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# Why Are the Streets So Dirty? Social Psychological and Stratification Factors in the Decline of Municipal Services\*

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## ABSTRACT

*Although objective measures of the decline of municipal services are hard to obtain and harder to interpret, there is a strong subjective sense that municipal services have declined from the level of some previous time. This sentiment is reinforced by the increase in municipal budgets and in serviceability ratios (number of service providers per 10,000 of population) in virtually all municipal service divisions. I propose that part of the decline in services can be explained by changes in the relative status of providers and consumers of services in many cities. Two aspects of status are pertinent. First, in earlier years, municipal service providers had by-and-large less or at least not very much higher status than those to whom they provided services. Thus service to others by these lower status providers conformed with sociological notions of deference and compliance with the interests and wishes of those of higher status. With the shift in population toward black and Hispanic in many central cities, service providers are now of clearly higher status than many consumers of services. This militates against service provision since it violates the proper direction of flow of benefits. A second status consideration is that recent relatively rapid increases in income for municipal service workers have temporarily elevated self-conceptions and status to the point where "dirty-work" can now be shunned as incompatible with the new status level. This too militates against the provision of service since much of the municipal service task consists of dirty work. Finally, in certain municipal service arenas, the usually higher status white group is at the mercy of the usually lower status black and Hispanic group. A form of class warfare ensues which also means lesser service. A rationale for a solution is proposed.*

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Some questions that trouble many who live in central cities or who visit them: why are the streets so dirty? Why do things look worse today than last year? How can it be that with larger budgets and more personnel,<sup>1</sup> services have nonetheless deteriorated? The problem is pandemic: street sanitation; parks and recreation areas; crime control; hospitals and medical care, and so on. While these problems overflow somewhat into suburban areas, their main locus is in the central city. Clearly the problem is not due to increased size generating higher demand for services. In the case of New York City, for example, population has slightly declined from 1950, a time regarded by many as a halcyon period of relatively clean streets, low crime rates, relatively safe and pleasant parks, and medical care revealing some genuine interest on the part of doctors, nurses, et al.

Perhaps this is a somewhat false recollection of times past, nurtured by wish fulfillment in a time when streets are noticeably dirty. Regardless of the absolute magnitude of the difference between then and now, even a minor deterioration must be projected against the vastly increased budgets that are supposed to pay for improved, rather than deteriorated services (cf. Rogers and Hawley; Savas).

While there are abundant economic and administrative science explanations for municipal service decline, I try here to derive an understanding from sociological theory. My approach is mainly deductive; that is, if certain theoretical propositions are true, then certain results should follow: in the case at hand, a decline in municipal services. I do not claim to provide a definitive explanation of service deterioration; only that we can better understand the municipal service problem when we supplement economic and administrative insights with *socio-logic*.

### **Economic and Administrative Explanations**

Economists have analyzed the problem of municipal services in two major ways. First is the argument that urban services, which are essentially noncompetitive due to monopoly, offer little incentive to increase efficiency. There is indeed evidence that certain services can be provided less expensively when contracted to private firms, e.g., garbage collection (Fitch; Savas). A second, more chilling, economic explanation is that the cost of municipal services must inevitably rise while productivity remains more or less constant. This comes about as follows: the production of services is not susceptible to much improvement in technology and thereby efficiency. On the other hand, wage rates are more or less tied to wages in the private sector, where technological innovation in the production of hard goods raises productivity, hence wages. But as wages rise in the private sector, so do they also in the public sector, despite the failure to improve efficiency. This process has come to be known as "Baumol's disease" after its discover-

er (Baumol, a,b). This argument must face the fact that, for most municipal service categories, personnel rosters have risen even faster than population, and while costs have certainly risen, services appear to have *declined* rather than remaining constant. Baumol does discuss certain external factors engendering "cumulative decay." For example, poor bus service leads to fewer riders which leads to higher fares and poorer schedules which produces fewer riders. Indeed this is a notable feature of the urban service merry-go-round. But there still remains the problem of explaining service decline in the first place.

Administrative and political science perspectives on service decline have looked at the problem in light of the fact that the quality and quantity of services are frequently, though not always, worse in minority or lower class neighborhoods (Lineberry, a). This involves the problem of equity or of responsiveness to citizen demand (Levy et al.; Lipsky; Lineberry, b; Rich). Various explanations have been offered for the provision of services on a differential basis: outright discrimination (Fainstein and Fainstein; Rich); unsympathetic political elites (Rossi and Berk); inefficiencies resulting from politically centralized service delivery systems (Rich); inadequate resources, perception of threat to the authority of service providers, and conflicting and ambiguous job expectations among providers (Lipsky); bureaucratic ignorance of lower class lifestyles (Schmandt); organizational contingencies involving bureaucratic work rules, uneven distribution of work loads, and the like (Antunes and Plumlee; Jones; Lineberry, a).

