


122. Ibid., pp. 14-19.


124. Bershady, Ideology and Social Knowledge, p. 16.

125. Stefan Nowak, “Empirical Knowledge and Social Values in the Cumulative Development of Sociology,” (Revision of paper prepared for the Round Table "Is There a Crisis in Sociology?" at the 8th World Congress of Sociology, Toronto, August 1974).

Social Stratification and Social-Class Analysis

Concern with social class and social stratification is as old as social thought. The ancient Greek philosophers were extremely conscious of the effects of stratification, and propositions about stratification may be found throughout many of the writings of Aristotle and Plato. Thus Aristotle, in discussing the conditions for different types of political organization, suggested in essence that constitutional government limitation on the powers of the political elite is most likely to be found in societies with large middle classes, while city-states characterized by large lower classes and small middle and upper classes would be more likely to be governed as dictatorships based on mass support, or as oligarchies. This general approach has been elaborated in contemporary studies of the social requisites of democracy. Plato, in the Republic, discussed the conditions for a genuine equitarian communist society and suggested that the family is the key support of inequality—that is, of social stratification. His argument, which is still followed by many contemporary sociologists, was that individuals are motivated to secure for other family members, for whom they feel affection, any privileges that they themselves enjoy. Hence, in every society there is a built-in pressure to institutionalize inequality by making it hereditary. Plato argued that the only way to create a communist society would be to take children away from their parents and to have the state raise them, so as to eliminate the tendency toward inherited social privilege.

Most of contemporary sociological theory and research on social class, however, does not stem from the Greeks. The emphasis of the Enlightenment on the possibility of social laws and of their discovery through observation and comparative study must be taken as one of the principal methodological breakthroughs. Institutional regularities, such as those governing class, status, and political relationships, became objects of disinterested inquiry as things in themselves, thus reversing the notion, dominant in the Middle Ages, that the temporal sphere was nothing more than an auxiliary part of the supernatural plan, subject to the principles of natural law.
The Enlightenment served to erase the assumptions about hierarchy, class, and intergroup relationships that stemmed from the medieval model of an organic Christian civilization. Thus, the basis was being laid for a science of society.

But it was Karl Marx, more than anyone else, who carried this scientific perspective into the study of social class, even going so far as to derive his idea of class from what he called the scientific laws of history. He then not only accepted the premise that social phenomena possess their own laws, but also set out to discover the underlying variables and how they are expressed under differing historical conditions. Thus, if one were to award the title of father of the study of social class to any individual, it would have to be to Marx. He made class the central aspect of his analysis of society and of his theory of social change. Though most latter-day sociologists have disagreed with many, if not most, of Marx’s assumptions about stratification, may of the non-Marxist or anti-Marxist ideas on the subject have come about in reaction to Marx’s original formulations.

This does not mean, of course, that there were not other important eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century figures who used stratification concepts in a sophisticated manner. Marx obviously was a child of his times; many of his ideas, sometimes in almost identical form, can be found in the writings of others. The Marxist formulation, laid down in the chapter “Social Classes” in Capital, that there are three major economic classes in modern society—landlords receiving rent, capitalists profit, and workers wages—is derived directly from Ricardo’s Principles, published in 1817, a work that also presented the labor theory of value. 2 Adam Smith’s great book, The Wealth of Nations, is an important work for the study of stratification, as are other writings of the school of Scottish philosophers of his day. 3 The American founding fathers contended that all complex societies are stratified and that there is an inherent basis of conflict among groups with diverse economic and class interests. Various American Marxist groups have, in fact, sought to legitimate Marxist doctrine as compatible with classic American thought by pointing to the similarities between the ideas presented in No. 10 of The Federalist Papers and various writings of Marx. 4 However, these precursors of Marxism influenced sociology primarily through their influence on Marx himself. It was he who formulated the theory of class so powerfully that he defined the terms of the argument for later sociological thinkers.

Types of Theoretical Approach

Approaches to the fact of social inequality have differed in the extent to which they emphasize change or stability in social systems. These differences in theoretical orientation have to a considerable extent reflected political differences. Reformists or radicals have seen reactions against social inequality and social class differences as sources of social change, which they are inclined to favor. Theorists with more conservative political tastes have justified aspects of the existing order of trying to show the functions performed by hierarchy in all social systems. Concern with social change has generally been associated with interest in social classes, that is, groups within stratified collectivities that are said to act politically as agents of change. Those stressing the functional basis of inequality have been interested in social stratification and in the purposes served by differential rewards, particularly in prestige, for various positions in social systems.

Those using the concept of social class to interpret the dynamics of social change have assumed that the creation of new occupational or economic roles has often resulted in the emergence of groups that initially were outside the traditional hierarchical system. As these new groups attempt to stabilize their position within society, they come into conflict with older, privileged strata whose status, economic resources, or power they challenge. The new groups also often develop sets of values, both secular and religious, that enhance their position by undermining the stability of the prior value system and the structure of privilege it justified. Thus historical change is viewed basically as a consequence of the rise of new classes and the downfall of old ones; it is assumed that complex social systems are inherently unstable and that conflicts stemming from inequality cause pressure for changes in the system.

In contrast, functional theorists have assumed that social systems must be treated as if they were in equilibrium. From this point of view, it is necessary to relate the various attributes of the social hierarchy to the conditions for social stability. Class, therefore, has been seen by these theorists not as an intervening variable in the process of social change but, rather, as a set of institutions that provide some of the conditions necessary for the operation of a complex society. These conditions, basically, amount to the need for a system of differentiated rewards as a means of institutionalizing the division of labor: differentiation by status and income is posited as a necessary part of the system of motivation required to place individuals in the various positions that must be filled if society is to operate.

The interest of students of social change in why men rebel, why they want change, has led to an emphasis within the tradition of class analysis on the way in which inequality frustrates men and leads them to reject the status quo. Functional analysts, on the other hand, are much more concerned with how the social system gets men to conform, to seek and remain in various positions in society, including ones that are poorly rewarded or require onerous work. The former, in other words, often ask how systems of stratification are undermined; the latter seek to know how and why they hold together.
It is important to note that while any analysis of social class must necessarily deal with social stratification as well, these two terms are not synonymous. Theories of social class refer to the conditions affecting the existence of strata that have developed or should develop some "consciousness of kind," that is, some sense of existence as a group attribute of society. Stratification refers to the entire complex of hierarchical differentiation, whether group-related or not. Although this discussion is about social class, much of the analysis in it will involve stratification, since it is impossible to account for the way in which social classes are formed, change, and affect other aspects of society without referring to stratification systems as such.

I have distinguished two polar traditions of social thought that do not, of course, occur in pure form in real life. (A review of theoretical commonalities between Marxist and functionalist analyses can be found in chapter 1.) Marx, the foremost student of class and social change and the advocate, par excellence, of instability and revolution, was also aware of the functional aspects of social stratification. Many of his writings attempt to show how ideologies, values, and patterns of behavior-all at different class levels-serve to maintain the stability of the social order. In fact, Marxian analysis is replete with functional propositions.

The functionalists, on the other hand, are of course aware that change and conflict occur and that men not only accept but also reject the given stratification system. Thus (as is noted in more detail below) the most influential stimulator of functional thought in sociology, Emile Durkheim, sought to show the way in which strains in value emphases within the same system lead individuals and groups to reject the dominant value system and to deviate from expected forms of behavior. Where Marx saw alienation as inherent in social inequality, Durkheim suggested that anomie, or rulelessness, is endemic in all complex social systems.

To see the way these concerns with stability and change, with alienation, and with the formation of class sentiments have evolved in modern social thought, it is necessary to turn to an examination of the work of some of the key theorists, particularly Marx, Weber, and Durkheim.

The Marxist Theory of Class

Marxist sociology starts from the premise that the primary function of social organization is the satisfaction of basic human needs-food, clothing, and shelter. Hence, the productive system is the nucleus around which other elements of society are organized. Contemporary sociology has reversed this emphasis by stressing the distribution system, the stratification components of which are status and prestige. To Marx, however, distribution is a dependent function of production.

