

TOWARD A MODEL OF PATRICIAN GROUP IDENTITY AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

One of the more perplexing problems in American historiography is the search for group identity. Writing about a group, the historian is unable frequently to describe precisely what it is. The American patriciate is no exception to the general problem of defining group identity.¹

The historian approaches group definition, or an approximation of it, through interaction between historical evidence bearing upon group membership and analytic constructs imposed upon the data. Some of these are borrowed from the social sciences and seem to suffer as a consequence of the seemingly unnatural transplant. Others rise more naturally from the data. One strives for

¹ The author has dealt with the problem of the treatment of group in American historiography in a paper "American History and Social Science: A Trial Balance" delivered before a session of the American Historical Association, December 29, 1966. This is reprinted in the *International Social Science Journal* 20 (May, 1968), 319-30. Robert Wiebe and J. R. Hollingsworth are two among the many historians who, consciously or not, have come up against the problem of group definition; *Businessmen and Reform* (Cambridge, 1962); "Populism: The Problem of Rhetoric and Reality," *Agricultural History*, XXXIX (April 1965), 81-85.

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the correct synthesis of data and theory that, somehow, is never as satisfactory as the historian and his critics would like it to be.

Which is to say that there is something unsatisfying about efforts to capture the group essence in historiography. This is because of the very many variables that enter into group identity and which make classification difficult. And if classification is ultimately unsatisfactory so inevitably are behavioral explanations that take group identity for granted as something that is "given" when, in fact, it is not.² This assumption is one of the reasons why behavioral models having a basis in group are inadequate.

The problem of patrician group identity would have been easier to resolve if we had in America an aristocratic establishment. Writing about the American patriciate, one envies students of the English and continental aristocracy who as a consequence of entitlement, can distinguish about whom they write. Not invariably, of course, because while the higher nobility of England, for example, is relatively easy to distinguish; who is "gentry" and who is not has long been a perplexing problem,³

In America, on the other hand, an important component of our early national identity was rebellion against kingship and aristocratic establishment. At various times in our history, the setting up of that convenient variable, an aristocratic establishment, was believed to be not unlikely if not necessarily imminent. The German sociologist Max Weber, after having visited the United States briefly in 1904, concluded that the great accumulations of wealth that he found here would result in the foundation of an American "nobility." Weber, whose visit was short and who was not too knowledgeable about the United States to begin with, did not calculate the strength of anti-establishment precedents in American history.⁴ Nor did he seem to realize that there was no movement among businessmen in the direction of

² Theodore K. Rabb, *Enterprise and Empire, Merchant and Gentry Investment in the Expansion of England, 1575-1630* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), takes the concept of "gentry" as given. He overlooks the historiographic controversy over gentry identification.

³ Ralph E. Pumphrey, "The Introduction of Industrialists into the British Peerage: A Study in Adaptation of a Social Institution," *American Historical Review* LXIV (October 1959), 1-16; Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1965).

⁴ Howard J. Rogers, ed., *Congress of Arts and Sciences, Universal Exposition, St. Louis, 1904* (Boston, 1906-07), 7, 744.

formal aristocracy. On the contrary, the most articulate of the business spokesmen in the late nineteenth century, Andrew Carnegie, boasted that in America there were “no ranks, no titles, no hereditary dignities, and therefore no classes.” Carnegie once subsidized an educational propaganda effort to weaken the faith of the English people in monarchy and aristocracy.⁵

At the time of Weber’s visit, there were wealthy Americans who aspired to marry their children into traditional aristocracies.⁶ But their eyes were upon Europe and not upon the potential of the American scene for aristocratic establishment. It was as though such an idea had to be projected outward and away from our shores. Henry Cabot Lodge insisted that the marriage of American money to a European title was the doing of *parvenus* to whom a title had about the same status and value as a business trademark. He deplored that the new rich preferred to marry their scions to European titles rather than American old families.⁷

Consequently, identification of the American patriciate must proceed without the familiar landmarks of the European scene. Yet, the absence of class divisions which was a source of nineteenth-century American pride, even as it was the despair of twentieth-century historians and social scientists, does not mean that the United States was a classless society. James Fenimore Cooper was representative of the opinion of many American commentators when he said that there were class divisions and even aristocracy in the United States. Still, everyone admitted that they were different from those of Europe.

What were they? Wealth, of course, was the key variable. In addition, nineteenth century and later observers of the American scene noted the presence of “old families” which were of comfortable means and which had a background of public service and tended to be proud of their genealogies. The difficulty with these variables is that they are more descriptive than analytical and they are difficult for the analyst to work with as he confronts the problem of who belongs to the patrician group and who does not.⁸

⁵ *Triumphant Democracy*, 19.

⁶ Elizabeth Eliot, *Heiresses and Coronets* (New York, 1959), *passim*.

⁷ *Early Memories*, 208.

