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FRED C. PAMPEL

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION In all complex societies, the total stock of valued resources is distributed unequally, with the most privileged individuals or families enjoying a disproportionate share of property, power, or prestige. Although it might be possible to construct an exhaustive rank-ordering of individuals based on their control over these resources, most scholars attempt to identify a set of classes or strata that reflect the major cleavages in the population. The task of stratification research is to describe the structure of these social groupings and to specify the processes by which they are generated and maintained. The

following types of questions are central to the field:

1. What are the major forms of stratification in human history? Is stratification an inevitable feature of human life?
2. Are there well-defined classes or status groupings in advanced industrial societies? If so, what are the principal features of these groupings?
3. What types of social processes and institutions serve to maintain or alter ascriptive forms of stratification (e.g., racial stratification, gender stratification)? Are these ascriptive processes weakening with the transition to advanced industrialism?
4. How frequently do individuals move across class, status, or occupational boundaries? Is the process of occupational attainment governed by ascriptive traits (e.g., family background) or by achieved characteristics (e.g., education)?

There is a long tradition of commentary on questions of this kind. For the greater part of history, the stratification regime was regarded as an immutable feature of society, and the implicit objective of commentators was to explain or justify the existing order in terms of religious or quasi-religious doctrines (see Bottomore 1965). It was only with the Enlightenment that a "rhetoric of equality" emerged in opposition to the legal and political advantages accorded to privileged status groupings. After the latter privileges were weakened in the nineteenth century, this egalitarian ideal was redirected against emerging forms of economic stratification; the result was the rise of socialist and Marxist interpretations of human history. It is out of this conflict between egalitarian values and the brute facts of economic inequality that modern theories of stratification emerged.

This is not to imply that the field of stratification has been dominated by a simple Marxist model. It would be no exaggeration, in fact, to say that much of modern stratification theory has been formulated in *reaction* to Marxist and neo-Marxist theories. Indeed, the term *stratification* is often seen as anti-Marxist, since it places emphasis on the purely hierarchical ranking of classes rather than the exploitative relations between them. Moreover, modern scholars have typically attempted to adopt a value-free orientation, with their research focusing on description and analysis rather than "praxis" in its purest form.

FORMS OF STRATIFICATION

The starting point for any theory of stratification is the purely descriptive task of classification. It is conventional among contemporary theorists to distinguish between modern *class systems* and the *estates* or *castes* found in advanced agrarian societies (e.g., Mayer and Buckley 1970). As shown in table 1, this conventional typology can be elaborated by introducing additional categories for tribal systems (panel A), slave systems (panel B), and state socialist societies (panel C). It should be kept in mind that these various forms of stratification are best seen as ideal types rather than descriptions of existing societies. Indeed, the stratification systems of advanced societies are complex and multidimensional, if only because their past institutional forms tend to persist despite the emergence of new forms. It follows that most systems of stratification are a complex mixture of elements from several of the ideal-typical forms specified in Table 1 (for related topologies, see Wright 1985; Runciman 1974).

The first panel in this table lists some of the basic principles underlying tribal systems of stratification (see line A1). It should be emphasized that the most extreme forms of inequality were eliminated from these societies through gift exchanges and other redistributive practices (Lenski 1966, pp. 102–112). In fact, some of the early students of tribal societies spoke of a "primitive communism," since the means of production (i.e., land) were communally owned, and other forms of property were distributed evenly among tribal members. This is not to say, of course, that a *perfect* equality prevailed. After all, some of the more powerful medicine men ("shamans") lived off the surplus production of others, and the tribal chief often exerted considerable influence on the political decisions of the day. The impor-

TABLE 1
The Principal Assets, Major Strata, and Justifying Ideologies for Six Forms of Social Stratification

System	*Principal Assets*	*Major Strata*	*Justifying Ideology*
A. *Hunting and Gathering Society*			
1. Tribal System	Hunting Skills and Magic	Chiefs, Shamans, and Followers	Meritocratic Selection
B. *Horticultural and Agrarian Society*			
2. Feudal System	Land and Labor Power	Kings, Lords, and Serfs	Tradition and Religious Doctrine
3. Slave System	Human Property	Owners and Slaves	Natural and Social Inferiority
4. Caste System	Ethnic Purity	Castes	Tradition and Religious Doctrine
C. *Industrial Society*			
5. Class System	Means of Production	Capitalists and Workers	Classical Liberalism
6. State Socialism	Organizational and Party Assets	Managers and Managed	Marxism and Leninism

tant point, however, is that these residual forms of power and privilege could not be inherited; it was only by demonstrating superior abilities in hunting, magic, or leadership that tribal members could secure political office or acquire prestige. It might be said, then, that tribal systems rested on meritocratic principles of a most basic kind.

With the emergence of agrarian forms of production, the economic surplus became large enough to support more complex systems of stratification. The Indian caste system, for example, is based on an elaborate and intricate classification of hereditary groupings. As indicated in Table 1, these groupings can be ranked on a continuum of ethnic purity, with the highest positions in the system reserved for castes that prohibit activities or behaviors that are seen as "polluting" (e.g., eating meat, scavenging). Although a caste system of this kind is often taken to be the limiting case of stratification, it should be noted that feudal systems were also based on a rigid system of quasi-hereditary groups. The distinctive feature of feudalism was the institution of personal bondage; that is, medieval serfs were obliged to live on a manor and pay rents of various kinds (e.g., "corvée labor"), since the feudal lord held the legal rights to their labor power (see line B3). If a serf fled to the city, this was considered a form of theft; the serf was stealing that portion of his labor power owned by his lord (Wright 1985, p. 78). It

must be stressed, however, that the serfs of feudal society typically retained some degree of control over their labor power. If this control is completely stripped away, then workers become nothing more than *human* property, and the distinction between feudalism and slavery disappears (see line B4).

