

Part IV

**SOCIAL
STRATIFICATION**

CHAPTER TEN

Theories of Racism

In order to explain economic, political, and cultural inequalities between the various races, many theories have been proposed. There are theories which view biological reasons as the main cause of racial stratification while others trace the cause of racism to social characteristics of people. On the other hand, there are theories which analyze racism as a self-perpetuating historical legacy based on social conditions. Once again, the philosophical dialectic of idealism and materialism emerges as an analytical framework for distinguishing explanations of social reality.¹

It seems to be common sense that racial conflict is an inevitable part of society. As the editors of *Daedalus* (a prestigious sociological journal) put it: "All the evidence is that there is potential trouble whenever people of different colors rub shoulders uneasily together."² At first glance, the inevitability of racial conflict might seem realistic, but we ask the reader to suspend judgment on this question. Through a historical examination of the development of racism, we hope to illustrate that it is a relatively new phenomenon in the history of our species and that racial conflict is neither natural nor inevitable.

The United States is one of the European settler colonies established after the rise of a European-dominated world economic system. For the most part, it has been the downtrodden and oppressed who voluntarily left (or were compelled to leave) their European homelands. Whether they went to Australia, South Africa, the Americas, or more recently to Israel, Europeans established settler states and massacred and expelled the original inhabitants of newly "discovered" lands. The formation of racial minorities in the U.S. includes one of the most brutal and systematic extermination campaigns against the natives, the forcible importation of African slaves, and foreign wars of conquest against our southern neighbor, Mexico, which had over half of its land (more than one million square miles) taken away by the U.S. in a series of wars from 1836 to 1848.

Although the specific dynamics of racism vary from one settler colony to another, the general functions of racial ideology – as we

discuss below – are strikingly similar: the justification of the conquest of new lands; the rationalization of a low-paid labor force and the preservation (in one form or another) of an exclusively defined superior cultural identity. In the Americas, the dynamics of racism were such that the predominantly Protestant settlers of the North did not intermarry with Native Americans to the same extent that Catholic settlers in the South did. To be sure, both Catholic and Protestant European settlers genocidally enforced their will on Native Americans, but over the centuries since the landing of Columbus in 1492, racism and racial segregation have taken hold most strongly in the U.S., not in Latin America.³ From our point of view, it is no coincidence that the social and political structure of the U.S. – to the extent that they were imported – came from England, the world's most advanced capitalist country before the end of the nineteenth century, while Latin American social structures, when imported, were from Spain and Portugal, countries which were long under the control of feudal aristocracies. The capitalist economies of Holland and England produced the European settlers of South Africa, where apartheid, a system of racial segregation and white supremacy, is the "legal" basis of racial relations. Israel, of course, is based on the European ideology of Zionism, a belief in an exclusively Jewish state, and Israel systematically denies equal rights to Palestinians in much the same way that South Africa treats Blacks.⁴ It is difficult to correlate religion and racism, but it should be noted that the Moslem religion has been able to provide its believers with a means of racial harmony. The non-racist character of Islam transformed Malcolm X, who went on a pilgrimage to Mecca believing whites were devils and returned to the U.S. with a different view of racism and white people because of his experiences in the Moslem world.

In this chapter, we are primarily concerned with the racism of the United States. As we complete our sketch of capitalist patriarchy, we consider racism to be a central dynamic serving to maintain the existing system. Racism refers to a system of domination in which the oppressors maintain their system of privileges through both institutional and psychological means. Racism involves a systematic cultural dehumanization of the oppressed within a system of social inequality and discrimination. As Albert Memmi put it:

Racism is the generalized and final assigning of values to real or imaginary differences, to the accuser's benefit and at his victim's expense, in order to justify the former's own privileges or aggression.⁵

The Frankfurt School's studies of prejudice⁶ grew out of European – and particularly the German – reality where Jews were the main victims of prejudice and discrimination, and their studies did not systematically deal with racism in the U.S., nor for that matter, with European expansionism in the Third World. Our focus is on the modern world system where racism is manifested in the continuing economic, military, and political intervention in the Third World, intervention aimed at preserving the world system in its present form. The problems of poverty, starvation, disease, and illiteracy of the underdeveloped countries are the other side of wasteful military spending and the escalating arms race among the developed countries, and racist theories of society are one of the ways in which the present system legitimates its irrationality.

BIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF RACISM

In the last century, sociological theory which rests on idealistic explanations for racial stratification has undergone changes at least in the content of the argument. Before slavery was abolished in the U.S., it was believed that Nature (or God) had created Black people as inferior beings whose role was to serve white masters. In the comparatively short time of one hundred years, slavery has been abolished and the biologically based justification for white supremacy has changed from a theological explanation (God's will) to a "scientifically" defined "genetic inferiority" as put forth in the theories of William Shockley and Arthur Jensen.⁷ According to these views, the statistically lower IQ scores of Blacks are related to inherently inferior genes, not to social or economic conditions. In 1968 Shockley declared that "The major deficit in Negro intellectual performance must be primarily of hereditary origin and thus relatively irremediable by practical improvements in environment."⁸ The next year, Jensen's article in *Harvard Educational Review* extended Shockley's analysis and was used to argue for cutbacks in social spending for poor Blacks.

In a society dominated by the scientific ideology (as we discussed in Chapter 1), such a theory of racism matches many of the requirements of "scientific" knowledge, insofar as it presents a statistical correlation of mathematical measurements. Rather than attempting to debate the origins and meaning of differential IQ scores, we again raise the questions of objectivity and bias. As previously discussed, any scientific explanation of social reality which seeks to verify its conclusions on the basis of data gathered by empirical research is founded upon the "facticity of the

given." Rather than *explaining* social reality, such views mirror it and indeed, the racist explanations of Shockley and Jensen are a mirror image of racist social conditions. In the final analysis, even to ask the question raised by Shockley and Jensen makes sense only in a racist society.

Biological explanations for racial inequality overlook the way in which race itself is *socially* defined. In the U.S., for example, a person of Greek descent is considered white, but in Germany, the same person is defined as a member of the racial underclass. Similarly, a Palestinian in the U.S. is considered white, but in occupied Palestine, the same person is denied fundamental rights and is part of the oppressed (inferior) race. These examples serve to illustrate the way in which even "skin color" depends upon the social context and is not simply biologically determined.

Many of the various types of stratification in the modern world have a biological basis to them insofar as a woman differs physically from a man, a black skin from a white, and a child from a grandparent. Why is skin color and not eye color a basis for social stratification? To answer this question is to recognize that social differences between humans are not reflections of minute biological differences but are a historically conditioned reality.

Human beings are a product of Nature, and we are, at essence, natural beings; moreover, we are the essence of Nature: because of our naturally given ability to think abstractly, we have different and more powerful relationships to Nature than any of the other species so far evolved on this planet. One aspect of freedom is freedom from the necessities of Nature. The struggle for survival impelled human cooperation, food sharing and mutual defense from other species and natural disasters. The creation of social formations, due to the unending development of the human species, today has reached levels of social organization which makes possible, for the first time in history, real freedom from the scarcity of the bare essentials for survival – food, clothing, and shelter – for the vast majority of humans. It has been the natural environment which brought human beings into existence, but it has been human praxis which has developed human society. Within the kind of social organization of the present (patriarchal monopoly capitalism), the potential gains of human evolution are turned into losses. Our scientific knowledge and technological capabilities are used to dominate and destroy ourselves, other beings, and our planet Earth. Our social relationships – particularly the control exercised by a tiny minority over the vast

forces of production – today threaten the very existence of the entire species and planet through the threat of atomic war. In a situation where stability means that over half the world's children are undernourished at the same time as five percent of the world's people (the U.S.) use forty percent of the energy and food resources, racism provides a justification. In the future, the unity between races forged in the struggle against common enemies – the power elite and their multinational corporations, and the racism, sexism, and ageism of our society – could be a basis upon which the human species might realize a new universality.

Contemporary biological explanations for social stratification are, in large part, reworkings of earlier eugenicist theories.⁹ Neither the old nor the new eugenicist theories have been proven, and the debates which have surrounded such theories may be missing the main points behind the construction of the theory. If the presuppositions of a theorist influence both the problem under consideration and the results “scientifically” obtained, as Circourel has pointed out,¹⁰ then these unstated motivations need to be considered in depth. Generally speaking, those theorists who explain racism in terms of biological or physical characteristics of people belong to the conservative end of the political spectrum. They see society as a racial battleground where the struggle is for “the survival of the fittest.” Since whites are today the most privileged in the U.S., according to these theorists, it is because they are “fitter.” During the 1970s, Shockley and Jensen were part of a more general development in the social science: the emergence of “sociobiology,” which in part, was a reaction which set in after the Black Power movement and the New Left. This new area of sociology seeks to explain a wide variety of social phenomena – including patriarchy and racism – by reference to biological characteristics of human beings.

Modern racialist theory has a historic precedent in the ideology of Nazism. The race theory which posed Aryans as the superior race which was being made “impure” through crossbreeding with other races was a central proposition advanced by Hitler.¹¹ “Keeping the blood and the race pure” was seen by the Nazis as the German people’s noblest task. The genocide against the Jews – the systematic murder of over six million – came directly from this belief. The Nazis believed that the superiority of the white race was an imperative of Nature and that human existence reached its highest level by conforming to natural laws. According to *Mein Kampf*, Hitler’s definitive statement written while he was in jail before the Nazis came to power:

“Blood mixture and the resultant drop in the racial level is the sole cause of the dying out of old cultures; for men do not perish as a result of lost wars, but by the loss of that force of resistance which is contained only in pure blood.”¹²

Arguments of this kind are *not* easily refuted on rational grounds. Those who put them forth operate with irrational feelings and not with arguments. As Wilhelm Reich observed:

. . . It would be hopeless to try to prove to a fascist that black people and Italians are not racially “inferior” to the Teutons. He feels himself to be ‘superior’, and that’s the end of it. The race theory can be refuted only by exposing its irrational functions, of which there are essentially two: that of giving expression to certain unconscious and emotional currents prevalent in the nationalistically disposed man and of concealing certain psychic tendencies.¹³

For many people, racism may be easy to condemn as a dynamic in human relationships, but for others, racism is a way of life whose existence is unquestionable. As a structural imperative of the system of capitalist patriarchy, racism fulfills essential economic and psychological functions. One of the psychological functions of racism is to provide an identity for the racist, whose reality is predicated on the need for an “other.” It has long been recognized that the “Herd Instinct” (as discussed by Freud)¹⁴ plays an important role in the social construction of identity. Race, family, country and culture can all be expressions of the need which humans have for collectivity and inclusion. Seen in this context, white racism in the U.S. today is a means for generating a sense of belonging for many whites. The “others” are defined in terms of skin color for the racist, whose racist slurs define not only the “outcasts” but also the identity of the racist.

Racism also functions as a direct extension of the patriarchal relationships engendered from the dominated status of women and children. From the patriarch’s point of view, the intermixing of the blood of his race with the others threatens his existing sovereignty over the women and children in the family. In this sense, racial purity becomes the culmination of patriarchal authoritarianism. The myth of racial purity, used to maintain control of the wife and children in the patriarchal family, is then made into the myth of the “other’s” perversion. As Wilhelm Reich put it:

In America the racial fight against the black man takes place predominantly in the sphere of sexual defense. The black man is thought of as a sensuous pig who rapes white women.¹⁵

The psychological functions of racism sketched above are not necessarily understood in the consciousness of racists, and because they are hidden dynamics, their impact on relations in society (including social research) are often difficult to detect. The economic functions of racism are much more obvious, but even so, they may be as difficult as psychological dynamics to change, as the continuing problems of racism indicate. Before moving on to discuss the economic functions of racism, we will consider another idealistic theory of racial stratification, one which is not based on biological characteristics of oppressed people but on their social characteristics.

VICTIM-BLAMING

It is not only unprovable biological theories like those of Shockley and Jensen which are put forth today to explain the position of people of color in the United States. Based on empirical social research, for example, Daniel Moynihan argued that unemployment and the conditions of inequality suffered by Blacks are generally the result of the weakness of the black matriarchal family.¹⁶ In 1970, Daniel Moynihan was Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare in the Nixon Administration, and his social research and memos were used to make policy decisions by the federal government. According to the Moynihan report, the problems of black people stem from the inability of the black matriarchal family to function within the dominant system of patriarchy. The report put forth an image of black women as domineering, and by implication, it blamed the black mother for all of the social problems suffered by her family members. The Moynihan report, linked as it was to the policies of the federal government, soon became a topic of controversy, particularly since the policies it recommended included substantial cutbacks in aid to poor families. The phrase most commonly used to describe the policy implications of the report was "benign neglect."

In the aftermath of the Moynihan report, other scholarly studies have indicated that the extended family structure of the black community is, in fact, an alternative form of kinship to the nuclear family and one within which mutual cooperation abounds.¹⁷ Furthermore, defining any family in this society as matriarchal, even if it is supported economically by a woman, is an entirely inaccurate description since the concept of matriar-

chy implies that women have power in the institutions of society. Nothing could be less true for black women who are the most under- and unemployed and lowest paid of all sectors of the labor force and who face constant discrimination and prejudice because they are both Black and female. Since black women experience a very high rate of unemployment, their children must often depend upon Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) from many welfare departments which require that, for children to receive this assistance, there cannot be a man residing with them. As Robert Staples has suggested, black women with dual responsibilities for mothering and economic support have developed the personal strength, confidence, and skill that many white women, sheltered in the home and supervised by fathers and husbands, seek to achieve for themselves through women's liberation.¹⁸

Such a view of the black family stands in stark contrast to that of Daniel Moynihan, who lapsed into a social version of biological race theories: that of blaming the victims for their problems. There are many social scientists who attempt to describe the oppressed as having *social* defects (rather than biological ones) which cause their plight. In his book *Blaming the Victim*,¹⁹ William Ryan did an excellent job of exposing the ideology of victim-blaming as one which helps to perpetuate the social position of black people in the United States. Ryan examined the use of statistics on the higher illegitimacy rate among Blacks, the greater amount of crime, and the poorer quality of public education in the ghetto. By pointing out the social conditions under which such statistics were generated and by uncovering the biases of the statisticians, he made a genuine contribution to transcending the ideology of victim-blaming.

. . . the basic ideological maneuver in blaming the victims is to apply exceptionalistic analysis to universalistic problems. . . . The exceptionalist position holds that problems are the result of particular circumstances, unpredictable and specialized . . . the results of unusual events, or even accidents. . . . The universalist position, on the other hand, sees social problems as rooted in social causes – the predictable, usual, even, in a sense, 'normal'.²⁰

Ryan's analysis exposed the self-serving nature of the beneficiaries of racism who wish to absolve themselves of guilt by rationalizing the existence of racism as a problem of people of color.

