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SOCIAL INDICATORS

Chairman, ELEANOR BERNERT SHELDON, Russell Sage Foundation

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MEASURING THE TREND IN SOCIAL STRATIFICATION Abstract

Otis Dudley Duncan, University of Michigan

As K. Svalastoga has stated, "The degree to which positions are filled without respect to social origin ... is the most important clue to [the] system of social stratification" of society. The most appropriate indicator of stratification in this sense appears to be the regression of measures of achieved status on measures of origin status. Some historical data on the correlation of son's with father's occupational status, secured from community studies, serve to illustrate the more salient methodological problems in trend measurement. There is a reasonably convincing case that the measurement of status can be effected in

such a way that intertemporal comparisons are conceptually justified, but defects in comparability of data preclude a firm judgment on trend. For what they are worth, the historical comparisons as well as certain inter-cohort comparisons based on retrospective information suggest that there has been no pronounced and continuous lessening or increase in the degree of stratification in the United States over the past several decades. The most important step in monitoring future trends would be a periodic replication of the 1962 survey of Occupational Changes in a Generation.