

**SOCIOECONOMIC SOCIOMETRY
AND SOCIOECONOMETRY:
MORENO'S SOCIODYNAMIC
EFFECT REVISITED**

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In 1932 an article appeared in a finance publication¹ describing the U. S. as an El Dorado so rich that it could (soon) provide every man with his own bonanza of riches. Moreno² used income data from this general period (1929) to explore the *Sociodynamic Effect* and noted that "the frequency distribution of choices shown by sociometric data is comparable to the frequency distribution of wealth in a capitalistic society."

Approximately thirty years later, Walter P. Reuther was asserting that "massive poverty has now become intolerable because it is no longer unavoidable,"³ and that "nothing that is relevant to human well-being is irrelevant to the war against poverty."⁴ In fact, America has become quite embarrassed by the existence of stubborn, entrenched poverty in the midst of our El Dorado (for most Americans do have their bonanzas in terms of the standards of 1932). Like embarrassed individuals—embarrassed nations first show alarm—they blush and fidget and overact—then they *deny*. Almost ten years after declaring war on poverty, we are dangerously close to having come full circle in terms of our response to poverty. We find ourselves in this predicament because we are still unable to understand the nature of poverty or to develop a really effective and adequate antipoverty strategy. Therapy (either social or behavioral) has been inadequate to explain the determinants of poverty and neither psychology nor psychotherapy, as presently practiced, have been very successful in ameliorating it.⁵ However, some progress has been made and perhaps a review of a few selected examples of current research can give some clues as to the possible direction of our endeavors.

¹ "El Dorado," article in the *Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, (Dec. 10, 1932).

² J. L. Moreno and Helen H. Jennings, "Statistics of Social Configurations," pp. 19-51 in J. L. Moreno (ed.), *The Sociometry Reader*, The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1960, p. 37. See also J. L. Moreno, *Who Shall Survive?*, 1953, pp. 639-640, 225-226 and p. 24.

³ Walter P. Reuther, introduction in Leon H. Keyserling, *Progress or Poverty: The U.S. at the Crossroads*, Conference on Economic Progress, Washington, D.C., 1964, p. 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. i.

⁵ Abraham J. Tannenbaum, "Some Non-Intellective Concomitants of Social Deprivation," *Israel Annals of Psychiatry and Related Disciplines*, 7 (April, 1969), pp. 9-30.

To guide this review, it is desirable to pause and review some of the basic questions involved:

1. Does the sociodynamic effect still operate?
2. What is the nature of poverty?
3. How can we develop an effective and adequate anti-poverty strategy?
4. What are the essentials for the development of "Socioeconomic Sociometry and Socioeconometry?"

I. DOES THE SOCIODYNAMIC EFFECT STILL OPERATE?

In an attempt to answer this question, a study was designed in which current sociometric data were compared with current economic data. A brief outline of the procedure and findings of this study follow.

Procedure

A sociometric data bank approach was used in lieu of a formal test of significance. In this approach, massive strength, based on a large number of selected cases and a large N, is used to show regularity of structure and/or consistent tendency. Those interested in the methodological prospects and problems of this approach are advised to review the current work of Davis.⁶

The unpublished sociometric data "drawn" from the bank, were gathered by several researchers from 2,245 subjects who were members of 100 groups. The groups tested varied in size, composition, sex distribution, and purpose for existence. These groups ranged in size from 5 to 365. Selected examples of groups studied:

1. A unit in a crippled children's hospital.
2. College sororities and fraternities.
3. Groups of retarded adolescent boys.
4. Cub Scout dens.
5. Group of soft drink (route) salesmen.
6. Neighborhood residents: Model City area of a small southern town.
7. Employee group in a water pumping station.
8. Baseball, basketball and football teams.
9. Group of "problem girls" in a Catholic school.
10. Public school classrooms (grades K-12).

⁶ James A. Davis, "Clustering and Hierarchy in Interpersonal Relations: Testing Two Graph Theoretical Models on 742 Sociomatrices," *American Sociological Review*, 35 (Oct., 1970), pp. 843-851.

TABLE I
 SOCIOMETRIC CHOICE INCOME BY POPULATION FIFTHS

	Top 20%	2nd 20%	3rd 20%	4th 20%	5th 20%
Number of Choices	3,170	1,860	1,338	907	423
Per Cent of Total	41.5	24.1	17.3	11.7	5.4

11. Senior M.Y.F. group.
12. Neighborhood library group.
13. Clerks in Sales Dept. of large department store.
14. Art department of a shoppers' newspaper.
15. Porters in a municipal light, gas and water division.
16. Adolescent weight-lifting club.
17. Commuter groups.

Members of each group were ranked in terms of number of choices received and these rankings were divided into approximate fifths in terms of "choice income" (see Table I).