Ryan called for a redistribution of wealth and power as well as increased government spending as a solution to racial inequality:

Just as government subsidies are used to develop new aircraft designs or new weapon designs, a similar effort could be made to subsidize research and development of less expensive housing.²¹

He blamed the system for not solving the problem of racism since the resources are there to alleviate much of the suffering but are not allocated properly. As the racists blame the victims, Ryan blamed the system, creating a vicious circle which both sides fail to break out of. Neither conservatives nor liberals seem able to comprehend that the solution to the social problem of racism, in the final analysis, rests on both a transformation of the economic relationships of our society and *ourselves as humans*. So long as our institutions discriminate against some on the basis of race, there will be racism. But racism will not simply disappear if our institutions are changed; even if new institutions were created, the problem of racial prejudice would continue to exist in both overt and covert ways.

Racism is an autonomous structure of domination that produces white privilege in everyday life. Racism is not a mystical reality, but a series of concrete structures of domination and ideological myths that serve to perpetuate the existing system of social inequality. To eliminate racism, the necessary but not sufficient conditions include the elimination of capitalist production and patriarchy. But the elimination of these factors alone will not automatically result in the elimination of racism. Many generations will be needed to transform our psyches as well as our society as a whole. It will be necessary not only to change certain concrete structures (like job and income differentials, differences in access to political power and education, and residential segregation) but also to transform ourselves into a human species capable of being free.

FUNCTIONALIST THEORIES OF STRATIFICATION

In our discussion of stratification, we have critically examined middle-range biological and social theories. We now turn to a more generalized body of sociological theory which seeks to explain social stratification: the functionalist approach. The idea of functional analysis is taken from biology. Just as every part of the human body has a function to perform for the whole organism, it is a central idea of the functionalist view of stratification that social inequality is a necessary part of the social organism. It is necessary to motivate essentially lazy human beings to do the

hard and dirty jobs, to motivate persons to work and study, and to reward talent highly enough to motivate genius. Even if this postulate is true, one could still question whether the amount of social inequality we have in American society today is more than is "functionally necessary."

Functionalist theories are not critical of social inequalities and, in fact, tend to ignore racial and class divisions as well as imperialism. Functionalism as an ideology is connected with the rise and development of French imperialism and was at its height in America when American imperialism held a hegemonic or dominant place in the world economy: during the 1940s and 1950s or after the Second World War had destroyed the hegemony of British, French, and German imperialism and prior to the beginning of the decline of U.S. imperialism which occurred during the Vietnam war.

According to the functionalist argument, if certain basic prerequisites are not met, a society will fall out of equilibrium and cease to exist. The four conditions that will terminate the existence of a society are:

1. The biological extinction or dispersion of the members;
2. Apathy of the members;
3. The war of all against all;
4. The absorption of the society into another society.²²

Societies which have ceased to exist biologically, such as many American Indian tribes like the Mohican in the Northeast or the Costanoans in the San Francisco area, were completely exterminated by the genocidal policies of both Spanish and American imperialism, which encouraged either bond slavery or murder of Indians to the point of putting bounties on dead Indians.²³ An example the functionalists use to demonstrate the second condition which terminates the existence of a society – apathy – are societies of Oceania like New Guinea, the New Hebrides, and Australia. These societies were not ended because of apathy; on the contrary, the natives were only apathetic with regard to British and French imperialism and preferred death to enslavement.²⁴

The functionalists, by viewing inequality as a necessary function of society, ignore the inhumanity and oppression that results from it. In the case of western industrialized societies which have histories of imperialistic ventures into other countries, they are led to generate theories about the destruction of native peoples which do not even mention the effects of colonization, thereby serving to legitimate imperialism.

To attempt to assure the reader that our characterization of the functionalist theory of stratification as a justification for imperialism²⁵ is

not overstated, a statement is included to give a flavor for the callous disregard for both human life and oppression that functionalism contains. Aberle, et al., state:

Apathy means the cessation of individual motivation . . . That migrant Polynesian laborers have died of nostalgia is well known. It is claimed that whole societies of Melanesia have withered away from ennui. In these cases, physical extinction is merely an extreme consequence of the cessation of motivation.²⁶

This statement is made as if there were no British or French colonial administrators extracting super profits from forcing the natives to work in copra plantations, which might have led to complete cultural demoralization at the hands of oppressors from another culture. Let us compare for a moment this description of the laziness and lack of motivation of Polynesians and Melanesians with the following report by a Native American about his treatment at a Spanish Mission in California in 1776:

The following day after my baptism, they took me to work with the other Indians, and they put me to cleaning a milpa of maize; since I did not know how to manage the hoe that they gave me, after hoeing a little, I cut my foot and could not continue working with it but I was out to pulling the weeds by hand, and in this manner I did not finish the task they gave me. In the afternoon they lashed me for not finishing the job, and the following day the same thing happened as on the previous day. Everyday they lashed me unjustly because I did not finish what I did not know how to do, and thus I existed for many days until I found a way to escape; but I was tracked down and they caught me like a fox; there they seized me by lasso as on the first occasion, and they carried me off to the mission torturing me on the road . . .²⁷

When the functionalists talk of the biological extinction or dispersion of the members of a society and of their apathy, or the absorption of one society by another, and they do not talk of imperialism, they must either be historically naive or callous toward the historical experience of the majority of the members of the human race. As to the supposed war of all against all – it is based on the assumption that human societies are held together by a State (Leviathan) which mediates the self-interest of what are considered to be basically selfish human beings. This conservative view of human nature was long ago refuted with anthropological

evidence²⁸ which found that society is held together by basic cooperation and mutual aid – especially among tribal peoples and oppressed groups. If there is a war of all against all, it exists most commonly among capitalists who murder each other, or among imperialists who start wars to decide how to divide the spoils of territory, dynamics ignored by functionalism. Particularly since the roots of the capitalist system – the “primitive accumulation of capital” – derive from the enslavement of African people and the theft of their lives and work and those of their offspring, it is curious that functionalist theories ignore colonialism as a cause of modern social stratification.

Prior to the worldwide expansion of European society, racism as we know it today appears to have been non-existent. Why then did racism arise? When the North American region was first settled, there were both white and black slaves, but around the end of the seventeenth century, the colonies changed to a purely racial system of slavery. Why? In an attempt to answer these questions, we now turn to an analysis of the relationship between racism and economics.

MATERIALIST THEORIES OF RACISM

Many people believe that racism is fundamentally a personal problem based solely on the bigotry of prejudiced individuals. If this were the case, then the elimination of racism would be possible within our present system, as the educational campaigns, anti-poverty programs and affirmative action programs of the government seem to indicate. We do not think that such solutions will succeed because there are economic functions played by racism which help make the capitalist system work today. These functions include the dual labor market where unionized (predominantly white) workers have job and income advantages over non-unionized sectors. This is one way of keeping working people divided, and it is also a way of continually having a pool of underemployed workers (and potential military draftees) available to business at a low rate of pay. As previously discussed, the reserve army of labor is a fundamental need and product of the capitalist system, something which is essential to the growth of a capitalist economy. This class of under- and unemployed people can be called upon to work in times of the expansion of production or during crises as in times of war. Since these people remain, for the most part, jobless, the situation allows employers to insure higher profits for themselves. They can pay those who are working lower wages since they may always replace a dissatisfied worker with

someone else who is looking for any work at all. Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and other minority groups have historically received the brunt of this exploitation,²⁹ an exploitation perpetuated by racist institutions. Too often, they have been denied education and job training and refused access to opportunities for upward mobility. The same is true for women for whom the myth of the male-as-breadwinner has provided justification for the denial of job opportunities.

The formation of our present economic system has never been the result of democratic decision-making but is tied to the evolution and expansion of the world system. Depressions, wars, and individual economic gains have been the mechanisms of the formation of this system more than any freely determined choice of the majority of the people who live within it. In the context of the evolution of the present economic structures, racism has developed as both a means for and an explanation of the inferior structural position of Blacks, Chicanos, and the people of the Third World in general. In order to clarify this view, we turn to a discussion of the origins of racial slavery.

In his monumental study, *Caste, Class, and Race*, black sociologist Oliver Cox tied the rise of racial slavery specifically to the demands of the labor market:

Sometimes, probably because of its very obviousness, it is not realized that the slave trade was simply a way of recruiting labor for the purpose of exploiting the great natural resources of America. The trade did not develop because Indians and Negroes were red and black, or because their cranial capacity averaged a certain number of cubic centimeters; but simply because they were the best workers to be found for the heavy labor in the mines and plantations across the Atlantic. If white workers were available in sufficient numbers they would have been substituted. As a matter of fact, part of the early demand for labor in the West Indies and on the mainland was filled by white servants, who were defined in the same terms as those used to characterize the Africans. Although the recruitment of involuntary labor finally settled down to the African coasts, the earlier kidnappers did a brisk business in some of the most enlightened European cities.³⁰

Because Native Americans generally refused to work on European farms or in the factories, preferring death or repeatedly escaping, they were unsuited to the growing demands of the market for labor-power. There

seem to be two reasons why Africans came to occupy the status of laborers/slaves in the expanding world system's frontier regions. First, the slave trade's economy of scale meant that the value of the work of a slave from Africa was more cost-effective than hiring a "free" laborer or paying off the debt of an indentured servant. In other words, the economic logic of the expanding capitalist system brought racial slavery onto the historical agenda.

Another view put forth to explain the rise of racial slavery is that the growing class conflicts in the new world around the end of the seventeenth century necessitated a conscious decision by the ruling class to appeal to white racial solidarity as a way to divide the under-class. According to this view, the ideology of white supremacy developed as one aspect of the new ruling class's domination. As white workers perceived that they were better off than slaves, they were more controllable, and over the decades, white supremacy became a central feature of American capitalism, serving both to stabilize the labor market and to provide a structural mechanism for social control. White supremacy may seem to imply economic benefits for whites, but a study completed in the 1970s, "The Economics of Racism," demonstrated that the long-run effects of racism are to lower the wages of all workers, including whites.³¹ Economically as well as psychologically, racism hurts all people, although it is undoubtedly the case that it is the oppressed who are hurt the most.

Whether the advent of racial slavery was a product of ruling class rationalizations for their own continued domination or for better profits, it seems clear that the global expansion of the world economy engendered the development of modern racism. Moreover, modern corporate capitalism continues to produce racist social conditions, particularly in the unequal allocation of poverty: in 1979, 31% of all Blacks in the U.S. were poor, 22% of all Hispanics, but only 9% of all whites; by the end of 1982, these figures had risen to 36% of all Blacks, 30% of all Hispanics, and 12% of all whites.³²

Although the roots and existence of modern racism may be clear, there remain many unresolved questions. One of the ongoing debates concerns an exact definition for the position occupied by Blacks and Mexicans/Chicanos in the U.S. Are they ethnic groups, who are mainly relegated to being part of the reserve army of labor? Or are they internal colonies or separate nations? The predominant view among sociologists is that Blacks are an ethnic group, but this view tends to overlook the

institutional and cultural discrimination they have suffered from the very beginning of their arrival in America, dynamics not suffered to the same extent by other underprivileged ethnic groups like Italians and Irish. A variant of this theory of modern society places black workers in the position of being among the most oppressed of all workers. In discussing the development of racism, for example, Oliver Cox stated that:

But the fact of crucial significance is that racial exploitation is merely one aspect of the problem of the proletarianization of labor, regardless of the color of the laborer. Hence racial antagonism is essentially political-class conflict. . . . As a matter of fact, the white proletariat of early capitalism had to endure burdens of exploitation quite similar to those which many colored people must bear today.³³

Cox's arguments point out the proletarian aspects of the oppression of black people in the U.S., and he sees no end to racism without the end of capitalism. On the other hand, he fails to fully appreciate the difference coming to the New World voluntarily (as the European immigrants did) and coming here in chains with no choice in the matter.³⁴ Except for a comparatively few white slaves and criminals who came to America rather than spend time in jail (or because there was no room in the prisons of Europe), the vast majority of whites came here with hopes for a better life than the one possible in their homeland. On the other hand, very few Blacks came voluntarily, and Chicanos became part of the U.S. only after the conquest of northern Mexico.

The belief that black people constitute an internal colony became widespread during the 1960s, when the Black Power movement was at its height. According to this view, the U.S. has systematically exploited Blacks in much the same way that a colonial country exploits its foreign dominions. The cultural dimensions of this exploitation – white prejudice and discrimination – are viewed as proof of the colonial mentality and contempt for native peoples. The idea that black people are an internal colony is closely tied to the view that Blacks constitute a separate nation within the U.S. This view was most prominent in the 1930s – before the vast migration of black people to the inner cities and at a time when many parts of the South had a black majority. Although today there may be relatively fewer Blacks in the South, there still exists a “black belt” in Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas as well as considerable sentiment among Blacks that they are entitled to a separate nation as well as reparations for centuries of exploitation.

Legally and historically, Native Americans constitute separate nations within the U.S., nations whose relationship to the larger society has continually been one of exploitation, colonization, and conquest. Their lands have been systematically stolen as have their natural and human resources. In recent times, they have renewed their struggles for genuine autonomy and independence.

Mexicans have a somewhat different position in the corporate state. The area which is now the southwestern portion of the United States was once part of Aztlan, the birthplace and origin of the civilization which was to become first the Aztec land and later Mexico. This land – including the states of Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona and Southern California – is culturally still a part of Mexico.³⁵ It is particularly unjust that border restrictions exist between the United States and Mexico, where people of Mexican descent are concerned, since this whole area is their ancestral homeland. The United States, or at least Anglo-Europeans, are in this view an imperialist culture occupying the southwest by force. The southwest, or Aztlan, is composed of a land, a people and a culture which for hundreds of years have been under the yoke of imperialist tyranny, first from Spain and France and now from the Anglo-European Yankees from east of the Mississippi River. This claim, of course, may be contested by the Apache, Comanche, Navaho, Hopi, Yacqui, and other Native American nations who claim the same land.

Aztlan is a land which can look to ancient religious and philosophical conceptions of the relationship between human beings and Nature³⁶ – a tradition which in many ways is more humanistic and ecologically sound than that of the modern corporate state. There were great achievements by the Central American civilizations – like corn, a vegetable which took five civilizations to domesticate from the acorn and which allowed the development of vast populations of highly civilized cultures.

