4/The Structure of Distributive Systems

The greatest and the best of our race have necessarily been nurtured in the bracing school of poverty —the only school capable of producing the supremely great, the genius.
Andrew Carnegie

AS THE LAST CHAPTER DEMONSTRATES, it is never entirely possible to separate analyses of social dynamics from analyses of social structure. Even though we were concerned chiefly with the dynamics of distributive systems, structural considerations frequently intruded. In the present chapter the situation is reversed and our chief concern will be with structural matters, but again the separation will be far from perfect. The simple fact is that both structure and dynamics are abstractions from the same reality and hence can never be completely divorced from one another. Thus, even though the primary concern of this chapter is with the structural aspects of distributive systems, it will be necessary to devote considerable attention to problems of dynamics.

Since the study of structure is the study of relationships among parts, it is necessary to begin this examination of the structure of distributive systems by

establishing the nature of these parts. This is a fairly simple matter since there are only three types of units with which we shall be concerned, *individuals, classes,* and *class systems.* Each of these represents a different level of organization within distributive systems. Individuals are the basic level and, as such, constitute the units within classes. The latter, in turn, are the units within class systems.[1] To complete the picture, the several class systems of a society (and normally there are several) are the units within distributive systems.

The nature of the first of these kinds of units is self-evident and requires no further discussion. The other two, however, have been used in so many ways that they have become sources of considerable confusion. Hence, it is to them that we now turn.

Classes

The confusion surrounding this term is largely a result of the complexity of the reality it represents and of the tendency of scholars to oversimplify. As our analysis of the last chapter indicated, stratification is a multidimensional phenomenon. Human populations are stratified in various ways, and each of these alternative modes of stratification provides a basis for a different conception of class. Thus, although one may legitimately analyze the population of a given community in terms of prestige classes, this does not exhaust the subject of stratification. The same population can also be analyzed in terms of power classes or privilege classes. Analytically each of these is quite distinct, though empirically there is a substantial measure of overlap as our earlier analysis indicated.

The difficulty is further increased since even these three modes of classification are not unidimensional. As shown in the last chapter, power takes many forms and these cannot always be reduced to a meaningful common denominator. An individual may have large property holdings without occupying a correspondingly important and powerful office and vice versa. Similarly, an individual may occupy an important and powerful role in one institutional system but not in others.

In view of this, it is clear that the term "class" should not be defined too narrowly. More can be gained by defining the term broadly and then distinguishing carefully between different kinds of classes. Therefore, we might best define a class as *an aggregation of persons in a society who*

[1] As will be noted later, the concept "class" may actually apply to several adjacent levels of organization, as when we speak of subclasses within classes. However, this does not alter the basic fact that classes are a level of organization standing between individuals and class systems.

stand in a similar position with respect to some form of power, privilege, or prestige.

This is *not* to say that all types of classes are equally important for theoretical and analytical purposes. On the contrary, if our goal is to answer the question of "who gets what and why?" and if our analysis of the last two chapters has any validity at all, *power* classes must be our chief concern. The distribution of privilege and prestige seem largely determined by the distribution of power, at least in those societies in which a significant surplus is produced.

In the last chapter we also saw that power manifests itself in two basic forms, force and institutionalized power. The latter, in turn, can be subdivided into the power of position and the power of property. Building on this, a power class may be defined as *an aggregation of persons in a society who stand in a similar position with respect to force or some specific form of institutionalized power.* For example, the concept "power class" may be applied to such varied aggregations as factory workers, wealthy landowners, or the members of a military junta which rules by force. Though the bases of their power differ, each constitutes an aggregation of persons who occupy a similar position with respect to some specific form of power.

Since the term "power class" is awkward, and since the concept is required so often in the analysis which follows, I shall usually dispense with the qualifying adjective and simply speak of "class." Unless otherwise indicated, "class" will hereafter refer to groupings defined in terms of power.

Though the definition of class seems relatively simple and straightforward, there are certain ideas implicit in it which are not completely obvious and require examination before moving on to other matters. To begin with, though the classes with which we shall be concerned are defined *in terms* of power, this does not mean that they all *have* power. On the contrary, some have virtually no power, as in the case of the expendables in agrarian societies (see Chapter 9).

Second, given this definition, a single individual may well be a member of half a dozen power classes. This is inevitable whenever the various forms of power are less than perfectly correlated with one another. To illustrate, in contemporary American society a single individual may be a member of the middle class with respect to property holdings, a member of the working class by virtue of his job in a factory, and a member of the Negro "caste." Each of the major roles he occupies, as well as his status in the property hierarchy, influences his chances of obtaining the things he seeks in life, and thus each places him in a specific class.

Since these resources are so imperfectly correlated, he cannot be located in any single class. In this connection, it may be appropriate to note that this tendency seems to become progressively more pronounced as one moves from technologically primitive to technologically advanced societies. In other words, *the necessity of multidimensional analyses seems greatest in modern industrial societies.*

Third, though the definition does not say so explicitly, *the members of every power class share certain common interests with one another, and these shared interests constitute a potential basis for hostility toward other classes.* This follows as a logical corollary of the fact that what unites the members of a class is their common possession, control, or utilization of something which affects their chances of fulfilling their wishes and desires. Given our earlier assumptions about the nature of man, it follows that all members of a given class have a vested interest in protecting or increasing the value of their common resource and in reducing the value of competitive resources which constitute the bases of other classes.