⁸ The problem of patrician definition probably could be facilitated if so-

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The testimony of those who belonged to the patriciate or who thought that they did, tends to be confusing. "The only test of belonging," wrote John Andrew Rice, "is birth... In the South Carolina of my childhood there were few or no rich, only the well-born—and they took no risk of contamination. With me, 'well-born' meant born on a plantation. I question whether an aristocracy can be founded on A. T. & T."⁹ Which, of course, would eliminate most of the New England old families who were well-established in A. T. & T. Like John Andrew Rice, Will Alexander Percy admired the southern aristocrat. At the same time, Percy could not "help wondering what were the qualifications that admitted to the post of post-Civil War aristocracy? Apparently not pedigree, certainly not wealth. A way of life for several generations? A tradition of living? A style and pattern of thinking and feeling not acquired but inherited?"¹⁰ Percy's description was as vague as that.

Henry Adams was equally indefinite despite "the habit of looking at life as a social relation—an affair of society." He even found London society of the 1860's lacking cohesiveness. "One wandered about in it like a maggot in cheese; it was a hansom cab, to be got into, or out of, at dinner-time." Nor did the presence of royalty and nobility establish social identity. Adams knew no one who "cared to enter any royal or noble presence, unless the house was made attractive by as much social effort as would have been necessary in other countries where no rank existed." In Washington, society was composed similarly of "disjointed fragments" with "no established centre of intelligence and activity." In this milieu, position was "a shadowy thing which seemed to vary with every street corner; a thing which had shifting standards, and which no one could catch outright."¹¹

"Money," said Henry Adams of his own Washington circle, played no part, "but cleverness counts for a good deal, and social capacity for more."¹² In New York, on the other hand,

biologists were more certain of what they meant by the term social power. Dennis Wrong, "Some Problems in Defining Social Power," *American Journal of Sociology* LXXIII (May 1968), 680.

⁹ *I Came Out of the Eighteenth Century*, 129.

¹⁰ *Lanterns on the Levee*, 41.

¹¹ *Education*, 65, 189, 200.

¹² Samuels, *Henry Adams: The Middle Years*, 169.

money was very important, at least according to Edith Wharton. She contrasted New York society with that of the Paris Faubourg in which culture played a large role. She recalled that Herman Melville, whom she identified as a cousin of the Van Rensselaers, although qualified by birth to figure in the best New York society, was excluded from it by what Mrs. Wharton called his “deplorable Bohemianism.” She had never heard Melville’s name mentioned by nor seen one of his books in the homes of any of her friends. There was in New York society, according to Mrs. Wharton, an “awe-struck dread . . . of intellectual effort.”¹³

In New England society, said Helen Howe, whose mother was a Quincy, money counted for little and intellect for a great deal. Her characterization of the New England Brahmins in the mid-1960’s evoked Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.’s description of the group more than a century earlier. The New England aristocrat, she recalled Holmes as saying, took for granted “family traditions;” “the accumulative humanities of at least four or five generations;” “literary traditions and a name made in previous generations through achievement in government, law, learning, science, letters, church—these qualifications were surer tickets of admission than money that had been made in trade.” At the same time, Miss Howe recalled her father, M. A. de Wolfe Howe, as saying that families which were prestigious had also held on to their money. “Somehow we vaguely felt that money long ago was all very fine, but that money today was a little—‘common’.” Those in Helen Howe’s circle possessed large inherited fortunes, “though to mention money would have made them cringe with embarrassment.” Henry Ford, she said, if he had been invited to dinner, would have had to eat in the kitchen. The difficulty with the Kennedys was not that they were Catholic but that they were “new.”¹⁴

Samuel Eliot Morison was undeniably a member of Miss Howe’s group. “How handsome and haughty was the professor-horseman, admiral-and-historian-plenipotentiary-yet-to-be as he strode down Brimmer Street in his riding clothes,” she wrote.¹⁵ Describing Boston society about 1900, Morison himself recalled

¹³ *Backward Glance*, 68-69, 144.

¹⁴ *The Gentle Americans*, 104-105, 165-67, 220.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

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"no distinctions of wealth." He and his friends were "vaguely conscious our families were 'top drawer'" despite the fact that there was no *Social Register* or its equivalent. "Once you were 'in,' more or less, wealth made no difference." Morison said that "it was not until I went to St. Paul's school, then favored by Pittsburgh and New York millionaires, that I encountered the notion that one's social rating depended on such externals as steam yachts, stables of race horses and Newport 'cottages'." Boston society, Morison added, was too simple to attract the "bloated 'gate-crashers'; nor did it breed multi-millionaires. People such as they stormed the social citadels of New York, Washington, Newport and London."

It is difficult to reconcile Morison's minimizing of "wealth"—perhaps he means great wealth—as a badge of admission to society with his further statement that while new families were "accepted" yearly, the way into society was to buy a house on Commonwealth Avenue or Beacon Street and a place on the North Shore and send one's children to private schools in the Back Bay. It was probably only after these requirements had been fulfilled that the further qualification of a minimum of breeding and good manners was needed. "Ancestry," according to Morison, "did not count in the least."¹⁶ This, too, seems unlikely or, at least, contradictory to Helen Howe's views.