The most striking development of the modern era has been the rise of egalitarian ideologies. This can be seen, for example, in the revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where the ideals of the Enlightenment were directed against the privileges of rank and the political power of the aristocracy. In the end, these struggles eliminated the last residues of feudal privilege, but they also made possible the emergence of new forms of inequality and stratification. It is usually argued that a *class system* developed in the early-industrial period, with the major inequalities in this system defined in economic terms and legitimated as the natural outcome of individual competition (i.e., "classical liberalism"). There is, however, considerable controversy over the contours and boundaries of these economic classes. As indicated in line C5, a simple Marxist model might focus on the cleavage between capitalists and workers, whereas other models represent the class structure as a continuous graduation of "monetary wealth and income" (Mayer and Buckley 1970, p. 15).

Whatever the relative merits of these models might be, the Marxist one became the ideology for the socialist revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The intellectual heritage of these revolutions can again be traced to the Enlightenment; however, a new "rhetoric of equality" was fashioned for the times, with the attack now focusing on the economic power of the capitalist class rather than the privileges of the aristocracy. The available evidence from Eastern Europe and elsewhere suggests that this egalitarian rhetoric was only partially realized (see, e.g., Lenski 1992). To be sure, private property was largely eliminated in socialist societies, yet various commentators have suggested that new lines of stratification crystallized in the "secondary stage" of socialist development (Kelley 1981; Giddens 1973). It is often claimed, for instance, that an intellectual or bureaucratic elite emerged under state socialism to take the place of the old capitalist class (see, e.g., Gouldner 1979; Djilas 1965). Of course, this elite cannot formally own the means of production, yet it does control the production of goods and the allocation of valued resources. There is an emerging consensus, moreover, that the power of intellectuals has been *further* strengthened with the recent antisocialist revolutions in Eastern Europe (e.g., Szelényi 1992). The obvious irony of this development is that the intellectual elite may ultimately be sowing the seeds of its own demise by reconstituting the old capitalist class.

SOURCES OF STRATIFICATION

The foregoing sketch makes it clear that a wide range of stratification systems has emerged over the course of human history. The question that naturally arises, then, is whether some form of stratification is an inevitable feature of human societies. In addressing this question, it is useful to begin with the functionalist approach (Davis and Moore 1945), since this is the best-known attempt to understand "the universal necessity which calls forth stratification in any system" (p. 242; also, see Davis 1953; Moore 1963a; 1963b). The starting point for Davis and Moore (1945) is the premise that all societies must devise some means to motivate the best workers to fill the most important and difficult occupations. This "motivational problem" might be addressed in a variety of ways, but perhaps the simplest solution is to construct a hierarchy of rewards (e.g., prestige, property, power) that privileges the incumbents of functionally significant positions. As noted by Davis and Moore (1945, p. 243), this amounts to setting up a system of institutionalized inequality (i.e., a "stratification system"), with the occupational structure serving as a conduit through which unequal rewards and perquisites are disbursed. The stratification system may be seen, therefore, as an "unconsciously evolved device by which societies insure that the important positions are conscientiously filled by the most qualified persons" (Davis

and Moore 1945, p. 243). Under the Davis-Moore formulation, the only empirical claim is that *some form* of inequality is needed to allocate labor efficiently; the authors are silent, however, when it comes to specifying *how much* inequality is sufficient for this purpose. It is well to bear in mind that the extreme forms of stratification found in existing societies may exceed the "minimum . . . necessary to maintain a complex division of labor" (Wrong 1959, p. 774).

The Davis-Moore hypothesis has come under considerable criticism from several quarters (see Huaco 1966 for an early review). The prevailing view, at least among the postwar commentators, is that the original hypothesis cannot adequately account for inequalities in "stabilized societies where statuses are ascribed" (Wesolowski 1962, p. 31; Tumin 1953). Indeed, whenever the vacancies in the occupational structure are allocated on purely hereditary grounds, the stratification system is no longer ensuring that the most important positions are "conscientiously filled by the most qualified persons" (Davis and Moore 1945, p. 243). What must be recognized, however, is that a *purely* hereditary system is rarely achieved in practice; in fact, even in the most rigid caste societies, the most talented and qualified individuals may have some opportunities for upward mobility. Under the Davis-Moore formulation (1945), this slow trickle of mobility is regarded as essential to the functioning of the social system, so much so that elaborate systems of inequality have been devised to ensure that the trickle continues (see Davis 1948, pp. 369–370, for additional and related comments). This suggests, then, that the Davis-Moore hypothesis might be used to explain inequalities in societies with relatively rigid mobility regimes. However, when opportunities for mobility are completely closed off, most commentators would concede that the original hypothesis becomes somewhat less credible.