Stemming from the assumption of the primacy of production is the Marxist definition of class: any aggregate of persons who play the same part in the production mechanism. Marx, in *Capital*, outlined three main classes, differentiated according to relations to the means of production: (1) capitalists, or owners of the means of production; (2) workers, or all those who are employed by others; (3) landowners, who in Marx's theory seemingly differ from capitalists and are regarded as survivors of feudalism.5 From Marx's various historical writings, it is clear that he had a more complex view than this of the hierarchical reality and that he realized, for instance, that there is differentiation within each of these basic categories. Thus, the small businessmen, or petty bourgeoisie, were perceived as a transitional class, a group that will be pressed by economic tendencies inherent in capitalism to bifurcate into those who descend to the working class and those who so improve their circumstances that they become significant capitalists.

Although Marx differentiated classes in objective terms, his primary interest was in understanding and facilitating the emergence of class consciousness among the depressed strata. He wished to see created among them a sense of identical class interests, as a basis for conflict with the dominant class. The fact that a group held a number of objective characteristics in common but did not have the means of reaching organized class consciousness meant for Marx that it could not play the role of a historically significant class. Thus, he noted in "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" that the French peasants of that period possessed many attributes that implied a common class situation:

The small-holding peasants form a vast mass, the members of which live in similar conditions, but without entering into manifold relations with one another. Their mode of production isolates them from one another, instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse. The isolation is increased by France's bad means of communication and by the poverty of the peasants.... In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organization among them, they do not form a class.6

Nikolai Bukharin, one of the leading theoreticians of the Russian Communist party, who was more concerned with sociological theory and research than any other major Marxist figure, attempted to formalize the differences among the workers, the peasants, and the lumpenproletariat (unattached laborers), making the workers a class and the other two not classes. His analysis, based on the events of the early decades of the twentieth century, was elaborated beyond that of Marx.
TABLE 2.1
Bukharin's Analysis of Class Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class properties</th>
<th>Lumpen</th>
<th>Peasantry</th>
<th>Proletariat</th>
</tr>
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</table>


The working class is exploited by a visible common oppressor, is brought together by conditions of work that encourage the spread of ideas and organization among them, and remains in a structured conflict situation with its employers over wages and working conditions. Consequently, over time it can become a conscious class.

Marx, however, did not expect there to be a high correlation between objective class position and subjective revolutionary class consciousness until the point at which the social system in question broke down: if there was to be total class consciousness in any given society, then by definition it would be in the midst of revolution. In normal times, structural factors press deprived strata to become conscious, but the inherent strength of the ruling class prevents class consciousness. The dominant class possesses social legitimacy, controls the media of communication, is supported by the various mechanisms of socialization and social control, such as the school and the church, and during its period of stability is able to “buy off” those inclined to lead or participate in opposition movements. The Marxist term that characterizes the ideology of the lower class in the period of the predominance of the other classes is “false consciousness.”

Marx was not very concerned with analyzing the behavior of the capitalist upper class. Basically, he assumed that the powerful parts of such a class must be self-conscious and that the state as a vehicle of power necessarily serves the interests of the dominant class in the long run. But more important to Marx than the sociology of the privileged class was that of the workers; the important question for research and action concerned the factors that would bring about working-class consciousness.

The dilemma of the Marxist theory of class is also the dilemma of every other single-variable theory. We can locate a class member objectively, but this may tell us little about the subjective correlates (social outlook, attitudes, etc.) of class position. Marx never actually said that at any given point in history or for any individual there would necessarily have to be a relationship between class position and the attitudes of class members. He did believe, however, that common conditions of existence create the necessary base for the development of common class attitudes, but that at any point in time, sharp discrepancies may exist between class position and class attitudes or behavior. Marx attempted to deal with this problem by his theory of transitional stages in the development of class. The first stage, in which a class is a class “in itself” (the German an sich), occurs when the class members do not understand their class position, the controls over them, or their “true class interests.” The proletariat, as long as they are simply fighting for higher wages without recognizing that this is part of a necessary class struggle between themselves and the bourgeoisie that will end in the victory of one or the other, are a class an sich. In ideal-type terms the opposite of the class in itself is the class “for itself” (fur sich). The class fur sich is a self-conscious class, a large proportion of whose members consciously identify with it and think in terms of the class's struggle with another class. As long as most persons in a lower class think in an sich terms, the behavior of class members will be characterized by intraclass competition in which individual members of the class strive to get ahead of other members. In such a period, class conflict will be weak. Only when fur sich attitudes develop does the class struggle really emerge. Members of a lower class who do not yet identify with their class are, according to Marx, thinking in terms of values or concepts that are functional for the stability of the position of the dominant class. Any individual, therefore, though objectively a member of the lower class, may subjectively be identified with or may be acting in ways which correspond to the position of another class. At different periods varying portions of an underprivileged population may be either an sich or fur sich. One of the purposes of Marxist analysis is the investigation of this discrepancy. In discussing the rise of the bourgeoisie, Marx suggested that the period during which the bourgeoisie was a class an sich was longer and required greater effort than the period during which it became self-conscious and took political class action to overthrow feudalism and monarchy. Implicit in this discussion of the development of the bourgeoisie class is the idea that the emergence of self-consciousness among the workers will also take a long time. Marx in fact suggested “making a precise study of strikes, combinations and other forms of class activity” in order to find out how the proletariat organizes itself as a class.8
Alienation

A key element in the Marxist sociology of the exploited is the Hegelian concept of alienation. Men are distinguished from animals—are less animal and more human-insofar as they become increasingly self-conscious about and freely selective in their work and conditions of life. Insofar as men do not freely choose their work but, rather, do whatever tasks are set before them, simply in order to exist, they remain in a less than human state. If work (or leisure) is imposed on man, so far from being free, he is objectively exploited and alienated from the truly human, that is, autonomous, condition.1

Alienation, for Marx, is an objective, not a subjective, condition. It signifies lack of autonomy, of self-control. The fact that workers may say that they like their work or social conditions does not mean that they are free actors, even if they think they are. Thus, in a slave society the fact that some slaves may have believed that they preferred to be slaves, and even that they were better off as slaves than as freed men, did not change the fact that objectively they were slaves. Similarly, the fact that a wage worker likes his conditions of work does not affect his position of being alienated and economically exploited or his potential as a free human being. In this sense, class society is akin to slavery. Class society must produce alienated individuals who are distorted, partial people. Marx therefore sought to document the facts about alienation and to understand the conditions under which estrangement, resentment, and, ultimately, political class consciousness would arise. Both class and alienation, he thought, would be eliminated by ending the private ownership of the means of production, for as long as people are working for others, they do not have conscious control over their life space and therefore are not truly human. Fully human society would come about when the production system could produce abundance in an absolute sense, when the machines produced enough food, clothing, and shelter for all men, to have as much as they needed, so that they could then devote themselves not to fighting over the scarce fruits of production but to fostering the activities of the mind. In essence, he was arguing that all class societies were pre-human and that class must disappear.

The Weberian Approach to Stratification

While Marx placed almost exclusive emphasis on economic factors as determinants of social class, Weber suggested that economic interests should be seen as a special case of the larger category of "values," which included many things that are neither economic nor interests in the ordinary sense of the term. For Weber, the Marxist model, although a source of fruitful hypotheses, was too simple to handle the complexity of stratification. He therefore sought to differentiate among the various sources of hierarchical differentiation and potential cleavage. The two most important sets of hierarchies for Weber were class and status.10

Class

Weber reserved the concept of class for economically determined stratification. He defined a class as being composed of people who have life chances in common, as determined by their power to dispose of goods and skills for the sake of income. Property is a class asset, but it is not the only criterion of class. For Weber, the crucial aspect of a class situation is, ultimately, the market situation.

The existence of large groups of people who can be located in a common class situation need not produce communal or societal action-that is, conscious, interest-determined activity-although it should produce similar reactions in the sense that those in the same class situation should exhibit similar behavior and attitudes without having a sense of class consciousness. These similarities, such as patterns of voting behavior or of drinking habits, reflect the effect of variations in life chances among the classes.

