

SOCIAL  
INEQUALITY,  
STRATIFICATION,  
AND  
MOBILITY

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The  
Middle Strata:  
Stability and  
Security

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DISTINCTIVE ATTRIBUTES OF THE MIDDLE STRATA are their stable occupational and employment attachments and their stable, even if not always adequate, incomes. In the United States today, the middle strata include the overwhelming majority of the population. "Security," or the fending off of threats to income, occupational, and status positions and their stability, is a central theme of middle-strata social, economic, and political appeals and responses. For it is stability of income which permits the ordered home, family, neighborhood, school, and recreational lives characteristic of these strata, and it is the stability of their work, business, and professional roles in the economy which anchors their positions and status in the larger society and legitimizes their stable access to social rewards and resources.

Against this common background of stability and the search for security, the middle strata are highly differentiated with respect to types of work performed and to individual and group styles of life, social interaction, and associational patterns. The major axes of such differentiation are—

1. type of employment: wage or salary workers as distinct from the self-employed;
2. type of occupation: "white-collar" as distinct from "blue-collar" occupations;
3. educational background: university graduates and degree-holders as

- distinct from those having completed only high school or high school plus some additional college or other post-secondary training;
4. ethnic, religious, and racial characteristics: whites as distinct from non-whites; Protestants, Catholics, or Jews; and foreign origins.

1. VISIBLE  
GROUPINGS  
OR A SILENT  
MAJORITY?  
IDENTIFYING  
THE MIDDLE  
STRATA

It was in the decade of the 1960s that the "power elite" emerged somewhat into the open in the United States. The recruitment and political and economic maneuvers of the Kennedy administration were combined with a display of cultural activity, style of behavior and consumption, and "beautiful peoplism" and "jet-setism" previously hidden, or at least previously disconnected, from the public scene. This was the decade, too, of the rediscovery of poverty, discrimination and privation in America, of the civil rights movements, freedom marches, and sit-in strikes, and eventually of the mass protests against American involvement and casualties in the Vietnam war. The lower strata found leadership and avenues not previously known, both to articulate their own claims on the society and economy and to express protest against the involvement in the war. With only a few exceptions, the power elite—always articulate and indeed with special access to (if not quite control over) the communications media—defended the involvement in Vietnam and, except for minor concessions, stood fast in defense of the American social status quo generally.

A question posed by journalists, politicians, and social scientists, and informally by laymen and the public, concerned the positions, attitudes, and expectations of those neither in the newly articulate lower strata nor in, or close to, the power elite or their spokesmen and bureaucracy. Some political figures, claiming to speak on behalf of these in-between members of the population, referred to them as the Silent Majority; and the press and other media often called them Middle America. Implicit in much of the discussion of the Silent Majority or of Middle America is the idea that—by virtue of their enormous numbers, if for no other reason—these strata hold in their hands the potential for choosing the political, social, and economic directions and future of the entire country.

Most of the popular and political mention of "Middle America" ignores the specific composition of these strata, being concerned neither with their detailed identification nor with their objective characteristics. Our own first task will be to develop a more precise and detailed description of the middle strata, and, insofar as possible, to identify them concretely. We can make some progress in this direction by drawing upon the major axes of middle-strata differentiation noted above. These enable us to identify a number of middle-strata occupational groupings:

1. White-Collar Entrepreneurs, the "Old Middle Class"
  - a) small and medium-sized business proprietors
  - b) fee professionals
2. Salaried White-Collar Workers, the "New Middle Class"
  - a) salaried professional and managerial workers
  - b) non-college-graduate office and sales workers

3. Blue-Collar Entrepreneurs
  - a) tradesmen and shop proprietors
  - b) farm owners
4. Organized Blue-Collar Employees
  - a) craftsmen and skilled workers
  - b) unionized industrial workers
  - c) organized blue-collar service workers

In many communities, not all of these groupings would constitute distinct substrata. For example, in small towns the small businessmen and fee professionals might well comprise a single stratum; or the independent entrepreneur tradesmen and shop proprietors and the wage-earning craftsmen and skilled workers might constitute a single stratum. Also, whereas this listing classifies strata according to only three of the aforementioned axes—type of employment, type of occupation, and educational background—in many communities, especially large cities, the middle strata are further subdivided along the fourth axis (ethnic, religious, and racial characteristics). Alternatively, members of *several* such occupational substrata who share the same ethnic, racial, or religious identity may in a given community effectively constitute a single ethnic, racial, or religious stratum; thus, there may be a stratum of Catholic white-collar workers, or of black businessmen *and* professionals, or of Polish office girls and salesgirls, or of Jewish garment workers and tradesmen, or of Puerto Rican civil servants.

*The white-collar–blue-collar distinction.* The middle strata are quite sharply distinguished from the privileged strata, on the one hand, and from the underprivileged strata, on the other, by virtue of differences in access to wealth and income, power and influence, status and prestige, and other social rewards and resources; and vis-à-vis each other the three major strata may be said to be quite *discrete* and distinct. But within the middle strata, all manner of substrata may be distinguished. Probably the most useful way of delineating them, and the one most frequently employed, is in terms of white-collar and blue-collar occupations. The lines of the white-collar–blue-collar division have mirrored those of educational-background and other socioeconomic divisions to a considerable extent in the past. But, as we shall see below, more recently white-collar and blue-collar socioeconomic attributes have converged in some important areas. Thus, while it is legitimate and useful to delineate substrata within the middle strata, especially according to the white-collar–blue-collar distinction, we must note that except for religious and social groupings (which we consider again below), middle-strata subgroups tend to be *continuous* rather than discrete: their boundaries are not clear-cut, and there tends to be much overlapping, interaction, and mobility among them.

## 2. STYLES OF LIFE AND LEISURE

It will be convenient to describe and compare styles of life and leisure in the white-collar and blue-collar middle strata with reference to the assertions holding that white- and blue-collar class distinctions and strata in-

equalities have been disappearing; that manual workers have assumed white-collar values, behavioral patterns, and political orientations; or that a process of *embourgeoisement* of the more affluent workers has taken place under conditions of increasing blue-collar income, education, and consumption. The data cited in support of these assertions are primarily those showing that certain types of manual-worker employees—especially skilled craftsmen—have higher average incomes than do people in the lowest-income nonmanual categories, e.g., clerks, sales employees, and self-employed proprietors. Other data show increasing levels of educational attainment among blue-collar employees and, indeed, some convergence of educational attainment relative to the lower white-collar groups. Finally, other recent data show that among blue-collar families there is an increasing consumption of goods once available primarily to white-collar families only. Indeed, a United States Department of Labor publication cited by Handel and Rainwater (1964) asserts that the life styles of wage earners and their families in the United States are indistinguishable from those of salaried persons and their families. Not only have worker income and consumption come to resemble those of the white-collar groups, but, according to this report, workers have adopted middle-class attitudes and expectations as well.