Whereas the early debates addressed conceptual issues of this kind, the focus ultimately shifted to constructing "critical tests" of the Davis-Moore hypothesis. This research effort continued apace throughout the 1970s, with some commentators reporting evidence consistent with functionalist theory (e.g., Cullen and Novick 1979), and others being somewhat less sympathetic in their assessments (e.g., Broom and Cushing 1977). Although the following decade was a period of relative quiescence, the debate over functionalism resurfaced when Lenski (1992) suggested that "many of the internal, systemic problems of Marxist societies were the result of inadequate motivational arrangements" (p. 6). This analysis focused on the unintended consequences of the socialist "experiments in destratification" (Lenski 1978); that is, Lenski argued that the socialist commitment to wage leveling made it difficult to recruit and motivate highly skilled workers, while the "visible hand" of the socialist economy could never be calibrated to mimic the natural incentive of capitalist profit-taking. These results led Lenski to conclude that "successful incentive systems involve . . . motivating the best qualified people to seek the most important positions" (p. 11). It remains to be seen whether this interpretation will generate a new round of functionalist theorizing and debate.

THE STRUCTURE OF MODERN STRATIFICATION

The recent history of stratification theory is in large part a history of debates about the contours of class, status, and prestige hierarchies in advanced industrial societies. These debates have been waged on a wide variety of fronts; however, for the present essay, it will suffice to focus on three distinct schools of thought (see Wright 1979, pp. 3–18, for a comprehensive review). The various debates within these schools might appear to be nothing more than academic infighting, but in fact they have been regarded by many postwar European intellectuals as a "necessary prelude to the conduct of political strategy" (Parkin 1979, p. 16). This form of political strategizing plays an especially prominent role within Marxist and neo-Marxist circles; for instance, a good deal of energy has been devoted to drawing the correct dividing line between the working class and the bourgeoisie, since the task of identifying the oppressed class is seen as a prerequisite to devising a political

strategy that might appeal to it. It goes without saying that political and scholarly goals are often conflated in such mapmaking efforts; and, consequently, the assorted debates in this subfield are infused with more than the usual amount of normative excitement.

Marxists and Neo-Marxists. The debates within the Marxist and neo-Marxist camps have been especially contentious, not only because of the foregoing political motivations, but also because the discussion of class within *Capital* (Marx [1894] 1972) is too fragmentary and unsystematic to adjudicate between various competing interpretations. At the end of the third volume of *Capital,* we find the now-famous fragment on "the classes" (Marx [1894] 1972, pp. 862–863), but this discussion breaks off at just that point where Marx appeared ready to advance a formal definition of the term. It is clear, nonetheless, that his abstract model of capitalism was resolutely dichotomous, with the conflict between capitalists and workers constituting the driving force behind further social development. This simple two-class model should be viewed as an ideal type designed to capture the "developmental tendencies" of capitalism; indeed, whenever Marx carried out concrete analyses of *existing* capitalist systems, he acknowledged that the class structure was complicated by the persistence of transitional classes (i.e., landowners), quasi-class groupings (e.g., peasants), and class fragments (e.g., the lumpen-proletariat). It was only with the progressive maturation of capitalism that Marx expected these complications to disappear as the "centrifugal forces of class struggle and crisis flung all *dritte Personen* to one camp or the other" (Parkin 1979, p. 16).

The recent history of modern capitalism suggests that the class structure has not evolved in such a precise and tidy fashion. To be sure, the available evidence makes it clear that the old middle class of artisans and shopkeepers has declined in relative size (Gagliani 1981; cf. Steinmetz and Wright 1989), yet a "new middle class" of managers, professionals, and nonmanual workers has expanded to occupy the newly vacated space. The last fifty years of neo-Marxist theorizing might be seen as an "intellectual fallout" from this development, with some commentators seeking to minimize its implications, and others putting forward a revised mapping of the class structure that accommodates the new middle class in explicit terms. Within the former camp, the principal tendency is to claim that the lower sectors of the new middle class are in the process of being proletarianized, since "capital subjects [nonmanual labor] . . . to the forms of rationalization characteristic of the capitalist mode of production" (Braverman 1974, p. 408). This line of reasoning suggests that the working class may gradually expand in relative size and thereby regain its earlier power.

At the other end of the continuum, Poulantzas (1974) has argued that most members of the new intermediate stratum fall *outside* the working class proper, since they are engaged in "unproductive labor" of various kinds. This approach may have the merit of keeping the working class conceptually pure, but some commentators have noted that it also reduces the size of this class to trivial proportions. The latter result has motivated contemporary scholars to develop class models that fall somewhere between the extremes advocated by Braverman (1974) and Poulantzas (1974). For example, the neo-Marxist model proposed by Wright (1978) generates an American working class that is acceptably large (i.e., approximately 46 percent of the labor force), yet the class mappings in this model still pay tribute to the various cleavages and divisions among workers who sell their labor power (also, see Wright et al. 1982). In fact, the model places professionals in a *distinct* "semi-autonomous class" by virtue of their control over the work process, while upper-level supervisors are located in a "managerial class" by virtue of their authority over workers (Wright 1978; also, see Wright 1985; Westergaard and Resler 1975). It should be noted that the dividing lines proposed in these neo-Marxist class models often rest on concepts (e.g., authority relations) that were once purely the province of "bourgeois sociology." This development led Parkin (1979) to conclude that "inside every neo-Marxist there seems to be a Weberian struggling to get out" (p. 25).

