹⁰ See, for example, M. Abrams: *The Changing Pattern of Consumer Spending*, 1959, and 'New Roots of Working Class Conservatism', *Encounter*, May 1960; also Lintas Research: *The Changing Consumer*, 1961.

¹¹ See, in particular, the findings reported in Acton Society Trust: *Management Succession*, 1956, and R. V. Clements: *Managers: a Study of their Careers in Industry*, 1958.

¹² Many kinds of industrial work that are often singled out on account of the relatively high earnings which they afford are in fact characterised by their insecurity (physical, if not economic) and by the virtual absence of any career prospects: for example, mining, fishing, construction work, heavy assembly-line work. These employments, too, are noted for their particularly unpleasant working conditions and for the awkward hours—often shift-working—which they entail.

¹³ See, for example, Thomas Bottomore: 'Social Stratification in Voluntary Organisations' and Rosalind C. Chambers: 'A Study of Three Voluntary Associations' in D. V. Glass (ed.), *Social Mobility in Britain*, 1954; M. Stacey: *Tradition and Change, A Study of Banbury*, 1960, Chs. 5, 6 and 8; P. Willmott and M. Young: *Family and Class in a London Suburb*, 1960, Ch. X.

¹⁴ It may well be the case, of course, that quite apart from questions of status, the manual worker's ability to participate in social activities outside the plant is restricted by the actual conditions of his employment: for example, if he is required to work shifts, especially night shifts, or if he is obliged to work a good deal of overtime—whether because this is inherent in the nature of his work (as, for instance, with maintenance men) or because it is essential to maintain a level of earnings commensurate with his domestic aspirations and commitments.

¹⁵ See, for example, the volume, *The New American Right*, ed. Daniel Bell, 1955, in which several writers contribute to the idea of 'status politics': i.e. the idea that groups that are advancing in wealth, and are seeking to advance in social position, may be as anxious and politically feverish as groups that have become *déclassé*.

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¹⁶ On miners see Acton Society Trust: *The Worker's Point of View*, 1952, pp. 10-14; T. T. Paterson: *Morale in War and Work*, 1955, pp. 164-9 and N. Dennis, F. Henriques and C. Slaughter: *Coal is our Life*, 1956, pp. 76-9: on dockers, University of Liverpool, Department of Social Science: *The Dockworker*, 1955, pp. 50-56. In fairness to Crossland one should note that in his major work, *The Future of Socialism*, 1956, he refers to much of this data in the context of a discussion of 'status politics' (pp. 196-201). In his more recent writings, however, the possibility that working class affluence might be conducive to other than generally conservative and complacent attitudes appears to be given far less importance.

¹⁷ See, for example, University of Liverpool and University of Sheffield Social Science Departments: *Neighbourhood and Community*, 1954; J. M. Mogey: *Family and Neighbourhood*, 1956; Young and Willmott: *Family and Kinship in East London*, 1957; and Hilda Jennings: *Societies in the Making*, 1962.

¹⁸ Cf. E. W. Bakke: *The Unemployed Man*, 1933, pp. 153-5; Raymond Firth: *Two Studies of Kinship in London*, 1956, pp. 33-4; Mogey: *op. cit.*, pp. 83-7; Young and Willmott: *op. cit.*, pp. 84-5; M. Kerr: *People of Ship Street*, 1958, pp. 101-106. See also the reminiscences of Richard Hoggart: *The Uses of Literacy*, 1957, pp. 20-22, and the impressions recorded by Mervyn Jones: *Potbank*, 1961, pp. 47, 58-9.

¹⁹ Cf. Firth, *op. cit.*, p. 60; Mogey: *op. cit.*, p. 140-1; Kerr: *op. cit.*, p. 115-6; Jennings: *op. cit.*, pp. 55-7; Hoggart, *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 58-60.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 116-19. Zweig also observes that workers with cars rarely invite workmates or other friends to join them on outings: 'a car outing is primarily a family affair'. (p. 107). The infrequency of home entertaining and of joint leisure activities between couples is, however, a well-attested feature of the traditional working class way of life. Cf. Doris Rich: 'Spare-time in the Black Country' in L. Kuper *et al.*: *Living in Towns*, 1953; Mogey: *op. cit.*, p. 95; Young and Willmott. *op. cit.*, pp. 84-5; Kerr, *op. cit.*, p. 104-9.