A quite different analysis of the convergence of white-collar and blue-collar status, life styles, and outlooks is the traditional Marxian view which anticipates a “proletarianization of the middle classes.” The centralized sources of income and employee status for the “new middle class” were



Paul Sequiera, Rapho Guillumette

expected by Marxists to lead ultimately to working-class consciousness in this group and to the fulfillment of Marx's prediction of a full polarization of society into two classes, capitalists and the proletariat.

In his now-classic analysis, *White Collar* (1951), the late American sociologist C. Wright Mills considered the "old" and "new" middle classes in historical perspective and analyzed their past and present sources of status. He indicated that the high prestige of white-collar workers was diminishing relative to that of blue-collar workers, not only because of the convergence of income and educational levels already noted, but also because of (a) the factory-like and highly rationalized or, more recently, automated work settings in which white-collar employees increasingly were found; (b) the erosion of ascriptive exclusiveness—e.g., of ethnic, racial, religious, and sex barriers—that formerly characterized large proportions of the white-collar occupational categories; and (c) the changing composition of the white-collar group to include increasing proportions with working-class origins.

A number of American and British social scientists have collected data bearing upon these assertions and have concluded generally that they are unwarranted, or at least overdrawn, and that there remain fundamental differences between blue- and white-collar styles of life. (Miller and Riesman 1964; Handel and Rainwater 1964; Goldthorpe et al. 1968). We shall draw upon their investigations and analyses in our discussion below. However, it is worth noting, at the outset, that these studies share with those asserting "emerging equality," "working class *embourgeoisement*," "middle-class proletarianization," and "end of ideology" or "fall of social classes" an oversimplified, largely undifferentiated, view of both the white-collar and blue-collar strata. The list of middle-strata occupational groupings given above is at least suggestive of internal differentiation with the broad white-collar and blue-collar categories, and we shall try to bear these distinctions in mind in the discussion which follows.

### **Work Roles and Work Rewards**

The importance of income, social position, and rewards associated with occupational roles has been indicated in the very definition of the middle strata. The type of employment, types of occupation, and educational backgrounds associated with the occupational groupings bear upon the patterns of work and work rewards and satisfactions of the middle strata. So, too, do the locations of the different middle strata in the larger production-distribution system—e.g., whether in the large-scale, highly centralized, bureaucratically operated, government or corporate sectors of the economy or in the smaller-scale sectors dominated by independent entrepreneurs (cf. Galbraith 1967).

There are at least four kinds of rewards and satisfactions associated with work and work situations:



1. Intrinsic satisfaction in performing the work itself because of its importance, its interest, its challenge and complexity, or its fun and entertainment.
2. Money earned by the work, which can be converted to other satisfactions.
3. Social relationships, status, or prestige in *the work setting*, generally mainly of intrinsic satisfaction but sometimes convertible to satisfactions outside the work setting.
4. Social status and prestige in the community and society, both of intrinsic satisfaction and convertible to other gratifications outside the work setting.

A summary of observations, conjectures, and findings concerning work satisfactions in the various middle strata is presented in Table 7.1. It is im-

Table 7.1 Work Satisfactions of the Middle Strata

<i>Strata</i>	<i>Intrinsic</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Social Relations at Work</i>	<i>Social Status</i>
<i>White-Collar Entrepreneurs (Old Middle Class)</i>				
Small and medium-sized business proprietors	low to medium	low to high	medium to high	medium
Fee professionals	high	high	high	high
<i>Salaried White-Collar Workers (New Middle Class)</i>				
Salaried professionals and managerial workers	medium to high	medium to high	low to high	medium
Non-college-graduate office and sales workers	low to medium	low to medium	low to high	low to medium
<i>Blue-Collar Entrepreneurs</i>				
Tradesmen and shop proprietors	medium to high	low to high	medium to high	low to medium
Farm owner-operators	low to high	low to medium	low to medium	low to medium
<i>Organized Blue-Collar Workers</i>				
Craftsmen and skilled workers	medium to high	medium	low to high	low to medium
Unionized industrial workers	low	low to medium	low to high	low
Organized blue-collar service workers	low	low to medium	low to high	low

portant to note that the table is based on a variety of materials that are not of uniform objectivity, validity, or reliability. Indeed, the development of concrete measures and indexes of work satisfactions and rewards is still in its infancy, and systematic comparisons of the various strata are needed. Thus, the table should be seen as only a tentative statement.

The table reveals two outstanding features of work satisfaction in the middle strata. On the one hand, the strata vary quite considerably with

respect to all four types of work rewards and satisfactions; and there is also variation within the respective strata. On the other hand, a certain polarity is evident: the "fee professionals," e.g., physicians, lawyers, and architects, are characterized by high intrinsic work-task satisfactions, high income, high social-relations-at-work satisfactions, and high social status; and service workers, industrial workers, and farmers are characterized by low or low-to-medium levels of reward and satisfaction.

The idea that work among those in manual occupations is only "labor," a "task" undertaken for its monetary rewards and with no, or negative, intrinsic rewards of its own, appears in a number of studies and reports. This attitude toward work is not uncommon among the lower white-collar group as well. But the very *uniformity* of low work satisfaction—and of low social status—in the middle and lower manual-occupation groups distinguishes these from the lower white-collar groups even if the income ranges are the same. For the lower white-collar groups *vary*, both in intrinsic satisfaction and in social status, and this variation gives reality to the idea of a work career—a possibility of movement, change, and improvement in scope and satisfaction of work as well as in status—that still characterizes the lower white-collar, but not manual, occupational groups (Goldthorpe et al. 1968).