Weberians and Neo-Weberians: The rise of the "new middle class" is less problematic for scholars working within a Weberian framework. Indeed, the class model advanced by Weber suggests a *multiplicity* of class cleavages, because it equates the economic class of workers with their "market situation" (Weber [1922] 1968, pp. 926–940). This model implies that wealthy property-owners are in a privileged class; after all, members of this class can outbid workers for valued goods in the commodity market, and they can also convert their wealth to capital and thereby monopolize entrepreneurial opportunities. However, Weber emphasized that skilled workers are also privileged under modern capitalism, since their services are in high demand on the labor market. The end result, then, is a new middle class of skilled workers that intervenes between the "positively privileged" capitalist class and the "negatively privileged" mass of unskilled laborers (Weber [1922] 1968, pp. 927–928). At the same time, the stratification system is further complicated by the existence of *status groupings,* which Weber saw as forms of social affiliation that often competed with class-based forms of organization. Although an economic class is merely an aggregate of individuals in a similar market situation, a status grouping is defined as a community of individuals who share a "style of life" and interact as status equals (e.g., the nobility, an ethnic caste, etc.). Under some circumstances, the boundaries of a status grouping are determined by purely economic criteria, yet Weber notes that "status honor need not necessarily be linked with a class situation" (Weber [1922] 1968, p. 932). The *nouveaux riches,* for instance, are never immediately accepted into "high society," even when their wealth clearly places them in the uppermost economic class (Weber [1922] 1968, pp. 936–937).

The Weberian approach has been elaborated and extended by sociologists seeking to understand the "American form" of stratification. During the decades following World War II, American sociologists typically dismissed the Marxist model of class as overly simplistic and one-dimensional, whereas they celebrated the Weberian model as properly distinguishing between the numerous variables that Marx had conflated in his definition of class (see, e.g., Barber 1968). In the most extreme versions of this approach, the dimensions identified by Weber were disaggregated into a multiplicity of stratification variables (e.g., income, education, ethnicity), and the correlations between these variables were then shown to be weak enough to generate various forms of "status inconsistency" (e.g., a poorly educated millionaire). The resulting picture suggested a "pluralistic model" of stratification; that is, the class system was represented as intrinsically multidimensional, with a host of crosscutting affiliations producing a complex patchwork of internal class cleavages. Although one well-known critic has remarked that the multidimensionalists provided a "sociological portrait of America as drawn by Norman Rockwell" (Parkin 1979, p. 604), it must be kept in mind that some of these theorists also emphasized the seamy side of pluralism. In fact, Lenski (1954) and others (e.g., Lipset 1959) have argued that the modern stratification system might be seen as a breeding ground for personal stress and political radicalism, since individuals with contradictory statuses may feel relatively deprived and thus support "movements designed to alter the political *status quo*" (Lenski 1966, p. 88). This interest in the consequences of status inconsistency died out in the early 1970s under the force of negative and inconclusive findings (e.g., Jackson and Curtis 1972). However, among recent researchers and commentators, there appears to be a resurgence of interest in issues of status disparity and relative deprivation. It is notable that American scholars have *not* been the driving force behind this "second wave" of multidimensional theorizing; to be sure, some Americans have participated in the revival (e.g., Baron 1992), but most of the new theorizing is European in origin (e.g., Beck 1987) and focuses on the generic properties of all "post-modern" stratification systems.

It would be a mistake, of course, to regard these multidimensionalists as the *only* intellectual descendants of Weber. In fact, some neo-Weberians contend that identifiable classes can develop under modern capitalism, despite the fragmenting

effects of crosscutting affiliations and cleavages (e.g., Goldthorpe 1980). The prevailing view within this revisionist camp is that various forms of *social closure* and *exclusion* play an important role in generating social classes with a shared culture and style of life (e.g., Giddens 1973; Breiger 1981). In modern industrial societies, there are no legal sanctions that prevent labor from freely flowing across class boundaries, but there are various social, cultural, and institutional mechanisms that effectively "channel" children into occupations that are similar to those of their parents. These exclusionary mechanisms produce a class structure with a relatively stable and permanent membership; as a result, a set of distinctive class cultures may emerge, and this in turn may generate a minimal level of class awareness and identification. In most countries, one would expect to see a fundamental "class divide" between manual and nonmanual labor, since the strongest barriers to mobility are found precisely at this boundary. Although barriers of this kind are not the only source of class structuration (e.g., see Giddens 1973, pp. 107–112), they may well contribute to the formation of identifiable "collar classes" under modern industrialism.

Gradational Models. The distinction between categorical and gradational models of stratification has long been important in American sociology. Whereas neo-Marxists seek to describe the stratification system with a small number of discrete categories (i.e., "classes"), gradational theorists map the contours of modern stratification in terms of *ordered levels* (see Ossowski 1963). This distinction played an especially prominent role in the community studies completed after World War II; for instance, Lenski (1952) emphasized that the residents of a New England mill town were stratified into "graded prestige levels" rather than "discrete social classes," while Landecker (1960) attempted to locate the "natural breaks" and cleavages within the status hierarchy of Detroit. As the discipline matured, the focus shifted away from critical tests of this kind, and the two approaches developed into distinct research traditions with their own methods of inquiry. It is commonly argued that American sociologists have an "elective affinity" for gradational models; in fact, when Ossowski (1963) surveyed the history of stratification research, he concluded that the "American class structure is [typically] interpreted . . . in terms of a scheme of gradation" (p. 102).