I wish to add an additional perspective that can help explain not only the difference in quality and quantity of services to sub-communities, but also the general *decline* of services to all sub-communities.

Principally, I contend that the problem results in part from a change in the pattern of status differences between providers and consumers of services. Given certain status patterns, services are provided more or less *willingly* and with some attention to detail and workmanship. Given other patterns of relative status between providers and consumers, services are provided reluctantly, indifferently, dilatorily, and, often enough, if one can judge from observing how ancient the trash is, rarely. A second status factor in the decline of services is related to the speed with which service providers have increased their incomes in recent years. Too rapid increase of income and status militates against performance of accustomed duties, especially when duties involve what Hughes has called "dirty work." Class, too, plays a part in the decline of services in cities. There are strategic settings where the usual urban underclass—blacks and Hispanics—has power over the white overclass. Here the stratification tables are turned, so to speak, and the oppressed pay back their categorical oppressors. The net effect is once again a deterioration of services. Since the main argument turns on the putative decline in service, while the number of providers and their costs have increased, I turn to this now.

### Indicators of the Decline of Service

It is important to establish that services have in fact declined from some previous level. Unfortunately, objective indicators either are not available or easily interpretable here (Lineberry and Welch; Rich; Ross and Burkhead). For example, if we look at tonnage rates of garbage collected at two times, these are affected by various factors differentially operative in the two time periods, such as the availability of garbage disposal units, and the unavailability of burn-all incinerators which cause air pollution; or the general increase in packaging materials, including disposable cans and bottles and non-reusable plastics for shipping and packing; or the increase in discretionary income which leads to increased purchases of goods in disposable packages; or the increase of a low-income, high-density-per-dwelling-unit-population which takes to the stoops and streets, disposing its trash there, instead of remaining cooped and cramped in miserable apartments.

If we look at police and fire services, similar problems obscure the degree of objective change between then and now. Is there more crime today per capita, as is believed, or is this due to different reporting methods, increase in police surveillance and arrests, a demographic bulge in the age pyramid among groups most likely to commit crimes (DeFleur et al.; Wheeler)?

In the case of fire protection, efforts to provide services are now frequently met with resistance from ghetto dwellers, who rightly or wrongly believe that firemen excessively damage ghetto housing during fires, and that this is due to racism on the part of the mainly white firemen (Shaver et al.). Thus service may actually decline, though the effort to provide service remains constant.

### CHANGES IN QUALITY AND PRODUCTIVITY

In a rare effort to evaluate municipal service productivity with objective data, Ross and Burkhead studied four municipal functions (education, welfare, police, and fire protection) in six New York State cities, including New York City, for the years 1959 to 1969. The central measurement problem was how to allocate increased expenditures, either to quality improvement or to productivity decline. There is no standard solution here, but of three methods tried, the most favorable (to quality improvement) led to the following conclusion:

There have been some quality improvements in both education and police, but not enough to account for the large change in expenditure . . . productivity has probably fallen slightly, or at best remained constant, for these two services over this period. The quality of welfare has improved very little, if at all . . . productivity may have even fallen slightly for this function. For New York City . . . quality . . . for fire declined . . . while productivity has improved . . . [F]or the five upstate cities

quality fell [and there was also] a decline in productivity in the provision of the fire services in these five areas (118).

These results certainly do not encourage a belief that service quality or productivity have much improved by virtue of much increased expenditure in recent years.

While objective indicators are not easily deciphered, subjective sentiments on the decline of service are plentiful. A *Newsweek* poll found that 45 percent of respondents believed that the quality of life had declined in the preceding decade, while only 33 percent believed it had improved. A *New York Times* letter makes plain the sentiments of many:

I was a resident of New York for 33 years, and for the past 16 years have been working in the Times Square section. . . . The deterioration of this city is appalling. The filth in the streets is a disgrace. I remember New York City when it was clean. That doesn't go back too far—10 years or so (Freyer, 24).

In the ten-city Urban Observatory Program (Fowler) 60 percent of citizens responded negatively to a survey question as to whether they felt they got their money's worth in municipal services (Lineberry, b). Eisinger, more or less replicating Wilson's study of municipal problems as seen by residents, found that about 50 percent mentioned such problems as crime, inconsiderateness, corruption, etc. While these results do not differ by much from Wilson's findings, thus appearing to show that problems are relatively stable, the findings must be understood in light of the significant real increase in personnel and cost of services for approximately the same time period. Kah reports a 24 percent increase in fulltime equivalent municipal employees from 1967 to 1974, and a 104 percent increase in payroll. If services have only *apparently* declined, rather than having decreased in an absolute sense after discounting demographic and other factors, this may be due to levels of expectation on the part of citizens rising even faster than the rising tax rates. We have no knowledge of the degree of improvement expected for each dollar increment in taxes.