### **Family Life**

A number of years ago some sociologists announced the advent of the small urban or suburban nuclear family (i.e., a family comprising parents and children only), mobile and isolated from kin and from social origins and roots, child-centered, with internal role-differentiation but extensive husband-wife cooperation, with social status and style of life dependent entirely upon the occupational status of the husband, and with all family members highly involved in consumption. These sociologists have now backtracked somewhat. The announced breakup of extended family and kinship relations among middle-strata families is seen to have been premature, and the importance of the extended family (i.e., grandparents, uncles and aunts, and cousins) and of kinship relations is acknowledged to be continuing in all strata. Nevertheless, there remains extensive variation in family patterns among the subgroups of the middle strata.

The dimensions of family life which have been found to vary among the different strata include: (1) the range and importance of kinship relations, (2) the pattern of authority, role differentiation, and role segregation, (3) sexual relations, (4) fertility control and family size, and (5) family economic cooperation and characteristics, e.g., the extent to which wives and children are involved in earning the family income, and occupational "inheritance" (entrance into occupations and industries through family connections). The image of the modern, "new middle class" urban family, with husband in white-collar employment, has been cast in terms of: (1) a

nuclear family with very limited extended kin ties; (2) an egalitarian and child-focused family, with husband as "instrumental leader" and wife as "socio-emotional" leader, and with extensive cooperation and sharing in leisure, recreation, child-care, and other functions; (3) positive, frequent, and spontaneous sexual relations uninhibited by fear of pregnancy or ignorance of reproductive processes, etc.; (4) controlled fertility—a small family; and (5) almost complete dependence on the earnings of the husband, with the rest of the family involved economically primarily on the consumption side, and with the husband's occupational and career pattern largely independent of both family occupational history and the "connections" of relatives. Conversely, the stereotype of the traditional working-class family—especially the family with ethnic ties—pictures (1) a nuclear family with deep and frequent ties, cooperation, visiting, and social interaction with kin and extended family members; (2) a patrifocal and parent-centered family, with children expected to be seen and not heard, etc., and with considerable husband-wife role segregation and separation of social spheres; (3) frequent but somewhat strained sexual relations, with the husband presumably enjoying sexual activity and the wife presumably indifferent at best and, more frequently, suffering both lack of pleasure and fear of pregnancy; (4) only partial and not-fully-successful control of fertility and hence families larger than desired and unwanted children born at inconvenient intervals; and (5) wives' and older children's earnings as *important factors* in the family's total income, and frequent entrance into jobs and occupations on the lead and recommendation of fathers and other relatives.

Some of the variations in family patterns among the middle strata are illustrated in Table 7.2, which, like the preceding table, is based on materials of varying scope and quality and should be viewed as a tentative summary.

Again, the profile of the modern, independent, disconnected, small nuclear family unit of middle America is recognized as having been overdrawn. At the same time, there are clearly changes in the "traditional working class" family. Handel and Rainwater (1964) have noted that the families in the blue-collar strata may now be divided into two types: modern and traditional. The modern blue-collar family has many of the characteristics attributed to the white-collar nuclear family: controlled fertility and few children, egalitarianism and high levels of initiative and freedom for wives and for children, and more social relationships outside the extended family than are characteristic of the more traditional blue-collar families.

But the materials of Table 7.2 suggest that variations in family characteristics may be very great among the middle strata. Moreover, additional contrasts in family structure and activities within each occupational stratum are evident as soon as further divisions by race, religion, ethnicity, or place of residence are made. Thus, regardless of occupational stratum,

**Table 7.2 Family Characteristics of the Middle Strata**

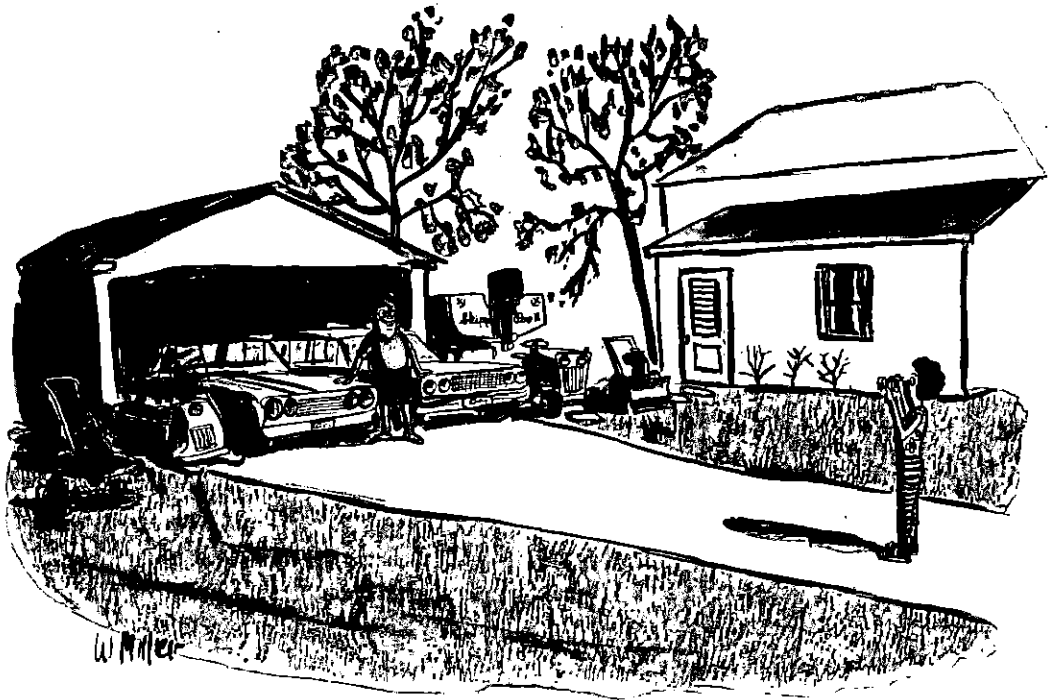
<i>Strata</i>	<i>Nuclear Family or Extended Family</i>	<i>Authority and Role Differentiation</i>	<i>Ease and Spontaneity of Sexual Relations</i>	<i>Fertility and Family Size</i>	<i>Economic Cooperation and Characteristics</i>
<i>White-Collar Entrepreneurs (Old Middle Class)</i>					
Small and medium-sized business proprietors	extended	patrifocal	low to high	medium	none to high
Fee professionals	nuclear	patrifocal	high	low to medium	none
<i>Salaried White-Collar Workers (New Middle Class)</i>					
Salaried professionals and managerial workers	nuclear	egalitarian	high	low	none
Non-college-graduate office and sales workers	nuclear	egalitarian	medium to high	low	low to medium
<i>Blue-Collar Entrepreneurs</i>					
Tradesmen and shop proprietors	extended	patrifocal	low to medium	medium	low to high
Farm owner-operators	extended	patrifocal	low to medium	high	high
<i>Organized Blue-Collar Workers</i>					
Craftsmen and skilled workers	extended	patri. to egal.	low to high	medium to high	medium to high
Unionized industrial workers	extended	patri. to egal.	low to medium	medium to high	medium to high
Organized blue-collar service workers	extended	patri. to egal.	low to medium	medium to high	medium to high

families with ethnic roots in population groups which have immigrated relatively recently tend, with the exception of Jews, to be more "traditional." Catholic families, regardless of occupational stratum, tend to be larger than Protestant or Jewish families, and families of white-collar blacks are smaller than those of white-collar whites. Families in rural areas or small cities tend to be more traditional, regardless of occupational stratum, than families in large cities or metropolitan areas.