The gradational approach can be operationalized by measuring the income, prestige, or status of individuals. While there is some sociological precedent for treating income as an indicator of class distinctions (e.g., Mayer and Buckley 1970, p. 15), most sociologists seem content with a disciplinary division of labor that leaves the income distribution to economists. This is perhaps unfortunate; after all, if one is indeed intent on assessing the "market situation" of workers, there is much to recommend a direct measurement of their income and wealth. Despite the merits of this method, it never enjoyed much popularity: the preferred approach is to define classes as "groups of persons who are members of effective kinship units which, as units, are approximately equally valued" (Parsons 1954, p. 77). The latter method was operationalized in the postwar community studies (e.g., Warner 1949) by constructing broadly-defined categories of reputational equals (i.e., "upper-upper class," "upper-middle class," etc.). However, when the disciplinary focus shifted to national surveys, the measure of choice soon became interval-level scales constructed from detailed occupational codes (see, e.g., Duncan 1961; Siegel 1971; Treiman 1977). These scales now serve as standard measures of "class background" in sociological research of all kinds.

ASCRIPTIVE FORMS OF STRATIFICATION

The long-standing tendency within both the Marxist and non-Marxist schools has been to treat ethnicity, race, and gender as purely "secondary forces" in history. There was always considerable disagreement within these schools over the appropriate way to define social classes; nevertheless, despite these various conflicts and disputes, the shared presumption was that modern society is essentially a *class system.* In almost all formula-

tions, the nuclear family was seen as the elemental unit of stratification, with the *occupation* or *employment status* of the family head (i.e., the husband) defining the class position of all its members. This approach had the effect of reducing various types of intraclass cleavages (e.g., ethnic cleavages, gender-based cleavages) to the status of "complicating factors" or historically contingent developments (see Parkin 1979, pp. 29–31, for an incisive review). To be sure, it was typically recognized that the competing bonds of race or ethnicity were still salient for some individuals, yet these ties were viewed as vestiges of traditional loyalties that would ultimately wither away under the rationalizing influence of capitalism or industrialism. It was often argued that this decline in purely ascriptive forces proceeded from the functional requirements of modern industrial societies (e.g., Levy 1966).

This so-called "conventional model" of stratification has come under criticism on both empirical and theoretical grounds. The first step in the gradual breakdown of this model was the fashioning of a multidimensional approach to stratification systems (see earlier section on the Structure of Modern Stratification). Whereas the conventional model gave theoretical and conceptual priority to the economic dimension of stratification, the multidimensionalists emphasized that the status of individuals reflected a wider array of ascriptive and achieved outcomes (e.g., race, gender, education, occupation). This approach had the obvious effect, then, of forcing sociologists to attend more closely to ascriptive sources of status and solidarity. The breakdown of the conventional model was further accelerated by the accumulating evidence in the 1970s that racial, ethnic, and gender-based conflicts were emerging in intensified form. Far from withering away under the force of industrialism, the bonds of ethnicity appeared to be alive and well; the consensus view was that "there had been a . . . sudden increase in tendencies by people in many countries and many circumstances to insist on the significance of their group distinctiveness" (Glazer and Moynihan 1975, p. 3). At the same time, the 1970s witnessed a concurrent growth in various types of feminist movements, which had the effect of politicizing the *gender* of individuals. These developments made it manifestly clear that ascriptive forms of solidarity continue to be salient in modern industrial societies.

The radical response to this evidence was to proclaim that the ascriptive factors of race, ethnicity, or gender are the driving forces behind further social development. In their latest formulation, Glazer and Moynihan (1975) conclude that "property relations [formerly] obscured ethnic ones" (p. 16), but now it is "property that begins to seem derivative, and ethnicity that seems to become a more fundamental source of stratification" (p. 17). There is, of course, an analogous position within the field of gender stratification; the "radical wing" within feminist circles has long argued for the "primacy of men's dominance over women as the cornerstone on which all other oppression (class, age, race) rests" (Hartmann 1981, p. 12; Firestone 1972). It should be noted, however, that the latter formulations beg the question of timing; after all, if the forces of ethnicity or gender are truly primordial, it is natural to ask why they only began expressing themselves with relative vigor in recent decades. In addressing this issue, Bell (1975) has suggested that a trade-off exists between class-based and ethnic forms of solidarity, with the latter strengthening as the former weaken. With the institutionalization of industrial conflict in modern societies (i.e., the rise of "trade unionism"), Bell argues that class-based affiliations gradually lost their *moral* or *affective* content; it was ethnic groups, then, that filled the gap by providing individuals with a new sense of identification and commitment (see Olzak 1983 for a comprehensive review of competing theories). It might be added that for some individuals it was gender politics that apparently filled the "moral vacuum" (Parkin 1979, p. 34) brought about by the weakening of class-based ties.

