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AUTHOR Liu, William M.
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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a theory for understanding social class in men's lives, and argues that poverty and depression are a function of social class and internalized classism. It begins by defining poverty, then explains the Social Class Worldview Model, which is a subjective social class model, and the Modern Classism Theory, which allows clinicians to integrate social class experiences such as poverty or job loss into diagnosis and treatment. Efforts to help and assist men in poverty cannot focus solely on the income, education, and occupational issues in men's lives. Instead there has to be a focus on the social class worldview in order to address the intrapsychic and affective factors related to social class transitions. Counselors need to understand what underlies men's depression in these situations, how internalized classism functions to exacerbate depression, and how men may mask depression in problematic behaviors. In poverty remediation, men need to be helped to develop strategies that are congruent with their economic culture and to understand the array of expectations around them. (Contains 33 references.) (JDM)

Running Head: POVERTY AND DEPRESSION AMONG MEN:
THE SOCIAL CLASS WORLDVIEW MODEL AND COUNSELING IMPLICATIONS

Poverty and Depression Among Men:
The Social Class Worldview Model and Counseling Implications

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William M. Liu, Ph.D.
University of Iowa
Division of Psychological & Quantitative Foundations
Counseling Psychology Program
Iowa City, IA 52242
William-liu@uiowa.edu

Poverty and Depression Among Men:

The Social Class Worldview Model and Counseling Implications

Introduction

Contextualizing men's experiences within multiple cultures, and understanding the potential impact of socialization on men, tends to disrupt our notions about diagnosis and treatment with men (Cochran, Liu, Boespflug, Dunston, & Sanchez, 2001; Cochran & Rabinowitz, 2000). The cultural lens and the understanding of contextual factors call into question the acontextual framework of diagnosis within the DSM and some treatment protocols (Cochran et al., 2001). Among the many cultural factors in men's lives, and one of the least understood psychologically, is social class (Frable, 1997; Liu, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2001d). Even though we understand that men are socialized to be the "breadwinners" (Kimmel, 1996), and tend to subscribe to gender ideals such as being self-reliant, self-sufficient, and in-control, we have not fully explored how social class functions in men's lives. Additionally, we have yet to explore how social class is related to certain affective issues such as depression or how contextual pressures such as poverty are related to masculinity. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to outline a theory to understand social class in men's lives and to argue that poverty and men's depression are a function of social class pressures and internalized classism. To do this, the presenter will first define poverty, then articulate the Social Class Worldview Model and Modern Classism Theory as requisites to understanding internalized classism and depression in men.

Poverty Defined

Poverty[1] in 2000 was defined as a family of four with an income of 17, 029$, with an income deficit of $6,687 to raise them out of poverty. Among those considered in poverty, almost 49 million people in the US, or one in five, had difficulty meeting a basic needs such as bills, rent, food, doctors, and heat and electricity (Census Bureau, 2001a, 2001b). In terms of gender, in 1999, there were about 3.3 million men in poverty (Census Bureau, 2001a, 2001b), however, women still represent the overwhelming majority of those in poverty. For this paper, poverty does not mean homelessness. Rather, men in poverty may be considered those who live paycheck to paycheck, have difficulty meeting basic needs, and the "working poor," or those who experience economic transitions wherein there is a change in status or social class because of declining economic opportunities and resources.

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[1] Poverty is defined from a set of "money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is poor. If a family's total income is less than the threshold, the family and every individual init is considered poor. The poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated annually for inflation using the official consumer price index. The official poverty definition counts money income before taxes and excludes capital gains and the value of noncash benefits 9such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps)" (Census Bureau, 2001a, p.51).

Social Class in Men's Lives

With so many men in economic need, evidence suggests that men's lives are related to social class. Among men in poverty, in low social class environments, low levels of education, and those men not in the workforce, men's health research suggest that men in poverty tend to have poor health behaviors (Hemmingsson, Lundberg, Diderichsen, & Allenbeck, 1998); high rates of coronary heart disease (Barnett, Armstrong, & Casper, 1999); tend to use alcohol (Jones-Webb, Hsiao, & Hannan, 1995); have high rates of premature death and mortality (Barnett et al., 1999); are prone to male-typical behaviors and careers that are related higher rates of mortality (Lippa, Martin, & Friedman, 2000); experience work related stress and conflict (Matthews, Raikkonen, Everson, Flory, Marco, Owens, & Lloyd, 2000); participate in dangerous sexual behavior (Ennett, Bailey, & Federman, 1999); have poor social support (Matthews, Sansfeld, & Power, 1999); a higher frequency of depression, anxiety, and aggression (Black & Krishnakumar, 1998); are exposed to chronic stressors and hostility (McLoyd, 1998); more psychiatric disorders (Timms, 1998); exhibit alexithymia (Salminen, Saarijärvi, Äärelä, Toikka, & Kauhanen, 1999); and tend to be overweight (Gortmaker, Must, Perrin, Sobol, & Dietz, 1993). Additionally, lower-class men are likely to endorse physical punishment and the use of physical power to resolve conflicts (Pinderhughes, Dodge, Bates, Pettit, & Zelli, 2000). And boys from lower-class families also may have lower self-esteem and are likely to take on the family's economic burdens (Mandara & Murray, 2000).