**Consumption and Leisure**

*Consumption.* We saw earlier that one of the bases for the assertion that white- and blue-collar differences are disappearing is the belief that similarities in the consumption of goods and services have developed. And indeed, the widely heralded expansion of purchase and use of automobiles, major home appliances, and furnishings to all, or almost all, social and economic strata in the United States and elsewhere in the West, and the accessibility to information, entertainment, and example rendered possible by the near-universal availability of radio and television represent a social and cultural revolution in the twentieth century.

Nevertheless, the separate occupational strata retain different patterns of consumption, especially with respect to marginal items. Thus, although



*Drawing by W. Miller; © 1973 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.*

both white- and blue-collar entrepreneurs and employees buy automobiles, houses, automatic washing machines, and refrigerators, the blue-collar husbands maintain and repair their own, while the white-collar groups must buy repair services (Handel and Rainwater 1964). White-collar groups typically buy higher-priced and more elaborate services, whether for health, education, or culture, compared to those used by the blue-collar groups (Table 7.3), and the stratum of farm owner-operators typically buys the least of all of these services. By contrast, some blue-collar groups have access to free or inexpensive health and other services through their work and labor organizations.

*Recreation.* The blue-collar groups are more likely than the white-collar ones to find their recreation in and around the home or in the homes of relatives or neighbors, but these patterns vary extensively among ethnic groups. Among the manually employed, recreation and entertainment outside the home tend to consist of "lowbrow" or "middlebrow" activities, often segregated by age and sex: e.g., drinking, attending spectator sports, bowling, and going to movies and, less frequently, musical shows or performances. Those in the professional strata tend much more to seek higher-brow entertainment, and are much less likely to be segregated by sex: they go to the theater, concerts, and the like, and confine their enjoyment of

**Table 7.3 Consumption and Leisure in the Middle Strata**

<i>Strata</i>	<i>Durable Goods</i>	<i>Housing</i>	<i>Home Repairs and Maintenance</i>	<i>Health</i>	<i>Education and Culture</i>	<i>Type of Recreation</i>	<i>Vacations</i>
<i>White-Collar Entrepreneurs (Old Middle Class)</i> Small and medium-sized business proprietors	high	medium	hired	medium to high	high	middlebrow	medium to high
Fee professionals	high	high	hired	high	high	highbrow	high
<i>Salaried White-Collar Workers (New Middle Class)</i> Salaried professionals and managerial workers	high	medium	hired	high	high	highbrow	high
Non-college-graduate office and sales workers	high	medium	hired	medium	medium	middlebrow	medium to high
<i>Blue-Collar Entrepreneurs</i> Tradesmen and shop proprietors	high	medium	self	medium	low to medium	lowbrow	low to medium
Farm owner-operators	high	medium	self	low	low	lowbrow	low
<i>Organized Blue-Collar Workers</i> Craftsmen and skilled workers	high	low to medium	self	low	low	lowbrow	low
Unionized industrial workers	high	low to medium	self	low	low	lowbrow	low
Organized blue-collar service workers	high	low to medium	self	low	low	lowbrow	low

spectator sports increasingly to home television-viewing. However, college sports events do attract professionals—especially to the alma mater. The lower white-collar groups very frequently attend spectator sports, often participate in such activities as bowling, and share many of the blue-collar groups' other lowbrow and middlebrow recreational tastes (Table 7.3).

The blue-collar strata tend to spend their vacations and weekends at home, or with relatives, or in outdoor recreation such as camping, fishing, and hunting, or in travel in the family automobile. The white-collar strata are more likely to patronize hotels and resorts, to travel by air to distant vacation areas, to go abroad, or to take winter vacations in warm climates or in winter sports resorts. The various resorts, vacation spots, and recreation centers tend to have specialized, stratum-specific clientele. Thus, the local, state and national parks cater largely to families of blue-collar workers and lower white-collar employees; Miami Beach caters to Jewish and French Canadian proprietors and fee professionals; and the New England and Rocky Mountain ski resorts have largely white Protestant clientele, with different locales and different resorts attracting specific strata. Both the Wisconsin and Michigan outdoor summer recreation centers attract vacationers from metropolitan Chicago, Milwaukee, and Detroit, and very often they have specialized ethnic clientele—for example, the Michigan

City-Union Pier-Benton Harbor summer vacation strip contains Italian, black, Jewish, and other ethnic-religious-racial enclaves. Similar enclaves are found in the resort areas of the Catskill and Adirondack Mountains which attract vacationers from the New York area, and in the northern coastal area of California, which caters to vacationers from the San Francisco Bay Area.

3. THE MIDDLE-  
STRATA  
ORGANIZA-  
TIONAL WEB

The middle strata are by definition strata comprised of "organization men" and their families: the criteria for membership in a middle stratum are the stable occupational attachments, income, and style of life that are assured by stable employment and economic organizational affiliation. For white-collar workers this entails permanent employment in a bureaucratic organization or self-employment in business or a profession. For blue-collar workers it entails relatively stable employment, with union membership or trade or craft licensing, or self-employment in a business or trade. Even for the self-employed, the concept of stable employment and income implies a stable web of market relationships between sellers of goods, their suppliers, and their clients, or between producers of services and their clientele. Such networks of stable market relationships for the self-employed are equivalent in an important sense to the organizational affiliations of wage and salary workers in that they *locate* the self-employed individual in the productive and distributive system as well as assure his and his dependents' livelihoods and other social and community relationships. After discussing middle-strata economic organizations, we shall consider other strands in the middle-strata organizational web.