#### INCREASED COST OF SERVICES

On the matter of increase in the number of providers, Kah presents a valuable index of the growth of municipal service personnel. She defines *serviceability* as the number of fulltime equivalent employees per 10,000 urban population. Overall, serviceability was 146.3 in 1967 and 162.0 in 1975. This represents an 11 percent increase. From this we obtain some estimate of how producers of services have grown, controlling for increase in population. As for specific municipal services, including police, fire protection, sanitation, highways, parks and recreation, and education—all had increased serviceability ratios over 1967 levels except sanitation, which declined from a ratio of 9.2 to 8.1. But, while sanitation lost personnel in

the 1967 to 1975 period, wages (not to speak of benefits) increased by 79 percent, while the Consumer Price Index increased by about 60 percent.

From Kah's figures we can also estimate how much real growth, discounting inflation, has occurred in municipal wages since 1967. The total number of employees in 1967 was 1,715,197, while in 1975 the number was 2,142,496. The monthly payroll for this work force came to \$971,546,000 in 1967, and \$2,129,314,000 in 1975, a difference of \$1,157,768,000. Some part of this increase is due to the approximately 25 percent increase in the number of workers. If we assume that the personnel increase was uniform through the levels of the work force, we can discount 25 percent of the dollar increase, assigning this amount to the cost of new personnel. This leaves \$868,326,000 to pay for real increases as well as inflation. The amount of inflation of consumer prices was approximately 60 percent, 1967 to 1975. Thus 60 percent of the increase can be assigned to inflation and the remainder to real increase in wages. The real increase comes to \$259,087,950, or 12 percent (see Appendix).<sup>2</sup> This compares with the real increase of about 1.5 percent in the wages of industrial workers in the same time period.<sup>3</sup>

Thus we see that while it is difficult to establish a decline in services by objective measures, there is a subjective sense that this is true, in the face of objective knowledge that both real income and serviceability ratios for most services have increased. I will assume that taken together the subjective estimates and the objective figures point to higher costs for less service, even discounting inflation. I turn now to social psychological and stratification factors that affect service decline.

### **Status and the Performance of "Dirty Work"**

I define *status* in this discussion more or less as explicated by Hamblin and Smith, Zelditch, and Kemper (a, c). Status is a scalar expression of the amount of voluntary compliance an actor or group generally receives or is entitled to from other actors or groups. Status is thus accorded to actors, or conferred by actors on other actors. Its currency consists of deference, money, love, service, or whatever is the culturally appropriate and situationally required medium (Kemper, a). In intergroup relations, groups may have superior or inferior status relative to other groups. When a member of an inferior group deals with a member of a superior group, both expect that the former will provide the suitable behavioral signs of status to the latter in higher amounts than the status conferred in the opposite direction (cf. Weber, a).

Providers and consumers of services are members of status groups—racial, ethnic, religious, occupational, sexual. These provide latent identities (Becker and Geer; Gouldner; Hughes) which modulate the way roles are

performed in the division of labor, especially as we consider the interface with other performers' latent identities, or in the case at hand, with the latent identities of clients of municipal services. When division of labor requirements conflict with the requirements contingent on particular combinations of latent identities, we have what Hughes so aptly called "dilemmas and contradictions of status," e.g., the black female doctor confronting the white male patient. But we have more than a status problem. There is a task problem that is complicated by the quality and evaluative standing of the task.

If, following Hughes, we conceptualize tasks as either agreeable or "dirty-work," part of what makes a task "dirty" is the objective activity itself. All occupations have some dirty-work, according to Hughes, including the most prestigious. But some are specifically devoted to it: sanitation, street repair, social welfare regulation, police work, housekeeping and routine care in hospitals, etc. These cover a large portion of the very services that appear to have deteriorated. Now, it may be considered a fairly unexceptionable generalization that the designation, dirty-work, is pejorative, and that most persons would not normally want to undertake such work. The prestige standing of some of the occupations mentioned supports this view (Hodge et al.). Thus, as far as many municipal services are concerned, there can be an aversion to diligent performance based simply on the fact that the tasks involved are mainly dirty-work. This is true regardless of the latent identities and deserved status patterns of the providers and consumers of services. When we examine the recently emerged pattern of latent status distribution, however, an even stronger repugnance to providing dirty-work services can be noted.