Weber, like Marx, was concerned with the conditions under which class consciousness arises. For him, however, there was no single form of class consciousness. Rather, which groups develop a consciousness of common interest opposed to those of another group is a specific empirical question; different groups acquire historical significance at different times and in different places. The extent of consciousness of kind depends to a considerable degree on the general culture of a society, particularly the set of intellectual ideas current within it. Concepts or values that might foster or inhibit the emergence of class-conscious groups cannot be derived solely from knowledge about the objective economic structure of a society. The existence of different strata subjected to variations in life chances does not necessarily lead to class action. The causal relationship posited by Marx between the fact of group inferiority and other aspects of the structure that might be changed by action had to be demonstrated to people; consciousness of it need not develop spontaneously. The presence or absence of such consciousness is not, of course, a fortuitous matter. The extent to which ideas emerge pointing to a causal relationship between class position and other social conditions is linked to the transparency of the relationship—that is, to how obvious it is that one class will benefit by action directed against another.

An examination of the history of class struggles suggested to Weber that conflicts between creditors and debtors are perhaps the most visible form of conflict flowing from economic differentiation. The conflict between employers and workers is also highly visible under capitalism, but it is essentially a special case of the economic struggle between buyers and sellers, a form
of interest tension normal within a capitalist market economy. It involves an act of
creative imagination and perception to develop an ideology that the tension
between employer and worker requires an attack on the entire system of
private ownership through the common action of all workers against the capitalist
class. Such an act is much more likely to come from the intellectuals, who thereby
present the workers with an ideological formula, than from the workers
themselves. In this respect, Weber came to conclusions similar to those drawn by
Lenin, who also argued that workers by themselves could only reach the stage of
emancipation, of trade union consciousness—that is, of conflict with their
employers over wages and working conditions. For Lenin, as for Weber, the
emergence of revolutionary class consciousness requires leadership, much of
which would be drawn from other strata—in Lenin’s case, the elite or
vanguard party.11 Weber explicitly formalized the conditions that facilitate the
emergence of class consciousness in terms that incorporated the principal
elements of the Marxist scheme almost intact, although he made the significant
and important addition of common status:

Organized activity of class groups is favored by the following circumstances: (a)
the possibility of concentrating on opponents where the immediate conflict
of interests is vital. Thus workers organize against management and not against
security holders who are the ones who really draw income without working.
... (b) The existence of a class status which is typically similar for large
masses of people. (c) The technical possibility of being easily brought together.
This is particularly true where large numbers work together in a small area, as in the
modern factory. (d) Leadership directed to readily understandable goals.
Such goals are very generally imposed or at least are interpreted by persons, such
as intelligentsia, who do not belong to the class in question. 12

Weber’s condition (a) is essentially a rephrasing of Marx’s antagonism factor,
though Weber made a distinction, not made by Marx, concerning the direction
of the antagonism—in this case, toward the visible overseer. Condition (b)
was never explicitly discussed by Marx. Condition (c) is borrowed
directly from Marx. As for condition (d), in Marx’s works it appears as the role
of the party, although Marx never faced up to the problems that arise when a
worker’s party has a middle-class leadership.

Status

The second major dimension of stratification, status, refers to the quality of
perceived interaction. Status was defined by Weber as the positive or negative
estimation of honor, or prestige, received by individuals or positions. Thus it
involves the felt perceptions of people. Those in a similar status position tend to
see themselves as located in a comparable position on the social hierarchy. Since
status involves perception of how much one is valued by others, men value it
more than economic gain.

Weber argued that since status is manifest, consciousness of kind is more likely
to be linked to status differentiation than to class. In other words, those who are in
a higher or lower status group are prone to support status-enhancing activities,
whether or not these activities can be classed as political. Those groups with high
status will be motivated to support values and institutions that seemingly serve
to perpetuate their status. Weber regarded economic class as important primarily
because it is perceived as a cause of status. Since it is usually easier to make or
lose money than it is to gain or lose status, those in privileged status positions
seek to dissociate status from class, that is, to urge that status reflects factors such
as family origin, manners, education, and the like-attributes that are more
difficult to attain or lose than economic wealth.

There is, of course, as Weber pointed out, a strong correlation between status
and class positions. However, once a group has attained high status through given
achievements, its members try to limit the chances that others will replace them.
And this is often done by seeking to deny the original source of individual or
family status. The economic and class orders are essentially universalistic and
achievement-oriented. Those who get, are. He who secures more money is
more important than he who has less. The status order, on the other hand,
tends to be particularistic and ascriptive. It involves the assumption that high
status reflects aspects of the system that are unachievable. Thus it operates to
inhibit social mobility, up or down. Weber, in his writings on status, echoed the
functional analysis of the role of style presented by Veblen.13 For Weber, as for
Veblen, the function of conspicuous consumption—that is, of emphasis on
pragmatically useless styles of consumption that take many years to learn—
was to prevent mobility and to institutionalize the privileges of those who had risen
to the top in previous years or epochs. Status groups are therefore identifiable by
specific styles of life. Even though the original source of status was economic
achievement, a status system, once in existence, operates independently of the
class system and even seeks to negate its values. This, as Weber and Veblen both
suggested, explains the seemingly surprising phenomenon that even to an industrial
capitalist society, money-making is considered vulgar by many; in
privileged positions, and the children of those who have made money are
frequently to be found in noncommercial activities.

Class Relations and Status Relations

The distinction between class and status is also reflected in the different
nature of the key set of interactions that characterizes each. Class relations are
defined by interaction among unequals in a market situation; status is determined
primarily by relations with equals, even though there are many status contacts
among unequals. The sanctions, in the case of status, are
greater when violating the norms for relations with equals than those for relations with unequals.

One value of differentiating between class and status is that while these two dimensions of stratification are correlated, there are many cases in which they are discrepant. Thus individuals or groups may be higher in status than in class, or vice versa. Weber argued that such discrepancies are important aids to understanding the dynamics of social change and of conflict; he detected an inherent strain between the norms of the market and those of status systems. Markets are the dynamic source of tension for modern industrial society. Success or failure in the market constantly upsets the relative position of groups and individuals: groups high in status and wealth often lose their relative economic position because of market innovations, failure to adjust to change, and the like, while others rise suddenly on the scale of wealth. Those who had status and its frequent concomitant, legitimate access to political authority, exert their influence and power against the nouveaux riches. For example, a common interpretation of the behavior of the French bourgeoisie during the Revolution of 1789 is that they had not pressed for economic rights and power because they already possessed all they needed. Rather, they had wanted to force the monarchy and aristocracy to accord them high status. Similarly, Weber's disciple Robert Michels suggested that the political radicalism of many quite wealthy European Jews before World War I was a consequence of their having been denied a status position commensurate with their class level in society.

Social Structure and Political Conflict

An industrial society characterized by an elaborate, highly institutionalized status structure combined with the class tensions usually found in industrial societies is more likely to exhibit class-conscious politics than is one in which status lines are imprecise and not formally recognized. It has therefore been argued that Marxist, class-conscious parties have been stronger in societies, like the Wilhelmine Germany in which Weber lived most of his life, that maintain a very visible and fairly rigid status system derived from preindustrial society than in class societies, such as the United States, that lack a feudal tradition of estates. Moreover, insofar as the dynamics of a successful industrial society undermine the ascriptive status mechanisms inherited from the feudal precapitalist order, the amount of political conflict arising from class consciousness is reduced. Hence it would seem to follow from Weber's analysis that the growth of industrial capitalism, and the consequent imposition on the stratification system of capitalism's emphases on achievement and universalism, weaken rather than increase class-linked consciousness of kind.

This thesis of Weber's that stresses the consequences of structural changes on class relationships has been paralleled by T. H. Marshall's analysis of the relationship between citizenship and social class. Citizenship, for Marshall, is a status that involves access to various rights and powers. In premodern times citizenship was limited to a small elite; social development in European states has consisted to a considerable extent in admitting new social stratafirst the bourgeoisie and later the workers-to the status of citizen. The concept of the citizen that arose with the emergence of the bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century involved a claim to universalistic rights in the status order, as well as the political one. Marshall has suggested that class-conscious ideologies of the extreme sort are characteristic of new strata, such as the bourgeoisie or the working class, as they fight for the right to full social and political participation-that is, for citizenship. As long as they are denied citizenship, sizable segments of these classes endorse revolutionary ideologies. In turn, older strata and institutions seeking to preserve their ancient monopolies of power and status foster extreme conservative doctrines.