**Middle-Strata Economic Organizations**

Nature and Membership

*What is a middle-stratum economic organization?* The variety of goods- and service-producing organizations in which the middle strata are employed is enormous, ranging from small one-person or family businesses to giant corporations and the federal government. Similarly, the variety of work settings is very large, ranging from the dentist's office to the house-painter's site, from the giant assembly-line to the military training camp or battlefield, from kindergarten to consulting firm or "think tanks," and from television newsroom to waterbed factory. But the number or proportion of middle-strata employees does not itself render an enterprise or firm a "middle-stratum organization." It is appropriate to view *some, but not all* of the organizations in which the middle strata work as such.

We may consider a work, production, or distribution organization a "middle-stratum economic organization" if it is owned, or owned and operated, or entirely controlled by a middle-stratum individual or group.

The main types of middle-strata economic organizations are small businesses, organizations of small businessmen, professional organizations, and *local* labor unions. The giant corporation—whoever its stockholders, employees, suppliers, or consumers—and the large government organization, whoever its personnel or beneficiaries, and the national or international labor union, whoever its members, tend to be controlled by persons and groups in the privileged strata.

The middle-strata economic organizations are those that explicitly and directly serve the interests of middle-strata individuals and groups and enhance their income, level of living, influence, power, or position in the economy. Thus, although by definition members of the middle strata belong to economic organizations, the organizations to which they belong, which assure them their incomes and locate them in the economic and social systems, are *not necessarily* "middle-strata economic organizations." The part of the economy which Galbraith (1967) calls the Industrial System, "the world of the few hundred technically dynamic, massively capitalized and highly organized corporations," is not per se a middle-stratum economic organization or set of organizations, regardless of the hundreds of thousands of middle-strata individuals employed.

*Who belongs?* Only middle-strata employees belonging to trade or industrial unions, professional organizations, or some other occupation- or work-based mutual aid society actually belong to middle-strata economic organizations. The others, mostly salaried white-collar workers, have been and remain an unorganized mass, increasing in numbers and proportion of the total employed. Mills has this to say:

The twentieth-century white-collar man has never been as independent as the farmer used to be, nor as hopeful of the main chance as the businessman. He is always somebody's man, the corporation's, the government's, the army's; and he is seen as the man who does not rise. The decline of the free entrepreneur and the rise of the dependent employee on the American scene has paralleled the decline of the independent individual and the rise of the little man in the American mind [Mills 1951, p. xii].

*Where are these organizations and what do they do?* Small businesses and proprietorships are increasingly confined to such sectors as agriculture, handicrafts, retail trade, the arts and the professions, and repairing, household, and personal services. The greater parts of the communications, power, transportation, manufacturing and mining, and entertainment industries, and much of retail trade, have become progressively dominated by large corporations. The small businesses, proprietorships, and professional practices still can assure their owners, practitioners, and senior employees adequate incomes and the social status and trappings attached to income. But while they may be significant as employers, consumers, and community participants in small places—in rural areas, small cities, and occasionally



the local neighborhoods or suburbs of medium-size or even larger cities—they are not so elsewhere. In the larger cities, metropolitan centers, and large suburbs or satellite cities of metropolitan areas, their employing power, buying power, and more generalized influence and power—i.e., the *social convertibility* of their economic status—is small and, indeed, progressively diminishing. Only where they are highly organized, as is the case with purchasing, packing, and wholesaling cooperatives organized by individual grocers, or with certain business groups (e.g., neighborhood businessmen's or "improvement" associations), do the small entrepreneurs still retain more generalized influence, social status, and political power.

#### Four Categories of Economic Organization

*The business subculture.* In smaller communities and in stable suburbs or neighborhoods of large cities—but much less often in very large, densely populated, or "high volume" areas—the group of businessmen, proprietors, and practitioners may comprise a relatively self-contained social grouping. Businessmen, entrepreneurs, and the stable employees of small businesses in such areas may be neighbors, belong to the same church, hold mutual membership in other organizations as well as in informal groups, and send their children to the same schools; and their children may "date" and marry one another. In short, the stable, relatively nonmobile, "business group" in a small community may form a subculture, with norms, values, and associational patterns specific to the group.

*Professional guilds and the professional subculture.* The associations and guilds of fee professionals and practitioners, which often incorporate salaried professionals as well, are middle-strata economic organizations not so much because they provide direct employment and income but because they (1) restrict entrance to practice, (2) take fees out of the realm of competitive market pricing regimes, and (3) regulate standards of operations, practices, payments, and rewards both within the professions and between a professional group and its clientele and between a professional group and the lay public. Not less important, such guilds and associations work to insure that only their members—rather than competing, less certified, and presumably less qualified or less appropriate agencies—provide a given type of service to the consuming public.

The formation of a "professional subculture" within a community is even more common than that of the "business subculture" and indeed is somewhat less dependent upon the setting of a small, stable community with low turnover. For many professionals, especially those in academic pursuits, there is a much broader group sharing symbols, techniques, purposes, and styles of work and life, so that even under conditions of high geographic mobility, the absorption of the professional into a local branch of some association, or into the local professional subculture, is relatively straightforward. Thus, the physician, the lawyer, the teacher, and the musician may find status, social associations, and support for their material

welfare and intellectual pretensions in the professional guild or association. And again, the very top men in each field may form a privileged elite or be absorbed into the stratum of privileged power elite strata.

*Trade unions and their members.* Trade unions differ from historical guilds and contemporary professional associations in that they have the explicit purpose of acting on behalf of their members through direct collective bargaining in contract negotiations with employers. Public service, political action, education and culture, and health, welfare, and democracy may all be of great importance to trade unions and their members, but the explicit, central, and universally acknowledged purpose of trade unions is the economic protection of their members. Trade unions in the different industries, in different communities, and in different social, economic, or political settings may organize quite differently to achieve their goals. Similarly, there are a great variety of forms of individual participation in trade unions, and the ways in which union membership affects economic and social status vary quite broadly. Some unions restrict themselves to narrow economic interests—pay, hours, and conditions of work—while others effectively create “occupational communities” involving not only members but also their families in a web of primary-group relationships in the union setting (examples are the International Typographical Union and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union). Unions vary in the extent to which they are locally autonomous or tied to nationwide agreements and dominated by national leadership, in the extent to which they are political or apolitical, in the extent to which they have high or low levels of rank-and-file participation, and in the extent of their bureaucratization. (Cf. Lipset, Trow, and Coleman 1956; Lipset 1960.)

