DESPITE the progress in the social class concept there exists a dearth of consensus in the field of social stratification. The disagreement embraces every phase of the field; its concept, methodology and findings. Students of stratification approach the study of social class phenomena in a variety of ways ranging from the subjective point of view defining social class as a feeling of belonging or consciousness of kind, to assessing class membership by a set of objective criteria employing such indices as socioeconomic status, occupation, income, possession, education, dwelling type and/or style of life. Centers, for instance, used a closed ended question to ascertain the place in the hierarchy of social classes acknowledged by the respondents. He also phrased the questions in an hypothetical manner as follows: “If you were asked to use one of these four names for your social class, which would you say you belonged in...?”

It is maintained that in the first instance, the respondent has no chance to express his feelings about social class in general and checks one of the ready answers of the question arbitrarily; and in the latter instance, when a respondent answers an hypothetical question, his answer may be in a detached manner and does not feel self involvement. In both instances the answers may not reflect the true feelings of the respondent. On the other extreme lies the evaluation of the objective criteria as suggested by Warner, et al, in which case the subjects are
assigned a particular class category by the researcher. This approach seems to be questionable as to the purpose this knowledge serves social science since at first blush it is only the assessment of the scientist and not the acknowledged placement of the class structure on the part of the respondents. The methodology also varies from employing the mailed questionnaire technique, informal or structured interviews, participant observation approach, to rating and ranking procedures. This lack of consensus forces every researcher to define his particular brand of the social class concept; the result being a Babel of concepts which, in turn, are reciprocated with a barrage of criticism, as Pfautz states: "Probably no area of current sociological interest suffers no much from the disease of overconceptualization (as that of class and stratification)." As a result, the class concept appears vague in definition to the point where it is even thought of as non-existent.

General agreement seems to have been accomplished on one point in the social class phenomena, and that is: differences in social class affiliation should have a bearing on differential social behavior. It is generally agreed that without the distinction of differential behavior on the part of the different segments of society there would be no purpose in its study. A corollary disagreement centers around the interpretation of findings that the class structure

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2 The concept of class is dealt with by some sociologists in terms of a psychological feeling of belonging and by others as a definite objective measure. To MacIver and Page, for example, social classes are "group-conscious segments of the community" in terms of prestige; for Centers, they are "psychosocial groupings"; others define social class in terms of occupations, status, esteem, or political power. For major different points of view, see: R. M. MacIver and Charles H. Page, *Society: An Introductory Analysis*, New York: Rinehart & Co., 1949, esp. pp. 348-383; Richard Centers, *op. cit.*; August B. Hollingshead, *op. cit.*; W. Lloyd Warner, et al., *op. cit.*; Paul K. Hatt, "Occupation and Social Stratification," *American Sociological Review*, 15 (April, 1950), pp. 216-222.


The mere fact that all stratification studies evaluate some one or more behavior patterns is witness to this agreement.