While social class seems to be related to men's psychological and physical health, the sociological framework of social class has limitations for psychology (Liu, Soleck, Hopps, Dunston, & Pickett, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c). Using income, education, and occupation to classify men into certain social class group (e.g., middle-class) and then inferring similar worldviews among men in that grouping does not explore the within group variation that exists (Liu, 2001a). This stratification scheme has been critiqued for having salient limitations for psychologists such as: (a) different locales (i.e., rural and urban, state to state) have different conceptualizations for these indices but are not considered in the stratification paradigm; (b) classism occurs in environments and among people who are relatively independent of these indices such as children (Cookson & Persell, 1985; Furnham, 1987) and men in prison (Phillips, 2001); (c) stratification theory has an upward mobility bias that tends to view those who do not subscribe as deviant and deficient (Liu et al., 2001c); (d) does not explain social class relationships; (e) does not explain affect associated with social class experiences; (f) does not explain the functions of classism (Liu & Pope-Davis, in press; Liu et al., 2001c); (g) assumes that people agree upon the indices that constitute a particular social class and that social classes are actually identifiable (Liu, 2001a, 2001b; Liu et al., 2001c); (h) does not consider that people use multiple variables to communicate to others about social class that do not rely specifically upon income, education, or occupation (Liu et al.,

2001c); and (i) does not explain people who choose to move "downward" in social class such as a "trust-fund hippie" (economically well-off but chooses a seemingly impoverished lifestyle) or a "downshifter" (Liu, 2001a, 2001b; Liu et al., 2001c; Schor, 1998).

More importantly for clinicians is the question, "how would I make sense of a man's occupation, level of income, and educational experience, and how would these indices illuminate the challenges men bring into therapy?" Furthermore, what would treatment look like once it is social class informed? These questions are pertinent because, as men enter therapy, clinicians should understand that socially, men's lives and their sense of masculinity are in part tied to their work lives and the greater economic opportunities (Liu, 2001c, 2001d).

To address these limitations in our current understanding of social class, the author constructed a subjective social class model called the Social Class Worldview Model (SCWM) and the Modern Classism Theory (MCT). These models allow the clinician to integrate social class experiences such as poverty or job loss into diagnosis and treatment. But before discussing the clinical applications, the author will present the theory.

Figure 1 Overhead Here

The Social Class Worldview

The Social Class Worldview Model (SCWM) (Liu, 2001a, 2001c) is a phenomenological approach to understanding social class in people's lives. In this reconceptualizing of a subjective approach to social class, several assumptions and foundational principles need to be articulated.

1. People's perception of their environment creates their reality.
2. People perceive money, not so much for the objective value, but what money means to them and other people in their environment.
3. People are motivated to seek and maintain acceptance within their chosen peer and cohort group.
4. People exist within environments, called economic cultures (e.g., peer groups, neighborhoods) that place certain expectations and demands upon people. These demands and expectations are filtered within the economic culture from a larger capitalistic ECONOMIC CULTURE (Liu, 2001c). One of these expectations is to accrue and accumulate resources or capital that are valued within the economic culture so that they use it to remain within their chosen economic culture. There are three types of capital that are expected from people: human or the physical abilities and traits, as well as accrued experiences that are valued within a particular environment; social or the relationships and affiliations that people

have that are used to gain or maintain one's perceived social class; and cultural or the tastes and aesthetics people develop and refine that are necessary in a particular context (Liu, 2001b; Liu & Pope-Davis, in press; Liu et al., 2001c). There are multiple economic cultures, and thus, there are multiple ways these capital are defined. Thus, even people who consider themselves similar, but exist within different locales, may value different forms of capital.

5. When people are able to accrue the necessary resources, they remain in homeostasis with their economic culture, and when they are unable, people behave in certain ways that allow them to maximize their opportunities. These strategic maximizing behaviors are where classism comes into play.