The Mexican people have traditionally played the role of proletarians in the social structure of Southern California, New Mexico and Texas, and many work as farm workers, miners, restaurant workers, laundry workers, textile workers – the “salt of the earth” doing the hard and dangerous work that most Anglos will not take. Mexican people have been exploited by Anglo landowners and factory owners (who stole the land from Mexicans with the force of imperialist arms in wars when capital was expanding). They have been deported and shipped back across the border to Mexico when they were not needed (in periods of

depression and recession, like the 1930s and the present time). Every year, nearly a million Mexicans are shipped out of their ancestral homeland because they are considered "illegal aliens."³⁷

An historical analysis of immigration of people into the U.S. reveals a trend for workers oppressed by imperialism to go to the colonizing country in the hope of finding work. Central Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans today play similar roles to that of Filipinos, Chinese, and Japanese around the turn of the century (when these latter groups came to work on the railroads in the West). These immigrants into the U.S. can be compared to the Greeks, Turks, and others who today migrate into industrialized European countries like Germany and France to live and work while saving money to take home. There seems to be a generalized trend: workers from the nations of the periphery are compelled to migrate to the industrialized nations in search of work. These vast movements of human beings across continents and oceans are largely determined by the workings of the world system rather than by freely determined individual will.

In terms of oppressed minorities within the U.S., the most important judgment that can be made is that no one seek to impose on them any particular definition of who they are. Mexicans, black people and Native Americans should be free to determine their own destinies. If Mexicans or Blacks decide they want an independent republic(s) in the future, this should be their decision to make.

RACISM AND RACIAL GENOCIDE

Besides being workers, whose labor-power is needed by capitalist society in order to reproduce capital and allow for the accumulation of capital and profits, Blacks, Mexicans, Native Americans, and other people of color in the U.S. have at one time or another been faced with genocide. The genocidal policies of international capitalism toward the Third World were demonstrated in Vietnam and continue today in many places like the Amazon basin. This genocidal policy involves breaking up indigenous cultures and replacing self-sufficient agricultural economies with dependent economies³⁸ which export cash crops like coffee, sugar, and rubber to the wealthier countries.

This genocide is sometimes very obvious as reflected in the body count in Vietnam³⁹ and the idea that the "only good Indian is a dead Indian."⁴⁰ Racist genocide is also reflected in the use of black people in

dangerous medical experiments, in the forced sterilization (sterilization without prior knowledge) of Puerto Ricans and in the decision to drop the atom bomb on the Japanese rather than on the Germans, even though the Germans were the ones about to develop the atom bomb themselves and the ones who were committing genocide against the Jews. The racism of the U.S. was reflected in the decision to put 112,000 Japanese-Americans into concentration camps during World War II, including the entire Japanese-American population of California, Oregon, and Washington.⁴¹

The genocidal thrust of the U.S. was also reflected by the treatment of the Black Panther Party and the Native American Movement. Many members of the Black Panther Party were murdered by police,⁴² and the genocide against Native Americans, epitomized by the massacre at Wounded Knee, is still going on. In July of 1975, for example, FBI agents illegally trespassed on the sovereign land of an Indian reservation in Pine Ridge, North Dakota, murdering Indians under the banner of the United States Government.⁴³

Faced with genocidal wars of conquest, the people of the Third World have drawn appropriate lessons and begun to fight back. Since the defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam, the once-dominated Third World has increasingly been standing up. National liberation movements have come to power in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and Nicaragua while other oppressed nations from Palestine to El Salvador to South Africa are preparing for the day when their people will be free to determine their own destinies. Vietnam marked a turning point in history where the westward expansion of U.S. imperialism was checked.

The irony of the Vietnamese revolution is difficult for Americans to understand. In the spirit of the American revolution of 1776, the people of Vietnam defeated an army of over 500,000 troops from a country which they had expected to be friendly to their cause of independence and freedom. The separation of Vietnam into North and South (which had been a temporary agreement following the defeat of the French in 1954) was made into a semi-permanent boundary through U.S. intervention. The first step was when the U.S. stopped free elections in Vietnam, since, according to President Eisenhower, Ho Chi Minh would have received over 90 percent of the votes. Massive U.S. intervention was precipitated by the CIA-staged "Gulf of Tonkin incident" where no attack on U.S. ships was actually made, as we now know from the Pentagon Papers.⁴⁴ A series of dictators was propped up by the U.S. and when the first of them, Diem (whom the U.S. had persuaded to return to

Vietnam from New Jersey where he was living) became too unpopular, the CIA had him assassinated by the next ruler, Marshall Ky, who once said that Adolf Hitler was his hero.

In the nearly two decades in which the U.S. attempted to conquer Vietnam, more than 6 million Vietnamese suffered death or injury. A host of anti-personnel weapons were devised and used, some of which contained shrapnel which could not be picked up by X-rays so that the victim could not be cured. The automated battlefield was devised by universities and corporations at the request of the Defense Department when too many U.S. soldiers were dying in action. "Smart" bombs, radar-operated planes, and B-52 raids replaced the use of soldiers in the continuing attempt to break the resistance. The saturation bombing of the countryside of Vietnam was an attempt to force the peasant population to migrate to the cities where they could be more easily controlled. On the ground, My Lai and Song My were examples of the many massacres of unarmed villagers, while from the air more bombs were dropped on Vietnam (to say nothing of Laos and Cambodia) than were used throughout World War II by all sides.

In the aftermath of Vietnam, at the same time as movements of national liberation have grown stronger, fascist dictatorships have consolidated themselves throughout much of Latin America with economic and military assistance from the United States. In the Middle East, the United States has supported a government of Lebanon whose president, Amin Gemayel, belongs to a party modelled on those of Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco. The genocidal policy of Israel is applauded by many Americans, serving as yet another example of the uniquely human capacity to wage war against ourselves. We are the only species to wage war, let alone to commit genocide.

These developments are not accidents or mistakes. As examples of what our present system produces, they prefigure the choice confronting our species: will we continue to accept the kind of system which leads to genocide and racism (and perhaps even nuclear holocaust) or will we choose to transform our social relationships in a new and truly human way? Socialism or barbarism are the twin historical possibilities which have again emerged in the latter part of the twentieth century.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

Theories of Class

A class society is one in which the stratification of human beings into superior and subordinate groups is based on their relationship to the mode of producing goods and services. The differences between classes in a society¹ may be expressed on the surface in terms of wealth, power, and prestige,² but these differences indicate a fundamental division of society into antagonistic classes.³ While the existence of social class and stratification within society is agreed upon by almost everyone, there are different views of just what it means; how important it is, and whether class inequality is a “law of Nature” or a historical structure that can be changed. In this chapter, we will examine the Marxist theory, structural-functional theory, the Weberian theory, and the neo-Marxist theories of social class.

In undertaking an analysis of classes in the United States today, many people make the mistake of using century-old categories to understand the complexities of modern corporate capitalism. Some of the best-intentioned social analysts attempt to analyze a concrete historical reality of the present in terms of the categories of the past. The task of social science is to constantly grow, both in terms of the areas of study and also in methodology and conceptual tools. We need to free science of age-old blinders which have been developed in the past to analyze very different situations than the one we are confronted with in the United States today. The class structure of the United States today, for example, is very different than it was in the days of Karl Marx. Today, nearly 20 million people in the U.S. live on social security and welfare payments. Over 10 million are in the armed forces. Roughly 50 million people are contained within the educational and publishing sectors of the economy. Can we begin to analyze the class structure of the U.S. without first analyzing our tools of analysis?

MARXIST THEORY OF CLASS

Marx analyzed classes not only in relation to production but also in relation to social change. For Marx, the struggle among and between

social classes results in the transition from one type of society to another.⁴ He understood that classes involve more than simply a different distribution of wealth, power and prestige within a society, that they involve, above all else, the oppression of the members of the subordinate class by the members of the dominant class. Marx asserted that this class oppression leads to a struggle for economic privilege and power between the contending classes. The intensification of struggles is the crucible by which a “class-in-itself” (as defined by the mode of production) transforms itself into a “class-for-itself” (with a self-defined vision of a totally new society). Marx postulated that the change from one type of society to another—from slavery to feudalism or from feudalism to capitalism—is based on the outcomes of class struggles.

Let us examine these postulates one at a time. Does social inequality imply oppression? This seems clearly to be the case with slavery, which was very oppressive from the point of view of the slave. It also seems clear that the wealth of the slavemaster was based on the labor and exploitation of the slave. Inequality also seems to imply oppression under feudalism. The landlords derived their wealth from the exploitation of the labor of the serfs, a relationship essential to the social relations of production in a feudal society. The serf cultivated a plot of land, and the landlord took the produce of as much as 90 percent of the plot of land, leaving the serf to keep the produce of only 10 percent. This form of sharecropping still goes on in some places in the southern part of the United States, meaning that a form of feudalism is still a reality there.

In modern capitalist society, some observers find it difficult to notice the exploitation and oppression involved in the relationship between the capitalist and the wage worker. It may be that it is harder to analyze the present than the past. It is also possible that some serfs and perhaps even some slaves felt that their exploitation was non-existent or justified by some higher purpose—such as a religious justification of slavery, although it is doubtful that many really felt this way.⁵ By and large, the systems of slavery and feudalism were held together by the sheer force of the army, police, and instruments of repression at the command of the ruling classes—whether patricians or lords. However, in relations between an employer and employee in capitalism, the worker often feels that he or she is involved in a “fair exchange” of wages for labor. It is the exploitation which is involved in such a “fair exchange” which Marx was able to analyze and describe.

Marx uncovered the process of exploitation at work in a capitalist society. According to Marx, the exploitation and oppression of workers

takes place primarily at the point of production—that is, in the factory, the office, the farm, the school or the hospital—where the workers must sell their labor-power as a commodity for the going wage. For the majority of workers in a capitalist society, whether at fast-food outlets, colleges, or aerospace factories, from 8:00 in the morning until 5:00 in the afternoon, their time is not their own, and they must do as they are told or be fired. This form of unfreedom or wage slavery differs from slavery in that the workers can go home at 5:00, but during the work day, they are subject to the whims of the bosses. In capitalist relations of production, workers have no control over production; they cannot elect their bosses the way towns elect mayors, and they have no say in what is to be produced or how it is to be produced. Even with the existence of a labor union, the workers at best can only gain control of raising wages and improving health and safety conditions. Under capitalist relations of production, workers could never decide to produce, for example, houses instead of jet bombers to be used for war.

Under capitalism the worker's labor is alienated because she or he does not have control over how it to be used by the capitalist. Even the capitalist has little control over the process, because the capitalist is bound to make a profit or he/she will soon cease being a capitalist and will end up just as another worker. The situation is not much different in the state socialist societies like the Soviet Union, where most workers work for wages and the conditions of work are determined by the Communist Party government and not by the workers themselves.⁶ In Poland, workers are not even allowed to form an independent labor union.

Marx's theory of classes was the first such theory to gain much popularity both in the labor movement and in academic circles. He developed his theory at the same time that the working class started to revolt against the conditions of work and the exploitation involved in capitalism.⁷ The theory did not simply come out of Marx's mind, but was also produced by the class conflicts that were going on during the time period in which he wrote. Marx was not the only one who noticed these developments. Another sociologist of about the same period—Lorenz von Stein—had similar things to say about class and class conflict in nineteenth-century Germany and France. But Marx must be credited as having the first fully developed sociological theory which involved the concept of class. As we discussed in Chapter 7, Marx's theory of class struggle was a key to his analysis of society.

If social classes have existed as long as the history of civilization, why were scholars, political theorists, moral philosophers and historians not conscious of them as major forces in history until the nineteenth century? Classes were observed as social strata in the division of labor by Plato, Aristotle, and Ibn Khaldun but not as actors in history. There are many reasons for this. One of them is that prior to the eighteenth century, the ruling classes ended up writing history and it was advantageous for them to leave out a careful consideration of revolution and social change. This is not to say that there was not class struggle. On the contrary, Spartacus was a leader of only one of the most famous of hundreds of slave revolts which took place during the Roman Empire, and the Middle Ages were dotted with revolts of serfs against the landlords. It was not, however, until the revolt of the middle class (or bourgeoisie) against the landlords, and of the working class (or proletariat) against the bourgeoisie that the oppressed classes developed theory from their revolutionary struggles.

The French Revolution of 1789 and the American Revolution of 1776 were the first great class struggles of the middle class against the feudal aristocrats and landowners, and the French and German revolutions of 1848 were the first great revolutions of the working class against the bourgeoisie. In the twentieth century, we have witnessed a number of successful revolutions by peasants in the underdeveloped countries against their colonial masters—such as in China, Vietnam, and Cuba.

THE FUNCTIONALIST ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL CLASSES

The main tradition in the study of social classes that characterizes modern sociology is the functionalist approach. The functionalist approach, although it has its roots in the work of August Comte⁸ in the 1820s and 1830s, was not elaborated as a theory of social classes until the 1950s.⁹ We have said that the Marxist view of classes—class conflict and the polarization of classes into bourgeoisie (or property owners) and proletariat (or wage workers)—was born out of the class struggles of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie in the 1840s in Western Europe. The functionalist theory could be said to be born then out of the Romantic reaction¹⁰ to the French Revolution of 1789 and was nurtured in the Cold War and McCarthyism in the 1950s when anticommunist hysteria was at its height in America.

The functionalist argument, although fundamentally conservative and (as mentioned in the previous chapter) based on pro-imperialist assumptions about oppressed peoples and conservative assumptions about the inherent competitive nature of human beings, is not without its insights about the structure of human societies. The functional prerequisites of society do point to some common structural features of societies as we know them today. These structural features are:

1. Provision for adequate relationship to the environment and sexual recruitment.
2. Role differentiation and role assignment.
3. Communication.
4. Shared cognitive orientations.
5. A shared, articulated set of goals.
6. The normative regulation of means.
7. The regulation of affective expression.
8. Socialization.
9. The effective control of disruptive forms of behavior.

The second functional prerequisite is of importance because role differentiation and role assignment—the decisions about who does what job—is used as a justification for property, social class, and sexism. One could hardly deny that an adequate economy of food, clothing, shelter, and sexuality must indeed be provided by all societies that wish to exist. On the other hand, “role differentiation and role assignment,” when viewed as eternal, has the effect of justifying ageism, racism, sexism, and class oppression. For example, Aberle states:

The universal problems of scarcity and order are insoluble without legitimized allocation of property rights and authority, and these in turn, are unattainable without reasonably integrated role-differentiation.”