This is not to say that the members of a class always have a conscious awareness of their common interest, much less that they act collectively on the basis of it. Nor are they always consciously or overtly hostile to members of other classes. These are possibilities which may be realized, but there is nothing inevitable about them.[2]

One final feature of the definition deserving note is the somewhat vague and annoying phrase, "a similar position." The critical reader will ask how much similiarity is required and will find, unhappily, that there is no definite answer. Whether we like it or not, this kind of phrasing is forced on us by the nature of the reality we seek to analyze. In most cases human populations simply are not stratified into a limited number of clearly differentiated, highly discrete categories. Rather, they tend to be strung out along continua which lack breaks that can be utilized as class boundaries. Furthermore, if we were to insist that members of classes stand in *identical* positions with respect to the distribution of things of value, we should have thousands, possibly millions, of classes in many societies, most with but a handful of members, and some with only one.

To avoid this, we are forced to use less restrictive criteria, but this forces us to use less *precise* ones. In general, students of stratification have found it more advantageous to employ a smaller number of larger and more inclusive classes. Thus, there are frequent references to broad categories such as peasants, merchants, workers, professionals, and so forth.

[2] In other words, the present definition is on the same level as Marx's definition of *Klass an sich,* not his definition of *Klass für sich.*

The use of such categories is not meant to deny the existence of internal variation within these classes. Obviously each class can be subdivided into more homogeneous subcategories or subclasses, e.g., prosperous peasants and poor peasants or rich merchants and poor merchants. The extent to which this is done depends largely on the nature of the study. In a highly specialized study with a narrow scope, much more attention is likely to be given to these subclasses than can be given in a broadly comparative study such as the present one.

Castes, Estates, Status Groups, and Elites

In much of the writing on social stratification, reference is made to certain other kinds of collectivities beside classes. Four, in particular, figure prominently in this literature—"castes," "estates," "status groups," and "elites." How is each of these terms related to class?

Caste, like class, has been defined in a variety of ways. Underlying all or nearly all the definitions, however, is the idea of a group whose membership is rigidly hereditary. When caste and class are used as contrasting terms, castes are thought of as groups out of which and into which mobility is virtually impossible. As a matter of fact, much of the membership of classes is also hereditary and conversely some mobility is possible where castes are involved. A more precise statement of the relationship would be that *upward* mobility by individuals is socially legitimate where classes are involved, but not in the case of castes.[3]

Actually, however, there is no need to treat caste and class as separate phenomena. In the interest of conceptual parsimony one can quite legitimately define caste as a special kind of class—at least when class is defined as broadly as it has been here. Thus we may say that *a class is a caste to the degree that upward mobility into or out of it is forbidden by the mores.*

A second type of collectivity often referred to by writers on stratification is the estate. The term comes from medieval European history (though it has a wider relevance) and refers to *a legally defined segment of the population of a society which has distinctive rights and duties established by law.*[4]

[3] Downward mobility is usually permitted in caste systems as a penalty for violation of certain caste mores. For a good early discussion of the relation between castes and other classes, see Charles Horton Cooley, *Social Organization* (New York: Scribner, 1909).

[4] See, for example, Egon Bergel, *Social Stratification* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), p. 68.

Again, there is no necessary contradiction between the definitions of estate and class. Thus we may say that *a class is an estate to the degree that its existence, rights, and privileges are established by law.*

The third concept, "status groups," has been introduced into discussions of stratification by the translators of the writings of Max Weber. In many of his writings, Weber used the noun *Stände* and the adjective *ständisch.* Sometimes he used the noun to refer to medieval European estates, but other times he used both the noun and adjective to refer what might be called "estate-like" phenomena, such as occupational groups, the First Families of Virginia, ethnic groups, and even Indian castes. The common denominator underlying all of these, in Weber's view, was the honor or prestige of the group, a collective attribute which automatically applies to all members. Thus status groups, or *Stände,* differ from classes which are, in his usage, based on economic power. He also adds that status groups are normally communities which develop distinctive subcultures, while classes more often tend to be mere aggregations or social categories. Finally, status groups are much more likely to be hereditary groupings.[5]

While it is clear that these groupings which Weber's translators call status groups fall within our definition of classes, it is not so clear just how they fit into our framework. Some of his status groups seem to be essentially prestige classes, e.g., the First Families of Virginia. Others, however, are also power classes. In the latter case, the common denominator which unites them and sets them apart from other classes is their *endogamous, hereditary,* and *communal* character. While all classes have these characteristics to some extent, status groups have them to a marked degree.[6] It is in the sense that I shall use the term later in this volume applying it chiefly to racial, ethnic, and religious groups.

The fourth, and final, term requiring comment is the somewhat elusive term "elite." Unlike the other three, elites cannot be regarded merely as a special kind of class. On the contrary, sometimes they are less than a class while at other times they are more. In the former case, one may refer to the most powerful (or most priviliged or prestigeful) segment of a class as the elite *of that class.* In the latter case, one may refer to two or more classes as constituting the political elite *of a society.* As yet another alternative, one may speak of a single class as constituting the political elite of a society. In short, the term has come to mean merely *the highest ranking segment of any given social unit, whether a class or*

[5] See Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology,* translated by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Fair Lawn, N.J.: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 186-194, for his most systematic treatment of the concept.