It may be misleading, of course, to treat the competition between ascriptive and class-based forces as a sociological horse race in which one, and only one, of these two principles can ultimately win out. In a pluralist society of the American

kind, workers can *choose* an identity appropriate to the situational context; a modern-day individual might behave as "an industrial worker in the morning, a black in the afternoon, and an American in the evening" (Parkin 1979, p. 34). Although this "situational model" of status has not been widely adopted in contemporary research, there is nontheless an emerging tendency among scholars to take into account the multiple affiliations of individuals. The preferred approach, especially among feminist theorists, is to assume that the major status groupings in contemporary societies are defined by the *intersection* of ethnic, gender, or class-based affiliations (e.g., black working-class women, white middle-class men, etc.). The theoretical framework motivating this approach is not always well-articulated, but the implicit claim seems to be that these subgroupings shape the "life chances and experiences" of individuals (Ransford and Miller 1983, p. 46) and define the social settings in which subcultures typically emerge (also, see Gordon 1978; Baltzell 1964). The obvious effect of this approach is to invert the traditional post-Weberian perspective on status groupings; indeed, whereas orthodox multidimensionalists described the stress experienced by individuals in inconsistent statuses (e.g., poorly-educated doctors), these new multidimensionalists emphasize the shared cultures generated within commonly encountered status sets (e.g., black working-class women).

The popularity of this revised form of multidimensionalism reflects, at least in part, a growing dissatisfaction with classical sociological theories that take the nuclear family to be the elementary unit of stratification (e.g., Parsons 1954). As was noted earlier, the "conventional model" of class represents the stratification system as a graded hierarchy of households, with the socioeconomic standing of all household members (e.g., wives) determined by the occupation or employment status of the family head. While most scholars agree that this model has been serviceable in describing past stratification systems, there is some concern that it no longer adequately represents the life chances and class situation of women in advanced industrial societies. Among the various positions that have emerged in this debate, the following ones have achieved some prominence:

1. According to some scholars, the conventional class system is receding in significance, and the *individual* is emerging as the new "elementary unit" of stratification. This revolution in class structure and identification is typically linked to the breakdown of the nuclear family, the growth of an autonomous female labor force, and the rise of individualist values (e.g., Szelényi 1988; also, see Davis and Robinson 1988).
2. At the other end of the continuum, Britten and Heath (1983) continue to see the nuclear family as the basic unit of stratification, yet they modify the conventional model by taking into account the work situation of *both* husbands and wives. This approach makes it possible to identify and describe various types of "cross-class families" in which the husband and wife work in different class situations.
3. The conventional model has also been defended in its original form (e.g., Goldthorpe 1983). Although this defense has been waged on a variety of fronts, the main point emphasized by Goldthorpe (1983) and others (e.g., Giddens 1973, p. 288) is that the male head still makes the *principal* commitment to paid employment, whereas the female spouse typically enters the labor force in "an intermittent and limited" fashion (Goldthrope 1983, p. 481). The implication, therefore, is that ongoing changes in female labor force participation have not undermined the conventional model to the extent that some critics have supposed.

Within American sociology, the first of these three positions has become the *de facto* standard; it is now common practice to carry out virtually all types of stratification analysis with separate male and female subsamples. The analytic assumptions underlying these analyses are not typically spelled out, but it would be difficult indeed to reconcile this form of subsampling with a conventional class model in its original or modified form.

GENERATING STRATIFICATION

The language of stratification research makes a sharp distinction between the structure of *socioeconomic inequality* (i.e., the "class structure") and the structure of *opportunities* by which individuals are allocated into differential outcomes (i.e., the "opportunity structure"). Whereas most Americans are willing to tolerate sizable inequalities in the distribution of resources, they typically insist that individuals from all backgrounds should have an equal opportunity to secure these resources. It might be said, then, that our primary interest rests in "running the race fairly" rather than equalizing the rewards distributed at the finish line (see, e.g., Hochschild 1981; Kluegel and Smith 1986). Whatever the wisdom of this logic might be, sociologists have long sought to explore its factual underpinnings; there is a substantial body of research that seeks to measure the objective opportunities for mobility against our shared expectations for a "fair race." This research agenda might be operationalized in various ways; the standard starting point, however, is to construct a mobility table that cross-classifies the occupational origins and destinations of individuals. Although most of the current research has focused on parent-child comparisons ("intergenerational mobility"), there is also a parallel tradition of work examining the contours of mobility within the life course of individuals ("intragenerational mobility"). These various types of mobility tables have served as the "anvil for sociological craftwork since the days when blacksmiths outnumbered social scientists" (Breiger 1981, p. 604).

It is no easy task to analyze tables of this kind. As is often the case, substantive issues turn on technical matters; the history of mobility research is marked by methodological signposts as much as substantive ones. The driving force behind these methodological developments has been the long-standing attempt to distinguish between *structural* and *circulation* mobility. This conceptual distinction derives, of course, from the well-known fact that social mobility is generated by structural shifts in the shape of the class structure as well as underlying patterns of exchange between classes (see Duncan 1966 for details and qualifications). The former component is often regarded as a nuisance factor, whereas the latter pertains to the openness of the mobility regime and the contours of class-based differences in life chances. While the verbal distinction between structural and circulation mobility is easy to maintain, it turns out to be difficult to represent this distinction in formal models of the mobility regime. It was only with the emergence of log-linear modeling in the early 1970s that the fundamental problem of "structurally induced" mobility was finally solved (see, e.g., Goodman 1972; Hauser 1978; Hout 1983; Sobel, Hout, and Duncan 1985).