From this point of view, the history of political ideologies in democratic countries can be written in terms of the emergence of new social strata and their eventual integration into society and polity. In Europe, the struggle for such integration took the form of defining a place in the polity for the business strata and the working class alongside the preindustrial upper classes and the church. Unless class conflicts overlapped with continuing controversies concerning the place of religion, as they did in Latin Europe, or concerning the status of the traditional upper strata, as they did in Germany, intense ideological controversy declined soon after the new strata gained full citizenship rights.

Power, Status, and Bureaucracy

Power, which in the Marxist analysis derives from class position, is a much more complex phenomenon in the Weberian model. Weber defined power as the chance of a man or group to realize their will even against, the opposition of others. Power may be a function of resources possessed in the economic, status, and political systems; both status and class are power resources. Since men want higher status, they tend to try to orient their behavior to that approved by those with the higher status which they value. Power resources can also be found in institutions that command the allegiance of people-religions, parties, trade unions, and the like. Anyone with followers or, like the military, with control of force, may have access to power. In large measure, the relative weight of different power resources is determined by the rules of the political game, whatever these may be in different societies. The structure of legal authority and its degree of legitimacy influence the way in which power is secured.

For Weber, the key source of power in modern society is not to be found in the ownership of the means of production. Rather, the increased complexity
of modern industrial society leads to the development of vast bureaucracies that become increasingly interconnected and interdependent. The modern state, with its monopoly of arms and administration, becomes the dominant institution in bureaucrmatized society. Because of the increasing complexity of operating modern social institutions, even economic institutions are brought into a close, dependent relationship with the administrative and military bureaucracies of the state. Increasingly, therefore, as all social institutions, the key power resources become rigidly hierarchical large-scale bureaucracies.

**Bureaucratization and Alienation**

This concern with bureaucracy as the key hierarchical power-related structure of the stratification system of industrial society (whether the society is formally capitalist or socialist is irrelevant) led Weber to formulate a source of alienation very different from that of Marx. For Weber, it was not only the wage worker who becomes alienated through his lack of control over his human needs; the bureaucrat is even more subject to obsessive demands. Bureaucracy, in fact, has an inherent tendency to destroy men's autonomy. It is characterized by formalism and it involves, in Weber's terms: (1) subordination; (2) expertise (and hence a rigid division of labor); (3) obeying fixed rules. Even members of small, nonbureaucratic structures have their freedom reduced if these structures are involved with bureaucracies. In this conclusion, Weber agreed with Marx. However, for Weber the key depersonalizing element is the expectation that the bureaucrat will give absolute loyalty to the organization. Loyalty within a bureaucracy is impersonal; no personal attachments are supposed to interfere with the functioning of the system. Thus the depersonalization of loyalty became the equivalent of what Marx called the alienation of man from his labor. Weber argued that, as a social mechanism, bureaucracy assumes absolute discipline and a high level of predictability. People in bureaucracies fulfill role requirements rather than their personal desires. Rational action in bureaucracies is not an end in itself but, rather, an aspect of the structure of social interaction. Individuals both judge others and interact on the basis of universalistic norms; personal motives are not considered. The bureaucratic structure functions for its own ends, not those of the people within it. In theory, all individuals in bureaucracies are expendable and only positions are important.

Preparation for a bureaucratic career involves increasing conformity. Bureaucracy requires that individuals become highly specialized. Success depends on the individual's ability to conform. As one enters a bureaucracy, he loses much of his freedom to change his life alternatives. He becomes highly specialized and therefore cannot move from one firm or type of job to another. Such specialization, such conformity to narrow role require...
Consensus and Conflict

ideas advanced by Erich Fromm, David Riesman, William F. Whyte, Robert K. Merton, Arnold Green, and C. Wright Mills concerning the "bureaucratic," "marketeer," or "other-directed" personality, the "organization man," and, in general, the individual who seeks to get ahead by selling his personality, are all related to the effects of bureaucracy on individuals. Weber is the intellectual father of these and all similar discussions. His ideas, therefore, constitute not only a contribution to sociological analysis but also a basic source for the moral criticism of society. They usually have not been perceived as such because Weber's empirical conclusion, that all complex societies will be both stratified and alienative, leads to no positive moral solution. This is because for Weber (as for C. Wright Mills), the only society that really makes individual autonomy possible is the nonbureaucratized society of small producers, and societies of this type are rapidly vanishing.

**Functionalist Approaches**

Although the ideas generated by Marx and Weber remain the most fruitful sources of theory on social stratification, much of contemporary sociology accepts the so-called functionalist approach to the subject. This approach is associated with the names of Emile Durkheim, Kingsley Davis, Talcott Parsons, and Robert K. Merton.

Durkheim and subsequent functionalists have assumed that since modern society has a complex and highly differentiated system of roles which must be performed, different men must be motivated to perform different roles. They see man as a social animal whose needs are not primarily physical and satiable but, rather, culturally determined and potentially unlimited. However, if all individuals had the same set of unlimited desires, no complex social structure would be possible. Consequently, some social or moral force must shape and limit these potentially unlimited desires. Society prescribes varying goals for different individuals and groups, sets limits on these goals, and prescribes the means that may legitimately be used to attain them.

In analyzing the function of stratification, functionalists see it as the mechanism through which society encourages men to seek to achieve the diverse positions necessary in a complex social system. The vast variety of positions that must be filled differ in their requirements for skill, education, intelligence, commitment to work, willingness to exercise power resources against others, and the like. Functionalist theory posits that in an unstratified society—i.e., one in which rewards are relatively equal for all tasks—those positions which require more work, postponement of gratification, greater anxiety, and the like will not be filled by the most able people. The stratification system is perceived, therefore, as a motivation system; it is society's mechanism for encouraging the most able people to perform the most demanding roles in order to have the society operate efficiently.

The theory also suggests that status-honorific prestige is the most general and persistent form of stratification because what human beings as social animals most require to satisfy their ego needs is recognition from others. Beyond a certain point, economic rewards and power are valued, not for themselves, but because economic or power positions are symbolic indicators of high status. Hence, the functionalist school of stratification agrees with Weber that stratification, or differential hierarchical reward, is an inherent aspect of complex society and that status as a source of motivation is inherently a scarce resource.

The emphasis in functional analysis on the need for hierarchical differentiation does not, of course, explain how men evaluate different individuals in the stratification system. Parsons has pointed to three sets of characteristics which are used as a basis of ranking. These are possessions, or those attributes which people own; qualities, belonging to individuals and including traits that are ascribed, such as race, lineage, or sex, or that are attributed as permanent characteristics, such as a specific ability; and performances, or evaluations of the ways in which individuals have fulfilled their roles—short, judgments about achievements. Societies, according to Parsons, vary considerably in the degree to which their central value systems emphasize possessions, qualities, or performances in locating people on the social hierarchy. Thus, ideally, a feudal social system stresses ascribed qualities, a capitalist society emphasizes possessions, and a pure communist system would assign prestige according to performance. Parsons has stated that no actual society has ever come close to any of these three "ideal-type" models; each society has included elements of all three. However, the variation in the core ideal values does inform the nature of the stratification system, patterns of mobility, and the like.

If we assume, as most functionalists do, that the function of stratification is to act as a system of role allocation, then it follows that a key requisite for an operating social system is a relatively stable system of social rankings. That is, there must be consensus in a society about what sorts of activities and symbols are valued; without such consensus, the society could not operate. Given this assumption, an ongoing system of stratification requires a general set of ideological justifications. There must be various mechanisms which explain, justify, and propagate the system of inequality, and which cause men to accept as legitimate the fact of their own inequality. From an ideal-typical point of view, a system of stratification that is stable would set for various groups within societies goals that could be achieved by all within each group. Feudal societies, which theoretically separate the population from birth into
distinct hierarchical strata which cannot be crossed, but within which men may succeed and gain social recognition for doing a good job, represent perhaps the extreme form of stratification as something that adjusts men to the needs of society. Theoretically, in a society in which individuals were socialized to accept attainable positions as the proper and necessary fulfillment of their role in life, men would feel “free” and satisfied. The sense of freedom, of being one's own master and of achieving what one thinks one wants to achieve, exists only where the means-ends relationship defined by society is stable—that is, where men do in fact get what they have been taught to want.