[6] Castes, therefore, may be regarded as the extreme type of class or status group since the hereditary, endogamous, and communal traits are maximized in them.

total society, ranked by whatever criterion one chooses.[7] In the present volume, the criterion invoked will be *power*, unless otherwise indicated.

The boundaries of elites, like the boundaries of classes, are usually imprecise—and for the same reason. In both instances we are confronted with data which are distributed in what is essentially a continuous series, largely lacking in meaningful breaks or gaps. Under the circumstances, social analysts have little choice but to introduce arbitrary boundaries of their own creation, just as economists do when confronted with income distributions.

In view of the foregoing, it seems clear that the single concept of "class" can be used to cover all the collective aspects of systems of stratification. This does not mean, however, that all kinds of classes are alike in all respects. Some are based on power, others on privilege, and still others on prestige. Some of those based on power are based on the power of position, some on the power of property. Some are based on one kind of position, others on another. Some are self-conscious communal groups, others are mere social categories. Some are almost entirely hereditary, others are not. Some are legal entities, most are not. These are all variable properties of classes and one of the important, but often neglected, tasks of stratification theory and research is to clarify these variable features and identify the forces responsible for them.

Class Systems

Of the three levels of organization within the structure of distributive systems, that of class systems is the one most often overlooked. The reason for this is not hard to find. If one takes a unidimensional view of social stratification, as has been customary, there is but one class system in any given society, and hence "the class system" and "the distributive system" are synonymous.

However, once the multidimensional character of distributive systems is recognized, this is no longer possible. Once we recognize that power rests on various foundations and that these are not always reducible to some single common denominator, we are forced to think in terms of a series of class hierarchies or class systems. These constitute a level of organization intermediate between a single class and the total distributive system.

For purposes of formal definition, a class system may be said to be

[7] For a similar view of the subject, see Vilfredo Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, translated by A. Bongiorno and Arthur Livingston and edited by Livingston (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1935), vol. III, paragraph 2027ff.

a hierarchy of classes ranked in terms of some single criterion. As indicated previously, each class system in a society contains within it all the members of that society. Thus every member of American society holds simultaneous membership in some class within the occupational, property, racial-ethnic, educational, age, and sexual class systems.

Figure 1 may help to clarify the nature of class systems by showing graphically their relation to the other three levels of organization, the individual, the class, and the distributive system as a whole. This figure depicts the distribution of power in a fictional Latin American society. In this society there are four important sources of power: (1) political activity, (2) wealth, (3) work, or occupational activity, and (4) ethnicity. These are not of equal importance, as indicated by the varying weights ranging from 2 to 10 shown in the column headings. Within each class system there are a series of classes varying in number from three (in the ethnic class system) to seven (in the occupational class system). The

The distributive system			
The political class system ($W = 10$)	The property class system ($W = 5$)	The occupational class system ($W = 3$)	The ethnic class system ($W = 2$)
The elite (X)	The wealthy (X)	Large landowners (X)	Spaniards (X)
The bureaucracy	The middle class (Y)	Independent farmers / Officials / Merchants (Y)	Mestizos (Y)
The apolitical class (Y)	The poor	Peasants / Artisans	Indians
Suspected enemies of the regime	The impoverished	Beggars, prostitutes, unemployed, etc.	

Figure 1 Graphic representation of the structure of the power dimensions of the distributive system of a *fictional* society.

boundaries between the classes vary in sharpness, with some being fairly well defined (those marked with a solid line), while others represent little more than arbitrary points on what is essentially a continuum (those marked by a dashed line). The circled figures (X) and (Y) represent two individuals. The former is a wealthy landowner of Spanish descent who is also a member of the political elite; the latter is a middle-class mestizo with a small business who is politically inactive but tending to support the existing regime. Where the rule of might prevails, as in this fictional society, the statuses of individuals in the several class systems tend to be quite consistent; as constitutionalism develops, inconsistent statuses become more common for reasons indicated in the last chapter.

One of the great advantages of a conscious recognition of class systems as a distinct level of organization is that we are led to see that the struggle for power and privilege involves not only struggles between individuals and classes, it also involves *struggles between class systems, and thus between different principles of distribution.* For example, in recent decades, we have witnessed in the United States and elsewhere vigorous efforts to increase the importance of the educational class system, often in conjunction with efforts to reduce the importance of the racial-ethnic and sexual class systems. In totalitarian nations repeated efforts have been made to increase the importance of the political class system at the expense of other kinds of class systems, especially the property class system. Under such conditions, the relation of individuals to The Party tends to become the key to power and privilege while other resources become secondary. In some instances changes in the relative importance of class systems occur without deliberate efforts and simply reflect the influence of changing social or technological conditions. An understanding of such shifts is also important for an adequate understanding of the distributive process as a whole.

Class systems differ from one another in a number of ways which deserve recognition. As Figure 1 indicates, they differ in both *importance* and *complexity*. Some have far more influence than others on the chances of men's obtaining the goals they seek. Similarly, some involve more complex structures than others; e.g., compare the occupational and ethnic class systems in Figure 1.

Two other variable features of class systems are their *span* and *shape*.[8] Span refers to the range of variation found within a class system. The shape of a system refers to the patterning of the distribution of cases.