From these examples, one can see what the analyst is up against. Vague, and at times at variance with one another, not the precise variables that one would like to work with, these individual impressions of group belonging and group identity manage to convey some impression of the group as a whole. However, distorted as they are by regional factors and individual subjective impressions, it is questionable whether they contribute the degree of definiteness to group structure that social science analysis demands or should demand. Instead, a basis is established for description rather than analysis. This distinction should be kept in mind as one which will be made again.

Finally, it is relevant to consider the various *Social Registers* as finders for the American patriciate. Their editors have evolved criteria—insofar as the latter have been made public—which

¹⁶ Samuel Eliot Morison, *Memoirs of a Boston Boyhood* (Boston, 1961), 62-66.

include “descent,” “social standing” as well as “other qualifications.”

Some scholars are happier with the *Register* listings than others. “In any individual case,” commented the late C. Wright Mills, “admission may be unpredictable or even arbitrary, but, as a group, the people in the *Social Register* have been chosen for their money, their family, and their life style.¹⁷ E. Digby Baltzell also relies heavily upon *Register* listings in ascertaining group identity.¹⁸ However, the measure of the skepticism of another analyst, G. William Domhoff, as to the value of the *Social Register* in establishing who is “in” and who is “out” was the comment of Owen Wister’s mother, “I don’t care to be listed in the *Social Register*, I know who my friends are.”¹⁹

Turning from individual impressions of group belonging and amateur efforts of classification by the *Register*, we take up the formal constructs of professional sociology. One of the simpler of these is derived from phenomenological theory. According to Karl Jaspers, “close contemplation of *an individual case* often teaches us of phenomena common to countless others... It is not so much the number of cases seen that matters in phenomenology but the extent of the inner exploration of the individual case.”²⁰

Something like the approach of the phenomenologist to group classification was evolved by historians without reliance upon the social sciences and before the emergence of the latter to their present stage of development. Francis Parkman used the type concept as a literary device for the synthesis of data.²¹ So did Henry Adams in his great *History*. In evolving the concept of a “representative type,” Adams presented the latter as an abstraction separate from the lines of force which, he believed,

¹⁷ *The Power Elite*, 57.

¹⁸ E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen; the Making of a National Upper Class* (New York, 1958); *The Protestant Establishment* (New York, 1958); and “‘Who’s Who in America’ and ‘The Social Register’: Elite and Upper Class Indexes in Metropolitan America” in Reinhard Bendix and S. M. Lipset, eds., *Class Status and Power* (New York, 1953).

¹⁹ G. William Domhoff, *Who Rules America* (Englewood, N. J., 1967), 15; quoted in White, *The Eastern Establishment*, 29.

²⁰ *General Psychopathology* (Chicago, 1963), 56.

²¹ David Levin, *History as Romantic Art* (Stanford, 1959), 60, 73.

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determined history and the understanding of which would lead to a "science" of history.²²

Adams' "representative type" shared the generic fallacies inherent in other attempts to construct typologies, failure to measure how far the type extends beyond the individual or individuals represented as typical. Adams' portrait of John Randolph as a "representative type" of Virginia aristocrat left unanswered questions about the distribution of qualities considered "representative" or the prevalence of aristocrats with different traits who might constitute other "representative types."

Adams' development of "representative type" as a construct was really not very different from Parkman's informal type structures that served his literary style or D. R. Hundley's breakdown of the people of the South into various types: "Southern Gentleman," "Middle Classes," "Southern Yankee," "Cotton Snobs," "Southern Yeoman," and so on. Adams as a "scientific historian" and Hundley as a kind of observer-commentator about the life of the pre-Civil-War South shared the common methodological error of overlooking deviations from the type.

Not far removed from this formulation is the "ideal type" concept developed by Max Weber and, until relatively recently, accepted uncritically by sociologists. The ideal type, to a greater extent than Adams' representative type, is an abstraction divorced from reality, bereft of any strict counterpart in the data of history. It is a deliberate distortion of reality devised in order that differences among groups might be highlighted and more readily perceived. The ideal type, according to Weber, "is not a description of reality but it aims to give unambiguous means of expression to such a description."²³

²² For a fuller discussion of Adams' use of the representative type, see Edward N. Saveth, *The Education of Henry Adams and Other Selected Writings* (New York, 1963), xix, 23, 25. For a critique of the "selectivities" of Oscar Lewis' *La vida* in defining the "culture of poverty," see Kenneth Keniston, review of *La Vida* in *American Scholar* (Summer 1967), 505; Oscar Lewis, "The Culture of Poverty," *Scientific American* CXXV (October 1966), 19-25.

²³ My discussion of the ideal type has been informed by Don Martindale, "Sociological Theory and the Ideal Type" in L. Gross, ed., *Symposium on Social Theory* (New York, 1959), 57-88 and the discussion of the ideal type in

The extent to which Weber's formulation aids in the definition of types over and beyond what the amateurs have improvised is questionable. Nevertheless, the Weberian ideal type concept helped to inspire a typology of groups developed by W. L. Warner and his associates which they applied to the city of Newburyport, Massachusetts, and other communities of the Atlantic seaboard.