But it is extremely doubtful whether any such system of balanced means-ends relationships within a stratification system ever existed or could exist. The assumption that individuals seek to maximize the esteem in which they are held implies that those who are in low-valued positions are subject to punishment. To be valued negatively means to be told that one is no good, that one is bad. Consequently, it may be argued that there is an inherent tension between the need to maximize esteem and the requirements of a stratification system.

In actual stratification systems, this tension appears to be alleviated by various transvaluational mechanisms. That is, there seems in all societies to be a reverse stratification system, the most enduring form of which is usually found in religion. Inherent in many religions is the belief that wealth and power are associated with sin and evil, while virtue is associated with poverty. Christianity and Hinduism, for example, both posit that righteousness will somehow be rewarded in the hereafter, so that the virtuous poor will ultimately be able to look down upon the wicked rich. This mechanism, which holds out the hope of subsequent reward for adhering to the morality of the present, does not, of course, challenge the existing secular distribution of privilege. It does, however, reflect the inherent tension within stratified society, that there is both acceptance and rejection of the value system by the underprivileged.

**Durkheim and Functionalist Theory**

Durkheim assumed that preindustrial society had been reasonably stable in that it had prescribed different sets of goals for different strata. He assumed that the lowly in feudal society had not resented not being high and that feudalism had been so organized that a man could and did obtain a sense of self-respect within his own group. Industrial society, he thought, is quite different. Society no longer provides the individual with definitions of means and ends that allow him to attain the goals his society defines as worthwhile. A highly integrated normative order such as feudalism had provided everyone with the possibility of feeling that his life was meaningful and successful within a given castelike stratum. In modern society, however, wealth and power become ends in themselves, and most people, unable to attain high prestige, find their own lives in conflict with social norms. Such conflict of norms leads to anomie, the breakdown of normative order, which becomes a chronic condition in industrial society.

Industrial society prescribes universalistic goals in monetary or bureaucratic terms. Since the norms of the market place and the bureaucracy prescribe common orientations and similar goals for all, it is inevitable that many men will experience life as failure. For Durkheim, the weakness of the stratification system of industrial society is that, basically, it encourages only one set of values, those involving individual success. This pressure on the individual to achieve results produces anomie—Durkheim's equivalent of alienation. The higher rate of suicide in industrial as compared with traditional society was, in part, explained by Durkheim in these terms. The individual no longer has the sense of being socially integrated that was possible in a Gemeinschaft society, that is, one with a strong set of closely related means and ends linked to the religious system. The individual does not have the means to achieve the universalistic goals set by modern society, and the society's normative order does not support him in his daily life, guide his activities, or give him a sense that his life is worthwhile. When the normative structure collapses, when individuals lose their sense of being involved in meaningful means-ends relationships, many break down, engage in obsessive behavior, and lose their ability to relate to achievable goals, and some commit suicide.

The key to understanding Durkheim's contribution to the discussion of alienation and stratification is his emphasis on a stable society as a prerequisite for an integrated personality. The absence of an established harmony of means and ends, far from producing freedom, produces, according to Durkheim, resentment and apathy—the war of each against all. Durkheim's theory therefore leads to the ironic conclusion that people should feel freest in a closed, integrated system in which they have little choice of occupation or opportunity for social mobility, while in an open, universalistic system they should feel coerced, dehumanized, estranged. In the latter case it follows that they will also experience a need to, in Erich Fromm's words, "escape from freedom." Society's emphasis on success thus becomes the principal source of alienation.

Durkheim's analysis of anomie ties into Weber's discussion of the alienative properties of bureaucracy for, as Fromm, Merton, Riesman, and others have pointed out, to succeed in a bureaucratic society, one must not simply conform to a work role—one must sell one's personality to one's superiors. This implies that the rules for success are often very imprecise and hence create confusion about means and ends.
Durkheim's account of what Merton has called the "seeming contradictions between cultural goals and socially restricted access to these goals" is a key aspect of the theory of social change that is inherent in Durkheimian functionalism. Since no complex society can achieve a complete balance between its emphases on ends and means, stratification systems always generate pressure on individuals and strata to deviate systematically from the cultural prescriptions of the society, and hence they foster social change. As Merton puts it:

The distribution of statuses through competition must be so organized that positive incentives for adherence to status obligations are provided for every position within the distributive order. Otherwise, as will soon become plain, aberrant behavior ensues. It is, indeed, my central hypothesis that aberrant behavior may be regarded sociologically as a symptom of dissociation between culturally prescribed aspirations and socially structured avenues for realizing these aspirations.

The outcome of the possible relations between approved goals and prescribed means has been analyzed in detail by Merton and by numerous other writers. These relations create a variety of strains fostering change. Thus innovation in the means of getting ahead occurs among those who feel strongly the culturally prescribed mandate to succeed but lack such culturally approved means to do so as access to capital, skills, education, and proper ascribed background characteristics. Innovation may have positive and negative consequences from the point of view of society. On the positive side is the effort to get ahead by "building a better mousetrap," that is, by providing services that did not exist before, such as credit buying, which was first diffused by Jewish businessmen. On the negative side are the forms of innovation that are regarded as illegitimate. As Bell has pointed out, organized crime has constituted a major avenue of mobility to do so as access to capital, skills, education, and proper ascribed background characteristics. Innovation may have positive and negative consequences from the point of view of society. On the positive side is the effort to get ahead by "building a better mousetrap," that is, by providing services that did not exist before, such as credit buying, which was first diffused by Jewish businessmen. On the negative side are the forms of innovation that are regarded as illegitimate. As Bell has pointed out, organized crime has constituted a major avenue of mobility.

While Merton has elaborated on the sources of social and individual tensions in this area, more pertinent here is his emphasis that such tensions may also produce rebellion. Rebellion by the lower strata, he has argued, may be viewed as an adaptive response called for when the existing social system is seen as an obstacle to the satisfaction of legitimate needs and wants. In means-ends terms, rebellion involves the establishment of a new set of goals which are attractive to those who feel themselves "outcasts" in the existing system. When rebellion is not a generalized response but is limited to relatively powerless groups, it can lead to the formation of subgroups alienated from the rest of the community but united among themselves. Of course, rebellion may also take a political form in an effort to overthrow the existing society and replace it with one that stresses other values.

Emphasis on these and allied sources of rebellion advances the study of alienation and prospective lower-class rebellion beyond the concern with objective social inferiority and economic exploitation. The study of values in this context helps to explain the phenomenon that many quite poverty-stricken strata in different countries do not rebel and are often even conservative conformists, while other, relatively affluent strata, whose position is improving objectively, may provide the mass base for widespread rebellion. It is clearly possible, under the means-ends formula, for a very lowly group to accept its place and income because it has achieved as much as it has been socialized to aspire to. Conversely, a much more well-to-do group whose aspiration levels have been raised sharply as a result of rapid urbanization, greater education, access to international media, recent involvement in industry, and exposure to the blandishments of unions and leftist political parties may experience the phenomenon of unlimited "rising expectations" and hence feel dissatisfied and prove receptive to a new myth which locates "the source of large-scale frustrations in the social structure and . . . portray[s] an alternative structure" that would be more satisfying.

Functionalist sociology stresses the way in which stratification fulfills certain basic needs of complex social systems and so becomes one of the principal stabilizing mechanisms of complex societies. Like the Marxist and Weberian forms of analysis, it points to ways in which the demands of a stratification system press men to act against their own interests, and alienate them from autonomous choice. However, the focus in functionalism on means-ends relationships reveals the conflict-generating potential of stratification systems, in which goals are inherently scarce resources. Hence, functional analysis, like the other two, locates sources of consensus and cleavage in the hierarchical structures of society.