The meaning and status entailments of union membership for individuals also varies—along occupational lines, among different communities, and by individual characteristics and attributes. Thus, Spinrad finds that the unionism of city residents differs from that of suburban workers:

The cityite's unionism tends to be an “instinctive” outgrowth of the working-class milieu in which he has spent most of his life. If his unionism in that setting is more intense, he will be relatively active in his union, although with few formulated ideas and no leadership role. The suburbanite's unionism seems more of a deliberate choice and is correlated with the extent of work-group orientation and apparent ideological commitment to unionism. The choice for him is between articulate unionism with some assumption of leadership or “lukewarmness” to basic union principles [Spinrad 1964, pp. 222–23].

These differences are related, Spinrad feels, to social psychological and structural characteristics of the *suburbanization process itself*. These include: (a) a sense of status achievement; (b) an overemphasis on consumption and leisure; (c) a feeling of extreme psychic separation from work place and meeting hall; (d) a lack of interest in work-mates; (e) a concern with local suburban community issues, detached from work and union

affairs; (f) physical removal from a working-class milieu; and, for some, (g) immersion in a more middle-class environment (*ibid.*, p. 224).

The relative prestige of occupations was viewed by Lipset, Trow, and Coleman (1956) as a crucial determinant of the extent to which workers have close relationships with their fellow workers *off the job* as well as in the work setting. Printers, they found, tend to associate with *other printers more than most other manual workers* associate with their fellow workers. In an intricate analysis, they concluded that since printing has higher status than other manual occupations, many printers are oriented to middle-class or white-collar values, styles of life, and associations; and to the extent that printers do not actually have white-collar associations and life styles, they prefer the company, associations, and joint activities (including union activities) of other printers to those of other manual workers. Lipset, Trow, and Coleman denoted this the "marginal status" hypothesis—"marginal" in being between manual and nonmanual statuses—and they also suggested that the formation of the "occupational community" is affected by other factors as well, e.g., the union's hiring system, hours and places of work, and the "craft aspect" of printing (Lipset, Trow, and Coleman 1956, chaps. 6 and 7).

Attempting to summarize the varying relationships of union members to union, work, and fellowship, Shostak (1969) tries to classify the rank and file of union members according to whether they are (1) loyal Patriots, (2) critical Grippers, (3) uncommonly fearful Fence-Sitters, or (4) independent-minded Pickers and Choosers. He suggests that the largest number of blue-collar union members are Pickers and Choosers, typically of blue-collar parentage but ambivalent about unionism and with mixed feelings about the collective advancement offered by unionism versus the dream of individual mobility and ascent thought independent of unionism. They are usually cautious about approving of big, influential, tax-collecting and spending government *and* of big, tax-collecting and spending local and national unions. Generally inactive in union affairs and rarely attending meetings, Pickers and Choosers act primarily only when their own particular interests are threatened, rather than on the basis of broader issues or ideologies.

The names "Patriots," "Grippers," and "Fence-Sitters" virtually speak for themselves. Unfortunately, however, Shostak does not indicate how they are identified in concrete worker groups, nor does he examine the causes or consequences of being in one or another of these subgroups.

*Voluntary associations.* A final category of "middle-strata economic organization" is the voluntary organization or association which has some recognized or institutionalized economic mediating role in that it is responsible for allocating certain kinds of benefits among its members (and sometimes among nonmembers as well). For example, ethnic benevolent associations (*Landmannschaften*) and mutual aid organizations may have actual statutory functions or, more often, *de facto* dominant representation rights, as do some unions, and often they virtually control access

to state or local sources of aid, as is the case with veteran and farm organizations (Lipset 1960, chap. 12). One characteristic which such organizations typically share is that they operate largely as what Lipset has called "private governments," with internal political processes and participation patterns varying broadly. But the degree of involvement and style of membership in such organizations also varies, perhaps in accordance with factors akin to those bearing upon union membership and activity.

Thus, the meaning of membership in middle-strata economic organizations varies in accordance with the type of organization, type of community, etc. In some cases, membership in a union or in a business or professional group has the effect of organizing the individual's entire sphere of social relations, associations, and interaction, as well as providing him with a stable socioeconomic "location" or "address." In other cases, attachments outside work or the economic organization are far more central to the individual's social life and status.

### **Churches and the Middle Strata**

#### **Rates, Meaning, and Ranking of Church Participation**

*Rates of church membership and activity.* On the basis of recent survey materials (Lenski 1963; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract* 1973), we may estimate that almost all of the American population identifies with some religion, a body of religious belief, or a religious denomination, and that some 62 percent are *members* of churches or synagogues. Although not all of these 62 percent report frequent *attendance* in church, most may be considered "participants" in church or synagogue activities, whether in prayer, educational activities, bingo games, dances, or church-sponsored book-review sessions. It is now well established in social scientific and historical studies generally, and in American sociology in particular, that the rate of church membership, attendance, and activity varies among the different social strata and in the different types and sizes of communities. In general, the higher strata are characterized by relatively more frequent church membership and participation than the lower strata; and smaller communities have more church participation than the largest cities (Demerath 1965).

*Meaning of church membership and activity.* Although the interest in connections between church activity and social rank actually predates modern sociological investigation, and although some of the relationships are quite well established and documented, the personal and societal *meanings* of church activity in the different groupings and strata remain in a somewhat confused, if not entirely uncharted, realm. On the one hand, church membership and activity are frequently viewed simply as "voluntary organization" membership and activity. However, for minority, ethnic, and migrant groups, the church is characteristically regarded—along with the family—as the central institution around which most other aspects of

group association and interaction are organized (Park 1952; Kramer 1970). The place of religious institutions, religious identification, and church membership and activity in the formulation and institutionalization of values, norms, goals, and ideologies, and the impact of religious beliefs on behavior, have been examined by sociologists and historians at least since Marx and Weber and remain significant issues. Finally, an important point of view in contemporary American social science holds that religious identification is itself a major axis of stratification, with the major white religious groupings of national scope in America—Protestant Catholic, and Jewish—comprising largely self-contained social strata systems (Herberg 1956; Gordon 1964).