For the functionalists, private property rights are ordained by Nature, since they are a functional prerequisite for the very existence of society. A free society—a society without wage labor or coercion—is seen as impossible. This argument is developed further by Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore. Davis was a long time advocate of “birth control in underdeveloped countries, which is now generally accepted to have been an imperialist policy of genocide against non-white and poor people in the Third World. Moore is a long-time student of “social change,”

which he poses as a problem of the economic development of backward nations rather than a problem of the unleashing of western imperialism.¹² It is not surprising that they combine a policy of justification for imperialist genocide abroad and one of support for age, sex, race and property stratification at home. According to Davis and Moore, there are two primary determinants of the positional rank a person holds in a society.¹³ These two determinants of positional rank are: (1) differential functional importance, and (2) differential scarcity of personnel.¹⁴ Of functional importance, Davis and Moore state:

If a position is easily filled, it need not be heavily rewarded, even though important. On the other hand, if it is important but hard to fill, the reward must be high enough to get it filled anyway. Functional importance is therefore a necessary but not a sufficient cause of high rank being assigned to a position.¹⁵

The example the functionalists often use to illustrate this point is that of the garbage collector—an important job, particularly in urban cities like San Francisco and New York. Another job characterized by a scarcity of personnel is illustrated by the example of the M.D.:

Modern medicine, for example, is within the mental capacity of most individuals, but a medical education is so burdensome and expensive that virtually none would undertake it if the position of the M.D. did not carry a reward commensurate with the sacrifice.¹⁶

This statement seems rather remarkable, since today many capitalist doctors make \$500,000 a year herding submissive patients in and out of their offices with computerized billing and exploited subprofessionals while worldwide many persons want to become doctors, and there is never a shortage of willing persons, just a shortage of funds and facilities to train people in the field, in many cases as a result of the imperialist exploitation of economies.

Talcott Parson’s functionalist analysis of class inequality is somewhat similar to that of Aberle, Davis, and Moore, but it is more sophisticated in that it takes on a direct confrontation with Marx and even credits the Marxist approach with some value. As its basis, however, the view of social stratification and social inequality is similar to Davis and Moore. The two fundamental determinants for Parsons are: (1) skill and competence, and (2) the necessity of a hierarchy because of the increasing division of labor and complex organization of industrial societies.

According to Parsons:

There is, furthermore, an inherent hierarchical aspect to such a system. There are two fundamental functional bases of the hierarchical aspect. One is the differentiation of levels of skill and competence involved in the many different functional roles. . . . Secondly, organization naturally involves centralization and differentiation of leadership and authority; so that those who take responsibility for coordinating the actions of many others must have a different status in important aspects from those who are essentially in the role of carrying out specifications laid down by others.¹⁷

The functionalists are pessimists. They believe that social classes, property, and social inequality are inevitable, and that the need for organization, skill and hierarchy makes any attempt to change the class structure or to abolish this form of oppression—or age, race, and sex oppression—utopian, futile, and condemned to failure. There is an undercurrent of “trust the boss” and “the rich deserve it” running through the functionalist literature.

The functionalists are very specific in their justification of private property. They believe that private property is inevitable and “functionally indispensable,” although inherited property is somewhat difficult for them to justify. Inheriting millions of dollars is hardly “functionally necessary” or “requiring of skill,” but they reply by imaging that inheritance is no longer important. Their defense of private property is very specific. Parsons says:

. . . there must be a property system which regulates claims to transferable entities, material or immaterial, and thereby secures rights in means of life and in the facilities which are necessary for the performance of function.¹⁸

Davis and Moore state that:

. . . it is only this pure, that is, strictly legal and functionless ownership that is open to attack (inheritance); for some form of active ownership, whether private or public, is indispensable.¹⁹

A FUNCTIONALIST CRITIQUE OF MARX

Parson's critique of Marx is sophisticated and subtle. He begins by praising Marx and giving him the key role in stimulating the development of modern sociology by stimulating the work of Pareto, Durkheim, and

Weber. This position is similar to the position taken by Irving Zeitlin, who also maintained that modern sociology is a reply to the ghost of Marx.²⁰ Parsons could hardly help but take this position since he studied in Germany where Marx's thought is still a point of departure for sociology.

Parson's criticism of Marx was that Marx oversimplified social stratification by generalizing the economic dimension too extensively. According to this view, Marx constructed a model of class conflict based on the abstraction of the economic-property dimension of social stratification at the expense of other important dimensions—such as prestige, power and kinship—and at the expense of the institutional complexity of the whole social system. First, Parson's praise:

It should, however, be clearly noted how important Marx was in the development of modern sociological thought. All three of the writers who may be regarded as its most important theoretical founders—Vilfredo Pareto, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber—were profoundly concerned with the problems raised by Marx.

And now Parson's critique:

The primary structural emphasis no longer falls on the orientation of capitalistic enterprise to profit and the theory of exploitation, but rather on the structure of occupational roles within the system of industrial society.

Parsons sought to reduce the problems of class oppression—lack of freedom at work, exploitation, and capitalists making a profit from labor—to the abstract and theoretical problem of “occupational differentiation.” Parsons, rather insensitively, spoke of the “winners” and “losers” in the system of “occupational differentiation:”

. . . there will be inevitably some differentiation into winners and losers. Certain psychological consequences of such situations are known. There will be certain tendencies to arrogance on the part of some winners and to resentment and a “sour grapes” attitude on the part of the losers.

It seems to be a bit arrogant on the part of Parsons to reduce the 200 years of exploitation and imperialist genocide characteristic of American capitalism to little more than “sour grapes” on the part of the losers.²¹

Parsons pointed out that Marx did not really account for the role of the managers or the intelligentsia in his model, a criticism which has of

late been made from the left by Alvin Gouldner.²² Part of the way Parsons diffused Marxism was by praise and partial acceptance. He agreed, for example, with Marx's notion that class conflict is a fundamental characteristic of society. Parsons said: "I believe that class conflict is endemic in our modern industrial type of society."²³ One of the reasons Parsons' critique is so powerful is that he synthesized the criticism of functionalism,²⁴ including Durkheim²⁵ and Pareto,²⁶ and the criticism of Weber.²⁷ The functionalist criticism basically changed the focus of sociological inquiry from a concern with power and class conflict to a concern with the smooth functioning of institutions. The Paretian critique shifted the focus from class conflict to social mobility, and the Weberian critique located the fundamental dialectics of social change and social conflict in three separate institutional spheres—those of status and power as well as that of class.

Another aspect of Parsons' criticism was that he only criticized Marx on points on which Marx's analysis was indeed weak. And in many cases, Parsons' critique was a critique of the Marxism of the Communist Parties in Europe under Stalin who were dogmatic in the use of Marx's insights and mode of analysis. Parsons made the following point, which is probably true, that "Marxian theory inhibited the recognition of differences . . . all class conflicts in a society in any sense capitalistic had to be reduced to a single pattern . . . Marxian thought appears as a straitjacket rather than a genuine source of illumination."²⁸ Finally, Parsons noted that the degree of social stratification is not really that different in capitalist or in socialist societies, both of which he viewed as variants of one basic type of "industrial society." Of course, there is even a certain amount of truth in that observation if one compares the corporate capitalism of the American monopolies with the state capitalism²⁹ or bureaucratic collectivism³⁰ of the Soviet Union. However, in these "socialist" type societies, the bureaucratic elite has nowhere near the economic power and privileges of the bourgeois families like the Rockefellers and the DuPonts.³¹

THE RULING CLASS

Parsons formulated a concrete analysis of the American class structure in the 1950s, a period of time when what he put forth as knowledge was widely believed by the people of the U.S. Since the Vietnam War, the

New Left, the Student Movement, the Black Liberation Movement and the Women's Movement, these myths are hardly defensible. Parsons did not say America is the land of Oz, but he did suggest that:

In brief, particularly as seen in comparative perspective, one of the most notable features of the American system of stratification is its relative looseness, the absence of a clear cut hierarchy of prestige except in a very broad sense, the absence of an unequivocal top elite or ruling class; . . .³²

. . . high progressive taxation, both of incomes and estates, and changes in the structure of the economy, have "lopped off" the previous top stratum, where the symbols of conspicuous consumption were, in an earlier generation, lavishly displayed.³³

These assertions contrast sharply with the data we now have about ruling class families and distribution of wealth, and about the total inability of progressive taxation to modify the structure of social inequality. Neither is conspicuous consumption a thing of the past. The Rockefeller family can be taken as a good example of the typical bourgeois family, although one could as easily take the Pews, Whitneys, Crockers, Hearsts, Astors, Hannas, Reynolds, Wilbanks, Kaisers, Cabots or many more, the roughly 200 families—all intermarried and cohesive as a social class³⁴—who constitute the ruling class of America.³⁵

The Rockefeller family alone has over ten billion dollars. They own a nine-story townhouse in New York, ninety-room "cottage" in Maine with a fleet of ships, a resort in the Virgin Isles, a resort in Hawaii and in Puerto Rico, a ranch resort in Australia, and another in Venezuela and Brazil, a villa in Italy, a house in Florida and a house made out of a mountain on St. Bartholomew Island.³⁶ To further document the existence of "conspicuous consumption," we might quote the following description of the Rockefeller family's Pocantico Hills estate:

. . . The Rockefellers' imperial palace is the Pocantico Estate . . . five square miles of rolling hills just west of New York City. . . . It's the most valuable mansion estate in the world (it was worth fifty million dollars during the depression). . . . It's filled with horses, sheep, cows, strange plants, Japanese tea gardens and several mansions. . . . The largest is "Kyuit," a five-story marble house which includes a hospital, a gymnasium, a bowling alley, an 18-hole golf course . . . it takes 500 servants to keep up Pocantico Hills . . . 35 of them

armed guards . . . it's protected with huge stone walls, electrified barbed wire fences . . . private police cars cruise around the grounds and huge floodlights keep watch over the countryside for miles. . . .³⁷

One might reply that while yes, the Rockefellers have a lot of money, that they do not really have much power any more, because there has been in America a separation of wealth and power—a separation of ownership and control. Parsons took exactly this position. He stated that:

Seen in historical as well as comparative perspective, this is a notable fact, for the entrepreneurial fortunes of the period of economic development of the nineteenth century especially after the Civil War, notably failed to produce a set of family entities on a Japanese or even a French pattern. . . . Members of these families have retained an elite position but broadly through their own occupation-like achievements rather than on the purely ascriptive basis of family membership.

The basic phenomenon seems to have been the shift in *control* of enterprise from the property interests of founding families to managerial and technical personnel who as such have not had a comparable vested interest in ownership. This critical fact underlies the interpretation that what we may call the “family elite” elements of the class structure hold a *secondary* rather than a primary position in the overall stratification system.³⁸

This is a rather peculiar thing for Parsons to say about an economy in which one family—the Rockefellers—controls \$280 billion worth of corporations—including Pan Am, Eastern Airlines, CBS, Kimberley-Clark, Allied Chemical, Anaconda Copper, Borden, Domino, Esso, IBM, Atlantic Richfield, AT&T, Standard Oil and many others. According to the “separation of ownership and control” argument, the managers run these corporations and the Rockefellers have little to say about it. On the contrary, it seems apparent that the Rockefellers not only control the corporations they own, but they also control many of the foreign and domestic policies of the federal government and control both corporations and governments best when they can fool the people into thinking that “independent” politicians and managers are the ones who really do the controlling.³⁹

Parsons seemed intent on convincing his readers of two things—first, that there really is no capitalist ruling class, and second, that inequality and hierarchy are absolutely (functionally) necessary for the survival of

the social order. One is a myth and the other is a justification for the exercise of the ruling class that the first myth denies the existence of. Parsons and the other functionalists are less concerned with the rest of the class structure than they are with the managers and rulers. They mention the existence of a vast middle class of successful, upwardly mobile Americans, and a lower class of “underprivileged,” “deviant,” and “culturally deprived.” They virtually exclude any mention of a working class or proletariat. We are presented with the image of a society with managers, white collar workers, small businesspeople, and a few underprivileged, with no factories, farms or plants and no one doing the work that makes a society function. Neither do Parsons and the functionalists make any mention at all of oppression or exploitation. If class conflicts exist, and it is admitted that they do, they are considered to be some sort of aberration of an otherwise smoothly functioning institutional order, in which people are socialized and motivated into proper occupational roles for the maintenance of the equilibrium of the system.

CLASS, STATUS AND PARTY: THE WEBERIAN APPROACH TO SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

The Weberian approach to social stratification has been so influential in American sociology that it has almost defined the field, and several literatures have grown up around the Weberian conceptualization. The Weberian model, which is essentially a criticism of Marx, is that to understand the class structure of a society, one must understand three distinct institutional spheres—*class*, *status* and *power*.⁴⁰ Thus, three whole literatures have grown up around this conceptualization, an economic literature on class,⁴¹ a literature on status or prestige stratification,⁴² and a literature on political parties or power stratification.⁴³

Weber was primarily concerned with naming various aspects of social reality using his categories—class, status and party. His model was an empirical one in that his primary concern was with developing a classificational scheme which would exhaust empirical reality, and he was only superficially concerned with “explaining” the political activity of social classes as Marx attempted to do. This mode of analysis lends itself to the development of an empirical sociology of class, in which individual persons are ranked according to prestige, income and power. Weberian sociologists develop concepts like status inconsistency and status crystallization, which have to do with prestige, power and income rather than any relationship to the means of production.⁴⁴

The theoretical goal in his analysis was not so much to explain social inequality or to relate it to other phenomena, such as political power or social change, but simply to develop an exhaustive system for classifying social stratification. This resulted in a criticism of Marx, because Marx used theoretical models, like the model of capitalist production and class conflict between bourgeoisie and proletariat. These models, because they were designed to explain “main tendencies of development of a social system,” rather than to exhaustively describe the existing empirical reality, were made to seem inadequate in comparison to Weber’s categories. Actually, making this comparison is like comparing apples and oranges. Marx’s purpose was analytic and explanatory; Weber’s was classificatory and taxonomic.

There is another portion of Weber’s sociology in which he did attempt an explanatory historical science like that attempted by Marx. In his major work on religion and social change, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber attempted to directly refute Marx’s theory of social change by proving that ideological factors, such as religious world views, can be more important in determining the structure of social formations than what Weber saw as “purely economic” factors. Weber’s thesis was that the Protestant religion with its personality structure of the “frugal entrepreneur” had more to do with developing the industrialization of capitalist societies than did the basic social relations of production between wage-labor and capital. Weber reduced the “accumulation of capital” to a problem of ideology and personality structure.

Although Protestantism would no doubt help justify a worker sacrificing his life to the enrichment of capitalist family wealth in a subordinate relationship of wage-labor or wage-bondage, it could hardly explain either the phenomenon of wage-labor or the process of the accumulation of capital.⁴⁵ Similarly, the Protestant religion would justify the capitalists in their drive for wealth to reinvest their money in their business enterprises—but so would the continual drive for profit itself. If the capitalists do not re-invest their money, they stand to lose everything to even bigger monopolists at any moment. The internal dynamics of the capitalist relations of production function to keep a rate of profit high enough to fight competitors.