Families that had been in the community for some time, wrote Warner of Newburyport in the 1930's, constituted "a social aristocracy. They knew it and the community accepted it. They remained exclusive about their membership and as far as possible kept their marriages within the clan." As upper-uppers, they are to be distinguished from the class directly beneath them, the lower-uppers "who were wealthy, oftentimes wealthier than those of the upper-upper stratum. However, their wealth was new, much too new, nor did they have the proper family background, and both factors operated to exclude them from membership in the social summit. By income, residence, and the extent of their social participation in the community, the lower-uppers resembled those above them, but they lacked the proper graces, the right tastes, and the accepted social mannerisms."

The upper-upper class, embracing the American patricians, according to the Warner school of sociology, is less in evidence in the Middle West and the Far West where the period of settlement has not been sufficiently long for an old-family group, based upon security of birth and wealth, to have developed. According to Warner, "When a community in the more recently settled regions of the United States is sufficiently large, when it has grown slowly and at an average rate, the chances are higher that it has an old-family class. If it lacks any of these factors, including size, social and economic complexity and normal growth, the old-family class is not likely to develop." The result is a synthesis between old-family and new-family elements into

Frederic C. Lane and Jelle C. Riemersma, eds., *Enterprise and Secular Change* (Homewood, Ill., 1953), 431-63. I have been particularly mindful of Gabriel Kolko's, "Max Weber on America: Theory and Evidence," *History and Theory* 1 (1961), 243-68. See also, John C. McKinney, *Constructive Typology and Social Theory* (New York, 1966), 3, 16, 25, 26, for an attempt to develop a type concept "shorn of any fictional qualities."

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a single upper class—lacking the kind of separation between the two that is characteristic of the older communities.²⁴

Not all sociologists subscribe to the Warner system of social stratification. Class theories proliferate and students are far from agreement as to what class is and how class and class awareness can be determined. Professor Kahl balks at Warner's distinction between "upper-upper" and "lower-upper," and sees instead a single upper class.²⁵ History, as usual, provides support for both opinions. Warner's assertion that the Middle West lacked an upper-upper class is inferentially denied by Professor Wade's conclusion that from the inception of middle western communities their class structure paralleled that of the eastern communities.²⁶ Elkins and McKittrick, on the other hand, in their investigation of Stark County and Canton, Ohio, see an elite arising from the practice of business, the promotional art, placation, and the "instinct of manipulation." These were the men "who headed Canton's 'first families.' They and their descendants became the only 'aristocracy' that Canton could ever have."²⁷

This would point to the validity of Dr. Stein's conclusion that no general theory of community sociology is sufficiently broad to comprehend all the available data, historical and contemporary.²⁸

American historians have been justifiably critical of class models like Warner's because the latter are static and do not take into account change in historic time.²⁹ At the same time, Warner's design does not lack relevance for the historian. It is discernible, albeit vaguely, in Charles Francis Adams' account of stratification in Quincy, Braintree, and Boston in the 1820's.

Before going into the detail of this, it should be noted that

²⁴ W. L. Warner, et al., *Social Class in America* (Chicago, 1949), 16-17; *The Social Life of a Modern Community*, 123-25, 352-53; Leonard Reissman, *Class in American Society* (Glencoe, 1959), 99-100.

²⁵ Joseph A. Kahl, *The American Class Structure* (New York, 1961), 186.

²⁶ R. C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier*, 106, 204, 206, 210, 217, 321.

²⁷ "Meaning for Turner's Frontier Part I: Democracy in the Old Northwest," *Political Science Quarterly* XXIX (September 1954), 321-53.

²⁸ M. R. Stein, *The Eclipse of Community* (Princeton, 1960), 333-34.

²⁹ Stephen Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge, 1964).

perceptions of class tend to be subjective and that the degree of awareness of class and class relationships varies from individual to individual. In the Adams family, for example, John Adams was very conscious of group and class differences. John Quincy, his son, seldom referred to them. One of the latter's rare references to social divisions failed to see them as significant. John Quincy wrote his father in 1790: "The farmer, the tradesman, the mechanic and the merchant are all mutually so dependent upon another for their prosperity, that I really know not whether most to pity the ignorance or to lament the absurdity of the partial politicians who are constantly erecting an imaginary wall of separation between them."³⁰

John Quincy's son, Charles Francis, shared his grand-father's sensitivity to group differences. At the bottom of the social order of Quincy and Braintree, Massachusetts, Charles Francis identified in 1824 the not "very respectable or at least very *high* people." Opposed to the politics of his father, John Quincy, they were mainly Democrats "that party here is generally among the lower class." The latter were the proponents of "absolute democracy" that Charles Francis Adams' reading in Greek history had warned him against and which he judged no better than anarchy. Above them were the "common people" who, in Adams' opinion, were not very intelligent, but were for the most part happy with their lot in life. One reason for their contentedness was the fact that they knew their place, respected their betters, and were willing to recognize and defer to "the idea of Family distinction" and, particularly, to the Adams family.

The next grade in the hierarchy was composed of people in "the second rank of life," a group which included most "merchants and professional men of respectability." The "middle condition of life" also respected the priority of certain families and derived some satisfaction in claiming kinship, however distant, with the elect. Finally, among the elite of Braintree and Quincy, Adams placed himself and his family. Charles Francis Adams confessed to having "aristocratic opinions" and proclaimed himself "not enough of a republican in sentiments" to enjoy the company of those who ranked beneath him.