We noted above that membership in middle-income strata economic organizations has different meanings in different social circumstances. *Similar kinds of variation* hold for church and synagogue membership, attendance, and participation. For some of the middle strata, church activities—with or without deep religious beliefs and identification—are the central facts, beacons, and anchors of social life; for others of the middle strata, church membership and activities are either entirely nonexistent, or else completely marginal, or even entirely irrelevant to the individual's social status and patterns of interaction.

*Ranked memberships.* Memberships in the different churches of a community carry with them different rankings, and in many communities such memberships or church associations constitute a system of social strata, i.e., an almost exhaustive and mutually exclusive set of ranked population groups, no less than do the occupational, property and income, or residential groupings of the community. Especially for the middle strata, who lack access to the consumption, exclusive clubs, leisure activities, or high-powered name-dropping available to the privileged strata for symbolizing their status, church membership is a form of exclusiveness; it symbolizes social status—and requires appropriate credentials—in ways somewhat more subtle than those attached to membership in professional associations or private clubs. To the extent that *other* associations and patterns of social interaction revolve around church-centered contacts, relationships, and activities, then the entire sphere of such associations and interactions is likewise symbolic of social status.

In principle, to be sure, church membership is open to all professing belief in, or identifying with, the basic religious doctrines of the denomination. But membership in a particular church may be more attractive, congenial, or accessible to one group or social stratum than to others. The location, the language and style of the service, the annual membership dues, the type and frequency of collections, the manner, speech, behavior, and dress of other members, the religious and secular services and activities offered or initiated—all may be selective factors in church membership. Individuals and families not able to pay, not willing or able to travel the distance to the church, not able to dress or behave as other members do, not able to avail themselves of the services and activities, not comfortable

with the setting, the music, the language, or the style of the service, or not friendly with other members will typically seek membership in a church which is more congenial. Conversely, for those with the appropriate credentials, membership in the church is symbolic of *having* such credentials and provides opportunities for social interaction with others having similar credentials—regardless of intensity or nonintensity of religious beliefs and identification.

### Types of Churches

Aside from the religious denominational categories, we can distinguish among three major types of middle-strata churches—each with a formal organizational network of church-sponsored or organized adult, youth, and children's activities, and each with a web of informal relationships among members. The three types are: (1) first-generation minority-group, ethnic-group, or newcomer churches; (2) neighborhood or area denominational centers; and (3) stratum-specific churches.

*First-generation churches.* The first-generation churches are obviously those established in a community by groups of newcomers with similar ethnic and/or denominational origins. Virtually all church denominations in the United States share this type of historical origin. A newly arriving origin-group or denominational-group becomes associated with its own church both by self-definition and by definition of the surrounding community; in this way there developed the Irish, Polish, German, and Italian Catholic enclaves in the large cities, the German and Scandinavian rural communities of Protestant denomination in the Middle West, the German and Eastern-European Jewish immigrant neighborhoods in large cities of the Eastern Seaboard and the Great Lakes, and, more recently, the Puerto Rican and Mexican Catholic, Negro Methodist and Baptist, and rural southern white Methodist and Baptist migrant enclaves in various settings, all with their churches organized around the newcomers' common origins and strangeness.

Aside from their purely religious functions, the minority churches mediate absorption and acculturation of the groups in their new settings and provide foci for a web of social relations and congenial community settings. At the very minimum, as additional newcomers arrive, clergymen and co-religionists provide them with *information* and serve to explain or translate local conditions, requirements, and opportunities in language, terms, and concepts familiar to them. Beyond providing general information and explanation, "old-timer" correligionists can make actual resources available to the newcomers; they can furnish jobs and provide care for the ill and aged, favorable housing opportunities, and—especially among Roman Catholics but among others as well—educational services for children. Finally, the minority, ethnic-group, or newcomer churches provide association and social interaction, themselves important social rewards and resources.

Although the first generation of the migrant group is differentiated occupationally, membership and association within the minority church are retained. But such churches must find new ways to entrench themselves with the second generation, competing both with other churches of the same or other denominations *and* with nonchurch interests, diversions, attachments, and associations. Especially those of the second or subsequent generations moving to *other social strata* may find other churches more congenial to their new tastes and membership elsewhere more symbolic of their new status.

*Neighborhood or area centers.* Neighborhood or area denominational centers are churches which serve *all* individuals and families—of whatever origins or strata—identifying with the religion or denomination. They are generally found in areas with relatively sparse populations of adherents (in contrast to stratum-differentiated churches, which are found in urban areas containing large and relatively densely settled populations of adherents). Although such centers are internally heterogeneous with respect to the social strata of their members, they tend to be ranked vis-à-vis each other in the sense that each attracts membership mainly from higher, or mainly from lower, strata. Thus, the single Catholic church in an area may serve industrial workers, businessmen, and farmers alike, as do the local Episcopalian church, the local Methodist church, and the local Orthodox and Reform Jewish synagogues—but the Catholic church may comprise a majority of farmers' families while the Episcopalian church serves mostly professionals and businessmen, and the Reform Jewish synagogue may serve mainly long-resident professional Jewish families while the Orthodox synagogue serves first- or second-generation Jews in skilled trades or small businesses.

In principle, Catholic church parishes are organized on a geographic basis to serve *all* Catholic residents of the area, whatever their ethnic or stratum background, even in largest cities. But the geographic divisions are often cut across by ethnic and linguistic divisions as well; thus, there are Polish, Italian, Irish, German, and Puerto Rican parishes. Moreover, as neighborhoods change in ethnic and stratum composition, parish members may elect either to travel to new churches or to retain membership in old neighborhood churches. In addition, Catholics of the higher strata have often preferred to attend services at the churches in which the local hierarchy, rather than the local parish priests, normally officiate—for example, at the basilica or cathedral rather than the parish church—and their baptisms, communions, weddings, and funerals may be performed by monsignors, archbishops, or cardinals rather than by ordinary parish priests.

*Stratum-specific churches.* The stratum-specific churches are those located in areas with *many* churches of the same or similar denominations—primarily Protestant. Both the denominations themselves *and* the individual churches within each denomination tend to be ranked, to appeal primarily to individuals and families of a given range of strata or effec-

tively to restrict in one way or another membership and participation to a relatively narrow range of strata. With increasing urbanization and improved transportation, the effective density of settlement for virtually all religious divisions and denominations has increased very rapidly in the present century. This, in turn, has permitted, and indeed forced, increasing differentiation and ranking among the competing churches. (Cf. Matras 1973, chaps. 2 and 11.)