TABLE II
 INCOME LEVEL DISTRIBUTION (1968) BY FIFTHS

Income Level	% of Total Income in Category
\$10,000 and over	39.7
6,000-9,999	31.0
4,000-5,999	12.9
2,000-3,999	11.2
Under 1,999	5.2

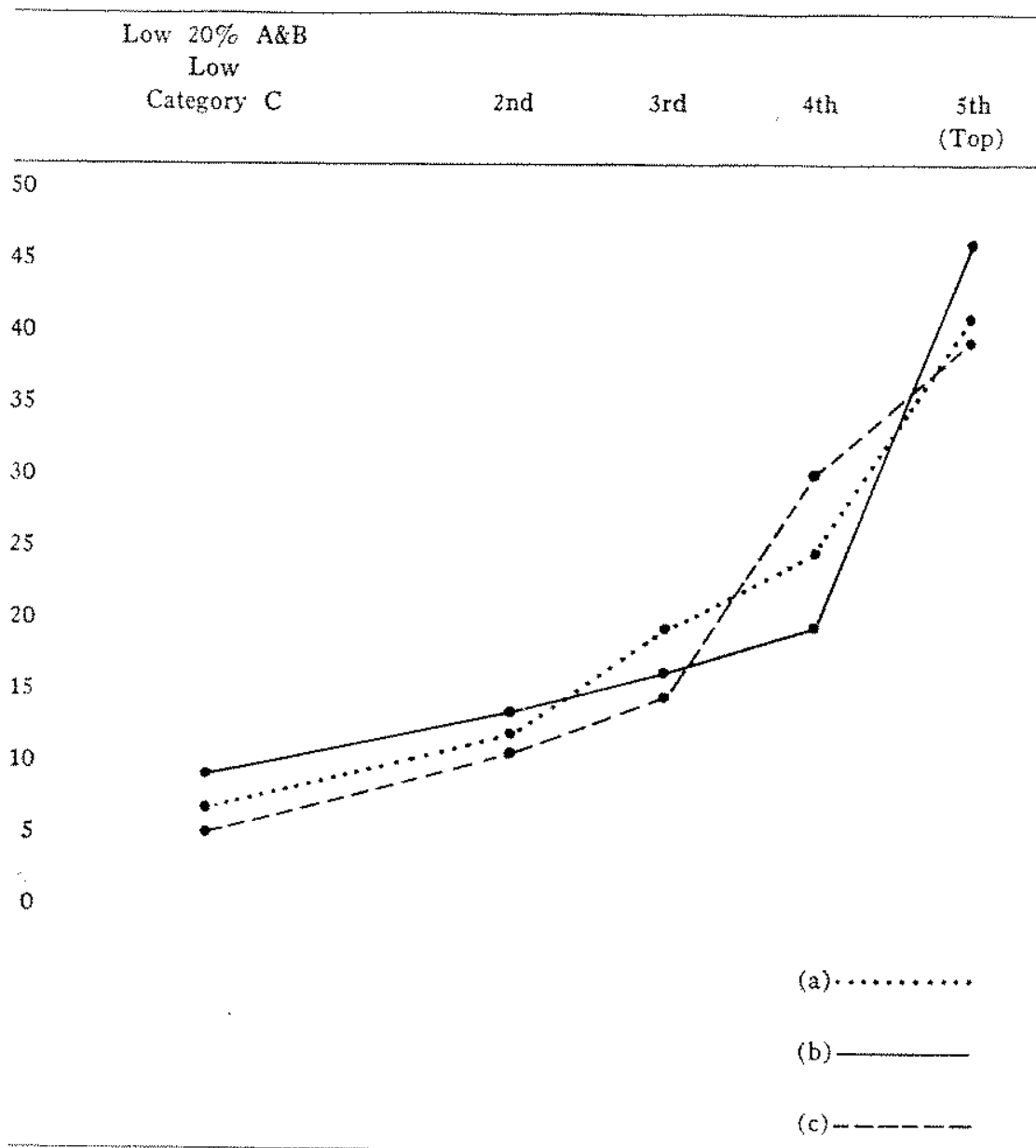
Adapted from Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1970 U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C., 1970, #486, Money Income—Percent Distribution of Families, by Income Level, By Race of Head: 1947 to 1968, p. 322.

TABLE III
 PER CENT OF NATIONAL INCOME BY INCOME FIFTH

	Top 20%	2nd 20%	3rd 20%	4th 20%	5th 20%
Per Cent of Income	46.2	19.0	15.0	11.5	8.3

Adapted from Kolko, Gabriel, *Wealth and Power in America*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1962, Table I "Percentage of National Personal Income, Before Taxes, Received by Each Income-Tenth," p. 14.

