In the Conduct of Inquiry Kaplan states that "What makes a concept significant is that the classification it institutes is one into which things fall as it were of themselves."[1] It is common to hear people speak of social class as though the distinctions between the groups were as clear as Kaplan's significant concepts. Respondents to questionnaires are often asked to check one of three to five social classes of which they consider themselves a member. And in everyday conversations we glibly toss around phrases such as "middle-class" or "lower-class" as descriptive categories representing distinct value systems, economic groups, or ways of life. We seem to assume a stratification system in which there exists discrete classes characterized by unique socio-economic attributes and life styles.

Several social scientists feel this conception of discrete groups is valid and have supported their contentions with various studies of which the work of Lloyd Warner is perhaps the most famous.[2] On the other hand, some sociologists have suggested continuum theories of social class which Cuber and Kenkel define as the "idea that there are several privilege, power, and status ranges, more or less continuous from top to bottom with no clear lines of demarcation."[3] They claim that acceptance of this concept provides a sounder theoretical ground for social science. An example of research supporting this theoretical perspective is lenski's study of a New England village.[4]

Because the literature is indeed contradictory and there is dispute over the nature of social class, there is a clear need to approach the question in an empirical objective manner which would meet the criterion suggested by Kaplan in his definition of a significant concept. Thus we decided to pursue the question by using a procedure designed to find the natural divisions within groups. The technique used belongs may be called clumper analysis and belongs to the general group of clustering techniques which includes factor analysis, linkage analysis, multidimensional scaling, and hierarchic cluster analysis. Until recently, these techniques, with the exception of factor analysis, have been used almost exclusively by natural scientists, especially biologists and taxonomists who empl have employed them in checking the validity of previously determined classical biological groups. The test

The rationale behind clustering techniques are fairly simple. They are basically methods for grouping variables or members of a group through a multidimensional analysis in an attempt to determine the natural divisions within the group.

in other words to examine the natural divisions within
the sample on the basis of socio-economic characteristics.

3

The particular tech. used was orig. written by Sharon Roof & modif. by Jerry King

Also mew tin Am's help

← The objective of this study was to analyze a set of data on the basis of socio-economic status variables using the clumper analysis techniques to see the extent to which distinct groups would appear in a way similar to that described by Kaplan. Because the literature is so inconclusive regarding the nature of social class, no hypothesis representing an expected outcome was formulated. However, several possible results of the process were suggested, all centering on the extent to which distinct groups would appear. First it would be possible that no distinct groups would appear at all; the sample would be homogeneous to an excessive degree. Secondly, groups could appear, but though the characteristics of each group could be ordered on an ses scale, they would not be unique to each group, but would tend to overlap, lending support of the continuum theories. The third suggested result was that distinct groups would appear and that socio-economic characteristics would be unique to that group.

The question would also arise as to whether life-style characteristics would differ between the various groups would differ. Roger Brown has emphasized the idea that the validity of a social class structure is high only if style of life characteristics differ between and are unique within the classes. Thus we would expect would look for unique style of life characteristics within the groups of the third possible result and overlapping or homogeneous characteristics within for the other two results within groups of the other suggested results.

The data for the study was collected by Dr. Ted Johannis in 1953 and was not gathered for purposes of a stratification analysis. The total sample i involved 1500 tenth grade students from the high schools of Tampa, Florida from which a subsample of 130 members was selected for the cluster analysis using the different schools of the sity as a proportional basis.for the selection.

For the clustering process twenty-four variables deemed indicative of socio-economic class were chosen. (A scale of similarity between the members of the sample based on the variables was constructed and groups within the sample were determined on the basis of this scale.

Three main groups seemed to emerge from the clumper analysis. To determine the nature of the groups the means and standard deviatinns and distributions for each variable were calculated. Table 1 shows part of the results and a percentage figure indicating the difference of the mean of each group from that of the total sample.

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The table reveals that one group tends to have the lowest educational and occupational scores for the parents, the lowest type of income source, homes in the worst condition and in the most undesirable neighborhoods. The largest group is midway to the other two groups when most of the distributions are compared and the third group is the highest in terms of these socio-enonomic variables. The sample as a whole seems to be skewed toward the lower socio-economic echelons. Thus the highest group may represent what only what is commonly termed an"upper-middle class." Though not shown on the table, the middle group also tended to subdivide with one group higher than the other on the socio-economic scale.

It must be noted that the standard deviations for the various indices of each group are not greatly, if at all, reduced from those of the total sample, so there appears to be a great deal of overlapping between groups on the distribu-tion of each varialbe. It seems then that although distinct groups could be determined through the clumping process, they are by no means completely homogeneous in nature. Instead an averlapping of characteristics of the groups seems to occur, which would lend some support to the continuum theories.

Also those at the extreme low end of the scale are missing for you youngsters often run this socio-economic background were in stayed in reg. school till th 10th grade

The few differences that could be determined in the limited review possible
of information relating to life styles were mainly in the area of home life.
Table 2 lists some of the variables studied. Of all respondents those in
the middle socio-economic range seemed to life with their own parents and more and
to perceive their home life as happier than members of other groups whose
responses waried from this level to different degrees. Note again the very
slight if reduction in standard deviations of characteristics of each group.

Go through tables more minutely -

So it could be suggested that style of life char -
exp. in home life vary thru the SES scale -

Several criticisms may logically be leveled at the study. First the information is fifteen years old, from a southern town, and is perhaps inapplicable to today's situation. The absence of an/upper members of the upper end of the socio-economic spectrum is also regrettable. Secondly thedata is based upon the impressions of tenth graders of their conditions and surroundings and the validity of this information for the purpose of this study could be questioned. Most importantly, we must seriously question the validity of some of the indices used as indicators of social class and the nature of the of scales.

However the analysis does seem to indicate the ordering of respondents on a socio-economic scale when an objective method of looking at the data is used. However the overlapping between groups is so great that it is actually impossible to determine discrete groups, and lending support to the continuum theories of the nature of social class.

We feel the method use employed in this study is one whose usefulness should be further investigated and that with more intensive and careful studies the findings would have to be seriously considered.

Differences in a few life-style characteristics were also noted.

Despite the drawbacks of the study,