³⁰ *The Writings of John Quincy Adams*, ed. W.C. Ford (New York, 1913-17), I, 63.

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Boston presented a different situation. Here, according to Charles Francis' estimate, the Adamses ranked second to such families as the Otises, Perkinses, and Quincys, who constituted "the purse-proud ostentation" of the city. Their pride, Adams went on to say, "is not the pride I like, it is not mine." Pride worth having, in Adams' opinion, is that of a man "who is sufficiently conscious of his own value to keep him clear from the common herd... not piquing himself upon his wealth but on his education, his acquirements, without being too appearance conscious that he is superior to his inferiors, or at least just enough to keep his station. A really noble man will not wish to show off before others anything like superiority. I am an aristocrat but not one of Boston."

Charles Francis Adams encountered Boston's purse-proud aristocracy, the lower-uppers of 1829, in the person of his prospective father-in-law, Peter Chadron Brooks, one of the richest men in Boston. The Brooks family was not as distinguished as the Adams family. Nevertheless, Adams was determined to marry Abigail Brooks despite her limited education and want of a certain reserve in manner. Money was required to make the marriage possible and Adams confided to his diary disappointment over Brooks' lack of generosity. "Rolling in weath as he is, a little well disposed might do much, but with a timid doctrine, the consequence of habits of early years, he delays it while every day takes off something from the value of the gift." Adams forced the old man's hand by stating that unless the marriage took place quickly it would be wise to terminate the engagement. The daughter also pleaded and Brooks finally gave in. An "upper-upper" married a "lower-upper" as they do in sociology textbooks, at least in some sociology textbooks.³¹

Traces of the Warner model are apparent in Edith Warton's autobiographical writings³² and, particularly, in those of Henry Cabot Lodge. Born in Boston in 1850, Lodge remembered the city when society was "based on families with their origins dating back to the Revolutionary War and the earlier colonial

³¹ *Diary of Charles Francis Adams*, ed. Aida Di Pace Donald and David Donald (Cambridge, 1964), Introduction, xix-xxi; 2:309.

³² *Backward Glance*, 56.

period. They were participants in the creation of the Constitution; they served in the army and navy and they maintained and added to the fortune secured by the founder of the family line." This was not a closed class. "The path to entry was securing a fortune or marriage." However, in recent years, Lodge wrote in 1913, this situation had changed. "There has appeared on the American scene a new society—one of plutocrats. Family means nothing, money is their primary measure of status. Inter-marriage with their own kind or into a title seems to be their primary quest for status." The plutocrat knew nothing of the history of state and country, and had but one standard, "money or money's worth."

There obtained a distinction, continued Lodge, between the "new" society and the "good" society. The latter was composed of the old families who recognized "a duty and obligation" to labor towards the public benefit in the fields of literature, public charities, and politics. The new society was less willing to recognize the obligations of leisure. "The first generation was obsessed by money-making. In the second generation the majority are failures, sometimes degenerate. They exhibit a lawless attitude; they have a disregard for the rights of others; they are arrogant and money is law." The children of the parvenus did not honor their parents: Families decreased in size and the domestic virtues yielded to the pursuit of pleasure. Like Henry Adams, Lodge deplored the bourgeois taste in art: "They proclaim the doctrine that the vague, the unfinished, the undrawn, the flat surface and the childish lines are the real qualities of art."³³ This judgment is reminiscent of Will Alexander Percy's reaction to Epstein's sculpture.

At the same time, Lodge distinguished between old families who "have been pushed out of sight, if not actually driven against the conventional wall..." and those who were able to retain and augment their inherited fortunes. Moreover, the separation between old wealth and new wealth, tended to be obscured by the overweening importance of money, regardless of its origin. Lodge, in pointing out that those "who now fill society... are for the most part the modern, very modern, plutocrats who are widely

³³ *Early Memories* (New York, 1913), 18, 28, 192, 209-11; "The Uses and Responsibilities of Leisure," in *Speeches by Henry Cabot Lodge* (Boston, 1892).

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different from their modest predecessors of the middle of the nineteenth century," nevertheless admitted that "among the old families there were those who wore the purples as if born to it and those who cared only for money." Distinction between old wealth and new wealth, Lodge said, as weakened further by "the underlying proposition of most of the agitation now going forward to take money by means of legislation, through government action, from those who have it, either by earning it or by inheritance, and give it to those who have not earned it and especially to those who are unable or unwilling to earn it."³⁴ Before this threat, old wealth and new must close ranks.