[8] These terms are from Bernard Barber, *Social Stratification: A Comparative Analysis of Structure and Process* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1957), pp. 87–93. His use of these terms is virtually identical with Sorokin's earlier usage of the terms height and profile. See Pitirim Sorokin, *Social Mobility* (New York: Harper & Row, 1947), part I.

When charted graphically this may result in a pyramidal structure with the great majority of individuals concentrated on the lower levels, or it may result in some more or less skewed variant of a normal curve with the majority of individuals in the middle levels, or still other patterns. As Sorokin has pointed out, men are able to change the shape of some class systems more readily than others. He suggests, for example, that we can control the shape of political class systems more easily than those of property class systems.[9]

Fifth, class systems vary with respect to the *degree of mobility* which is possible within them. In some, as in the case of sexual and racial class systems, the positions of individuals are virtually fixed. In others, movement is possible in widely varying degrees.[10]

Sixth, class systems differ in terms of the *degree of hostility* which prevails between classes. In a few instances, class warfare of the type envisioned by Marx has prevailed, at least for a period of time. At the other extreme, there has often been a virtual absence of hostility. There is good reason for supposing that class hostility is inversely related to opportunities for mobility, though available evidence suggests that the relationship is far from perfect.

Finally, class systems differ in *the degree of institutionalization.* In some systems the rights and duties of the several classes are firmly embedded in custom and undergirded by a universally accepted ideology which serves to legitimize inequalities. In extreme cases, custom has become translated into law. At the other extreme, certain class systems have been based almost entirely on the ability of the favored class to control others by naked force.

One of the important tasks confronting students of stratification in the next several decades will be to establish the factors responsible for variations in each of these dimensions. To date only a beginning has been made, largely because attention has been directed elsewhere.

Citizenship: A Potentially Unique Resource

Before turning our attention from the structural units which make up distributive systems to the systems themselves, it is necessary to consider

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 92–93.
[10] Various writers have argued that it is impossible to develop a single measure of the degree of vertical mobility in a population since the *volume of movement* and the *distance of movement* cannot be reduced to a single common denominator. While granting the practical difficulties involved in getting an adequate measure of social distance, one can argue that there is nothing impossible about this. On the contrary, the physical sciences long ago resolved such problems by developing combined measures such as foot-pounds.

briefly the relevance of *citizenship* for our analysis. As T. H. Marshall, the British sociologist, made clear more than a decade ago, citizenship can be thought of as a resource much like other kinds of positions and property, since it, too, guarantees certain rights to individuals and hence is a basis of power.[11] Unlike other resources, however, it does not always divide the population into "haves" and "have-nots"—at least not in the more advanced industrial nations of the modern world.

In an earlier period the rights of citizenship were reserved for the few and citizenship, like other resources, did divide men into classes. Sometimes citizenship divided the members of societies into citizens and noncitizens, other times into first- and second-class citizens. This traditional pattern can be seen in the early history of this country, when the population was divided into enfranchised citizens, unenfranchised freemen, and slaves. Each stood in a different relation to the state, with enfranchised citizens in the most favored position and slaves in the least.

Today slavery has disappeared in advanced industrial societies and the right of franchise has been extended to include nearly all adults. As a result, citizenship tends to be a resource which all share alike.

Since citizenship is shared by all, one might suppose that it no longer has any special relevance for the student of stratification. This is not the case, however. Citizenship continues to figure prominently in the distributive process. Those who lack other kinds of resources, together with those who, for ideological reasons, believe in social equality, have combined to fight for the enhancement of the value of citizenship at the expense of those resources which generate inequality. This struggle is evident in recent controversies involving the issue of property rights versus human rights. Those who advocate the primacy of human rights over property rights typically advocate the enlargement of the rights of citizenship at the expense of the traditional rights of property. Their opponents take the opposite position. Thus the struggle becomes not merely a struggle between classes, but also a struggle between class systems and thus between differing principles of stratification.

Historically oriented students of stratification will recognize that the modern era is not completely unique in this, since in preindustrial societies the less powerful classes often fought the more powerful classes in the same way, and not without some success. At the very least, they often succeeded in establishing certain uniform legal rights, including the right to a public trial based on an established body of law. Sometimes they were even able to establish the right of all men to protection from extortionary

[11] T. H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1950).

and irregular taxation and other abuses. To be sure, men of property and position usually fought to prevent such rights from being established and to undermine them if they were. Usually they were successful in these efforts. Only in the more advanced industrial societies of the modern era, however, is citizenship simultaneously a resource of *major* importance and one shared by all.

In many ways this centuries-old effort to enhance the value of common citizenship can be viewed as an attempt to reestablish the ascendancy of *need* over *power* as the dominant principle of distribution. As noted in the last chapter, in those societies which are technologically most primitive, need, rather than power, is the chief determinant of "who gets what." With technological advance and the growing capacity to produce a surplus, power became the chief determinant. Today, an organized effort is being made to restore the importance of need. Ironically, however, it appears that this reversal can occur only if the advocates of need can mobilize more power than the advocates of power.[12] This is because advanced industrial societies, unlike primitive hunting and gathering societies, have a surplus and thus their distributive pattern is not dictated by economic necessity. Thus one is led to the conclusion that if need should ever be restored to the position of dominance, it would not rest on the same foundation as that on which it rested in technologically primitive societies.