### **Relative Status of Providers and Consumers of Services**

One of the most remarkable population shifts of recent times has been the flight of whites from central cities to environing suburbs or to less populous regions, while black and other minority groups of low status have migrated to the vacated areas and have, as well, experienced a large natural increase there. The turnover rate points to the high probability of black majorities by 1985 in Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Detroit, Cleveland, Oakland, Baltimore, New Orleans, Richmond, and Jacksonville (Downs). Hence large areas of many cities are populated mainly by low status consumers of municipal services.

The labor market for providers, however, has shown much higher viscosity, with, consequently, less turnover (Fainstein and Fainstein). The 1974 Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) survey of state and local government employment of women and minorities shows that in 17 SMSAs where the minority group is mainly or substantially black, the

average percent of blacks in the central cities is 36.3 percent while the average of black employment in state and local government is 27 percent. The figures are not as far apart as one might have thought, but this must be evaluated in light of the substantial recent pressure to hire minority group members. For example, in Chicago, 38 percent of new hires in 1974 were black, though blacks comprise only 32.7 percent of Chicago's population. In 7 SMSAs where the minority group is mainly or substantially Hispanic, the average percent of Hispanics in the central cities is 31.6 percent while the average of Hispanic state and local government employment is 24.4 percent. Again affirmative action hiring has operated to favor Hispanics in recent years, thereby improving the ratio of minority employed to minority population (EEOC).<sup>4</sup>

Most new hires, however, as well as minority employees with some seniority, are at the lower levels of the government occupational structure. Thus supervisors responsible for workflow and supervision remain overwhelmingly white (EEOC). Despite affirmative action plans, whites still very strongly predominate in police, fire, street and highway, and finance departments, while minorities are very heavily involved in hospitals, public welfare, and utilities and transportation, with variable involvement in sanitation and sewerage departments depending on the city (EEOC). This division of labor of majority–minority employment also helps to breed service decline. (Some aspect of this will be considered below in regard to hospital care.)

In earlier years, I contend, in many cities the latent identities of the providers and consumers of services were more socially compatible, since both providers and consumers were overwhelmingly white. As to other identities—ethnic, religious, etc.—the providers may have had lesser status than those to whom they provided services. Where the status difference favors consumers of services, or where the difference to the advantage of providers is at least not *very* great, this conforms to the sociological understanding of the expected flow of status and benefits, and of the differential deference and obligations which groups at different status levels are prepared to accord and receive. In the status order of things, it was perfectly just in prior years that the relatively low status Irish policeman, Italian garbage collector, and Jewish teacher do their tasks in the division of labor where the consumers were no worse by and large than themselves in the status order, and were, often enough, much better. Status compatibility—or at least not gross incompatibility—in the latent statuses of providers and consumers of services allows dirty-work tasks to be done in the division of labor without the additional obstacle of self-pollution of one's latent identities.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, this pollution of status identity—making dirty-work even dirtier—is precisely what is entailed by the current status composition of the labor force of providers and the status composition of nearly a majority of

the population of consumers. White, higher status ethnics, are often the main groups responsible for providing services to black or other lower status ethnics: cleaning their dirt and trash from the streets and sidewalks, dealing with them in their most unattractive states—angry, drunk, sick, despairing—and thus requiring extremes of dirty-work by which the higher status groups salve, sooth, mollify, encourage, and groom the lower status group. But if there is a status order, and it is a fundamental sociological axiom that there is, these municipal service actions contradict the direction of service flow that the status order dictates. It is the higher status group that should be salved, soothed, mollified, encouraged, and groomed by the lower.

By virtue of the racial-ethnic transition in the status composition of providers and consumers of municipal services, a social anomaly has been created: higher status groups are required to service and do dirty-work for lower status groups. This goes against the status-grain, nullifying the significance of higher status.

There is indeed evidence that white municipal workers are negatively disposed toward black clients. Main et al. studied 24 agencies in the Atlanta, Georgia, Model Cities Program and found that white personnel were more likely to attribute negative characteristics to their mainly black clients. Rossi et al. found that white policemen in 15 cities surveyed were much more likely to endorse negative views of blacks and to perceive them as a threat than were black police, though black policemen are not particularly known to be "soft" (Reiss). Additionally, Thompson and Browne found that among a random sample of public agency officials, whites were significantly less committed to hiring minorities even after controlling for "commitment to economic equality" and "perception of racial inequality."

I propose that the overall effect of the relative status of present providers and consumers of services is to cause some withdrawal of commitment to task norms, some aversion to the performance of task duties, and a consequent drop in the level of task accomplishment. Even if my sociological surmise here accounts only for a 10 percent objective loss in effort and dedication, I believe this would be enough to account for the strong subjective sense of deterioration of services.

The argument I have outlined to this point concerns changes in the relative status of providers and consumers of services. It is designed to account for that portion of deteriorated service where providers are mainly white and consumers are mainly minority. I propose now a second status-based reason for the decline of services. It has to do with the relationship between status and the improvement in money income of providers, and its effects are indifferent to the racial-ethnic composition of either providers or consumers.