²¹ See T. Cauter and J. S. Downham, *The Communication of Ideas*, 1954, pp. 66 *et. seq.*; Willmott and Young, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-95; also the many American studies as referred to, for example, in John C. Scott: 'Membership and Participation in Voluntary Associations', *Amer. Soc. Rev.*, Vol. 22, No. 3. June, 1957.

²² For a discussion of genotypical versus phenotypical analysis of sub-cultures, see S. M. Miller and Frank Riessman: 'The Working Class Sub-culture: A New View', paper read to the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, 1960.

²³ See F. M. Martin: 'Some Subjective Aspects of Social Stratification' in D. V. Glass (ed.): *Social Mobility in Britain*, 1954; A. H. Birch: *Small Town Politics*, 1959, pp. 107-110; Willmott and Young: *op. cit.*, pp. 114-17; Zweig: *op. cit.*, pp. 133-38; Abrams: 'The Socialist Commentary Survey' in Abrams and Rose: *Must Labour Lose?* 1960.

²⁴ For example, Milton M. Gordon, surveying studies of social stratification carried out in the United States up to the early 1950's marshalled considerable evidence to support the view that, for American society at any rate, 'self-identification as to class made in a poll-type interview may be safely calculated to be the least reliable method of ascertaining class structure, even psychologically defined.' See his *Social Class in American Sociology*, 1958, p. 197. And for a still earlier critique, see A. W. Kornhauser: 'Public Opinion and Social Class', *Amer. Journ. Soc.*, Vol. LV, January, 1950.

²⁵ For example, Willmott and Young in their study asked firstly 'Which class do you belong to?' and then offered a list with the following choices:

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Upper, Upper-Middle, Middle, Lower-Middle, Working, Can't Say. The proportion of manual workers assigning themselves to the middle class rose from 34%, judged according to the first question, to 48% when judged according to the second. *Op. cit.*, p. 115, n.1.

²⁶ This effect has clearly emerged in American studies; for example, in the contrast between the results obtained by R. Centers: *The Psychology of Social Classes*, 1949, and earlier investigations. See Leonard Reissman: *Class in American Society*, 1960, p. 138.

²⁷ Cf. on this point certain comments of Ralph Samuel's in his critique of Abram's study: 'Dr. Abrams and the End of Politics', *New Left Review*, September-October, 1960, pp. 6-7.

²⁸ Cf. Bennet M. Berger: *Working Class Suburb, A study of Auto Workers in Suburbia*, 1960, pp. 83-90.

²⁹ Cf. the remarks of some of Zweig's respondents: 'Working class and middle class are the same thing'; 'We are all middle class nowadays'; 'Actually I don't see any difference: I earn as much as a shopkeeper'; 'There are no differences: I live in the same neighbourhood as my manager, have the same kind of house and have a car'. *Op. cit.*, p. 134.

³⁰ Cf. Willmott and Young: *op. cit.*, pp. 115-6.

³¹ Cf. Zweig: *op. cit.*, p. 138.

³² Apart from articles already cited, see also 'The Future of the Left', *Encounter*, May, 1960, and 'Class and Politics', *ibid.*, September, 1961.

³³ In 'Class and Politics' Abrams has tried to use the sizeable exceptions to his rule as the basis for a typology of working class voters. For example those who regard themselves as middle class and vote Conservative become 'Materialists of the Right': those who regard themselves as middle class but vote Labour become 'Altruists of the Left'. However, the question is: Who are these Materialists of the Right and Altruists of the Left? How are they located in the social structure? The possibility which must be seriously considered is that they are not distinctive social types at all but simply artefacts of Abrams' method and imagination.