Shortly before the Spanish-American War, Lodge wrote to President William McKinley that "the old merchants of New England, from whom you and I are descended, would be pressing Congress to take vigorous action instead of trembling with fear lest we should do anything, as the present money power does." However, at a later date, alarmed by the muckraker attack on big business, Lodge wrote Theodore Roosevelt urging caution. "We ought to be careful... not to alarm and confuse the great body of American people who are hard working and thrifty and have some little property."³⁵

Patrician attitudes toward wealth were ambivalent, to say the least. Charles Francis Adams Jr. loathed men who were "'big' financially." Nevertheless, by being in business Adams enhanced his own comfortably inherited fortune and we find him taking a rather parvenu satisfaction in the result. With wealth, he said, "I become a power to be considered. Whenever I choose to come forward, I am received with deference and listened to with acceptance;—I can dictate my own terms. It becomes a question of ability, emphasized by wealth. I could do more for my own success by getting rich than by slaving my life away in mere political action. This I failed to appreciate twenty years ago... I want wealth as the springboard to influence, consideration, power, and enjoyment."³⁶

³⁴ *Early Memories*, 126, 210-24.

³⁵ Quoted in Richard M. Abrams, *Conservatism in a Progressive Era* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), 34, 165.

³⁶ Kirkland, *Charles Francis Adams, Jr.*, 84; Charles Francis Adams, Jr., *An Autobiography, 1835-1915* (Boston, 1916), 190.

Lamenting the parvenu, Henry Adams was troubled because his own very substantial fortune was not larger, in order that he might step up his already handsome life style from mere luxury to sheer opulence.³⁷ At times, Adams shows a very high regard for wealth and wealth was one of the criteria in terms of which he measured success and failure of himself and his friends. He calculated the investment in time and money in his great history and lamented that the completed work did not make him rich. (Or did he really want it to make him famous?) On another occasion, however, Adams was pleased to be an historian precisely because he earned no money by his pen. He wrote his publisher that history was the "most aristocratic of all literary pursuits" because it was unprofitable. Should history yield a substantial financial return, "the luxury of its social distinction would vanish."³⁸

In the search for patrician identity the analyst seeks, but seldom finds, a fixed group structure and consistent unambivalent attitudes related to individual and group status. He must deal for the most part with grey, overlapping areas of group identity and values.³⁹ The Warner model is useful to the historian in enabling him to get his bearings among the data. Space and time have the effect of adding to the model unique variables that encumber it to the extent that the model structure, although recognizable in a survey as wide-ranging as this, is distorted by the unique data. The model that Warner and his associates have devised, extended backwards and forwards in history, has not advanced the historian beyond the hazy, safe, and ultimately disappointing so-called middle level of generalization. Unresolved is the question of precisely where the "middle level of generalization" begins and ends.⁴⁰

In recent years, there has occurred in social science a shift away from emphasis on macrounits such as group and class—which present very difficult problems of definition—to the

³⁷ Samuels, *Henry Adams, The Major Phase*, 364.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 366.

³⁹ This is approximately the conclusion of William B. Hesseltine, "Four American Traditions," *The Journal of Southern History* XXVII (February 1961), 3.

⁴⁰ "Some Notes on the Problem of Historical Generalization" in Louis Gottschalk, ed., *Generalization in the Writing of History* (Chicago, 1963), 145-77.

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microunit and to techniques of microanalysis. More than a half-century ago, Joseph Schumpeter described family as the basic unit of class;⁴¹ in 1957, Professor Bernard Bailyn wrote of family as a more viable and fundamental concept than class and as a building block that would make increasingly comprehensible the macrounits of group and class.⁴²

Accordingly, I have attempted a behavioral model of the patrician group with family as its foundation. The model and its component variables is as follows: family culture \neq individual career line \neq group structure \neq group ideology \neq group behavior. By \neq is meant—does not necessarily predict; \neq implies a relationship or empirical connection among variables that might or might not be predictive.⁴³

In terms of the predictive or deterministic character of the model, each variable presents its own problems. To begin with, little is known about the foundation of the model in family culture. Not only are few family histories written but very few families are documented. The Adams family, with its extensive records, is a relative rarity among American families. Nor are the family histories which we have notably sensitive to the dynamics of the model: the relationship between family and group and between group and ideas and behavior.⁴⁴

Moreover, Professor Bailyn's assumption that family as a microunit is less complex than the macrounits of group and class, is not necessarily valid. Professor David M. Potter has said that "a microcosm is just as cosmic as a macrocosm" and that the "relationships between factors in a microcosm are just as subtle and the generalizations involved in stating these relationships

⁴¹ "Social Classes in an Ethnically Homogeneous Environment," in *Imperialism and Social Classes* (New York, 1951), 158.

⁴² Bernard Bailyn, "The Beekmans of New York: Trade, Politics and Families," *William and Mary Quarterly* XIV (October 1957), 601.

⁴³ Fred I. Greenstein, *Personality and Politics* (Chicago, 1969), 123-24. According to Greenstein, "what needs to be emphasized is that the connections are empirical, that they need to be carefully examined, and that the relationships are neither necessarily strong nor positive..." Not as strong and positive as Christopher Lasch makes them out to be in attempting to relate "the new radicalism" to family structure. See particularly the review by Carl Resek of Lasch's *The New Radicalism in America 1889-1963. Studies on the Left* (January-February 1966), 68-69.