Systems of ideas of societies do generally tend to support and influence the social relations of production. For example, we find that Catholicism supported feudal relations of production (serfdom), and that Protestantism supports wage-labor and capital as relations of production.

But this hardly proves that these religions were the basis for major changes in systems of social organization, as Weber seemed to suggest.⁴⁶

Despite the problems with his analysis of the relationship between the Protestant ethic and the development of capitalism, Max Weber’s influence on the modern sociology—particularly the sociology of classes—has been immense, especially since he carefully read and criticized the writings of Marx. In one of the definitive works of sociology in the 1950s, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*,⁴⁷ Ralf Dahrendorf not only read Marx, he went as far as attempting to write the unfinished last chapter of *Capital*,⁴⁸ Chapter 52 of Volume III of *Capital* (entitled “Classes”), which has been left unfinished by the death of Marx. Dahrendorf argued that: “Marx does not always make his answers to our questions entirely clear. But it can be shown that his analyses (of classes) are essentially based on the narrow, legal concept of property.”⁴⁹ From this premise, Dahrendorf used other fragments of Volume III of *Capital* to argue that for Marx, “The joint-stock company, in other words, is halfway to the communistic—and that means classless—society.”⁵⁰ He quoted from *Capital* that the joint stock company “is a necessary point on the way to reconverting capital into the property of the producers, this no longer being the private property of individual producers, but their associated property, that is, immediate social property.” Incredibly, Dahrendorf completely ignored Marx’s own statement four pages later: “But the conversion to the form of stock still remains ensnared in the trammels of capitalism; hence, instead of overcoming the antithesis between the character of wealth as social and private wealth, the stock companies merely develop it in a new form.”

Inasmuch as Dahrendorf’s book has had a tremendous influence in generating the entire sociological notion of a post-capitalist industrial society (and later of “post-industrial” society), his omission and distortion of Marx’s notion of class is a serious matter calling into question the reduction of Marx’s analysis which Dahrendorf accomplished (as well as his conception of the United States as a “post-capitalist” industrial society). It is significant that Dahrendorf attempted to root his analysis in Marxist thought. More recently, Seymour Martin Lipset has come to use an “apolitical Marxism” as his theoretical frame.⁵² The breakthrough made by Marx in comprehending the structures of social reality cannot be ignored by even the most mainstream American sociologists. If their reading of Marx is tailored to the mechanisms of stability in the industrialized societies, we attempt to provide a different reading, one which seeks to explain the displacement of class conflict into new arenas.

Wallerstein, among others, has pointed out that “private ownership is irrelevant” to the definition of capitalism. Indeed he went further and argued that the abolition of joint-stock ownership in the “socialist” countries is relatively inconsequential:

The fact that all enterprises are nationalized in these countries does not make the participation of these enterprises in the world-economy one that does not conform to the mode of operation of a capitalist market-system: seeking increased efficiency of production in order to realize a maximum price on sales, thus achieving a more favorable allocation of the surplus of the world-economy. If tomorrow U.S. Steel became a worker’s collective in which all employees without exception received an identical share of the profits and all stockholders were expropriated without compensation, would U.S. Steel thereby cease to be a capitalist enterprise operating in a capitalist world economy?⁵³

MARXIST MODELS OF CLASS TODAY THE STRUCTURALIST VIEW OF CLASS

The structuralist view of class was most recently elaborated by Nicos Poulantzas.⁵⁴ He ended up with a theory of “a new petit bourgeoisie” to explain all of the inconsistencies and changes in the capitalist class structure in the last 125 years since Marx wrote *The Communist Manifesto* and *Capital*. The phenomenon to which Poulantzas addressed himself was the new middle strata in advanced capitalist societies. This stratum has been referred to as “white collar” by C. Wright Mills,⁵⁵ as the “affluent working class” by John H. Goldthorpe,⁵⁶ as the “new working class” by Herbert Gintis,⁵⁷ and as the “proletarianized petty bourgeoisie” by Fred Gordon.⁵⁸ The question raised by Poulantzas is: Is this a stratum of leftovers from other classes or is it a true social class with its own structural determinations in the larger system of social organization of monopoly capitalism? From a political point of view this becomes a very important question, because it tells us how this “new petty bourgeoisie” might act under the circumstances either of a social crisis such as in France in 1968, a political crisis such as the election of the Socialist-Communist Coalition in Chile, or during an economic crisis.

Let us examine Poulantzas’ critique of the other analyses of the phenomenon of “embourgeoisement” or “integration” of the working class in advanced capitalist societies. According to Poulantzas:

These theories are based on a real fact, the exact significance of which we will assess later on. The considerable increase, throughout monopoly capitalism and its various phases, of the number of non-productive wage-earners, i.e., groups such as commercial and bank employees, office and service workers, etc., in short all those who are commonly referred to as “white collar,” or “tertiary sector” workers.⁵⁹

The theory of this new social fact, according to Poulantzas, takes two primary forms, each with several variants. The first form the analysis takes denies that this new grouping is a real social class and wants to dissolve it either into the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. Such a view more or less accepts the basic Marxist class analysis of a wage-earning class—the proletariat, and a stock-owning class—bourgeoisie. The first tendency within this form of the analysis sees the “new petty bourgeoisie” as part of the bourgeoisie. This is one form of the old argument that everyone in America is middle class that was often heard during the affluent 1950s and 1960s. Poulantzas would probably include the functionalists in this category, since “middle class” and the inclusion of the majority of the “new class” in this category is measured by income, exercise of authority, or managerial entrepreneurial functions, and is not measured in terms of the basic relations of production—wage labor and capital.

The second form of the argument states that the “new class” is just a new stratum of an old class, arguing that the new class is part of the proletariat or working class. For example, C. Wright Mills⁶⁰ designated the “white collar” class, implying that the salaried white collar sector is part of the working class rather than using the “middle class” designation which implies part of the bourgeoisie.

The third tendency in the “no new class” form of the theory is the analysis put forth by Dahrendorf.⁶¹ According to Poulantzas, Dahrendorf split the difference and puts part of the new class into the bourgeoisie and part of it into the proletariat. According to Dahrendorf, we can no longer talk of proletariat and bourgeoisie in any meaningful way for understanding the stratification systems of industrial societies, because the owners no longer manage the enterprises. What is important, according to his argument, is who commands and who obeys—the power dimension—and not the class or ownership variable. Thus, half of the new class—who commands—goes into the bourgeoisie and the other half—who obeys—goes into the proletariat.

Poulantzas made the very important point that this “dualistic” view of the class structure is fundamentally non-Marxian, even though it is frequently ascribed to Marxists. Although Marx saw a historical tendency for all classes to be dissolved into either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat, the essential factor (for Marx) was the class’s relationship to the means of production, a relationship which may or may not correspond to immediate power and authority relations. Dahrendorf is un-Marxian because he fails to recognize this key factor.

The second form of the theory of this “new class” is the theory of the middle class. In this analysis, the “new class” is seen as a force between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and the question becomes on which side this new class will operate politically, on the side of the working class or on the side of the bourgeoisie.

The problem with both of these approaches—the theory of the new middle class and the contention that there is no new class—is that both are what Poulantzas called “nominalist.” By nominalist he meant that both assume that social class is the result of a sociologist applying a mental model or theory to reality, and reality either fits the model, or some of the stuff of reality is left over. To Poulantzas this is the wrong way to view the class structure. He felt that social classes are produced and reproduced every day by concrete human beings interacting in terms of the basic social relationships involved in the production process of the society. Therefore, social classes are the concrete manifestations of how a society is daily reproduced within the social relations of production. If there is stratification, or what Poulantzas called “fractions” of a class, these are always concrete class fractions, and stratification should never be viewed on the nominalist ways described above, as if the sociologist created the perfect social classes by applying his or her theory to reality.⁶²

The second criticism that Poulantzas had of the traditional analyses of classes in contemporary capitalism is that in addition to being nominalist and trying to impose abstract categories onto social reality, they are “empiricist.” By empiricist, he meant that usually the sociologist looks at social classes in terms of where a particular individual falls within the class structure, rather than analyzing the structure of social classes as a whole.

Poulantzas concluded that there is a new structurally determined class that we may call a *new petit bourgeoisie*, and that although it no longer owns property like the old *petit bourgeoisie*, it does hold power over immediate conditions of work and has authority over others, as well

as a privileged position in the income structure and privileged conditions of work.

Poulantzas’ scheme of analyzing social classes “concretely” may or may not be Marxist as he claimed it to be. His analysis, although concrete, is not historical or dialectical, although it was structural. Marx was more interested in the *historical* tendencies of the development of capitalism and classes than he was in concrete structures at one point in time. Marx was most interested in the way classes came into conflict and how these conflicts were related to social change—not in the analysis and description of social strata. Poulantzas’ scheme was not a dialectical theory because it is structural and static rather than dynamic and historical.

CRITICAL THEORY AND CLASS

The category of class is also fundamental to the critical theory of society, in that the basic social relations of capitalist production involve the division of society into two antagonistic classes—the bourgeoisie who own and control capital or corporate stock, and the proletariat, who own only their labor power (and in America perhaps a house and car). Marx hardly dealt with *abstract* classes in *Capital*, except as the fundamental assumption of his whole theory.⁶³ Critical theory remains historically specific, attempting to comprehend the changing nature of reality from the point of view of the latent qualities within it.

In terms of the actual struggles of the post–World War II era, it would be fair to say that it was students and people of color in the industrialized countries and the vast majority of the population in the undeveloped countries who were the main participants in the struggles of the 1960s. In some places like France, the new working class and traditional sectors of the working class also joined in. The struggle of the power elite against all these forces and a struggle within the power elite⁶⁴ were also occurring in this period. In the 1970s, a vigorous women’s liberation movement and a gay liberation movement have emerged (as well as a “New Right” in opposition to these movements), and the struggles of the working class for jobs and survival has intensified as “smokestack industries” have been in crisis.

In order to help clarify the class structure of the modern United States, the chart below compares a nineteenth-century model to the twentieth century:

NINETEENTH CENTURY	TWENTIETH CENTURY
Bourgeoisie	Power elite of owners and managers of corporations, politicians and generals.
Petit Bourgeoisie	Administrators and technocrats. New working class of educated labor (white collar) and service workers.
Industrial Proletariat	Working class with social security, a house, a car and other joys and burdens of consumerism, with a declining standard of living and loss of jobs to industrial decline.
Reserve Army of Labor	Human resources pool mostly of people of color, youth, women, working poor, unemployed workers.
Lumpenproletariat	Poverty class of permanently unemployed persons who live at the margins of industrial society. ⁶⁵

This basic analysis is shared by many sociologists, including C. Wright Mills,⁶⁶ Bell,⁶⁷ Lipset,⁶⁸ Reisman⁶⁹ and Galbraith⁷⁰ in the United States; Aron⁷¹ in France, Lichtheim⁷² in England and Dahrendorf⁷³ in Germany.

Stanley Aronowitz criticized some of these concepts, like "white collar" and "middle class," as being ideological, and instead used "white collar proletariat" and "professional servant class." He also disagreed that somehow "managers" have replaced the bourgeoisie within corporate capitalism.⁷⁴ Aronowitz's model looks like this:

ORTHODOX MARXISM	TWENTIETH CENTURY CAPITALISM
Grand Bourgeoisie	Grand bourgeoisie (Rockefellers, du Ponts, Hearsts, Pews, Whitneys, Mellons, Fords, Astors, etc., family corporations).
Petit Bourgeoisie	Professional servant class of corporate servants
Industrial Proletariat and Proletarianized petit bourgeoisie	White collar proletariat and the industrial workers
Lumpenproletariat	Underclass of unemployed and oppressed

Aronowitz criticized C. Wright Mills' concept of "white collar" as an ideological one. He stated that:

Thus "white collar" is a label that presupposes an essential difference between the structure of labor in the factory and the office. It is a category of social ideology rather than of social science and has evoked the image of a system of social stratification that regards office work as a higher-status occupation than factory work, administration as more prestigious than manual labor, or, indeed, any occupation related directly to the production of goods. The bare fact is that "white collar" is less a description of an actual group of workers than a conceptual tool for a specific perspective on social class.⁷⁶

Furthermore, according to Aronowitz, Mills did not understand the historical direction of the shift from production to the service sector, nor did he appreciate the degradation of office work and the factory-like character of the modern office.⁷⁷ The historical trend within industrial societies away from the production of goods and towards the production of services is behind the mechanization and degradation of "white collar" work, making the office look more and more like a factory, and the factory more and more like an office. Expressed as either the proletarianization of the intellectuals or the mass-education of the proletariat, monopoly capitalism and large-scale bureaucratic organizations have created an increasing number of workers whose jobs defy traditional hard-and-fast distinctions between manual and intellectual work.⁷⁹

NOTES

1. This definition of society is modified from the definition presented by D.F. Aberle, et al., "The Functional Prerequisites for the Existence of a Society," *Ethics*, Vol. 60 (1950).
2. Defining social classes in terms of their superficial characteristics was typical of early American empirical sociology. See August B. Hollingshead, *Elmstown's Youth, The Impact of Social Classes on Adolescents* (New York: J. Wiley, 1949), and William Lloyd Warner, *Yankee City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963) for examples of this approach.