³⁴ It might be added here that quite a number of the attitude surveys to which we have referred have shown *no* correlation between self-upgrading among manual workers and other 'middle class' responses. For example, Martin's study, still perhaps the most thorough that has been made, indicated that manual workers who styled themselves 'middle class' did not differ significantly or consistently from those who styled themselves 'working class' in their views on their children's chances of social mobility, their preferred school leaving age for their children, their preferred occupations for sons, their desire to have their own business and their degree of satisfaction in their jobs. In Birch's study, self-upgrading was only very weakly connected with Conservative voting among manual workers and an objective factor—formal religious affiliation—appeared far more relevant to the explanation of this. One of the significant points of Centers' study in the United States was that respondents' assessments of their class position correlated considerably *less* well with their scores on a Conservative-Radical scale than did their positions on an objective socio-economic status scale. Cf. Gordon: *op. cit.*, p. 200.

³⁵ In comments he has made on the outcome of the 1959 election in Great Britain Lipset appears to regard all manual workers who vote Conservative and who are not deference voters as being workers aspiring to middle class membership. See his article 'Must Tories always Triumph', *Socialist Commentary*, November, 1960, pp. 11-12. We cannot see how the evidence available warrants this position.

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³⁶ H. Popitz *et. al.*: *Das Gesellschaftsbild des Arbeiters*, 1957; A. Willener: *Images de la Société et Classes Sociales*, 1957; Elizabeth Bott: *Family and Social Network*, 1957. Ch. VI.

³⁷ Notably, Centers, Martin, *op. cit.*; H. H. Hyman: 'The Value Systems of Different Classes' in Bendix and Lipset (eds.): *Class, Status and Power*, 1954; and, more impressionistically, Zweig: *The British Worker*, 1952, and Hoggart: *op. cit.*

³⁸ A number of relatively recent American studies have been relevant to certain of the issues we raise here. See, for example, E. Chinoy: *Automobile Workers and the American Dream*, 1955; Berger: *op. cit.*; and perhaps most importantly, Arthur Kornhauser, Harold J. Sheppard and Albert J. Mayer: *When Labour Votes*. The authors of the latter work conclude as follows: 'There are two vital choices ahead in social philosophy for the working class. One is a key element in what we have called a 'middle class' versus a labor political orientation. It is the question whether working people will seek individualistic or collective solutions to their problems . . . The general question here might be re-phrased in this way: Can working people attain comfortable and respectable middle class planes of living and yet persist in their loyalty to organized labor and labor's political aims? . . . Our study of auto workers contributes rather striking evidence that it is possible for wage-earners to experience vast social and economic gains and yet remain steadfastly union orientated in their political views.' pp. 281-2.

³⁹ R. K. Merton: *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 1957, Ch. VIII, 'Contributions to the Theory of Reference Group Behaviour' (with Alice S. Rossi), p. 270.

⁴⁰ Cf. David Lockwood: 'Der Angestellte: Eine international vergleichende Darstellung' in H. Bayer, ed.: *Der Angestellte Zwischen Arbeiterschaft und Management*, 1961.

⁴¹ There is, of course, a considerable oversimplification here. Although an orientation to the present has been linked with an orientation to communal sociability, and, similarly, a future orientation with an orientation to the nuclear family, these are not necessarily linked. For example, within the traditional working class, the 'respectable' working class family, while sharing the orientation to the present, may tend to devalue communal sociability as an end. Again, although the traditional working class can be primarily differentiated from the middle class by its orientation to the present, an orientation to the future coupled with a strong affective attachment to the working class collectivity has been characteristic of one sub-section of the traditional working class: namely, that involved in the labour movement as an agency of social transformation. For the purposes of mapping out the process of 'normative convergence', however, we shall ignore these refinements.

⁴² For a preliminary attempt at sketching out some of the interconnections between social structure, the social milieu of work, community and family and the normative orientations of manual workers, see David Lockwood and John H. Goldthorpe: *The Manual Worker: Affluence, Aspiration and Assimilation*, paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the British Sociological Association, 1962.

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