Distributive Systems

Having completed our examination of the various kinds of units which form the structure of distributive systems, we are now in a position to consider these systems *as totalities*. It should be remembered that we have focused on the *power* dimensions and largely ignored privilege and prestige. However, if our earlier analysis was correct, this should cause no serious difficulties or errors, since the distributive patterns of the other two basic rewards are largely extensions of the patterns of power.

Viewed in their totality, distributive systems resemble a system of wheels within wheels. The complexity of these systems varies considerably and seems to be largely a function of the societies' level of technology.

[12] There is a paradox involved here which should be noted. In modern industrial democracies, a class of less powerful individuals can become *collectively* more powerful than a class of more powerful individuals. This is because there is a difference between the power of the individual and the power of his class. A class of powerful individuals is not necessarily more powerful than a class of less powerful individuals if the latter are much more numerous and are able to organize effectively.

As one might expect, distributive systems, like other units of social organization, have properties which can serve as bases of comparison. Unfortunately, however, precise measurement of these properties is usually impossible. Furthermore, the nature of most distributive systems precludes the use of simple, unidimensional measures, thus compounding the difficulties.

Nowhere are these difficulties more evident than in efforts to compare distributive systems on the basis of their *degree of inequality.* To begin with, precise, quantitative data of the kinds we require are lacking for most societies. In addition, all the various forms of power cannot be reduced to a single common denominator, and thus no single measure can fully express the extent of inequality in most societies.

Nevertheless, *meaningful* comparisons are possible. Fortunately, the differences in inequality among distributive systems are so great in many cases that it is possible to make rough comparisons which can be defended (compare, for example, the degree of inequality in hunting and gathering societies reported in Chapter 5 with that in agrarian societies in Chapters 8 and 9). Furthermore, there is sufficient consistency between most of the major class systems in most societies (i.e., marked status inconsistency is sufficiently uncommon) so that the use of summary measures can be meaningful—especially if qualifications are added to take account of those class systems which are not closely linked with the rest.

On the basis of the postulates set forth in the last two chapters, one would predict that *the degree of inequality in distributive systems will vary directly with the size of a society's surplus.* Some modification of this general pattern could develop, however, when conditions permit persons who individually lack power to combine and organize, and thus to develop a collective counterbalance to those with greater individual power. Such developments seem most probable in democratic nations with an egalitarian or socialist ideology.

A second important property of distributive systems is their *rate of vertical mobility.* Here, too, the same methodological problems arise. Here, too, however, the possibility of rough but meaningful comparisons seems possible, especially if appropriate qualifications are made for significant variations between class systems and between inter- and intragenerational mobility.[13] Unfortunately, our theory provides us with no basis for predicting systematic variations in the rates of vertical mobility.

[13] See footnote 10 above for a brief discussion of the feasibility of handling *volume of movement* and *distance of movement* in a single measure.

On an *ad hoc* basis, however, one might predict that they will tend to *vary directly with the rate of technological and social change.* Such change should lead to changes in the bases of power and, in a period of flux, traditional means of transmitting and retaining power should prove somewhat less effective than in periods of relative stability.

The degree of class hostility is a third variable feature of distributive systems. The same methodological problems and possibilities that apply to the first two variables apply here as well. Here, too, there is no basis for predicting systematic variations, but again an *ad hoc* hypothesis suggests itself. If, as suggested earlier, the lack of opportunities for upward mobility is one of the sources of class hostility, one would predict that *the degree of class hostility will tend to vary inversely with the rate of upward mobility.* Since the rate of upward mobility is assumed to be only one among several factors contributing to class hostility, we should not expect a strong relationship.

There are other properties of distributive systems which might also be used as bases for comparison, as for example, the degree of their complexity, institutionalization, and so forth. However, the three stated above seem the most important, and it is with these that we shall be chiefly concerned in the chapters which follow.

Reactions to Status Inconsistency

Before concluding this chapter, it is necessary to turn back again briefly to a problem of dynamics which has been brought into focus by our examination of structural matters. When one takes a multidimensional view of distributive systems he soon finds himself confronted with another interesting problem involving men's reactions to the unequal distribution of power and privilege (see Chapter 3, page 63, for the earlier discussion). This is the question of *men's reactions to the phenomenon of status inconsistency.*

The recognition of this problem is largely a modern development, because unidimensional views of stratification had such a strong hold on men's minds until recently that the very existence of the problem passed almost unnoticed. Even the few who did note it, such as Cooley and Sorokin, gave it scant attention.

More recently, however, a body of theory and research has developed which suggests that pronounced status inconsistencies of certain kinds tend to be a source of stress and give rise to distinctive reactions which are not predictable simply from a knowledge of the rank of the

individual in each of the respective status systems.[14] This theory is based on the postulate that individuals strive to maximize their satisfactions, even, if necessary, at the expense of others. This means that an individual with inconsistent statuses or ranks has a natural tendency to think of himself in terms of that status or rank which is highest, and to expect others to do the same. Meanwhile others, who come in contact with him have a vested interest in doing just the opposite, that is, in treating him in terms of his lowest status or rank.

One can see how this works, and the consequences of it, by imagining the interaction of a Negro doctor and a white laborer in a situation where neither the racial nor occupational status system alone is relevant. The former, motivated by self-interest, will strive to establish the relation on the basis of occupation (or perhaps education or wealth), while the latter, similarly motivated, will strive to establish the relationship on the basis of race. Since each regards his own point of view as right and proper, and since neither is likely to view the problem in a detached, analytical fashion, one, or both, are likely to be frustrated, and probably angered, by the experience.