## Status and Money

In general, the status of an occupation, commonly known as prestige, is a relatively stable aspect of occupations (Hodge et al.). In Reiss et al.'s analysis of the responses to the 1947 North-Hatt study of occupational prestige, several matters relating to prestige and income are of interest. The single most important ground on which respondents gave an "excellent" rating to an occupation was its money income. Furthermore, the correlation between occupational prestige and median income for occupations was + .86, thus giving occupational prestige a very strong monetary basis. Also to the point is Parsons' discussion of the symbolic value of money compensation for occupational performance. His view is that income has status connotations even more than it does purely material ones. The dollar value of a job is thus a badge of one's status merit. The link between status and money ramifies in a special way in the problem of deteriorated services.

A dirty-work job—sanitation, police, fireman, social welfare case-worker, and the like—is socially congruent with relatively low prestige and certainly with low income. Yet, in recent years, income for these occupations has risen significantly (Kah). In many cities, as a result of strong municipal workers' unions, salaries of municipal workers have risen dramatically. (I am not arguing here about whether the salary levels are adequate or just in any absolute sense.) Since these money increases largely post-date the most recent update of occupational prestige standing (Siegel), I cannot say whether the money improvement is reflected in prestige rank improvement. Logically and deductively, however, it must be. Reiss et al. and Young and Wilmott found that while the standing attributed to occupations is generally the same across occupational and stratum levels, there is a tendency to upgrade one's own occupation, attributing more prestige to it than others do.

It is also known that money is a more important occupational criterion at lower than at higher stratum levels (Hyman). It is thus highly likely that members of municipal service occupations who have received relatively large salary increments in recent years have reevaluated the prestige of their occupations in an upward direction. This has a direct bearing on the image of self which members of these occupations must hold. Given the correlation between occupational prestige and income, given also the symbolic status value of income, those who provide many of the city's services must have experienced an important increment of self-esteem and self-evaluated status deserts as a result of recent salary increments. This has, I believe, a significant deleterious effect on the provision of services.

Ordinarily, the higher one's status, the less one does dirty-work. In transitional times, marked by rapid increases in income, a kind of "anomic division of labor" (Durkheim) results, in which the normative component of obligation and occupational responsibility which link all, even nonpro-

fessional occupations, to the general division of labor may lag until the proper relation between income and obligation is reaffirmed. I propose that the improvement in income-prestige-status militates, *for now*, against a diligent assumption of the dirty-work duties of municipal service tasks. We are thus led to the startling, yet apparently accurate proposition that the street cleaner is now too highly paid to clean streets, the policeman too highly paid to walk a beat, and, to indicate the universality of the proposition, the university professor too highly paid to teach. Yet, if the positive correlation between occupational status and income is correct, and the negative correlation between status and dirty-work is also correct, then the results just derived should hold.

### Normative and Remunerative Orientations

Etzioni provides a useful typology that sheds additional light on the issue of money and task performance: organizational social controls can be normative, remunerative, or coercive.<sup>6</sup> The normative implies evocation of value commitments which guide organization members in the performance of their tasks. Rewards are importantly symbolic—approval and recognition of contribution. In the remunerative pattern, rewards are essentially monetary. Commitment is guided mainly by the felt adequacy of the cash benefits.

I suggest that the development of strong unions among municipal employees has the latent effect of diminishing the normative interest inevitably. This comes about in part because of the periodic confrontations which polarize municipal employees and the municipal administration politically responsible for providing the services. The issues are often monetary, and the customary reluctance of public officials to pay more (because this would require higher taxes for which they will be held responsible) puts them into the position of failing to meet "just" demands. This promotes the likelihood of "reciprocal deviance" (Kemper, b). This is deviance in response to the felt deviance on the part of the organization (the municipal government) as represented by its leaders, the political elite. Withdrawal of service—the slowdown, minimal performance, etc.—are common forms of reciprocal deviance.

I propose that the monetary effect on normative interest is exacerbated by relatively rapid and frequent increases in income, which is the case when union contracts expire every two or three years. Expectations for income improvement gear up with this frequency. Just as often, however, do municipal administrations attempt to dampen these expectations. The result is that increasing monetary benefits lead to increasingly difficult negotiations for new benefits in later contracts, and increasing likelihood of withdrawal of service (Horton).<sup>7</sup>

Some insight into the effect of unions on fire protection is afforded

in the study by Coulter et al. of a sample of 324 cities of over 25,000 population located in 50 SMSAs with less than 1.5 million population. A discriminant function analysis showed "unionism" to be the single best predictor of expenditure level. It did not, however predict any of the quality-productivity variables: fire prevention effectiveness, fire suppression effectiveness, or fire service productivity.