The descriptive power of this approach is best demonstrated by turning directly to an illustrative analysis based on a major survey of stratification outcomes and processes (see Featherman and Hauser 1978). The densities plotted in Figure 1 (see pp. 1966–1967) refer to patterns of career mobility over the period between the point of first entry into the labor force ("first occupation") and the time when the survey was administered ("current occupation"). As indicated in the stub to this figure, the rows and columns of the matrix index the origin and destination occupations, and the vertical dimension maps the estimated densities of career persistence and mobility for our sample of American males (see Stier and Grusky 1990 for further details). The height of the bars refers to the relative likelihood of persistence or mobility after the structural forces of occupational supply and demand have been purged from the data. The topography of this simple figure suggests the following five conclusions:

1. The towering peaks on the main diagonal testify to the strength of occupational persistence within the life course. The farming peak, for example, indicates that workers originating as farmers are 69.7 times more likely to remain in that occupation than to move to the top of the class structure (Stier and Grusky 1990, p. 747).
2. The clustering on the main diagonal follows a

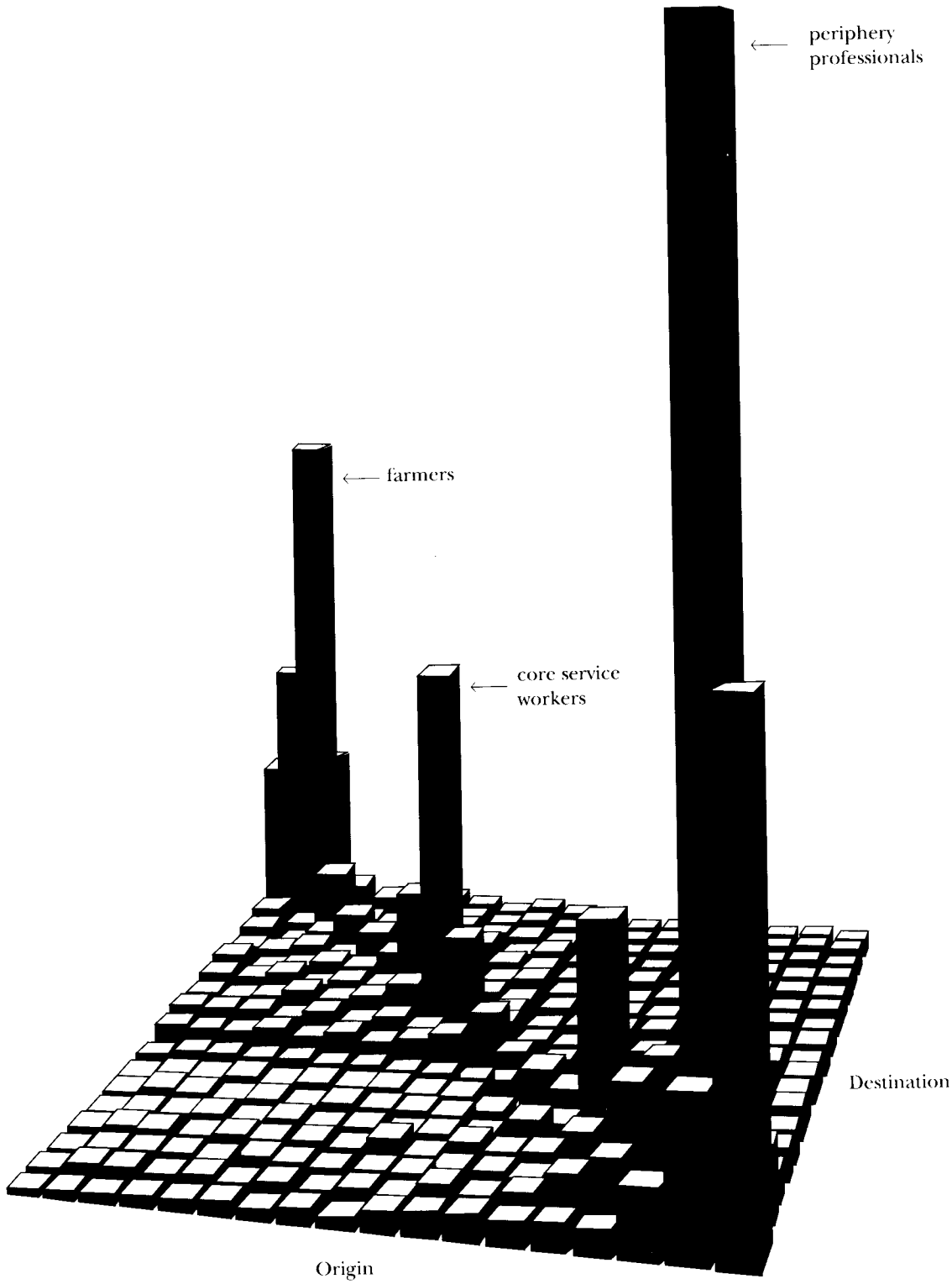

FIGURE 1

Densities of Mobility and Immobility for an 18 × 18 Intragenerational Table.

W-shaped pattern. Although the tallest peaks are found at the two extremes of the hierarchy, a set of secondary peaks emerge in the center of the class structure. This result indicates that *some* sectors of the middle class (i.e., service sectors) are relatively successful in retaining their incumbents.