The practice of "one-upmanship," as this pattern of action has sometimes been called, is so common in everyday life that most who indulge in it hardly give it any thought. The net effect, however, is to create considerable stress for many persons of inconsistent status. As a result, such persons are likely to find social interaction outside the bounds of the primary group (where others tend to be like themselves) somewhat less rewarding than does the average person.

This is important for a general theory of stratification if such experiences lead individuals to react against the existing social order and the political system which undergirds it. Thus far there is some limited evidence that this kind of reaction does occur, and that persons of incon-

[14] Unfortunately, there is still no good summary of the relevant literature on this subject and no definitive treatment. Among others, the following have given special attention to the stress hypothesis: George Homans, "Status among Clerical Workers," *Human Organization*, 12 (1953), pp. 5–10; Gerhard Lenski, "Status Crystallization: A Non-vertical Dimension of Social Status," and "Social Participation and Status Crystallization," *American Sociological Review*, 19 and 21 (1954 and 1956), pp. 405–413 and 458–464; Irving Goffman, "Status Consistency and Preference for Change in Power Distribution," *ibid.*, 22 (1957), pp. 275–281; A. Zaleznik et al., *The Motivation, Productivity, and Satisfaction of Workers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958); Elton Jackson, "Status Consistency and Symptoms of Stress," *American Sociological Review*, 27 (1962), pp. 469–480. Methodological problems have been a source of difficulty in this area, but two recent papers point the way to their resolution. These are Lenski, "Comment," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 28 (1964), pp. 326–330, and Elton Jackson and Peter Burke, "Status and Symptoms of Stress: Additive and Interaction Effects," *American Sociological Review*, 30 (1965), pp. 556–564.

sistent status are more likely to support liberal and radical movements designed to alter the political *status quo* than are persons of consistent status. The classic case of this has been the strong support which successful Jewish merchants and professional men have given such movements in every part of the world. Similar examples can be found among economically successful members of other ethnic, racial, and religious minorities. In fact, political sociologists have shown that such individuals are much less likely to support established conservative parties than are persons in the same occupational class who are members of the majority group. Thus, voting studies show that with class position held constant, Catholics are more likely than Protestants to support liberal or socialist parties in Protestant nations, while Protestants are more likely to support such parties in Catholic nations.[15]

This inconsistency reaction is not nearly so important from the quantitative standpoint as it seems to be from the *qualitative*. The great majority of the supporters of liberal and radical movements will probably always be persons of consistently low status. Such movements also require *leaders* and *resources,* however, and persons of consistently low status are not likely to have either the training or the skills necessary to lead such movements successfully, nor are they likely to have money to spare. By contrast, persons of inconsistent status are frequently in a position to supply one or both of these necessary ingredients, thus greatly increasing the probability of the success of such movements. As a result, their importance may well be out of all proportions to their numbers.

In this connection it is interesting to note that for all their concern with revolutionary movements, Marx and Engels never really developed an adequate explanation for the source of their leadership. They simply asserted that certain members of the *bourgeoisie* would rise above their class perspective and, seeing the true and inevitable course of history, throw in their lot with the proletariat. Neither Marx nor Engels ever explained how this was possible. The present theory offers one possible explanation for this otherwise puzzling aspect of revolutionary movements.

Retrospect and Prospect

Having completed the general theoretical introduction, we are now ready to turn to the task of testing its relevance in various types of societies. The remainder of the book, however, will be not only a test of the general

[15] See, for example, S. M. Lipset, *Political Man* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959), pp. 247–248.

theory, but also an attempt to develop a series of more specialized theories of stratification or distribution, each applicable to a specific type of society.

Before turning to this second stage of our analysis, it may be well to review briefly the central elements of the general theory and the nature of their interrelations. This can be done quite simply with the aid of the diagram in Figure 2.[16]

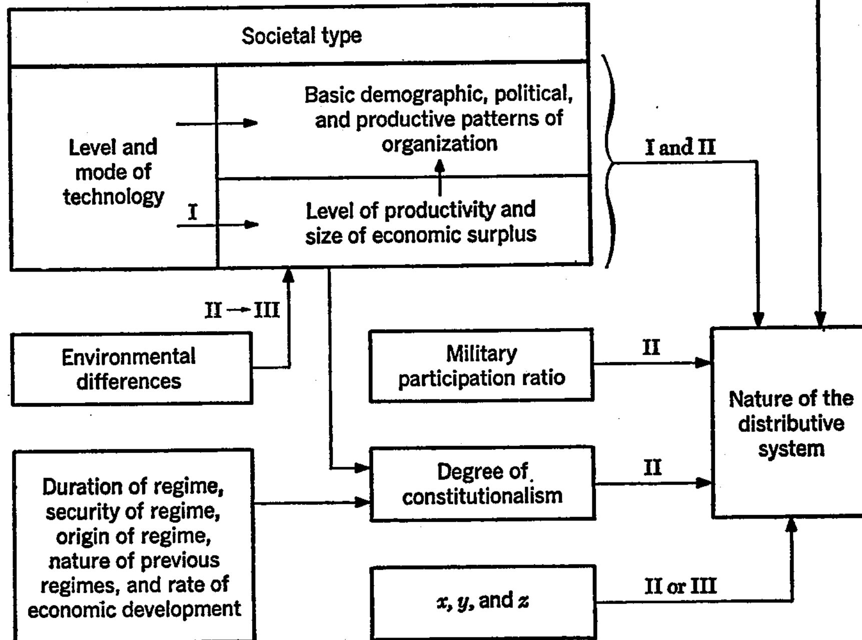

Figure 2 Diagramatic summary of the general theory of stratification.