In the letter to the *New York Times* cited earlier, Freyer makes a common error in assuming a positive relationship between recompense and effort: "Why can't we have street cleaners like we used to? There is nothing demeaning about a 'pay job' well done." (24). The error is to suppose that if a certain amount of recompense leads to good task performance, then more recompense should lead to even *better* task performance. This does not take into account the fact that a remunerative orientation must ultimately reach a limit without a normative supplement.

Research in experimental social psychology also supports this view of reduced commitment to task as income increases (Deci; Folger et al.). The psycho-logic is that substantial rewards interfere with intrinsic motivation to perform the task by centering motivation instrumentally on the benefit received rather than on the expressive or normative commitment to the work to be done.

There is evidence that some degree of normative orientation may be retained by *managers* in public organizations. Rainey found that they were less oriented toward monetary incentives than managers in private organizations. But normatively oriented managers who attempt to motivate their remuneratively oriented subordinates and line personnel by normative appeals are likely to fail. Indeed, lower echelons are likely to regard such efforts at symbolic activation with cynicism, as if purposely designed to turn attention away from monetary compensation. This serves only to polarize interests even further. Mandish and Frankel report that among police, for example, the most important recruitment incentives are pay and benefits, or the total compensation package. There seems to be little room here for a normative or service-oriented appeal.<sup>8</sup>

The normative deficit among providers of municipal services must operate to the detriment of a service commitment. If this analysis is correct, other things equal, service institutions (e.g., hospitals, social service agencies, etc.) with religious or ideological (e.g., union or political party) sponsorship should provide superior service to comparable institutions without such normative sponsorship. This would be difficult to establish due to methodological problems: pay scales in normatively sponsored, e.g., religious, institutions are usually lower, and this mitigates the very problem that is at issue. Furthermore, average competence levels may be inferior in these settings since the usual standards of competition and universalism may be suspended in favor of the normative interest. Yet the theoretical position requires that when there is dirty work, it will be done more easily

and with less reluctance if there is some "Wertrational" (Weber, b, 115) to offset the frustration. Hughes proposed that prestige and other rewards operate to make dirty-work palatable. I believe that a normative commitment does even better, since, after a certain point, increments of prestige and money can cause a deterioration in commitment.

I turn now to a final sociological basis for service deterioration.

### Social Class and the Decline of Services

Ironically, in those division-of-labor, dirty-work tasks where the upper status group is entitled to supportive treatment and where the providers of service are of lower latent status identity, services have also deteriorated. Perhaps the most notable case of this is in hospitals where routine medical care and housekeeping are generally provided by a cadre of black, Hispanic, or other minority nurses, aides, maintenance personnel and the like (EEOC). Here the worm has turned, so to speak, and the usual upper status group—white patients—is now at the mercy of the lower. There is relatively little evidence on this point, but Jacob's study of municipal services in Milwaukee reports that white middle class respondents were less satisfied with hospitals than with any other of seven municipal agencies.

Although it is tempting to retain the status notion in this further example of deteriorated services, it would be mistaken to do so. In the ideal-typical *status* order, the compliance and rendering of deference and benefits by those of lower status is voluntary and based on the sense that the upper status group deserves its place. If the conferral of benefits is coerced, however, we have, not status, but, in a general sense, *class* relations. An overclass obtains benefits from the underclass by exploitation and compulsion. Evidence for this is that when surveillance and coercion diminish or cease, deference and accord of benefits cease as well.

Status and class can alternate as fundamental principles that order compliance and deference to the wishes of others. Weber (a) proposed that class dominates in times of technological change, while in eras of technological stability a status order prevails. It is also possible for the two systems to co-exist at different levels of the social structure: the white middle and upper group believes in the status system, while the minority lower group operates according to the class system (cf. Mann).

I propose that in the case of the mainly minority group lower echelon professionals and other workers in health care institutions, the operative sociological principle is one of class. For a brief, relatively protected period, members of the underclass can avenge themselves on members of the overclass. Perhaps only superhuman forbearance and professional norms far stronger than those prevailing would be required to prevent retributive nonfeasance. History does not record many instances of charitable, com-

passionate return when underdogs become overdogs. In the health setting, the status order is nullified by the power order. The white higher class ethnic is generally powerless before the minority, lower class, hospital worker, who here controls the delivery of ease, comfort, and cleanliness. The white patient can call on his doctor to try to remedy matters, but in interprofessional give-and-take only the most flagrant violations are likely to be followed up with punishment that has a deterrent effect (Freidson).