3. The strength of the manual-nonmanual divide reveals itself in a low-lying ridge marking out the northwest and southeast quadrants. At the top of each ridge, the mobility data form a broad plateau; the height of these plateaus speak to the "holding power" of the manual and nonmanual strata.
4. The distribution of destination points for long-distance movers is surprisingly uniform. The valleys in the northeast and southwest quadrants are flat and uncontoured; there is no evidence, then, of a "distance gradient" that channels long-distance movers into the closest occupations.
5. The design matrix is symmetric around the main diagonal. The implication is that patterns of occupational inflow and outflow are identical once the structural forces of supply and demand are controlled (see Hauser 1981).

Taken as a whole, the figure suggests a broad valley rising into a pair of low-lying plains, with the plains then rising into a jagged mountain ridge that cuts across the valley (see Featherman and Hauser 1978 for a similar description). While this overall picture can be generated under a wide range of log-linear specifications (Stier and Grusky 1990), it is always possible to devise competing models that yield somewhat different interpretations (see, e.g., MacDonald 1981). These differences have generated a continuing debate over the merits or shortcomings of particular types of log-linear models (e.g., Pöntinen 1982; Grusky and Hauser 1984; Kim 1987).

It should be emphasized that the preceding figure can only be used to characterize the structure of male career mobility in the early 1970s. Although the available evidence suggests a "family resemblance" in the basic topology of all mobility regimes, it is clear that systematic variations in the contours of mobility can also be found. The last decade of stratification research has been devoted, in large part, to documenting the structure of these differences across subpopulations defined by nation, region, gender, race, or time (e.g., Hout 1984; Grusky and Hauser 1984). The latter research effort has been complemented by a parallel stream of research focusing on the mediating variables (e.g., education) that account for the origin-by-destination association in a mobility table. It could well be argued that these two subfields are producing new findings "faster and more furiously . . . than any other [subfields] in sociology" (Hout 1984, p. 1379).

(SEE ALSO: *Ethnicity; Income Distribution in the United States; Marxist Sociology; Occupational Prestige; Slavery and Involuntary Servitude; Social Mobility; Socialism; Societal Stratification; Status Attainment*)

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FIGURE NOTE: The origin axis indexes "first occupations" and the destination axis indexes "current occupations." Moving from left to right on the origin axis, the occupational categories are ordered as follows: farm laborers, farmers, periphery laborers, core laborers, periphery operatives, core operatives, periphery service, core service, periphery crafts, core crafts, periphery clerical, core clerical, periphery sales, core sales, periphery managers, core managers, periphery professionals, and core professionals. The ordering is identical for the destination axis (moving from top to bottom). The persistence ratio for periphery professionals has been reduced by one-third for purposes of presentation. See Stier and Grusky (1990) for details.

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SOCIAL STRUCTURE *Social structure* is a general term for any collective social circumstance that is unalterable and given for the individual. Social structure thus provides a context or environment for action. The size of organizations, distribution of activities in space, shared language, and the distribution of wealth might all be regarded as social structural circumstances that set limits on feasible activities for individuals.

Social structure is objective in the sense that it is the same for all and is beyond the capacity for alteration by any individual will. Accordingly, social structure is often spoken of in the singular and as a thing apart, as if there is but one social structure, from whose effects no one can escape. Such usage masks disagreement about the exact extension of the term and reflects the intent of authors to highlight abstract patterns as an inflexible collective circumstance to which individuals must adapt.

Social structure, or the weaker structural regularities, arise because of the prevalence of social routine. Many social patterns change very slowly, either through unmotivated inertia, through willful efforts to renew or reproduce them, or as a collective consequence of individual efforts undertaken for independent reasons. An image or picture, such as a map colored by the linguistic practices of the inhabitants of geographic areas, will lose accuracy slowly but might still be somewhat valid after a century or more. Such substantial durability and accompanying slow, continuous change suggest the possibility that regularities or even scientific laws govern the phenomena underlying the description.

Routines endure, and structural regularities persist, for at least three general reasons. Social life is subject to physical constraints like distance. Thus, most people live close to where they work, if indeed living and working are spatially separated. For related reasons, many persons maintain stable residences. Furthermore, many people need or desire the company or cooperation of representative social types such as those sharing religious convictions or particular work skills. Accordingly, one can associate social attributes with geographical maps. This was a central activity of the Chicago school of sociology (Park and Burgess 1924) and gave rise to the perspective of human ecology (Hawley 1986). The location of particular social types and activities in particular places is subject to powerful incentives that induce continuity in the face of turnover by individuals. For example, ethnic concentrations result in specialized facilities, like food shops, that attract replacements that conserve the ethnic character of a neighborhood. Such patterns often persist beyond the lifetimes of the people that participate in them.

A second source of routine is limited learning capacity or the complexity of many social activities. Linguistic rules, moral codes, and work skills are examples of social capacities whose acquisition requires considerable time and effort. Such socialization often requires extended exposure to others who know the routines well, especially where the delicate skills of interpretation are involved.

The difficulties of acquiring capacity can confound individual wills. Bernstein (1975) described how linguistic conventions, acquired in the home, reflect the conditions of adult work and render individuals unsuited for occupations that are not similar to those of their parents. In the same way, a New Yorker who wished to speak in Latin would first have to make a huge investment in learning a novel linguistic code. But this would not undo the investment in English by other New Yorkers, which makes Latin impractical for directing taxi drivers. Similar reasons impel newcomers to adopt the abrasive social style of New Yorkers. The general