⁴⁴ I have explored this problem at length in "The Problem of American Family History," *American Quarterly* XXI (Summer 1969), part 2, 311-29.

are just as broad, as the generalizations concerning the relation between factors in a situation of larger scale.”⁴⁵

It is at the initial stage of family culture that the predictive element in the model begins to break down. This is apparent in the search by that pluperfect patrician snob, Sidney George Fisher, into the nuclear family for an explanation of why he was so unlike his brother Henry. “It is odd” wrote Sidney, “that two brothers should have such contrasted natures. We have no ideas in common. Between us lies the deep gulf which separates the practical and active from the contemplative character.” The family culture yielded no satisfactory explanation to Sidney.⁴⁶ Model indeterminism begins at home, in the family. Family cultures which might have served as nuclear elements in research, which might have become the basis of group and class culture, and out of which predictable ideological and behavioral patterns might emerge, simply do not play this role.

The reason for this is apparent in the next stage of the model, *individual career line*, involving both conflict and integration between personalized drives and the family culture; the centripetal pull of the family culture as opposed to or integrated with the centrifugal force of the individual career line. This bears upon a key problem in American historiography which has been studied very little by historians and social scientists, namely, the strength of family cultures in the United States. As Professor Greenstein reminds us, there is need for methodological clarification in “personality and politics” research.⁴⁷ The sources of patrician political behavior, evaluated in terms of the family culture or the individual career line, evokes the problem of why the patrician behaves politically as he does, which is difficult to resolve not only in terms of the individual-family nexus but also in terms of a more general motivational pattern. Historian and social scientist are dependent upon documentation that is too limited for effective

⁴⁵ David M. Potter, “Explicit Data and Implicit Assumptions in Historical Study,” in Gottschalk, ed., *Generalizations in the Writing of History*, 191.

⁴⁶ Wainwright, “Sidney George Fisher,” 15.

⁴⁷ Fred I. Greenstein, “The Impact of Personality on Politics: An Attempt to Clear Away Underbrush,” *The American Political Science Review* LXI (September 1967), 629-41; Urie Bronfenbrenner, “Personality and Participation: The Case of the Vanishing Variables,” *Journal of Social Issues* XVI (1960), 54-63.

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motivational analysis.⁴⁸ Frustration in the characterization of individual motives frequently leads to the explanation of behavior with reference to that vague and imprecise causal entity, socio-economic background, not because this is, invariably, a true clue to behavior but because it is the only evidence we have.⁴⁹

There is a facet of *career-line* study which enables it to blend into the next step in the model which is *group structure* or adaptability to quantitative techniques. G. Kitson Clark recommends: "Do not guess, try to count, and if you cannot count admit you are guessing."⁵⁰ Accordingly, Professor Samuel P. Hays would study the American patriciate by means of "a collective biography of several hundred members of the group and a complete picture of their historical situation."⁵¹ Hays, however, does not identify the variable distinguishing patricians from other groups. Moreover, if Hays did name his variables would they be sufficiently distinguishable to permit identification with the precision that the coding process requires or should require?

This is unfortunate because the sharpness of group outline is contingent upon the clarity with which the governing variables can be distinguished. In the case of the American patriciate these are not as definite as one would like. One such criterion is "old wealth." But what is "old" and how much in money and possessions must an individual or family have to be considered wealthy? Another criterion is the family reputation for public service, which is also subjective in the eyes of the investigator. Professor Hays errs in regarding the group structure of the patriciate as "given" and he easily passes over the question of proper group variables to deal with ideas and behavior before first revealing who, precisely, he is talking about.

"Collective biography," with its basis in career-line analysis, should provide a foundation for group structure, leading to succeeding stages in the model: ideas and behavior. Professor Hays,

⁴⁸ Martin Duberman, "On Becoming an Historian," *Evergreen Review* (April 1969), 57-59 *et seq.*

⁴⁹ Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *A Behavioral Approach to Historical Analysis* (New York, 1969), 7-8, 67.

⁵⁰ G. Kitson Clark, quoted by W. O. Aydelotte, "Quantification in History," *American Historical Review* LXXI (April 1966).

⁵¹ "New Possibilities for American Political History: The Social Analysis of Political Life," (Paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, December 29, 1964, 23).

however, manages to overlook a large body of criticism of the career-line and group biography method, as if quantification and computerization were a cure for an underlying fallacy. What is at issue here is that the career line technique and collective biography fail to recognize that ideas and behavior tend to be uniquely individual and situational with the result that no amount of career-line analysis can determine them.