### Summary and Conclusions

If the evidence—both subjective and objective—is sound, many municipal services have deteriorated from previous levels despite increases in service-ability ratios and compensation. An economic model would of necessity view a decline of service under these conditions as an anomaly. Socio-logic, however, appears to explain the contradiction. If providers of services improve their status levels relative to consumers, this militates against the willing conferral of services to the lower status groups because it confutes the sociological premises of status relations. This is especially the case when the services to be provided are essentially dirty-work, as is true in the case of many of the services that have apparently declined. If the answer is to compensate providers better, this appears to have the perverse result of reducing services even further. This is because socio-logic indicates that those who receive higher pay also deserve higher status. But those of higher status are not supposed to do dirty-work to any degree. The end result is that services continue to decline. This introduces a form of anomie in the municipal labor setting. If Durkheim's analysis of the anomic division of labor is correct, it will take some time to reequilibrate the relationship between moral obligation to perform and the new level of compensation.

A normative as opposed to remunerative orientation as described by Etzioni would be useful in all cases where increased income disposes toward a decline in service. Yet it is precisely such an orientation that increased compensation negates. To get more money appears inherently to nullify effort, unless a very powerful normative orientation is already in place.

As if to knot the service problem even tighter, when circumstances put ordinarily upper level consumers in the hands of a newly militant set of usually lower level providers—the class conflict is also resolved in favor of less service. Thus both status and class effects operate to guarantee less service than in the past. This leads, of course, to a demand for more personnel and a higher budget. The consequence can only be to cause services to decline even more.

What is to be done? Clearly the answer is not to reduce status or

reduce incomes, except perhaps at extremely high levels. The effect of such a policy would be to reduce services even further, as a response of reciprocal deviance (Kemper, b) to the deviance of reducing incomes and prestige. Even supposedly normatively oriented professionals can strike or shirk, e.g., doctors (Badgley and Wolfe). All the more would one expect remuneratively oriented service providers to engage in job actions, slow-downs, etc.—police, firemen, sanitation workers, and air-traffic controllers.

The answer lies, in part, in the same terms as the problem: reequilibrate the status levels of providers and consumers by recruiting the major proportion of providers from the major minority groups of lower status municipal residents (cf. Main et al.). This would have the effect, sociologically, of redressing the status imbalance in the direction that is most congruent for purposes of willing conferral of benefits, namely to those above one in the status order, and at least, not too far below (cf. Lipsky; Rich).

The white flight from the central cities has already sentenced many cities to a sure fate as mainly black and minority preserves, along with an upper white elite and bohemian-professional group. A largely black and minority service force in the central cities would thus accomplish the necessary status reequilibration.

I have tried to test this proposal with data that examine indexes of municipal satisfaction in relation to proportions of minority members in the municipal labor force. Unfortunately there is no single body of data that provides both these pieces of information concurrently for a large sample of cities. However Rossi et al. present several indexes of satisfaction with urban services and conditions for 15 cities in 1969, while EEOC provides proportions of minority employees in state and local government for 23 SMSAs in 1974. Eight areas in the two studies are the same: Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Newark, Philadelphia, and St. Louis. Table 1, column 1, shows the correlations between proportion of blacks in state and local government in 1974 with 11 indexes of satisfaction with municipal services in 1969. Column 2 shows the same correlations controlling for proportion of blacks residing in both the SMSA and the central city.

The results are offered with due appreciation for the smallness of the nonrandom sample of cities, the five-year time lag between the measurement of the putative independent and dependent variables, and the fact that the time lag reverses the sensible order of the two variables. Were there no such problems, we would expect the correlations to indicate that the higher proportion of blacks in state and local government employment, the greater the satisfaction.<sup>9</sup> In light of these expectations, what do we find?

First, the felt seriousness of such problems as crime control, race relations, and recreation are negatively related to proportion of black em-

**Table 1.** CORRELATIONS BETWEEN PROPORTION OF BLACKS IN STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT AND INDEXES OF SATISFACTION WITH URBAN SERVICES

Indexes of Satisfaction	One	Two*
(1) Crime control a serious problem†	-441‡	-744
(2) Race relations a serious problem	-444	-608
(3) Education a serious problem	282	306
(4) Recreation a serious problem	-646	-809
(5) Evaluation of city government	566	575
(6) Perceived rate of black progress	-702	-721
(7) Perceived opportunity for blacks	-559	-705
(8) Satisfaction with schools (blacks)	406	232
(9) Satisfaction with schools (whites)	045	291
(10) Mayor trying hard to solve problems (blacks)	279	181
(11) Mayor trying hard to solve problems (whites)	411	355

\*Column Two reports correlation between proportion of blacks in State and Local government controlling for differences in proportion of blacks living in SMSA and central city.

†Items from Rossi et al.: items 1-4, p. 88; 5, p. 96; 6, p. 100; 7, p. 269; 8-9, p. 356; 10-11, p. 392.