3. This criterion—the relationship to the means of production—is taken from Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1965).
4. Ibid.
5. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (New York: Signet, 1968).
6. For the Frankfurt School's analysis of the Soviet Union, see Herbert Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961).
7. Karl Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971).
8. August Comte, *System of Positive Polity, Social Statics*, Vol. II (New York: B. Franklin).
9. The key articles in this tradition are Talcott Parsons' "A Revised Analytical Approach to the Theory of Social Stratification," *American Journal of Sociology* (May, 1940), and Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore, "Some Principles of Stratification," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. X (April, 1945) pp. 243-397.
10. This at least is the position taken by Irving Zeitlin in his *Ideology and the Development of Social Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968). Gouldner, Aron and Herbert Marcuse generally support this interpretation. See Alvin Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (New York: Basic Books, 1970) pp. 89-108, Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1965) Vol. I, pp. 57-107, and Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960) pp. 330-360.
11. Aberle, op. cit., *Ethics* (1950), Vol. 60, p. 105.
12. See Wilbert E. Moore, *Social Change* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963).
13. Davis and Moore, *American Sociological Review* (April, 1945), p. 243.
14. The ultimate eloquent aberration that this theory achieved was at the hands of Herbert Simon, the mathematical sociologist, who reduced it to an equation in his *Models of Man* (New York: Wiley 1957).
15. Davis and Moore, op. cit., p. 244.
16. Ibid.
17. Talcott Parsons, "Social Classes and Class Conflict in Light of Recent Sociological Theory," in *Essays in Sociological Theory*, revised ed. (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1964), p. 327.
18. Ibid., p. 326.
19. Davis and Moore, op. cit., p. 247.
20. Irving Zeitlin, *Ideology and the Development of Social Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968).
21. For this critique of Parsons, see Alvin Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), pp. 20-61 and 167-199.
22. Alvin Gouldner, "Revolutionary Intellectuals," *Telos*, No. 26 (Winter, 1975-1976) pp. 3-37.
23. Talcott Parsons, *Essays in Sociological Theory* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1964), p. 333.
24. For an excellent comparison of Marxism and functionalism, see Pierre L. Van den Berghe, "Dialectic and Functionalism," in Walter Wallace, *Sociological Theory* (Aldine Pub. Co., 1969).
25. Durkheim's most "functionalist" tract is his *Division of Labor in Society* (1933; rpt. New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964).
26. Vilfredo Pareto, *Manual of Political Economy* (New York: A.M. Kelley, 1971).
27. See Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1947).
28. Talcott Parsons, op. cit., p. 333.

29. See Raya Dunayevskaya, *Philosophy and Revolution* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1973), Chapter 8, pp. 247-263 for a discussion of state capitalism.
30. *Telos* #17 (Fall, 1973), p. 159.
31. See G. William Domhoff, *Who Rules America* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), *The Higher Circles* (New York: Random House, 1970), and Ferdinand Lundberg, *The Rich and the Super Rich* (New York: L. Stuart, 1968) for a competent documentation of this assertion, along with Myer Jutz, *Rockefeller Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), Jules Abels, *The Rockefeller Billions* (NY: Macmillan, 1965), and William Hoffman, *David* (New York: L. Stuart, 1971).
32. See Talcott Parsons, "Revised Analytical Approach to the Theory of Social Stratification," in Reinhart Bendix and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Class, Status and Power* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1953) pp. 122-123.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
34. G. William Domhoff, in *The Higher Circles* (New York: Random House, 1970), has demonstrated to almost every sociologist's satisfaction that the ruling class, or bourgeoisie, in America does indeed constitute a cohesive social class, and is not simply a stratum as Parsons would have it. As Domhoff documented, they belong to the same clubs, go to the same resorts and private schools, and even the maid's night out—Thursday—is the same for ruling class families all across America.
35. G. William Domhoff's first book, *Who Rules America*, nicely documented how the upper class rules both the executive branch of government and American foreign policy and has done so since roughly the annexation of Texas and California (1840s). Domhoff's most recent book, *The Bohemian Grove and Other Retreats* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), documented how high level policy of the American government is made informally by members of the elite families in retreats such as one in the Redwoods of Northern California, and how the ruling class develops class cohesion and class consciousness through mechanisms of intellectual and regional culture.
36. See Joel Andreas, "The Incredible Rocky," North American Conference on Latin America (Berkeley), pp. 2-3.
37. *Ibid.*, p.2
38. This rather lengthy quote from the "Revised Analytical Approach to the Theory of Social Stratification" (Bendix & Lipset, op. cit., p. 123) is justified by the importance of Parsons' work in American sociology.
39. See Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power & Social Classes* (New Left Books, 1965).
40. *Class, Status & Power*, ed. by Bendix and Lipset (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1953).
41. The vast sociological literature on social class differences in attitudes and behavior would probably fall into this category. See Norval D. Glenn, et al., *Social Stratification: A Research Bibliography* (Berkeley: The Glendessary Press, 1970).
42. For two studies in this tradition, see Joseph R. Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics in the American Temperance Movement* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1963), and Louis A. Zurcher and R. George Kirkpatrick, *Citizens for Decency: Antipornography Crusades as Status Defense* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1976).
43. An example is Robert Michels, *Political Parties* (New York: Free Press, 1962).
44. Gerhard Lenski, "Status Crystallization: A Non-Verbal Dimension of Status," *American Sociological Review* (1954), pp. 405-413, and James A. Geschwender, "Continuities in Theories of Status Consistence and Cognitive Dissonance," *Social Forces*, No. 46 (December, 1967), pp. 160-171.
45. See Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973) for an explanation of industrialization much superior to the Weberian flights of fancy.
46. See Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1962) for a documentation of the economic changes in the social relations of production from feudalistic

ones to ones involving wage labor and capital prior to either the ideological or the political changes which ushered in the hegemony of the capitalist state.

47. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959).
48. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (New York: International Publishers, 1970).
49. Ralf Dahrendorf, op. cit., p. 21.
50. Ibid., p. 22.
51. Karl Marx, op. cit., p. 436.
52. See Seymour Martin Lipset, "Whatever Happened to the Proletariat?" *Encounter* 56 (June, 1981).
53. A forum on the "socialist countries" and the world system can be found in *Social Problems*, Vol. 28, No. 5. The quotation is from Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (September, 1974) pp. 387-415.
54. See Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes* (New Left Books, 1973) and, more recent still, Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (New Left Books, 1965). Also see Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London: New Left Books, 1970).
55. C. Wright Mills, *White Collar* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1951).
56. John H. Goldthorpe, David Lockwood, Frank Bechhofer and Jennifer Platt, *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1969).
57. Herbert Gintis, "Revolutionary Youth and the New Working Class," *Continuum* (1970).
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CHAPTER TWELVE

Ageism and the Status of Youth

The modern conception of youth as well as the contemporary treatment of young people are socially and historically conditioned as much as they are determined by biological facts. Such a statement may come as a surprise since it appears that "youth" is simply defined in terms of a natural process. In this chapter we hope to make clear the changing nature of age categories and the functions served by the modern subordination of youth to the adult world. We do not deny the necessity of age differentiation, but we are critical of both age stratification and theories which reduce the problems of young people today to "eternal" problems. By ageism, we mean the institutional and interpersonal subordination of young and old to the imperatives of capitalist patriarchy. As we discuss, ageism is rooted in the institutions of society (the family, the economy, and the educational system) as well as in the character structure of human beings. Although the focus of this chapter is on youth, ageist discrimination also defines the status of many of the elderly. Past the age when their labor-power is considered valuable and isolated in a society whose family structure has been considerably weakened, senior citizens are often relegated to a separate and unequal existence. Ageism not only confines the very young and very old to restricted roles in our society, it imposes rules, roles, and regulations on people of all ages.

Because of its deep psychological impact, ageism is an aspect of life which most people tend to overlook. Many analyses of the position of young people today treat the question of their inferior status as one of secondary importance. After all, each of us lives through a period of youth which lasts for only a fraction of a person's life. Yet for precisely this reason, the analysis of the status of youth cannot be relegated to a position of secondary importance. Because every one of us is socialized to be an "adult"—i.e., to repress our imaginations and conform to a hierarchical society—the period of our life designated as youth needs to be consciously reexamined from the point of view of uncovering the process of creating the human beings who live in and continually re-create society. Whether the analysis emanates from conservative patriarchs or

radical feminists, the question of youth has been examined primarily from a narrow viewpoint and rarely from the point of view of the young themselves.

Our critical analysis of the ageism of modern society is in part founded on the insights of feminist critiques, but an understanding of the oppression of youth cannot rely solely on an acceptance of the feminist perspective. Insofar as children are dominated by both parents, and women are part of the adult structures of domination, the critique of patriarchy falls short of a critique of ageism.¹ In contrast to the reduction of social analysis to the economic foundations alone, feminism has made clear how deep the cultural and psychological dimensions of capitalist patriarchy run. While the socialist analysis of everyday life has too often attempted to reduce the problems of sexism, ageism, and racism to economics, the extreme feminists have attempted to see these problems as caused by patriarchy alone. A critical analysis does not attempt to reduce social problems to one particular aspect of capitalist patriarchy but attempts to multi-dimensionally analyze the totality. The oppression of youth, a fundamental period of life for every human being, is itself part of the total system which we call capitalist patriarchy.

A MYTH ABOUT YOUTH

Much of the ideology of the domination of youth in modern society revolves around myths of the "eternal truths." Lewis Feuer, for example, wrote that:

The conflict of generations is a universal theme in history; it is founded on the most primordial facts of human nature, and it is a driving force of history, perhaps even more ultimate than that of class struggle.²

Feuer's assertion was developed from an analysis of student movements in the modern world as well as from ancient writings like the Bible, Plato, Aristotle, and Ptahhotep, an Egyptian who Feuer described as "A man of the Establishment . . . (a term Feuer borrowed from the student movement of the 60s) . . . in the twenty-seventh century B.C."³ The stereotypes of young and old discussed through the epochs of history are used by Feuer to bear out his assertion that the youth movement of the 1960s was nothing new. The moment of truth in such an analysis is easily discerned—the young are less concerned with material wealth than their elders and more concerned with issues of morality and justice. But such

universal propositions ignore ways in which youth has changed over the ages. Similarly, Feuer treats hierarchy and "the Establishment," and not only the social inferiority of the young, as eternal truths.

The myth of eternal youthful rebellion was used by Feuer to defame the student movement of the 1960s as irrational.⁴ Feuer's conclusions about the irrationality of student movements were based on the assumption that the adult world is "rational," even though this world excludes youth from full participation in the political and social decision-making processes. He based his argument on the belief that adults will always be settled into positions of power and authority which they will seek to defend. Feuer's analysis of youth "blamed the victims."⁵ He attempted to explain the discontent of young people in terms of their personal problems (much like the poverty of blacks is explained by defects in their genes or family structure⁶). Rather than coming to terms with some of the social problems raised by the youth movement, Feuer would have people believe that the problem is with the young.

Modern theories of an "eternal" conflict of generations, much like theories of the "inevitability of racial conflict," neglect to consider the possibility of a society where age and racial differences are not the basis for stratification and hierarchy. It goes without saying that before social actors can engage in conflict, they must already have been separated from each other. Without prior system of social segregation, whether of the young or racial groups, there would not exist a basis for conflict. As long as young people are excluded from responsible membership in society, they will rebel. Feuer's myth is founded on the belief that the old will always dominate the young, but the patterns of life from childhood to old age have not always been the way they are today. By examining some of the differences between the meaning of youth in the ancient and modern world, we might gain some insight into the changing nature of society.

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF YOUTH

In ancient Greece, people were defined as "young" as long as they were strong and healthy enough to fully function as human beings. Prior to this stage was childhood and beyond it were the decrepit old. Since there was no category between childhood and "youth," the Greek world did not recognize adolescence in any way.⁷ Similarly, in most tribal societies, children become adults after a short initiation period, and anthropologists who have studied tribal languages have not found a word for adolescence.

The word adolescent comes from the Latin word *adolescens*, but in ancient Rome, it was not used as it is today to denote a transition period from childhood to adult status. Rather *adolescens* was applied to young males without reference to age. Julius Caesar, for example, was referred to as *adolescens* when he was about 38 years old.⁸ Constantine the Great divided human life into seven stages, and he referred to the third stage as adolescence: the time in which “the person grows to the size allotted to him by Nature.” But for Constantine, as well as for medieval thought in general, adolescence *preceded* youth, and people were “young” as long as they were healthy.

From ancient society until modern times, the age at which a person entered the adult world changed very little. In ancient Rome, a person stopped being an infant and became an adult when they were about seven years old. Throughout the Middle Ages, a child became an adult between the ages of five and seven, and adults remained “young” as long as they were able to work. As Philip Aries pointed out in *Centuries of Childhood*, people in the Middle Ages were generally expected to behave and work like adults after about the age of seven:

In medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist; this is not to suggest that children were neglected, forsaken, or despised. The idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children: it corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood, that particular nature which distinguishes the child from the adult, even the young adult. In medieval society this awareness was lacking. That is why, as soon as the child could live without the constant solicitude of his mother, his nanny or his cradle-rocker, he belonged to the adult society.⁹

In the Middle Ages, “children were so little differentiated from adults that there was no special vocabulary to describe them.”¹⁰ Furthermore, medieval art did not draw boundaries between the everyday life of adults and youth:

Medieval art until about the twelfth century did not know childhood or did not attempt to portray it. It is hard to believe that this neglect was due to incompetence or incapacity; it seems more probable that there was no place for childhood in the medieval world. . . . A painter would not even hesitate to give the naked body of a child, in the very few cases when it was exposed, the musculature of an adult. . . .¹¹

In short, children in the Middle Ages were members of the society and participated as such in it. They learned about life in their everyday participation in society as members and were not segregated from the adults.

For a thousand years, from the sixth to the sixteenth centuries, the status of children was relatively fixed, but with the rise of the modern world system, the lives of children and adults have become increasingly segregated. An indication of the separation of the worlds of children and adults at the end of the Middle Ages can be found in the changes in children’s apparel, a transition noted by Shulamith Firestone:

The first special children’s costumes appeared at the end of the sixteenth century, an important date in the formation of the concept of childhood. At first children’s clothing was modeled after archaic adult clothing, in the fashion of the lower class, who also wore the hand-me-downs of aristocracy.¹²

Moreover, it was not until the seventeenth century, that a strict division between children’s games and those of adults appeared. Not only was the definition of childhood changed in this period of transition, but what it meant to be an adult increasingly was defined as being serious and repressing spontaneity, developments which have had severe consequences for the quality of life in the modern world. The changes marked by the extension of childhood until a much later date than in earlier epochs help us forget the “child prodigies” of earlier days. Mozart, for example, composed music at the age of three. Louis XIII played the violin and sang at the age of seventeen months.