6. People's social class perceptions of their world are reflective of the expectations and demands within their economic culture. These perceptions are the individual's social class worldview. The social class worldview is comprised of five domains, which are always present but are not simultaneously salient. These are: *Saliency, Attitudes, and Consciousness* which refers to the individual's awareness that he/she belongs to a social class system, their related feelings and thoughts to this consciousness, and the meaningfulness of this understanding on his/her life; *Referent Groups* are those individuals, past, present, and aspirational, the individual attends to and wants to be similar to in terms of social class. Hence, the past group or group of origin typically represents the family or guardians that provided their early social class socialization; the present group or their peer/cohort group represents those individuals who are most similar to the individual in social class; and the aspirational group or group of aspiration are those people the individual would like to be similar to in social class in the future; *Property Relationships* refers to the "tangible use of commodities as external representations of an individual's social class worldview" (Liu et al., 2001c, p. 21); *Lifestyle* is defined as the way people choose to organize and spend time and resources to remain congruent with the economic culture's expectations; and *Behaviors* are those learned and socialized actions that are perceived to reinforce a person's social class worldview and allow him/her to operate easily within their economic culture (e.g., table manners, "proper speaking," social habits).

From this worldview, people develop certain strategies that allow them to maximize their opportunities to accumulate the necessary capital. The potentially competitive relationship people engage in to accrue capital is where classism erupts interpersonally and intra-psychically.

Modern Classism Theory

In Modern Classism Theory (MCT), classism is defined as "prejudice and discrimination based on social class resulting from individuals from different perceived social classes" (Liu, 2001a, p. 137).

Classism refers not only to cognitions but also associated affect such as shame, guilt, depression, and anxiety. MCT posits that classism is a strategy people use with others in order to maximize their opportunities to accumulate capital. When an individual perceives another person to either thwart or inhibit the potential for capital accumulation, classism is employed as a strategy to allow the individual a sense that they are able to gain their needed capital (Liu et al., 2001c).

In MCT, there are four types of classism: upward, downward, lateral, and internalized (Liu & Pope-Davis, in press; Liu et al., 2001c). While it may seem that there is a return to a hierarchical notion of social class and away from subjective social class, the names for the types of classism only reflect how people tend to perceive others (i.e., people above, below, and like them). In MCT, upward classism is prejudice and discriminatory behavior directed toward people believed to be of a "higher social class" than the perceiver (Liu & Pope-Davis, in press; Liu et al., 2001c). Typically, people will describe those of a "higher social class" as snobs, elitists, and spoiled. Downward classism is prejudice and discrimination directed toward those perceived below the perceiver. In this case though, one does not have to be an elite or wealthy, but anyone can be perceived to be below an individual. Lateral classism is prejudice and discrimination that occurs among people perceived to be similar in social class in order to realign a target person's social class worldview to be congruent with others in their perceived economic culture (Liu & Pope-Davis, in press: Liu et al., 2001c). This is the pressure associated with "keeping up with the Jones'" (e.g., Schor, 1998). Finally, internalized classism refers to the feelings of anger, frustration, depression, despair, disappointment, and anxiety when one is unable to meet and fulfill the social class expectations of one's economic culture (Liu et al., 2001c). This can result from failures to accumulate capital, but can also occur when an individual fails to "pass" for someone of a certain economic culture such as when a lower-working class person's background is discovered in a prestigious law school (Croizet & Clarire 1998). Failure to "pass" jeopardizes the individual's capacity to continue capital accumulation and may lead to feelings of disappointment.

Internalized Classism and Depression

This presenter posits that men's depression may be rooted, in part, to the frustrated attempts of men to live up to the societal and socially classed expectations of men. When men's strategies to adhere to the socially classed expectations fail repeatedly, men may internalize this failure as a personal fault. This internalized classism may arise from continual job loss, failure to receive promotions, transitional or permanent poverty, and homelessness. Additionally, because there is such social stigma attached to poverty (O'Connor, 2001), men may be struggling with multiple layers of shame (e.g., failure as a man, failure as a citizen, failure among peers).

To illustrate the SCWM and MCT on men in poverty experiencing depression, one form of impoverishment, transitional poverty, will be used. Transitional or temporary poverty are situation in

which the man may lose his job or become injured or ill, which leads to home loss, economic deprivation, and a rapid change in status (O'Connor, 2001). But because this situation is temporary, the man is able to recover to some extent, but during the impoverishment, men may experience an array of cognitions and feelings such as depression related to his condition.