[16] I am very grateful to Donald Ploch, a recent member of my stratification seminar, for the suggestion that I summarize the theory diagrammatically.

As this figure makes clear, the theory is designed to explain the nature of distributive systems. It seeks to do this in terms of the combined influence of certain constant and variable features of the human situation. The arrows indicate the hypothesized direction of the flow of causal influence, and the Roman numerals their hypothesized importance.

This figure serves as a reminder that this theory predicts that *variations in technology* will be the most important single determinant of variations in distributive systems. In part this is because of the influence of technology on the level of productivity and the size of the economic surplus; in part it is because of the direct and indirect influence of technology on basic demographic, political, and productive patterns of organization. The theory also leads us to predict secondary variations in distributive systems as a consequence of secondary variations in technology, or those which occur among societies of the same societal type.

Though this theory predicts that variations in technology are the most important single determinant of variations in distribution, it does not hypothesize that they are the only determinant. Three others are specifically singled out: (1) *environmental differences,* (2) *variations in the military participation ratio,* (3) *variations in the degree of constitutionalism.* In addition, since this is not a closed theory, it is assumed that other factors also exercise an influence. These are indicated by the symbols x, y, and z. One of the important concerns in the analysis which follows will be the identification of these factors and the determination of the magnitude of their influence. Some will prove of importance only in societies of a single type, and perhaps only with reference to a single, minor aspect of distributive systems. Others, however, may prove to be much more important, and it is with these that we shall be especially concerned.

Given the nature of this theory, the organization of materials for the remainder of the volume is clear. Since it is predicted that technological variation is the primary determinant of variations among distributive systems, societies should be classified in technological terms, and this scheme of classification should be used to order the presentation of data. If the theory is sound, this method of presentation should prove frutiful; if not, it should prove a source of considerable confusion.

The system of classifying societies used in the following chapters reflects the influence of dozens of anthropologists and archaeologists who have wrestled with this problem. Lewis Henry Morgan, the pioneer American anthropologist, distinguished between three basic societal types, savage, barbarian, and civilized.[17] The first two were further subdivided

[17] Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society* (New York: Holt, 1877), pp. 9–10.

into upper, middle, and lower levels, the criteria differentiating the several levels being technological in nature.

Though Morgan's scheme is no longer used, most of the more recent efforts to develop a societal typology based on technological criteria reflect its influence. It is seen in the work of such widely separated scholars as the British sociologist Hobhouse, the British archaeologist Childe, the American anthropologist Goldschmidt, and the American sociologist Duncan.[18] The system of classification used in this volume stems directly from that of Goldschmidt.

Goldschmidt identifies six basic societal types which he sees as related to one another in the manner described in Figure 3. The higher the position, the more advanced the type is technologically. The arrows indicate the probable evolutionary sequence according to Goldschmidt. Thus, though herding societies are technologically less advanced than agricultural-state societies, he hypothesizes that the former evolved from the latter. It may be relevant to note here that Goldschmidt's two hunting and gathering types correspond closely to Morgan's savage societies, his herding and horticultural types to Morgan's barbarian, and his agricultural-state and industrial types to Morgan's civilized.

The differences between Goldschmidt's scheme and that used in this volume can be seen by comparing Figures 3 and 4. First, Goldschmidt's nomadic and settled hunting and gathering societies are treated as a single type on the grounds that the differences between them are due chiefly to environmental factors rather than technological; i.e., when hunting and gathering peoples are not nomadic, it is because their environment is fertile enough to sustain a sedentary human population. Second, the horticultural type is divided into two categories, a simple and an advanced. This was not planned in advance, but a careful reading of the ethnographic literature made it inescapable. Goldschmidt himself anticipated the need for this step when he wrote, "Our horticultural category is the broadest and internally the most varied of the lot, and closer examination may ultimately provide sensible and useful subdivisions." [19] Third, it has been necessary to make certain additions to Goldschmidt's typology. Fishing societies are largely subsumed under the "settled hunting and gathering" rubric in his scheme, while maritime societies are presumably included under the "agricultural-state society" rubric. The need for these

[18] See L. T. Hobhouse, G. C. Wheeler, and M. Ginsberg, *The Material Culture and Social Institutions of the Simpler Peoples* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1930); V. Gordon Childe, *Man Makes Himself* (London: Watts, 1939); Walter Goldschmidt, *Man's Way: A Preface to the Understanding of Human Society* (New York: Holt, 1959), especially chap. 6; and O. D. Duncan, "Social Organization and the Ecosystem," in Robert E. Faris, *Handbook of Modern Sociology* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), pp. 48–61.