In the development of the modern conception of childhood, there have been two ways of viewing children from the adult perspective. In the first place, children became a source of amusement and relaxation for adults, in the words of one writer of the seventeenth century, like “little dogs or monkeys.” Such coddling of children originated in the aristocratic class, among those whose wealth and comparative freedom afforded them the time and the space to play with their offspring. But when the Protestant Reformation raised the issue of original sin, moralists and teachers of that period adopted a much sterner view of how children should be treated. Their concern was to inculcate children with respect for authority—for God above all—and with the proper manners. Calvin declared that the nature of children was a “seed of sin” who should be whipped to cure their inherent wickedness. As Aries recounted this transition:

The child was no longer regarded as amusing or agreeable: "Every man must be conscious of that insipidity of childhood which disgusts the sane mind; the coarseness of youth which finds pleasure in scarcely anything but material objects and which is only a very crude sketch of the man of thought."¹³

The emergence of adolescence as a social category of existence in modern industrialized society is a relatively recent development, one which serves psychological and economic functions at the same time as it has made the problems of young people even more severe than during the initial separation of adults and children. The current usage of adolescence is only about two centuries old. In the words of one analyst:

Adolescence was invented at the same time as the steam engine. The principal architect of the latter was Watts in 1765, of the former Rousseau in 1782.¹⁴

The increasing segregation of the young has today produced a new category of life called "teenager," a concept which has its origin in modern America, as Dwight McDonald pointed out.¹⁵ Freed from many of the responsibilities which younger adults in previous eras were burdened with—from chores around the house to factory work—teenagers in modern industrialized societies are seen as constituting a new social type who have been segregated into a world of their own under adult supervision.¹⁶ Whether in the family, schools, the military, or at work, teenagers live for many years in a world where their peers are their peers by age.¹⁷ The status of teenagers in our society is not full adult status but one of subordination to the adult world.¹⁸ The "rites of passage" which teenagers pass through on their way to adult status include getting a driver's license around the age of 16, becoming eligible to vote at 18, and being able to buy alcohol at around the age of 20. Until they are 21, young people have restricted legal rights.¹⁹ The authority of parents is the final word in most disputes, and if teenagers refuse to obey their adult supervisors, they can be placed in juvenile halls, or for the wealthy, sent to private schools. The expression of genital sexuality in most states is illegal until the age of 18 despite growing evidence that puberty today is reached at an earlier age than in previous epochs.²⁰

Having briefly surveyed the changing definition of youth, we now turn to an analysis of the modern status of youth within the major institutions of society: the family, the economy, and the educational system. We then discuss the youth resistance of the 1960s.

YOUTH AND THE FAMILY

The patriarchal hegemony of the family has assumed two different forms in history.²¹ In the first case, the patriarch owned the women and children and was free to sell or trade them as he saw fit. More recently, women and children are not legally owned, and although the authority-based family is very similar to the property-based family of earlier days,²² there is an important difference. Within the family of earlier periods, the internal beliefs of the dominated members of the family were relatively inconsequential, but the modern family rests less on an unquestioned property status of the children than on the dominated members of the family themselves submitting to the authority of the father (or mother). In other words, the structure of domination in the modern family is reproduced within the character structure of the children, not simply maintained by external force or unquestioned belief. This insight into the psychology of the modern family was very important to such researchers as Wilhelm Reich²³ and T.W. Adorno²⁴ in their studies of character structure and authoritarianism.

For generations, the family served as the principal vehicle of socialization of the young, but with the weakening of family ties in the modern world, there is increasingly no substitute for the human interaction within the family. James Dean's movies "Rebel Without a Cause" and "East of Eden" dramatized the failure of adult society to provide acceptable role models for young people in the modern world, and much recent work in psychology has sought to analyze a "society without fathers." C. Wright Mills' *The Power Elite*²⁵ concerned itself with the rise of the authority of mass society, particularly its celebrities and rulers, and Herbert Schiller's *The Mind Managers*²⁶ critiqued the power and importance of the mass media in the industrialized (and nonindustrialized) nations. Habermas has noted that the contemporary state has reassumed functions of mediating everyday life, a process he has referred to as "refeudalization." By this he notes that in the early capitalist epoch, the organic links between the state and civil society, ties which had existed on the feudal manor, were severed, but under conditions of modern corporate capitalism, these links are again operative. The increasing role of the state in modern society is viewed as both cause and effect of the weakening of the family, thereby helping create conditions for the politicization of women and youth.²⁷

The writings of the Frankfurt School contain a concern with the end of critical reflection in the modern world.²⁸ The breakup of the family in the face of the rise of mass society is a problem which reinforces the

patriarchal domination of the institutions of mass society like television and Madison Avenue. Without the family, youth on their own have little thought of meaningful long-term human interaction. Rather, "action" like drugs and sex become "where it's at." The reduction of the ego occurs whether or not the ego is developed from loving parents who support the autonomous development of their child or from strict parents against whom one rebels in the course of ego development. Thus "being here now," as the modern child increasingly is, leaves the individual in a social and historical void.

In his essay "Art and Mass Culture," Max Horkheimer diverged at length into a rare discussion of childhood. Commenting on the subordination of private life to the needs of industry in the late nineteenth century, he went on to make an appraisal of the changing role of the family:

In the twentieth century, the population is surrounded by large trusts and bureaucracies; the early division of man's existence between his occupation and family (always valid with reservations so far as the majority was concerned) is gradually melting away. The family served to transmit social demands to the individual, thus assuming responsibility not only for his natural birth but for his social birth as well. It was a kind of second womb, in whose warmth the individual gathered the strength necessary to stand alone outside it.²⁹

No longer brought up to inherit the family business or profession as had been the case for centuries, children today leave home fully on their own as in no other historical epoch. While this theme—being on one's own—may be an important advance over the rigid social structures of the past, there is simultaneously a problem of resisting the kinds of personal escape into mass society which are available in the modern world.

One of the most common forms of escape in the modern world (and one of the principal vehicles of socialization today) is television, a relatively recent invention whose effects have been dramatic. In 1978, 97 percent of households in the U.S. had televisions, and they were on for an average of 4½ hours per day.³⁰ The TV is a cheap babysitter for young, middle age and old alike. The effects of TV—its forms (passivity, spectacle) and content—are to maintain our society as it is now by those specialists on Madison Avenue who are well-paid to manipulate our conscious and our unconscious minds.³¹ The socialization process of the mass media gears all of us, and especially the young, to appreciate certain

kinds of human relationships—violence, action, spectacular events, and instant coffee-type consciousness.

There are few examples of real group interaction within the major institutions of our society. Television is an extreme example of one-way communication, to the point where the gestalt of watching TV resembles a state of hypnosis. Movies, concerts, and sporting events all relegate us to a passive posture both physically and mentally, although generally not to the same extreme as television. Similarly, working in a factory requires energy and care to avoid being injured, but generally speaking, the workers have little control over the products they produce (guns, automobiles, or deodorants) or the process of production. The worker merely keeps up with the pace of the assembly line in most factories, which means he or she has his/her activity on the job regulated by a machine. Rather than the person having the machine work at the individual's request, the individual is subjected to the rhythm of the machine.

YOUTH, SEXUALITY, AND CHARACTER STRUCTURE

The routines of mass society and the tremendous power of centralized culture have intensified the repressive requirements of the social order, producing a conformist character structure which reached an extreme form with the rise of fascism in Germany in the 1930s. In analyzing the development of authoritarian character structure, Wilhelm Reich rooted it in the sexual repression required by the development of the patriarchal nuclear family:

[T]he patriarchal authoritarian sexual order . . . becomes the primary basis of the authoritarian ideology by depriving the women, children and adolescents of their sexual freedom, making a commodity of sex and placing sexual interests in the service of economic subjugation. From now on, sexuality is indeed distorted; it becomes diabolical and demonic and has to be curbed.³²

Reich's analysis of sexuality, like Freud's discovery of infantile sexuality, was initially greeted with much derision from his colleagues in psychology as well as from the public at large. Over the decades, of course, Freud's psychoanalytic insights have become generally accepted, resulting in (among other changes) a reevaluation of spankings as a positive factor in childrearing. Since the Protestant Reformation, violence against children had increased, and although children continue

to be abused within many families, there exists a general consensus today that violence is not a productive means of socialization. Freud's understanding of the significance of infants' sexual desires was further developed by Reich, who put forth the view that the repression of sexuality among children was one of the principal ways in which patriarchal and authoritarian values are transferred from generation to generation:

Childhood and adolescent sexuality, which were given a positive value in the original matriarchal work-democracy, fall prey to systematic suppression. . . . As time goes on, this sexuality, which is so distorted, disturbed, brutalized, and prostituted, advocates the very ideology to which it owes its origin. Those who negate sexuality can now justifiably point to it as something brutal and dirty.³³

Sexual repression, especially in the family, continues to be an important aspect of our social order. Infidelity, although glorified by swingers and "wife swappers," is still legal grounds for divorce in the United States. Child sexuality is perhaps the most misunderstood of all aspects of human sexuality today. It is illegal for people under 18 to have intercourse or to cross state lines with a member of the opposite sex (to say nothing of the antihomosexual laws of our society for all ages).

The sexual repression imposed on youth has severe consequences for adults as well. Repressed sexual needs are destructively desublimated—released in such a way as to increase the frustrations of the individual—through various means. Buying a car can easily become a means of sexual satisfaction, especially since the sales pitches from Madison Avenue depend upon manipulating the latent sexuality of human beings.³⁴ In *Eros and Civilization*, Herbert Marcuse critiqued this "repressive desublimation" and investigated the possibilities of a liberated human character structure founded on a "resurgence of pregenital polymorphous sexuality and in a decline of genital supremacy." As Marcuse put it:

This change in the value and scope of libidinal relations would lead to a disintegration of the institutions in which the private interpersonal relations have been organized, particularly the monogamic and patriarchal family.³⁵

Far from posing the family as we know it today as an eternal institution, Marcuse and the Frankfurt School clearly indicated that the

conditions for a free society include the development of new forms of socialization. Marcuse's call for "polymorphous sexuality" is, in a sense, a call for the construction of a society founded on the vital energy of youthfulness.

YOUTH AS A CLASS

Young people in the United States today play an increasingly important role in the functioning of the economy, particularly in many of the new service industries which profit from the fact that most young people have little choice but to work for the minimum wage. In the two sectors of the economy which have grown most rapidly since the end of World War II—the military and educational establishments—youthful energy constitutes the driving force and, as some argue, the very reason for existence of such a large educational apparatus. The rise to world power of U.S. corporations necessitated the expansion of the Defense Department, defense-related industry, and the size of the army in a time of "peace." The development of technology has brought about the vast expansion of higher education and the integration of the educational establishment into the center of the system as a whole. Within both these institutions, large-scale youthful uprisings took place in the 1960s and 1970s. As with the "conflict of generations" thesis, the historical and social nature of the United States was not generally considered to be an important factor behind the youth movement. But in their article, "Youth as Class," John and Margaret Rowntree challenged the view that Feuer had put forth:

The tremendous power of the youth movement today is that it is not a "generational conflict" but a social conflict. To the old generational consciousness there has been added a true class consciousness among young people. . . . Domestic economic viability is being maintained by the rapid growth of the defense and education industries, industries which focus their exploitation on young people. . . . This is our thesis: that youth as youth, employed as students and soldiers, have become the potentially revolutionary core in the United States today.³⁶

The Rowntrees saw the student movement and the counterculture as movements where youth constituted themselves as a class-for-itself in reaction to their being constituted as a class-in-itself by the exploitation of

adult society. They developed this theme along four levels of analysis: the society as a whole (“Capitalism as conflict-ridden system”); historically (“the change of class actors” from the trade unionists of the 1930s to the youth of the 1960s); the social and psychological recruitment to the youth class; and the forms of organization and expression of class consciousness. Their empirical analysis of the status of youth within the modern capitalist system revealed that the defense-education complex, which accounts for more than one-sixth of the Gross National Product of the U.S., plays a “very important role in absorbing surplus peoplepower—especially young peoplepower.”³⁷ The problem of the absorption of the surplus capital—the difficulty the system has in continually reusing the vast resources at its disposal (as we discussed in Chapter Seven) has largely fallen on the shoulders of the young.

Students absorb surplus by “investing in their futures,” that is, by staying out of the labor force during an increasingly long enrollment in school. . . . Students absorb surplus that has already been produced; and they refrain from producing still more surplus product that must be disposed of profitably; instead they labor but do not produce a tangible product . . . a total of about 10 percent of potential GNP [is] absorbed by education.³⁸

Today, in the United States, we have more and more young people staying in college because there are not enough jobs. Why are there not enough jobs? One of the major reasons is that of the needs of the system to make profit, not to produce for human use. Making profits means that a cheap source of surplus labor is needed—a need which young people provide both by those who work for the minimum wage and by those who go to college and graduate only to become a reserve army of labor for white-collar employers.³⁹

Within the work force, young people are a source of low-paid, unskilled labor. They constitute a huge human resource which can be mobilized to fight wars or to sell hamburgers. In 1976, the 3500 MacDonald’s stands around the globe employed 150,000 teenagers (about the same number of coal miners in the U.S.) at the minimum wage who prepared and served about three billion hamburgers a year. Since he started the MacDonald’s franchise in 1954, the traveling salesman Ray Kroc became a multimillionaire worth \$450,000,000.⁴⁰

More than half of the people between 18 and 21 in the U.S. today are in college.⁴¹ If we were to return to the 1950 proportional level of enrollment of young people in the military and colleges, nearly ten

million additional people would find themselves unemployed.⁴² Given the high unemployment rate today, could the economy stand up in such a situation? Of course, we have no way of knowing the answer to this question, but by posing it, we hope to make clear the dependence of our modern economy in the U.S. on war-related industry and the containment of the young in the educational institutions. Because of the importance of the educational system to modern capitalist patriarchy, we pause to consider its structure and functions.

THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF EDUCATION

The classical notion of education saw schooling as a means for human improvement and enlightenment, which in the context of a relatively uneducated society (as in the Middle Ages) was a means for preparing the new rulers of society. Education in the lower classes was confined to practical skills useful in doing a specific job. Of course, for the vast majority, formal education was not available until modern times, and it was sometimes illegal. In the South during slavery, for example, it was illegal to teach Blacks how to read and write.

Today, however, the educational system has been greatly expanded to the point where it is compulsory for young people below the age of 16 to remain in high school. There are many reasons for this transformation of education from a privilege of the few to a requirement for the many. The breakdown of the nuclear family has necessitated a new arena for the socialization of children as well as to “keep the kids off the streets.” The increasing role of science and technology in the economy has necessitated the training of workers able to deal with various kinds of new jobs. Modern education cannot be simply looked upon as the transmittal of skills, but as Bowles and Gintis⁴³ have pointed out, schooling needs to be comprehended in terms of people becoming accustomed to the routine work, bureaucratic authority, hierarchy, and low pay of most jobs in the U.S. today. Although the original expansion of the educational system in the United States was a result of the need to Americanize the large number of foreign immigrants and to prepare these people for jobs made possible by the industrial expansion of the U.S.,⁴⁴ formal education has come to be a grounds for socializing young people into the rigidly hierarchical and bureaucratic organization of industry.

According to Jürgen Habermas, the modern university has three functions to fulfill outside of its research and instruction connected with the economic needs of society.⁴⁵ These are: to socialize its graduates to

be responsible members of their profession (thus, for example, doctors are expected to be capable of quick action in situations of uncertainty); to transmit, interpret, and develop the cultural tradition of the society; and to help form the political consciousness of its students. Under no conditions, according to Habermas, can the university fail to perform these functions.