It is useful, of course, to know "who the guys were" provided, of course, that the distinguishing variables are sufficiently clear. This, however, only contributes toward resolving the question of group structure. There remains the problem of what makes the guys tick, which is what Karl Popper calls a "why" question. Career line and quantitative biography can provide correlations rather than reveal motives. Motive, like cause, remains hidden in the shadows and collective biography holds out only the possibility that we might learn something more about it.⁵²

Group ideology, the next stage in the model, has to do with ideas and values and their relationships to group structure. Unfortunately for the predictive character of the model, ideas and values tend to take own course and may or may not be status oriented. Professors Wolfinger and Osgood have demonstrated this at some length⁵³ and it is something that is known to students of intellectual history who have fought long and tediously to free themselves from the incubus of the instrumental approach to ideas.⁵⁴

Ideas may or may not condition behavior and this fact should

⁵² John Brooke, "Namier and Namierism," *History and Theory* III (1963-64), 333; Karl Pepper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (Boston, 1957), 27-28. Studies framed along the lines suggested by Professor Hays have produced no remarkable results either in ascertaining group identity or explaining group behavior. See particularly Richard B. Sherman, "Status Revolution and Massachusetts Progressive Leadership," *Political Science Quarterly* LXXVIII (March 1963), 59-65; Geraldine M. McTigue, "The New York City Liberal Republicans: A Study of Reform," (Master of Arts thesis, Columbia University, 1965); James S. McLachlan, "The Genteel Reformers: 1865-1884"; Edward N. Saveth, ed., *American History and the Social Sciences*, 167-202, for a critique of career-line analysis.

⁵³ For a critique of the presumed relationship between group structure and ethics see Raymond E. Wolfinger and John Osgood Field, "Political Ethos and the Structure of City Government," *American Political Science Review* LX (June 1966), 306-26.

⁵⁴ Robert Schotheim, *American Intellectual Histories and Historians* (Princeton, 1966).

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be recognized as we approach the final stage of the model, *group behavior*, the goal of the preceding variables. Contributing to the movement of the model toward the behavioral goal is the concept of reference group in terms of which it was once fashionable to explain patrician behavior. This is not the place to review the controversy centered around reference group as a source of patrician political behavior; since Professor David Donald and Professor Richard Hefstadter used reference group along with the concept of status politics in the mid-1950's, these concepts have progressively lost the esteem of the historical profession. Components of determinism that Donald and Hefstadter have assigned have been challenged and disproved by attacks by historians on their conclusions and by sociologists who fault the very concept of reference group as theoretically imprecise.⁵⁵

The failure of reference group theory as an explanation of patrician motivation and behavior cannot be separated from a general failure of motivational theory as applied to the data of history. Underlying the inadequacy of the model is the historian's inability to explain motivation, what causes patricians or, for that matter, people to behave as they do. Not only do we not have enough evidence from the past to explain motivation, but despite the proliferation of motivational theory, conscious and subconscious, it is surprising how little of it is applicable to the historian's search for the causes of behavior.

Mainly for this reason, Professor Duberman questions the value of history as a purposeful study and seems to want to leave the service of a somewhat pointless discipline.⁵⁶ To which let me add by way of postscript that the social sciences, for all their elaborate formulations, are not much further along the road of behavioral explanation than are the historians. It is not only that the data of the past as they affect motivation are hard to come by but, I suspect, there is a counterpart weakness in motivational theory itself.

The result is that the model with which we have been working is neither predictive nor deterministic since each variable presents

⁵⁵ H. A. Nelson, "A Tentative Foundation for Reference Group Theory," *Sociology and Social Research* XLIV (April 1961), 280; Saveth, *American History and the Social Sciences*, 196-97.

⁵⁶ "On Becoming An Historian," *op. cit.*

its elements of imprecision and indeterminism. This conclusion is supported by the variety of political behavior of those patricians whose careers I have studied. There is, I have found, an enormous behavioral range from squeamishness about political participation under the circumstances of modern politics in the case of Henry and Brooks to wholehearted participation by political naturals like Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin Delano Roosevelt; from political purists of the Mugwump type like Adlai Stevenson to those like Boise Penrose who seemed to enjoy wallowing in corruption; from patricians who would have nothing to do with political machines to those who made a more or less happy adjustment to them; from patricians who were Republicans to patricians who were Democrats or who preferred to remain outside the party system; from patricians to the left of center to those to the right of center.

Nevertheless, historians and publicists have not hesitated to generalize about the patrician political "role:" none of these generalizations are accurate as far as I have been able to discover. Our patricians behave this way and that on the political scene—which is to say that they are, in the last analysis, individuals who defy prescribed roles (what is role but an anticipation of behavior?).

The model, with its uncertain variables, each presenting attributes of indeterminism, is more of an "explanation sketch" than a prediction of role. As such, the "explanation sketch" is analogous to what the narrative historian describes as a "framework" for history that is less analytical than descriptive.⁵⁷ The model has only a tenuous kind of existence as a guide to narrative history which is the only kind of history that allows for the range of deviation inherent in the subject matter. The model, then, is less predictive than descriptive; more of a literary device for the organization of data than a predictive explanation of behavior and ideas in their relationship to group structure.

The search for a model of patrician political behavior—one that would amount to more than an organizational focus for the historian's traditional function of description and narrative—recalls Professor Cochran's conclusion in connection with his

⁵⁷ "Explanation sketch" is Professor William Dray's term. See J. H. Hexter, *Reappraisals in History* (Northwestern University Press, 1961), 16.

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study of the group attitudes of railroad executives. Cochran expressed the hope that “more mature hypotheses than now exist” in social science can be brought to bear upon the problem of group definition and behavior.⁵⁸ Whether they will actually come into being at a future date may or may not be part of the *mythos* of social science.

⁵⁸ *Railroad Leaders*, 13-15.