[19] Goldschmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

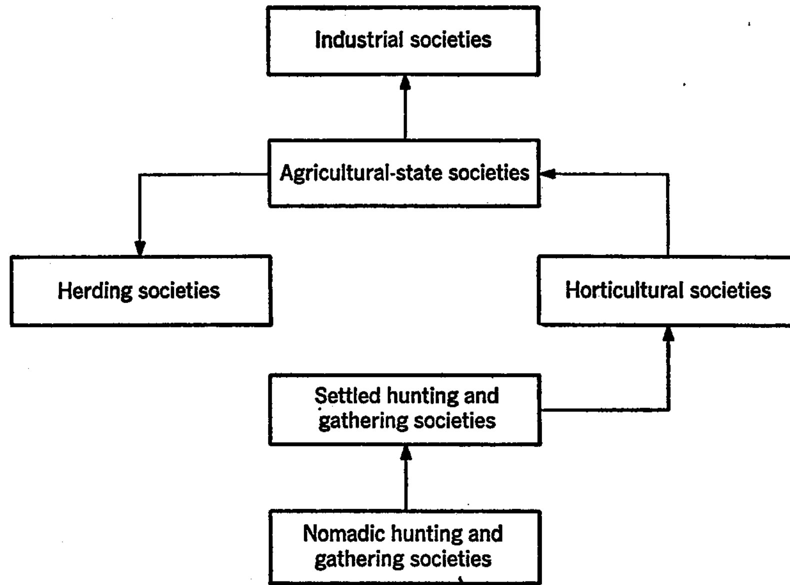

Figure 3 Goldschmidt's societal typology.

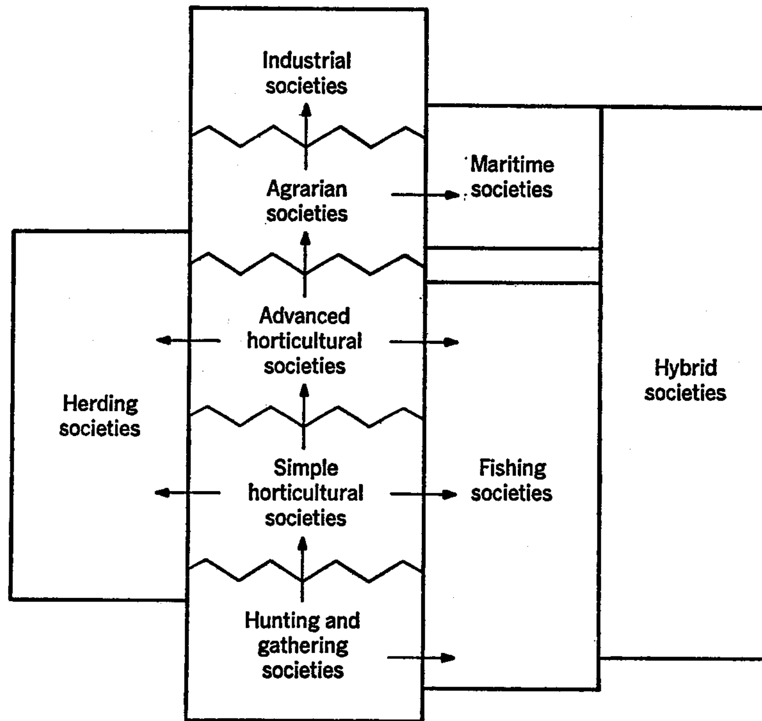

Figure 4 Societal typology for *Power and Privilege.*

distinctions will be explained in Chapters 5 and 8 respectively. Finally, the system of classification used in this volume makes allowance for a variety of *hybrid* types—societies which involve curious and often complex intermixtures of technology. Such societies arise as a result of the diffusion of technology from more advanced societies to less advanced. Thus, many of the Plains Indians in this country in the nineteenth century fit none of the traditional types. Rather, they were hunting and gathering or simple horticultural societies with certain important elements of agrarian technology grafted on, e.g., the horse and the gun. These elements, though few in number, altered the character of these societies so greatly that it is impossible to treat them as hunting and gathering or simple horticultural societies. Similarly, contemporary Indian society (in Asia) can be viewed as a hybrid type involving a complex intermixture of technological elements from agrarian and industrial societies. To lump such societies with "pure" types can only lead to confusion.

The present typology is predicated on the assumption that there is an underlying continuum, in terms of which all societies can be ranked. This continuum is a measure of a society's *overall technological efficiency*, i.e., the value of a society's gross product in international markets divided by the human energy expended in its production. Unfortunately, this concept is not easily operationalized, and we are forced to rely on simpler and more obvious criteria for classificatory purposes. This is the reason for classifying societies in terms of their basic techniques of subsistence. Such data are readily available and seem highly correlated with overall technological efficiency.

The chief disadvantage of this method of classification is that it introduces a certain area of overlap between adjacent societal types. For example, for operational purposes agrarian societies are differentiated from advanced horticultural on the grounds that the latter lack the plow. Sometimes, however, the most advanced horticultural societies have made other advances which result in slightly greater *overall* efficiency than exists in certain of the least advanced agrarian societies. (This is the reason for the jagged lines between certain societal types in Figure 4.) Fortunately, the extent of such overlap is not great.

Finally, it should be noted that the present study deals with only five of the eight basic types identified in Figure 4 and with none of the hybrid types. The selection of these five was determined chiefly by their crucial importance in human history and because collectively they cover the total range of variation in technological efficiency. The limitations of time and space precluded extending the analysis to the other types, but one hopes that this can be done in the not too distant future.