Empirical Studies

A considerable amount of the research on stratification by American sociologists has stemmed directly from functional analysis. Perhaps the most extensive single set of studies is contained in the many volumes by W. Lloyd Warner and his associates reporting on the "social class" (i.e., status) system of a number of American communities. Warner, an anthropologist by training and originally a follower of Durkheim, argued that any effort to deal in functional terms with the social system of a modem community must relate many of the institutional and behavioral patterns of the community to the needs of the classes within them rather than to the larger system as such. Using the method of reputational analysis (asking people in the community to rank others and seeing who associated with whom as status equals), Warner
located five or six social classes ranging from "upper-upper" to "lower-lower." Each of them was found to possess a number of distinct class characteristics, such as intrafamily behavior, associational memberships, and attitudes on a variety of issues. On the whole, Warner saw class divisions as contributing to social stability rather than to conflict, because the strata are separated into relatively distinct elements that have a more or less balanced and integrated culture. He interpreted his data as indicating that those in lower positions tend to respect those above them in the status hierarchy and to follow their lead on many issues. While most sociologists would agree with Warner concerning the existence of the sort of status groupings that he described (Weber presented a picture of American status relations in much the same terms), many would disagree with him concerning the degree of consensus within the system as to where individuals are located and would tend to agree more with Merton that tensions and conflicts are inherent in any hierarchical order. It is interesting to note, however, that while the various community studies of the accorded status system do suggest considerable ambivalence about where various individuals or families rank, particularly if they are not close to the very top or bottom of the system, investigations concerning the prestige rankings of occupations indicate considerable consensus both within and among a variety of nations. The prestige studies would seem to be in line with the assumption of functionalist theory that consensus in the desirability of different occupational roles is necessary in order to motivate the most competent individuals to seek those positions which are valued most.

Criticism of the Functionalist Approach

Functionalist theory has been sharply criticized by a number of sociologists who argue that while systems of widespread inequality characterize all existing complex societies, this fact does not demonstrate that inequality is a social requisite for a stable society, as many functionalists argue. Rather, these critics urge that systems of stratification persist and take the varying forms they do because the privileged strata have power and are able to impose their group interests on the society. The greater rewards in income and status received by various positions reflect greater power more than the need to motivate individuals to secure them. The value systems related to stratification therefore reflect the functional needs of the dominant strata, not those of the social system as such." A Polish sociologist, Wlodzimierz Wesolowski, has suggested that functionalist sociologists, particularly Davis and Moore, who have written the most comprehensive contemporary statement of the functionalist position, are wrong when they emphasize the need for stratification as a system of motivation in the form of material advantage or prestige. He has contended that there are alternative systems of social organization that can sharply reduce inequality in prestige and income while motivating people to seek higher education and fill responsible positions. Hence, class differences that derive from such forms of inequality may decline greatly. Wesolowski, however, agrees with the functionalists that complex social systems will continue to be organized on hierarchical lines, because systems of authority and command are necessary. Men will continue to be divided between those who occupy "positions of authority . . . who have the right (and duty) to give orders while the others have the duty to obey them." And he has noted that Friedrich Engels, Marx's closest intellectual collaborator, who "said that in a communist system the State as a weapon of class domination would wither away, nevertheless, declared that it would be impossible to think of any great modern industrial enterprise or of the organization of the future communist society without authority-or superiority-subordination relationships. " Wesolowski agrees with the functionalists that stratification is inevitable because differentials in authority relationships, not variations in income or prestige, are necessary. As he puts it, "if there is any functional necessity for stratification, it is the necessity of stratification according to the criterion of authority and not according to the criterion of material advantage or prestige. Nor does the necessity of stratification derive from the need to induce people for the acquirement of qualifications, but from the very fact that humans live collectively." Wesolowski has presented in general terms a formulation very similar to that of the German sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf, who has tried to reformulate Marx's theoretical assumptions so as to deal more adequately with certain structural changes in Western society—especially those which have resulted in the divorce of ownership from management that is characteristic of the modern corporation. Many have argued that this separation negates Marx, since it means the disappearance of the class of private capitalists as a powerful stratum. Dahrendorf, however, has suggested that the only significant difference this change makes is that it is now more meaningful to speak of the differential distribution of authority as the basis of class formation than it is to speak of the ownership of the means of production. It is differential access to authority positions and, therefore, to power and prestige that gives rise to contemporary class conflict, for those who are excluded from authority in "imperatively co-ordinated associations" (a term Dahrendorf borrowed from Weber) will be in conflict with those who have command over them. Articulation of manifest interest and organization of interest groups then become the dynamite for social-structural change.

Functionalism and Marxism

In urging that the universality of stratification, or hierarchical differentiation—though not, it should be noted, of social class—is linked to the functional
requirements for a power hierarchy, Wesolowski has built an interesting theoretical bridge between Marxist and functionalist sociology. For his and Dahrendorf’s lines of reasoning ultimately are not greatly different from the functionalist approach to power presented by Parsons. The latter, of course, does not emphasize the theme of power as self-interested, which is found in the Marxist tradition, or that of coercion, which was stressed by Weber. Rather, Parsons has suggested that power-in his terms, the ability to mobilize resources necessary for the operation of the system—should be viewed in value-neutral terms, as follows. Inherent in the structure of complex society, especially in the division of labor, is the existence of authority roles, holders of which are obligated to initiate acts that are socially necessary. Most of the things done by those at the summits of organizations or societies are necessary. If individuals and groups are to achieve their goals within the division of labor, it must include a complex system of interactions. The more complex the system, Parsons has argued, the more dependent individuals are on others for the attainment of their goals, that is, the less free or powerful they are. And power is basically control over the allocation of resources and roles so as to make a given system operative. Power, under any system of values, resides in having what people desire, because they will obey for the sake of getting what they want. Finally, unless the capacity to organize the behavior of those in a system existed, sharply differentiated societies could not operate.12

It should be noted that there is a coincidence of the Marxist and functionalist approaches to political power. Both approaches view it as a social utility as the means, par excellence, through which societies attain their objectives, including the expansion of available resources. Elite theories of power, on the other hand, see it in “zero-sum” terms, that is, they assume a fixed amount of power, so that the gain of one group or individual necessarily involves the loss of others. Two reviews of C. Wright Mills’s analysis of the American power elite—one by a functionalist, Parsons, and the other by the student of stratification who, among leading American sociologists, stands closest to Marxism, Robert S. Lynd—criticized Mills for having a zero-sum game approach to power and for identifying it with domination.” That is, both Lynd and Parsons agreed that power should be viewed, both sociologically and politically, in the light of its positive functions as an agency of the general community and that it is erroneous to view power, as Mills did, solely or even primarily in terms of powerholders seeking to enhance their own interests.

There is, of course, a link with stratification theory in Parsons’s analysis of power, since he has assumed that what people value most are economic advantage and esteem. It follows from this that those who possess the qualities which place them at the upper levels of the economic and status hierarchies also have the most power. Money and influence, Parsons has noted, are exchangeable for power, since power is the ability to mobilize resources through controlling the action of others.

The Dimensions of Stratification

The foregoing discussion of the Marxist, Weberian, and functionalist approaches to social class analysis has distinguished a number of issues that continue to concern sociologists. Instead of moving toward one concept of social class, students of stratification have generally reacted to an awareness of the complexity of the subject by differentiating a large number of apparently relevant concepts, most of which are directly derivable from the three traditions discussed above. The differences in approach have, in large measure, reflected variations in the intellectual concerns of the scholars involved.