For a man who is experiencing transitional poverty, the SCWM and MCT would frame the experience as such: assuming that the man started in a self-perceived middle-class situation, he exists within an economic culture that places certain social class expectations upon him such as having two cars, owning his own home, attending certain social activities and events, and having leisure time. These are capital expectations that the man feels he needs to attend to and fulfill if he is to remain a part of his "middle-class" culture. Hence, for this man, he must have a certain level of education, educational experiences, and occupational experiences (human capital), certain social relationships for job success (social capital), and value certain brands of cars, homes, and vacation spots to be congruent with his peers (cultural capital). The man's social class worldview may be constructed around valuing his peers, property relationships, and lifestyle. He in turn will use certain strategies to make sure he is able to maintain these expectations and to remain in homeostasis with his economic culture. He may fight for promotions and a higher salary (upward classism); behave in ways he believes he should be treated as a middle-class man (downward classism); and chastise other men, who he perceives to be similar to him, who do not subscribe to his worldview (lateral classism).

However, if a sudden event occurs such as a job loss or health failure that causes him to lose his capacity to maintain homeostasis with his economic culture, he may at first attempt to increase the intensity of his existing social class strategies to accommodate for his new situation. Thus, his social class worldview may adjust to isolate the one or two domains that he believes make him middle-class. In this case, it may be property relationships and lifestyle. Believing that if he can maintain a semblance of "middle-classhood" to avoid the stigma of poverty, he may work hard to maintain this fantasy to "pass" as middle-class. The man's social class strategies may then focus on demeaning or belittling the value of other people's property (upward and lateral depending upon if it is a peer or aspirational figure); using whatever resources he has available, such as credit cards, to maintain his lifestyle (lateral); downplaying or belittling other people's vacations (upward and lateral depending upon if it is a peer or aspirational figure); becoming abusive, arrogant, and hostile to people he considers to be subservient to him as a middle-class man such as waiters, clerks, and other service related persons (downward); or work harder (i.e., workaholism) to ward off feelings of failure (internalized). These behaviors are all in an effort to make other people support his self-perceived middle-classhood despite quickly diminishing resource opportunities. In this situation, human capital is accrued from reasserting his educational level or his physicality (i.e., he may become physically assertive and/or abusive to those around him); social capital is

accrued from being able to maintain the relationships by not seeming abnormal from his peers and still participating in expected activities; and cultural capital is accrued from his critique of other people's tastes and aesthetics, which I will argue is a middle-class hobby, and through purchasing property to reflect his middle-class taste.

But as his resources evaporate, and property and lifestyle are stripped away (e.g., home loss), the man is faced with several problems simultaneously. First, as his strategies begin to fail and he is unable to maintain homeostasis, internalized classism becomes more prominent. These feelings of anxiety, depression, failure, frustration, and anger become more difficult to ward off, and instead are channeled through male appropriate behaviors and affective routes. In this case, masked depressive behaviors such as social withdraw, drug and alcohol use, partner abuse, and aggression may arise. Exacerbating this situation is the impending transition to another an economic culture in which he is unfamiliar. The new economic culture may be that of a perceived lower-class or those in poverty, which may be perceived as alien, shameful, and full of stigma. The additional struggle is the man's unfamiliarity with this new economic culture's expectations, his "middle-class" social class worldview that may be incongruent with the new economic culture, and his "middle-class" strategies that may not operate well in his new environment. Consequently, his transition may be more demanding than simply losing his job, but rather, the transition represents a constellation of changes intrapsychically. The social and internalized shame and classism (i.e., feelings of failure), his current inability to effectively cope in his new situation and environment, and his depression may work in concert to increase his depression.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Consequently, efforts to help and assist men in poverty cannot focus solely on the income, education, and occupational issues in men's lives. Instead, there has to be a concomitant focus on the social class worldview of the man to address the intrapsychic and affective factors related to social class transitions. Counselors need to understand what underlies men's depression in these situations, how internalized classism functions to exacerbate his depression, and how men may mask their depression in problematic behaviors. Additionally, in poverty remediation and prevention, men should be helped to develop strategies that are congruent with their economic culture and be helped to understand the array of expectations around him. Finally, counselors must also be aware of their own biases and worldview when interacting with men in poverty to minimize relationship problems that may affect therapy (Liu, 2001d; Liu & Pope-Davis, in press).