TABLE IV
 COMPARISON OF DISTRIBUTION OF (a) SOCIOMETRIC INCOME, (b) % OF NATIONAL INCOME,
 AND (c) INCOME LEVELS



These data were compared with data concerning (a) income level distribution (1968),⁷ (see Table II), and (b) percent of national income by income fifth⁸ (see Table III).

⁷ Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1970 U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C., 1970, #486, Money Income—Percent Distribution of Families, by Income Level, By Race of Head: 1947 to 1968, p. 322.

⁸ Gabriel Kolko, *Wealth and Power in America*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York,

Findings

The findings are shown in Table IV. When the distribution of sociometric income is compared to the distribution of wealth in a capitalist society as either (a) income level distribution or (b) percent of national income by income fifth, results show a remarkably high comparability of distribution. The law of sociodynamics is alive and well in a battered, bewildered, beleaguered EL Dorado!

II. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF POVERTY?

When we use such concepts as "the cultural capital of families,"⁹ or the "culture of poverty,"¹⁰ we often find ourselves talking about the by-products of poverty,¹¹ not its characteristics or determinants. Walter P. Reuther,¹² glimpsed the answer to this question when he noted the poor are robbed when ". . . *denied the sense of belonging* and of participating in the progress which others enjoy."

While most writers and researchers have failed to follow Reuther's lead and consider the possibility of testing the proposition that economic success—or lack of it—can be explained in terms of sociometric concepts, the subject of belongingness does appear in several reports.

Bylund¹³ analyzed the educational and cultural factors associated with vocational success of recent graduates of a Navajo boarding school. The employment variables studied were not found to be correlated with scholastic (academic) variables but were highly correlated with social skills.

Belongingness is also important to success on the job. The NAB (Jobs program) and the AFL-CIO have developed a buddy system whereby selected union members are trained to help newly employed hard-core disadvantaged workers make a smooth transition into the work situation. To date, the programs have been very successful.¹⁴

1962, Table I "Percentage of National Personal Income, Before Taxes, Received by Each Income-Tenth," p. 14.

⁹ Joze Susmely, "Vpliv Socialne Strukture Mladih Na Solanje in Izbiro Poklica (Influence of Socioeconomic Status on Educational and Vocational Choice of Teenagers)," *Poklicno Usmerjaje*, 1968 (no. 16), pp. 385-88.

¹⁰ Joseph C. Finney, *Cultural Change, Mental Health and Poverty*, 1969.

¹¹ Elizabeth Herzog, "Facts and Fictions About the Poor," *Monthly Labor Review*, 93 (Feb., 1970), pp. 42-49.

¹² Reuther, *op. cit.*, p. i.

¹³ H. Bruce Bylund, *Social, Cultural and Educational Factors Associated with Relative Vocational Success of Navajo High School Graduates*, 1970.

¹⁴ Kenneth Fiester, "Putting Labor in Work Training," *Manpower*, 2 (Dec., 1970), pp. 24-29.

Goldman, et. al.,¹⁵ found that one-third of a sample of economically disadvantaged youth obtained their current jobs through "personal sources." When the source of job was a friend or relative working in the workplace, the employment situation was much more stable: jobs were better paying, better liked, and of longer duration.

Bahr and Caplow¹⁶ compared affiliation (defined as membership in an organization such as a church or voluntary association) and employment histories of a group of skid-row men with the histories of a control group of lower-class men in settled neighborhoods. Their finding was that the skid-row men were not actually "skidders," but (as compared to control group) have long histories of low affiliation, both before and after their arrival on skid row. The researchers were able to surmise that the disaffiliation of skid row men did not appear to be attributal to their downward mobility. Evidently an alternate explanation did not occur to these researchers; namely, that the general level of poverty of these subjects—and not just their downward mobility (or lack of it)—is obviously the result of their homelessness and disaffiliation.

In summary, all the researchers cited above, skirted the idea of belongingness as a determinant of economic success without delineating this concept in the form of a testable hypothesis.

What, then, is the nature of poverty? In a previous effort, this author¹⁷ conducted an examination of sociometric theory and research and found that the similarity of the distribution of sociometric wealth and economic wealth (in a capitalistic society) was not accidental. In fact, it was concluded that "sociometric poverty precedes economic poverty." He noted "that poverty is more than being economically poor, or lazy, or depressed, or uneducated, or of living in an underdeveloped community," and demonstrated that "*economic poverty is a product of an individual's being sociometrically poor.*"

¹⁵ Irwin J. Goldman, Roslyn G. McDonald, and Joyce Epstein "Characteristics of Jobs Held by Economically Disadvantaged Youth," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 40 (Jan., 1970), pp. 97-105.

¹⁶ Howard M. Bahr and Theodore Caplow, "Homelessness, Affiliation, and Occupational Mobility," *Social Forces*, Vol. 47 (Sept., 1968), pp. 28-33.