Contemporary students of stratification continue to be divided into two groups, those who urge that there is a single dimension underlying all stratification and those who believe that stratification may best be conceptualized as multidimensional. That is, they disagree as to whether economic class position, social status, power, income, and the like are related to one underlying factor in most societies, or whether they should be considered as distinct although related dimensions of the stratification system. To some degree this controversy may be perceived as a continuation on a more formal level of the differences between the approaches of Marx and Weber. However, some of those who uphold the single attribute position are far from being Marxists. They do not believe that position in the economic structure determines all other aspects of status; rather, they would argue that statistical analysis suggests the presence of a basic common factor. For analytic purposes, however, the controversy cannot be resolved by statistical manipulation, since some of those who favor a multidimensional approach would argue that even if it turns out that these various aspects of stratification do form part of a single latent attribute, there is enough variation among them to justify the need to analyze the cases in which individuals or groups are ranked higher on certain dimensions than on others.

If we assume, as most contemporary sociologists do, that stratification may most usefully be conceptualized in multidimensional terms, we are confronted with the variations in dimensions which various theorists emphasize. The dimensions they have suggested may be grouped into three categories: (1) objective status, or aspects of stratification that structure environments differently enough to evoke variations in behavior; (2) accorded status, or the prestige accorded to individuals and groups by others; (3) subjective status.
status, or the personal sense of location within the social hierarchy felt by various individuals. These approaches in turn may be further broken down in terms of important variables, as follows.

**Objective Class Concepts**

Perhaps the most familiar component of objective status is power position within the economic structure. This is essentially Marx's criterion for class: persons are located according to their degree of control over the means of production. In the first analysis this serves to distinguish owners from employees. Owners, however, may vary in their degree of economic security and power, as large businessmen differ from small ones, and workers also may vary according to the bargaining power inherent in the relative scarcity of the skills they possess.

Another important concept in this area is extent of economic life chances. Weber perceived economic status not only in terms of ownership but also in terms of the probability of receiving a given economic return, or income. Thus an employee role, such as engineer or lawyer, which gave someone a higher probability than a small businessman's of earning high income, would place him in a higher class position. Essentially, this dimension refers to power in the market. Indeed, the simple difference in income received has been suggested as the best way to measure economic class.

Variation in the relative status of different occupations has also been seen as an important criterion for differentiating positions in the economic hierarchy. This approach has increasingly come to be used in studies of social mobility. Occupational prestige is, of course, a form of accorded status, except that what is being ranked are occupations, not individuals or groups.

Another aspect of stratification that is sometimes perceived as an objective one is power, which may be defined as the ability to affect the life chances of others, or conversely as the amount of freedom from control by others. Power may also be conceptualized as the set of probabilities that given role relationships will allow individuals to define their own will—that is, to impose their version of order even against the resistance of others. This dimension is extremely difficult to describe in operational terms: how, for instance, does one compare the different amounts and types of power possessed by labor leaders, Supreme Court justices, factory owners, and professors? It is also argued that power should not be regarded as an aspect of stratification in itself, as if it were comparable with economic class, but, rather, as the dynamic resultant of the forces brought into play in different types of social situations. Authority-legitimate power within a formal structure is clearly hierarchical, but the rank order of authority usually applies only to a given authority structure within a society, not to the society itself.

Finally, a number of sociological studies have treated education as a major determinant of objective status and as a dimension of stratification. The differences in behavior and attitudes of those who are higher or lower in educational attainments have been demonstrated by empirical research. On the theoretical level, it is argued that education, like the various economic dimensions, affects the life chances of individuals—their degree of security, their status, and their ability to interact with others. People are given differential degrees of respect and influence according to their level of education.

**Accorded Status**

The dimension of accorded status is the one most sociologists tacitly or overtly refer to when they use the term “social class.” This dimension involves the amount of status, honor, or deference that a given position commands in a society. Various methods are used to study accorded status, but in any case the location of individuals or groups in the status system depends on the opinion of the individuals who go to make up the system rather than the opinion of the sociologist who observes it. Accorded status, then, is a result of the felt perceptions of others, and as a social class based on accorded status is composed of individuals who accept each other as equals and therefore as qualified for intimate association in friendship, marriage, and the like.

Since this concept depends on rankings by others, it is difficult to apply it to large-scale social systems, particularly nations, except at the level of the small uppermost social class. Individuals from different communities cannot rank each other unless they rely on criteria more objective than social acceptability. The social class consisting of individuals who have, roughly speaking, the same attributes will vary with size of community; for instance, the type of individual who may be in the highest social class of a small town will probably be in the middle class of a large city. It has, in fact, been argued that the larger the community, the more likely it is that accorded status will correspond to objective status. In other words, individuals who live in large communities are more prone to make status judgments about others on the basis of knowledge about their jobs, how much their homes are worth, how many years of education they have had, and the like.

Accorded status tends to become an ascribed characteristic, that is, one that can be inherited. "Background," which usually means family identification, is the way in which people define the source of accorded status. This implies that in addition to specific lineage, other visible ascribed characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, and religion, often constitute elements in status placement. In all societies that contain a variety of racial, ethnic, or religious groups, each such group is differentially ranked in honorific or status terms. Those groups which were present first and retain the highest economic and
Subjective Status

Unlike objective and accorded class concepts, which locate individuals in the stratification hierarchy according to the judgments of analysts or of the community, subjective status categories involve efforts to discover the way in which the individual himself perceives the stratification hierarchy. In sociology there are essentially two main traditions of dealing with subjective positions, one based on the methodological device of self-identification and the other on reference group theory.

**Self-Identification.** The technique of self-identification is used to determine the extent to which given individuals or portions of specific groups see themselves as members of a given class or other group that may be located in terms of stratification. Efforts to locate individuals have involved asking them to place themselves in one of a number of class categories furnished by the investigator in such questions as “Do you think of yourself as a member of the upper, middle, working, or lower class?” The number of alternatives furnished respondents may, of course, be larger or smaller than this. Other investigators, instead of following this procedure, have sought to find out what categories people use to describe the social hierarchy.

**Reference Group Theory.** The groups that individuals use as reference points by which to evaluate themselves or their activities are known in sociology as reference groups. They can be, but need not be, groups to which an individual belongs. Thus a person may judge his degree of occupational achievement by comparing his attainments with those which preponderate among his fellow ethnic, racial, or religious group members, people he went to school with, neighbors, or those who are more privileged than he is and whose position he would like to attain.

Reference group theory assumes that individuals rarely use the total social structure as a reference group but, rather, that they judge their own status by comparison with smaller, more closely visible groups. The extent of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with status is held to depend on one’s reference groups.

Reference groups are often derivable from structural factors; thus neighborhoods, factories, employers, schoolmates, and the like often constitute relevant reference groups. On the other hand, relevant reference groups may be manipulated, as when organized groups that are competing for support seek to affect the reference groups of those whose support they want so as to increase their sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The formation of class consciousness may be seen as a process in which members of the lower social strata change their reference groups: while class consciousness is dormant or incipient, the lower-class individual relates himself to various small groups; with the full emergence of class consciousness, he relates himself to aspects of the larger social structure.

**Objective and Subjective Orientations**

The fact that social class may be conceptualized both objectively and subjectively does not mean that these are in any sense mutually exclusive ways of looking at the social hierarchy. Almost all analysts, regardless of which approach they choose to stress, are interested in examining the interrelations between their conception of class and other factors, which they view either as determinants or as consequences of class variations. Thus, as has been noted, Marx was intensely interested in the subjective reactions of people to their location in the class structure.

It is significant that Richard Centers, who is most identified with the social-psychological approach to class as involving self-definition, initiated his study of the subject as a way of finding out to what extent American workers were class-conscious in the Marxist sense. In fact, Centers’ work is more directly inspired by Marx than is that of many sociologists, who are more wont to approach the subject in objective terms.

It should also be noted that there are close links between elements in Marx’s thought and contemporary reference group theory. In seeking to suggest hypotheses that would explain the relationship between objective position and anticipated subjective reactions, Marx advanced a theory of relative deprivation. He suggested that although objective improvement in the economic position of the workers could take place under capitalism, this would not prevent the emergence of “true” class consciousness, since the position of the capitalists would improve more rapidly than that of the workers. As he put it, the “material position of the worker has improved, . . . but at the cost
of his social position. The social gulf that divides him from the capitalist has widened." In another work Marx illustrated this generalization with the story of a man who was very happy with a small house in which he lived until a wealthy man came along and built a mansion next door; then, wrote Marx, the house of the worker suddenly became a hut in his eyes.