One might argue, as most administrators at universities in the United States today do, that the university should not be political, that the university is a place for the development of "knowledge," not for its application in the "real world." As we have discussed earlier, however, "value-free knowledge" is itself a value judgment suitable to the conditions of modern technocratic society. What Habermas is attempting to speak to is not whether or not the university should be "political," but since it is political, *what kind* of political traditions should the university transmit to its students? This question is generally not considered unless the students themselves take actions which compel the administration to find answers. When students get together to protest a university's contract with the Central Intelligence Agency, for example, all of a sudden it becomes clear that the university is involved in the real world.

The system no longer needs the enlightened scholar or the individual entrepreneur since its bureaucratic organizations need the "organization person." The corporations do not only need workers with skills for industry, but most importantly, they need the kind of individual who will conform to the hierarchy and discipline of bureaucratic authority and assembly line production.

In *Schooling in Capitalist America*, the authors' study confirms the statement that the *structure* of learning in the university is one of the most important functions of the educational process.⁴⁶ This book contains a wealth of statistics and analysis to verify the proposition that the primary function of education today is grinding out the kinds of people who can tolerate and participate in the hierarchical organization of industry, white-collar jobs, and everyday life in the United States today. Students are rewarded with good grades in much the same way that a worker receives pay increases. The structure of the classroom (teachers and students) mirrors the top-down relationship of management and workers. According to the authors, with the closure of the westward frontier, education in the United States became a new means of social advancement, but the rapid expansion of the educational establishment soon diminished the importance of the college degree. The progressive era around the begin-

ning of the twentieth century had ushered in a standardization of school curriculum and classroom structure in contrast to the provincialism of decentralized small-town educational institutions.⁴⁷ Instead of becoming a means for social elevation, however, the schooling system became a means of tracking people into appropriate jobs based on their class, racial, and sexual status.⁴⁸ The transition from industrial capitalism to modern corporate capitalism required the increasing production of "educated" white collar labor to meet the needs of industry.

The view that the educational system in the United States has been developed to meet the needs of industry is not simply a proposition of radical theory. Rather, such high-level commissions as the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education admit the dependence of industry on the production of workers in the university.⁴⁹ Clark Kerr, president of U.C. Berkeley for many years and a spokesperson for the corporatization of higher education has said it is "natural" for the university to serve government, industry, and agriculture.⁵⁰ As one observer put it, universities today are little more than a service station catering to the needs of the corporations.

The element of social responsibility needed for students to be able to critically examine the direction and goals of the society is increasingly absent from university education as the methods of science and "value-free" information have become stressed. Fragmented technical knowledge and submissive behavior patterns are rapidly disintegrating the students' capacity for critical thought. Orwellian "double-think" is on the ascendency: the political complicity of the universities is called "apolitical," and those who protest university connections with the "Defense" Department are accused of politicizing the university.

The problems with the educational system in the modern world are ones of both quality and quantity. Qualitatively, education should serve to heighten the individual's sense of moral, ethical and aesthetic appreciation of life. Polytechnic education should be universally available to both demystify the control of technology by the experts who work for the power elite and to begin the process of developing a new science rooted in popular aspirations for harmony with Nature through an understanding of the laws and purposes of Nature. Young people should be "educated to govern,"⁵¹ not worn down into submissive roles. Furthermore, as Illitch reminds us, "de-schooling society" needs to accompany the redefinition of education.⁵² Rather than being viewed as the exclusive function of the schools and universities, education is involved in all

aspects of human interaction. As long as we only comprehend education as a specialized fragment of life, we live within the mis-education of the modern capitalist system.

THE AUTHORITARIAN CLASSROOM

In *On Learning and Social Change*,⁵³ Michael Rossman developed the theme that the universities in the United States have advanced to meet the needs of technocratic society, but that they are still caught in the self-definition of themselves from an earlier epoch. Students attend the universities in large numbers to learn technical skills and to find a way to become socially useful workers. The universities, on the other hand, see themselves as neutral institutions, an ideal formed in an earlier, ivy era, when higher education served to train the elite in how to rule. But, as Rossman discussed, the universities today serve another important function: they are the central socializing mechanism of society. The mixing of rewards and punishment, first used by parents to teach children acceptable and nonacceptable kinds of behavior, is an important lesson which the universities continue to teach:

Benevolently the dean reprimands, the dorm mother locks in, and the professor, inescapably the living arm of the machine of grades and degrees, casts shadows of stronger punishment indeed with every gesture.⁵⁴

Rossman is attempting to deal with the problem of what he calls the totalitarian classroom—the structure of learning in such a way that one is required to memorize the wisdom of experts without being able to think critically for oneself. According to this model, change in society and in knowledge only occurs in a linear fashion. The authority of “Great Men” of the past is unquestionable if one wants to get ahead, and getting ahead is the reward for submitting to the rituals of the authoritarian classroom. Rossman’s insight into the Authority Complex in the university leads him to understand pre-university and post-university life as being set within the same kind of structure:

Spankings are the rare Vietnams of the cultural imperialism that dominates the world of the nuclear family. The true motives of the family, like those of our foreign policy, are not simply benevolent. In each the Authority Complex operates in the interests of power, to preserve and transmit an established order.⁵⁵

Having demonstrated how the Authority Complex actually inhibits real learning, Rossman goes on to discuss the Free Speech movement in Berkeley and other aspects of the counterculture in the United States as providing an “open-circle” model of learning. According to this model, freedom of the individual becomes the goal of learning. No one person is expected to always play the role of leader (teacher), and the group is decentralized, rather than centralized in its focus and operations.

The critique of the authoritarian classroom is an important contribution which indicates new forms for education. A liberated classroom would stress participation rather than passivity; communication among peers rather than just a one-way flow from teacher to student; critical reflection on one’s own life experiences and knowledge rather than assuming that the students know little or nothing; and role-exchanges whereby no one person is artificially expected to be the expert while the others are to be the passive consumers. As students in a classroom situation, think for a moment about the structure of the situation you submit to. If you have a big lecture type of setting, what is the *form* of the communication process? Whether your teacher is a radical or conservative, a man or a woman, it is a safe assumption that you and they are passively accepting the strict leader/led dichotomy. In other words, human interaction is perverted simply because of the way in which the room is constructed—the front of the room has priority since often the seats are bolted down facing the podium—or solely because it is “natural”—the easiest way to cover the material which the student is required to cover in order to advance to the next class.

Our analysis of the function of the educational system—to socialize people to accept the bureaucracy and hierarchy of the modern world—is precisely one of the reasons why all young people in the United States are required to stay in school for so many years and why the schools have come to resemble jails in many inner cities—complete with armed guards and windowless buildings. In order to curb the idealism and sense of social responsibility which young people have, the schools make sure—or at least try to—that people become accustomed to life as it is and will passively partake in the system as it is without questioning its rationality.

YOUTH RESISTANCE

Despite the many structures of domination imposed on young people, an international student movement and counterculture arose in the 1960s. In contrast to the hierarchy of adult society and the atomization of the social

world, the youth movement sought to create a new community of equality and freedom. The political expression of this "new culture" in the United States was embodied in the anti-war movement, a movement inspired by the Civil Rights Movement and the resistance of the people of Vietnam. The anti-war movement reached its high point during the student strike of May 1970, when colleges, universities, and high schools across the country were shut down to protest Nixon's invasion of Cambodia.⁵⁶ This strike was the only major political strike to take place in the United States in decades, and it ended only after 6 students had been shot dead at Kent State and Jackson State universities while thousands more were injured or arrested across the country. The demands of the strikers were:

- 1) An immediate end to U.S. involvement in Indochina;
- 2) Freedom for Bobby Seale (Chairperson of the Black Panther Party in 1970 who was on trial for murder and later acquitted) and all other political prisoners in the U.S.;
- 3) An end to university complicity with military research and recruiting.

The universalistic nature of these demands are but one indication that the student movement was not confined to the problems of a special stratum of society—youth—but were self-consciously setting out the needs of the most oppressed in society as their own needs. This self-conscious universality would seem to invalidate sociological theories of the student movement which remain confined to psychological explanations. Moreover, those explanations that only stressed the specific conditions of the United States or industrialized countries failed to realize that students and youth have been responsive to radical movements in many different times and places. From the May Fourth Movement in early twentieth century China to the Civil Rights and anti-war movements in the U.S., students have played an important role as catalysts for larger social movements (as well as powerful movements in their own right). Especially in modern industrialized societies where the student population has increased immensely and where the problems of youth are exacerbated by the extension of childhood inequality later into life, the student movement has affected and will continue to affect national and international reality.⁵⁷ From the Pentagon Papers to the accounts of Watergate written by the "President's Men," the student movement had far more power than it itself was aware of.⁵⁸

In every country where national liberation struggles are being waged today, students are an important part. A student movement by itself, of course, is not capable of effecting a revolution (except in exceptional circumstances, as in Thailand). The student movement's limits are often more apparent than its scope, but from practice it seems that students are the blasting cap and the working class is the dynamite of revolution. In May 1968 in France, a student revolt spread to the working class, and in the ensuing two months of upheaval, there was nearly a revolution. For Herbert Marcuse, the May events in France constituted the "first powerful rebellion against the whole of the existing society, the rebellion for the total transvaluation of values, for qualitatively different ways of life."⁵⁹

The student movement in the U.S. (and the industrialized countries generally) as well as the counterculture which accompanied it were living proof both of the human capacity for freedom as well as the limits of rebellion. Young people were instinctually repulsed by the technological genocide perpetrated by their society. Mario Savio, a leader of the Free Speech Movement of 1964, expressed the revulsion of the young when he said:

There is a time when the operations of the machine become so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part, you can't even tacitly take part. And you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop.⁶⁰

From its inception, the youth culture contained members motivated by more than the desire to carve out easy lives for themselves. To understand the development of hippies in the United States, some observers have tried to make analogies with other youthful movements in the past. While the long hair and sexual experimentation of the hippies may appear on the surface to be similar to the Russian youth movement of the 1880s or to the earlier culture of rebellion in Germany, the youth movement of the modern world came into itself in the "electronic age," synthesizing a new music, "Rock and Roll," and alternative lifestyles to the monogamous family.

The original impetus of the hippie movement was the desire to live humanly in an age of specialization. The generations of children born after the second world war were raised in a position of unprecedented prosperity. This wealth was largely made possible by the exploitation of Third World nations, and it appeared to rebound in the minds of many Americans when their children began to support the struggles of Third

World peoples to be free. The hippies were born into a world secure in terms of their material needs, but they were cut off from their own human desires and potentials by adult society. While money and social status were basically guaranteed, living a free, integrated, and fulfilling life was not. Previous generations had had little choice but to accept material security as their goal because of the extreme poverty they had experienced during the Great Depression. In order to try to reach new human goals, hippies rejected the careerism and professionalism of technocratic life.

The belief that people and not things should come first was of paramount importance to the hippies. The propensity of the young to espouse moral causes coupled with the genocidal war in Indochina produced a remarkably long-term resistance to the foreign policy of the adult government. This resistance was spurred on by the fact that while 18-year-olds were not allowed to buy liquor or vote in many states, they were drafted (generally lower class and Third World young people were the Draft Board's targets) and forced to fight and die in the jungles of Vietnam. The televised draft lottery where young men were arbitrarily picked to be drafted only reinforced the view that adult society used the young to do their dirty work without giving them the full status of citizenship.

Since the 1960s, the cooptation of the counterculture—that is the institutional adjustment making more room for young people and the products of the counterculture within corporate production—has helped to sap the vital energy of the movement. The end of the draft, the 18-year-old vote, the formation and strengthening of youth groups within the established institutions (Young Democrats, Young Communists, etc.) the tokenistic granting of student representation on administrative bodies (to say nothing of the Democratic Party opening its convention in 1972 to radicals of the 60s)⁶¹ have all taken the sense of opposition away from non-established groups and individuals. Where there was once a real San Francisco music, today there are huge record companies marketing the latest rock, jazz, and folk. Even agribusiness has jumped on the bandwagon with all-natural cereals and organic foods. The rapid diffusion of the counter-culture, as well as its dependence on “plastic America” for something to be “counter” to, proved to be strong forces which overwhelmed the meaning of such symbols as long hair.

The sudden rise and fall of the counterculture has led some observers to ask if it really was a “culture” after all. Those who saw the youth

movements as “petit-bourgeois”⁶² have seen their point of view confirmed by the sporadic existence of “Woodstock nation.”⁶³ Those who saw it merely as a youthful infatuation believe that the Woodstock generation has finally grown up. Some analysts, like the Rowntrees, had comprehended the countercultural communities as a base area for the class struggle:

The youth communities—Haight Ashbury, the East Village, etc.—are important mainly because they define a quasi-political boundary between youth and others. Therefore, like black ghettos, school grounds and campuses, villages provide a base from which youth can organize and a setting in which political learning can take place. . . . The communities also offer laboratories for the development of communal, life-affirming forms of living, eating, sharing and participating in public activities. Contrast the buoyancy of contemporary youth culture with the nihilism, individualism and withdrawal of the Beats of the 1950s.⁶⁴

But the Rowntrees' expectation of the continuation of the youth class struggle after the resolution of the war in Vietnam has proven to be wrong, at least on the level of overt action. With the victory of the people of Indochina, many aspects of youth culture turned into withdrawalism of one form or another — mysticism, sex, drugs, space fantasy, and music.

Of course, the cooptation has not been complete. There remain many individuals, institutions, and collectivities who seek to transform the society, and despite their apparent disappearance, the rebels of the 1960s were an effective force in exposing the inhuman nature of the modern capitalist system to a complacent public. The total transformation of this society, a goal which was momentarily posed by the New Left, would require a leap from rebellion to revolutionary consciousness—a leap where young people do not define adults or “anyone over 30” as the enemy. As Dick Flacks put it:

The idea of youth is a dangerous one for a social order, but it is also a very promising one. Youth revolt is a sign that a new culture and a new social order have been placed on the agenda of history. The promise of youth can only be fulfilled, however, if youth is transcended—if the young and the old who have a common interest in a new social order come together to make their collective mark and help each other realize their common dreams.⁶⁵

NOTES

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4. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
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28. Horkheimer, *op. cit.*, pp. 277-278.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 276.
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31. *TV Guide*, March 26, 1977, pp. 6-10 document the use of lie detectors to select newscasters by measuring their effect on audience sexual excitement.
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36. John and Margaret Rowntree, "Youth as a Class," *Our Generation* 6, pp. 155-156.

37. Ibid., p. 162.
38. Ibid., p. 164.
39. Sam Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).
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