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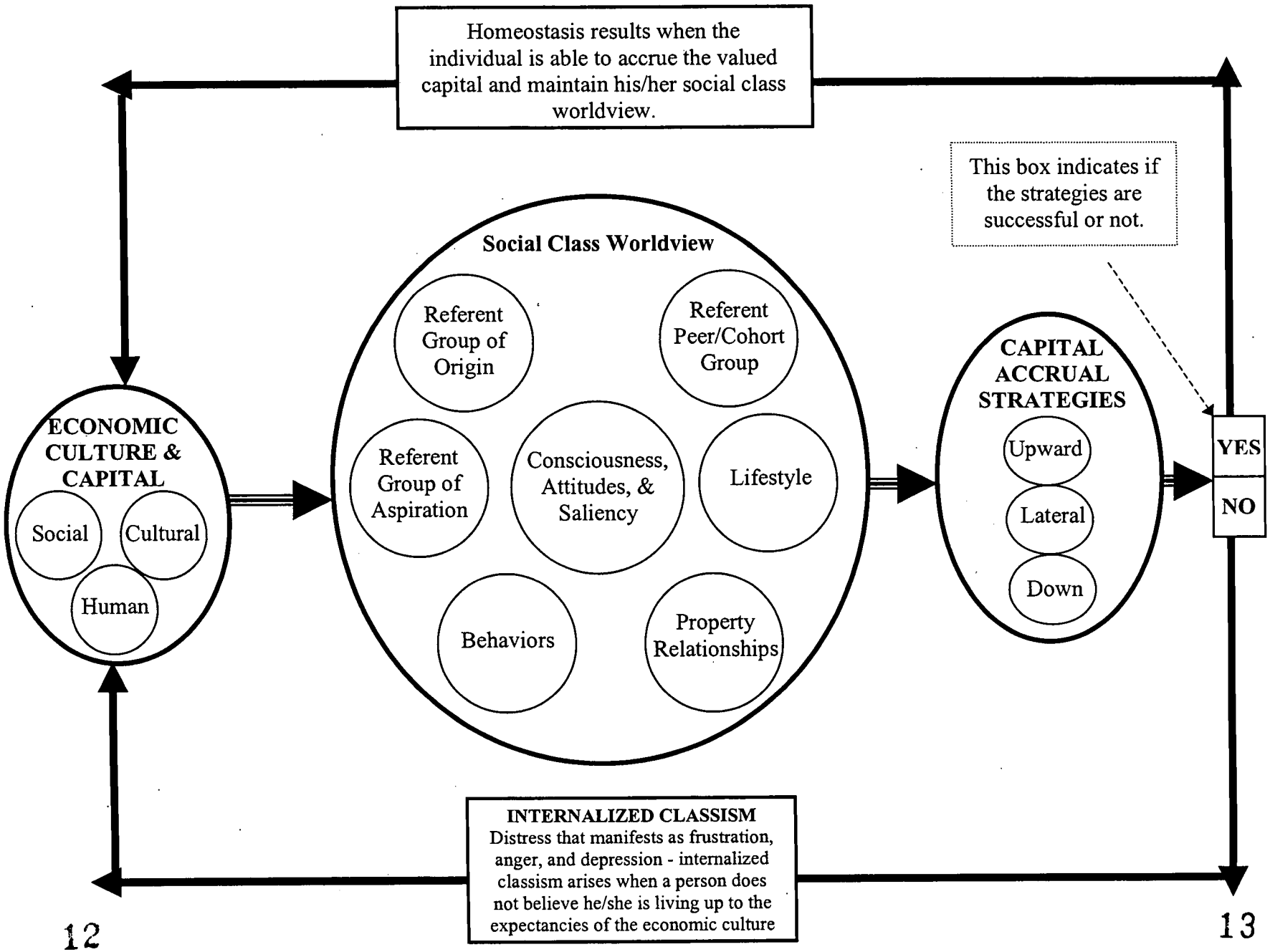
FIGURE 1


Homeostasis results when the individual is able to accrue the valued capital and maintain his/her social class worldview.
This box indicates if the strategies are successful or not.
Social Class Worldview
Referent Group of Origin
Referent Peer/Cohort Group
Referent Group of Aspiration
Consciousness, Attitudes, & Saliency
Lifestyle
Behaviors
Property Relationships
ECONOMIC CULTURE & CAPITAL
Social
Cultural
Human
CAPITAL ACCRUAL STRATEGIES
Upward
Lateral
Down
YES
NO
INTERNALIZED CLASSISM
Distress that manifests as frustration, anger, and depression - internalized classism arises when a person does not believe he/she is living up to the expectancies of the economic culture

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