Similarly, although Marx never dealt with the distinction between class and status on a conceptual level, there are frequent references in his historical writings to distinctions among social strata in various countries. These distinctions actually reflect what would now be called variations among status groups. Perhaps the most interesting formulation related to this question may be found in a major Marxist classic by Engels. In discussing political life in nineteenth-century England, Engels pointed out in very clear terms that status may be an independent source of power, more important in a given situation than economic power:

In England, the bourgeoisie never held undivided sway. Even the victory of 1832 left the landed aristocracy in almost exclusive possession of all the leading government offices. The meekness with which the wealthy middle class submitted to this remained inconceivable to me until the great Liberal manufacturer, Mr. W. E. Forster, in a public speech implored the young men of Bradford to learn French, as a means to get on in the world, and quoted from his own experience how sheepish he looked when, as a Cabinet Minister, he had to move in society where French was, at least, as necessary as English! The fact was, the English middle class of that time were, as a rule, quite uneducated upstarts, and could not help leaving to the aristocracy those superior government places where other qualifications were required that mere insular narrowness and insular conceit, seasoned by business sharpness... The English bourgeoisie are, up to the present day [1892], so deeply penetrated by a sense of their social inferiority that they keep up, at their own expense and that of the nation, an ornamental caste of drones to represent the nation worthily at all state functions; and they consider themselves highly honored whenever one of themselves is found worthy of admission into this select and privileged body, manufactured, after all, by themselves.

Clearly, what Engels was describing is a situation in which an old upper class, which had declined in economic power, continued to maintain its control over the governmental machinery because it remained the highest status group in the society. Those with less status but more economic resources conformed to the standards set up by the higher status group.

**Stable and Unstable Status Systems**

The relationships among the different dimensions of stratification vary in different types of societies and different periods; they are probably at their weakest during periods of rapid social change involving the rise of new occupational strata, shifts from rural to urban predominance, and changes in

the status and authority of key institutions, such as religion and education. Of all the relatively stable types of society, the ones in which the various dimensions of stratification are most closely correlated are rural, caste, and feudal societies. The growth of industrial and urban society in Europe and America has resulted in a system of stratification characterized by wide discrepancies between class and objective status, and between both of these and the subjective attributes of status. Currently, as Western society moves into a "postindustrial" phase characterized by a considerable growth in the white-collar, technological, and service sectors of the economy and a relative decline in employment in manufacturing, the relationships among the dimensions have become more tenuous. Status, economic reward, and power are tied to educational achievement, position in some large-scale bureaucracy, access to political authority, and the like. In a predominantly bureaucratic society, property as such has become a less important source of status and social mobility. Complaints about alienation and dehumanization are found more commonly among students, intellectuals, and other sectors of the educated middle classes than among the working class. Most recently, sections of the radical Left have openly discussed the revolutionary role of university students and the petty bourgeoisie, and have seen the organized proletariat in Western society as a relatively conservative group, unavailable for radical politics.

These developments may reflect the fact that some of the most politically relevant discontent in the bureaucratic "affluent society" of the 1960s seems to be inherent in social tensions induced by status inconsistencies. However, the bulk of resentment against the stratification system is still rooted in objective deprivation and exploitation. The concept of status inconsistency introduced by Lenski, who derived it from Weber, refers to the situation of individuals or groups that are differentially located on various dimensions of stratification. Persons in such a situation are exposed to conflicting sets of expectations: for instance, those who are high in educational attainments but are employed in relatively low-paid occupations tend to be more dissatisfied than those whose stratification attributes are totally consistent. As evidence in support of this assumption it is possible to cite research findings that at the relatively well to do, those with discrepant status attributes are more likely to favor change in the power structure and to have more liberal or leftist attitudes than those with status attributes that are mutually consistent. Consequently, the increase in status discrepancy inherent in situations of rapid social change should result in an increase in overall discontent and, among those in the more ambiguous status positions (which now occurs largely in the well-educated middle strata), in greater receptivity to the myths justifying rebellion. In industrialized societies those who form the underprivileged strata but who have consistent status attributes remain politically on the left but show little interest in radical change. Because all social change generates
status discrepancies, rebellious and extremist mass movements are more likely to be found during periods of rapid industrialization and economic growth, and in areas where immigration has caused sudden population growth, than in industrially mature urbanized areas.

Analysis of the consequences of status discrepancies has yielded seemingly contradictory results largely because some researchers treat all discrepancies as necessarily equal in their effects. For example, institutionalized discrepancies, such as those which result when a member of a minority group becomes rich but is still discriminated against, are equated with inconsistencies between education and occupation, or between occupation and income. Highly visible institutionalized discrepancies should result in more active expression of resentment and more efforts to bring about social change than do loosely structured personal inconsistencies. The latter are more likely to be reflected in efforts by the individual to change his personal situation through various forms of mobility, including change in occupation, residence, or organization. The consequences of status discrepancies should therefore be investigated within broad status categories rather than for total societies. For instance, discrepancies among the poor may have effects very different from those they have among the well-to-do. A manual worker with a claim, based on good education or family background, to higher status than his occupational position allows him is more likely to be politically conservative than workers whose status attributes are consistent. Among the well-to-do, however, status inconsistency will impair claims to high positions and will induce favorable attitudes toward liberal or egalitarian ideologies. The effects of status inconsistencies in societies with relatively rigid status lines are quite different from their effects in societies that have relatively fluid stratification systems. Clearly, the concept of status inconsistency, though potentially a useful tool in class analysis, presupposes some systematic treatment of how the relationship between the various dimensions of status varies from one type of stratification to another.

The Future of Social Class

To conclude on a note of irony, it may be observed that in a certain sense history has underwritten one of Marx's basic assumptions, which is that the cultural superstructure, including political behavior and status relationships, is a function of the underlying economic and technological structure. As Marx put it in the Preface to Capital: "The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future." The most economically developed society should also have the most advanced set of class and political relationships. Since the United States is the most advanced society economically, its class system, regarded as part of its cultural superstructure, should be more appropriate to a technologically advanced society than the class systems of the less developed economies of Europe. In addition, one might argue that the United States, since it lacks a feudal past, should evolve the institutions of a highly developed society in their purest form. Hence, an unpolitical Marxist sociology would expect the social class relationships of the United States to present an image of the future of other societies that are moving in the same general economic direction. Characteristic of such a social system is a decline in emphasis on social class, that is, a decline of distinct visible strata with a "felt consciousness of kind." The various dimensions of stratification are more likely to operate in a crisscrossing fashion, increasing the numbers who are relatively high on some components of status and low on others. Highly developed societies of this kind, whether variants of the communist or the capitalist model, are more likely to possess systems of social stratification-varied rankings-than social classes.

These comments suggest the need to view stratification in international as well as national terms. The differences between the average per capita income of the poorest and wealthiest nations are on the order of 40 or 50 to 1, that is, much greater than the differences among social strata within the industrially advanced nations. These variations in national wealth constitute structural parameters that greatly affect the "class" relationships between nations. A Chinese communist has already advanced the thesis that the significant class struggle is between the predominantly rural nations, which are underdeveloped and very poor, and the urbanized, wealthy ones. He has also argued that the wealth of the latter has to a considerable degree reduced the political expression of class tensions within them, but that this should be seen as a result of exploitation by the economically advanced countries of the underdeveloped ones. Whether this thesis is warranted by the facts of international trade relationships or not, it does seem true that any analysis of class structures and their political consequences must in the future consider the impact of variation in national incomes. Many in the elite of the poorer part of the world see themselves as the leaders of oppressed peoples; the radicalism of the intellectuals, university students, military officers, and the like in the less developed nations can be related to the social and economic inferiority of their countries, rather than to their position in the class structure. Such considerations take us far afield from the conventional Western sociological concerns with class relationships, but they clearly are relevant to any effort at specifying the sources of class behavior and ideologies. As sociology becomes more comparative in outlook and research, we may expect efforts to link class analysis of individual nations to the facts of international stratification.
Notes

8. Ibid., p. 147.
30. Ibid., p. 69.