¹⁷ Joe W. Hart, "The Sociometry of Poverty," *The British Journal of Social Psychiatry*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1970).

III. HOW CAN WE DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE AND ADEQUATE ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY?

As this author has previously noted,¹⁸ such current strategies to the solution of the "problem" of poverty as Alinsky's conflict model, the welfare crises, and the new careers model have enjoyed mixed success and recommended recognition of "the significance of the sociometric factor in the economic lives of man" as a basis for the development of an anti-poverty strategy.

Obviously, recognition of, and better understanding of, Moreno's law of sociodynamic effect; attending to Reuther's notation that the poor are those robbed of a sense of belonging and participation; and, an energetic program to eradicate sociometric poverty as a prerequisite to the elimination of economic poverty would all have to be included in an effective and adequate anti-poverty strategy. However, more precise delienations of such a strategy are dependent upon the development of *Socioeconomic Sociometry* and *Socioeconometry*.

IV. WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF "SOCIOECONOMIC SOCIOMETRY AND SOCIOECONOMETRY?"

Burgess¹⁹ noted that the uniqueness of sociometry as a type of measurement lies in its

(1) significance for *understanding* of human behavior—not just as another statistical process.

(2) being a necessity only if society is viewed holistically.

(3) bridging the gap between social analysis and statistics. (To him, this was "most important of all").

It is bewildering that he did not follow his own lead in discussing the relationship between sociometry and econometry (econometrics). Instead, he saw sociometrics, econometry and psychometry as involved in the analysis of separate (and discreet?) phenomena and suggested an additive approach to "the establishing of significant scientific generalizations which will ultimately constitute a coherent system."

In his view of the uniqueness of sociometry, Burgess was correct. His view of the relationship between sociometry and econometry could have been improved had he followed his own lead and had demonstrated greater

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ E. W. Burgess, "Discussion Papers on Sociometry," in Moreno, *The Sociometry Reader, op. cit.*, pp. 211-212.

appreciation for the fact that "sociometry deals with configurations."²⁰ The idea that sociometric wealth or poverty is to be seen as the foundation of economic wealth/poverty must be the fundamental basis of *socioeconometry*.²¹ *Socio-economic sociometry*²² theory is an integral part of socioeconometric theory and is but an extension and/or specific example of the application of this theory.

In the building of a theory of socio-economic sociometry and socioeconometry (SESS) care must be taken to avoid preoccupation with the negative aspects of the affiliative process. "The Sociometry of Poverty," "The Isolate as an Accident Prone Individual," "The Reject as a Disruptive Force in the Workgroup," or "The Negative Influence of the Work Peer Group" are all appropriate but negative concerns of SESS. The investigation of their counterparts might prove to be more productive. Such positive subjects might include:

1. "The Sociometry of Success,"
2. "The Peer Group as a Supportive Force in Rural-Urban Migration,"
3. "The Sociometry of Real Neighborhoods,"
4. "Work, Sociatry and Therapeutic Technique," and
5. "A Sociometric Study of the Relationship Between Work and Social Well Being."

SUMMARY

After nearly a half century of expressed hope, stated concern and sporadic activity with relation to the "problem" of poverty, we have had little success in understanding poverty or developing strategies to cope with it. Moreno's law of social dynamics was revisited and research reported indicated that when the distribution of sociometric income is compared to the distribution of wealth in a capatalistic society as either (a) income level distribution or (b) per cent of national income by income fifth, results show a remarkably high comparability of distribution.

A review of selected pieces of research revealed that in the area investigated, social theory has lagged behind empirical reality. While the subject of belongingness appears in several reports, the researchers cited all failed to consider the possibility of testing the proposition that economic

²⁰ J. L. Moreno, *Who Shall Survive*, 1953, p. 623.

²¹ Socioeconometry is the social/sociometric analysis of the essential nature of the structure and dynamics of economic phenomenon.

²² Socio-economic sociometry is the sociometry of social stratification and economic stratification.

success—or lack of it—can be explained in terms of sociometric concepts. Previous work of this author was quoted presenting his conclusions that “sociometric poverty precedes economic poverty” and that “economic poverty is a product of an individual’s being sociometrically poor.”

Selected elements of an effective and adequate anti-poverty strategy were listed as

- (1) renewed emphasis on and better understanding of Moreno’s law of sociodynamic effect,
- (2) recognition that the poor are those robbed of a sense of belonging and participation, and
- (3) an energetic program to eradicate sociometric poverty as a prerequisite to the elimination of economic poverty.

The idea of sociometric wealth/poverty as the foundation of economic wealth/poverty was viewed as the fundamental basis of *socioeconometry* (sociometric analysis of economic phenomena) as well as its subspecialty *socio-economic sociometry* (sociometric analysis of social stratification).