‡Decimal points omitted.

ployees. Second, evaluation of city government, satisfaction with schools, and with the mayor, by both black and white citizens, are positively correlated with proportion of black employees. Both sets of correlations confirm the hypothesis proposed above. On the other hand, proportion of blacks employed in state and local government correlates negatively with perceived rate of black progress and perception of opportunities available for blacks. These results are contrary to the hypothesis and are not easily explained. One possibility is that the reverse time lag in the independent and dependent variables has emerged as a problem here. But this invites the further question of why the effect was not universal for all variables in the set. A second possible explanation is that of relative deprivation, as discussed in *The American Soldier* (Stouffer et al.). In the Air Force, where promotion rates were relatively high, satisfaction with promotion rates was lower than in the Military Police, where promotion rates were relatively low. It is not possible to test this explanation further with available data. Notwithstanding these two negative outcomes, and the additional one regarding education as a serious problem (see Table 1), the pattern for the other eight variables is to confirm the status-equilibration hypothesis.

However, there are problems with this solution, not the least of which is whether we ought to assume that the status differentiation between black and minority groups on the one hand and whites on the other will long continue. If it does not, and status is distributed in a more egalitarian form to latent identities this will at least not mean a reversal of status between providers and consumers as is now often the case.

There are other problems. Are minorities well enough trained to take over the service functions and to perform them adequately? If not, it only signifies how deeply rooted the problem is and how large a price must be paid for the years of invidious benefits conferred on the white majority by discriminatory practices. Another issue is whether minority service personnel will make class war on white consumers, denying them legitimately due services, as can be the case in urban hospital settings. Again we come squarely up against a question of equity. "The task of the most advanced societies," said Durkheim "is to do justice" (387). In this case it means the full equality of opportunity that enables all to find niches in the division of labor indifferent to their latent status identities. I believe that for the interim, we may wish to do this at last, thereby to subject Durkheim's proposition to a crucial test.

It may be that only social justice can give the cities clean streets again.

## Notes

1. Some of the material on absolute numbers of personnel pertain to the period just prior to the immediate present in which municipal rosters have been reduced through attrition or outright layoffs as a result of budget cuts. These reductions do not, however, affect the main argument of the paper.
2. Evidence for the 1971 to 1976 period indicates that the overall increase is not distributed uniformly over cities, due to differences in local wage gains and local inflation rates (*New York Times*).
3. Lineberry (a) also concludes that services have declined on the basis of increased expenditures, in a manner similar to that presented here.
4. The employment data are a bit difficult to tease out of the EEOC materials, since minority employment percentages are given for SMSAs while the argument of this paper is directed toward central cities. I assume that the minority employment is overwhelmingly focused in the central city. Also, since the selection of SMSAs is not random, the results must be interpreted cautiously.
5. For another use of the relative status approach, see Berry and Kasarda (especially Chap. 2), who argue that one of the basic causes of urban residential turnover in recent years is the invidious status difference between fleeing whites and the black and other minorities pressing into their neighborhoods.
6. The coercive model of social control does not apply to the present issue and will not be discussed.
7. While the problem would be bad enough in its pure form, it is complicated by inflationary pressures which drive municipal employees to seek settlements that merely keep up the level of their real wages without regard to their improvement.
8. Lipsky believes that higher education among police will promote improved services, but Mandish and Franklin report that, to date, the evidence on this is equivocal.
9. Significance level for correlations in column 1  $p < .05$ , is .707; for column 2, .811. The results are analyzed here in terms of the pattern, by sign, either supporting or negating the hypothesis.

**Appendix**

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I estimate real increase in municipal worker wages as follows:

$$\text{Real Increase} = 1975 \text{ wages} - Z$$

$$Z = 1967 \text{ wages} + X + Y + W$$

$X = (.25) (1967 \text{ wages})$  This accounts for the 25 percent increase in personnel 1967 to 1975.

$Y = (.6) (1967 \text{ wages})$  This accounts for inflation of 60 percent in the wages of employees on the payroll in 1967.

$W = (.3) (.25) (1967 \text{ wages})$  This accounts for inflation in the wages of employees added since 1967. I assume for purposes of this computation that all new employees were hired at the midpoint of the inflation cycle. Thus I estimate inflation for this group is only 30 percent.

$Z =$  Estimate of 1975 wages for all employees with inflation accounted for.

Actual Figures:

$$Z = 1967 \text{ wages} + X + Y + W$$

$$\$1,870,226,050 = \$971,546,000 + \$242,886,500 + \$582,927,600 + \$72,865,950$$

$$\text{Real Increase} = 1975 \text{ wages} - Z$$

$$\$259,087,950 = \$2,129,314,000 - \$1,870,226,500$$


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