Among the middle strata, it is the salaried professionals, the fee professionals catering to a general clientele (rather than to specific ethnic or minority groups), and the established proprietors serving a general public (rather than a stratum-specific or special ethnic clientele) who are most likely to belong to churches boasting members of "upper-middle" or higher status, income, and tastes. Supplementing the status they derive from their occupation and associations, or from their place of residence, or from their style and level of consumption is the status these people derive from membership in a relatively "exclusive" church. In addition, church membership offers them concrete opportunities for contacts and interaction with others of similar status.

Along with blue-collar workers and blue-collar entrepreneurs, business proprietors and professionals serving strictly neighborhood or ethnic-group clientele are typically connected with neighborhood centers and newcomer or minority-group churches or synagogues. These proprietors and professionals typically provide a measure of stratum *leadership* for those of the middle strata who are relatively inarticulate and individually command little leverage in community affairs. Aside from providing services, creating jobs, or purchasing goods and services within the area or in the circle of coreligionists, the professional and the businessman very often have business, political, or other connections outside the area or outside the ethnic enclave. Thus, they are often in a position to mediate in "external affairs" for the church-connected group as a whole or for individual coreligionists lacking such connections of their own.

At the same time, members of lower-middle strata can derive social resources and satisfactions from "belonging" to the church and taking part in church activities and organizations. Church membership may make available to them the pleasures of scouting, bowling, or bingo games, of volunteer and charitable work, of participation in rituals, and of reviewing books or going on organized tours and pilgrimages, and it may offer them friendships and associations with others sharing roughly similar religious beliefs and ideologies and a roughly similar range of social attributes.

Church membership and activities, in turn, must coexist with the rest of the middle-strata organizational web; but in many communities, churches and church-related activities are the dominant settings of middle-strata social interaction, social status, and exchange and conversion of social resources. In particular, church membership often defines the boundaries of marriage markets, i.e., it dictates the acceptability or non-acceptability of potential marriage partners and establishes orders of



preference in matchmaking. In the minority groupings, especially in the first and second generations, family membership in the group's church, or in a different but ethnically or socially "close" church, is a preferred characteristic for potential marriage partners. For the "old-timer" strata, membership in a minority-group church is often a reason for exclusion from dating pools and marriage markets. The preference patterns of the minority groups and exclusion patterns of the dominant groups in the middle strata of a community reinforce one another—and this reinforcement, in turn, generates and sustains church-associated extended family and kinship patterns.

### ***Middle-Strata Voluntary Organizations***

In free societies an individual's association with economic organizations and with religious institutions and organizations is "voluntary," at least in the sense that his economic or religious attachments are not determined by birth. A person may *change* his economic or religious attachments, or, indeed, he may elect to have no such attachments at all. But the basic economic or religious organizations are different from other voluntary organizations in that (1) they are largely mutually exclusive, e.g., a person or family belonging to the Anglican Church is not likely to belong to the Lutheran Church or Baptist Church as well; and (2) attachment to an economic or church organization generally entails or permits a broad range of social associations, participation, and individual and family behavior, which, in a general way, imply or support the social ranking imputed to the economic or church organization in question. For example, labor unions provide members and their families with picnics and outings, while business associations and professional groups have foreign tours. Some churches sponsor lecture series and chamber music concerts, while others sponsor street carnivals. Thus, economic associations alone, or in some communities church and denominational associations alone, can suffice to generate a system of social strata.

Other organizations do not have this potential; rather, they are largely symbolic and supportive of the more basic rank-determining associations. They range from Nixon-for-President organizations, lasting the duration of an election campaign, to the Daughters of the American Revolution, persisting for generations; from the nationwide American Legion and Women's Christian Temperance Union to the local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; from the Mystic Order of Nobles of the Sacred Shrine and the PTA to the Girl Scouts and Junior Achievement Clubs; from the Knights of Columbus to the B'nai B'rith and National Association for Advancement of Colored People.

*Personal and community functions.* Voluntary organizations all have some explicit goal or purpose, and the "joiners" generally subscribe to the organization's purpose. Implicitly, however, organizations also have the function of providing their members with social relationships and gratifica-

tions, with recognition of fellowship and status—either as equals or in intraorganizational leader-follower relationships, and with a sense of sharing norms, values, and social importance, all expressed and supported in the group activity.

Moreover, things can be achieved by groups that are not easily achieved by middle-strata individuals. The individual's community participation may not only go unnoticed but be totally without effect, while the group effort may be both noteworthy and effective. Thus, the election or defeat of an alderman, a congressman, or a president is affected by group support or nonsupport, and the expression of group desires is more likely to be heard and considered than the expression of an individual's. An individual's help in the schools, or his ideas about what's right or wrong with them, may or may not receive the attention of the appropriate authorities; but the help of the PTA in putting over a school project, or the stand of the PTA on a school issue, are not likely to go unnoticed. Similarly, the war veteran's concern for his own benefits or the benefits of others and his expressions of patriotism may well confront the deaf ears of politicians and the blind eyes of the news media; but the American Legion is heard and seen.

*Exclusiveness.* The voluntariness of organizational association is a two-way phenomenon: the individual may seek to associate himself or not, as he pleases; but for its part, the organization may accept or not accept the applicant as a member, or may encourage or discourage him from applying. The encouragement or discouragement of new members may be random or arbitrary; but frequently there are explicit or implicit criteria and credentials for membership in voluntary organizations—for example, in middle-strata "country clubs" no less than in their privileged-strata models. Thus, voluntary organizations, too, have their dimensions of exclusiveness, which more often than not reflect their social-stratum bases and are symbolic of the social status of their members.

#### 4. MIDDLE- STRATA POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

We have already seen at several junctures that the middle strata comprise those social groupings having only "average" access to, or control over, social rewards and resources. In particular, the individual members of these strata lack institutionalized political power and have no great resources which can readily be exchanged for power. It is the privileged whose members have either direct access to power or social resources convertible to power. But a central premise of democratic politics is freedom of political initiative and participation for all.

Two kinds of questions are raised by this apparent contradiction:

1. What forms and avenues of political participation are open to the middle strata under democracy, universal franchise, and freedom of association?
2. To what ends? What policies are advocated and supported by the middle strata, and with what societal goals do they identify?

We consider only the first of these, for the second is beyond the scope of this volume.

### ***The Forms of Middle-Strata Political Participation***

Political participation of the middle strata includes personal office-holding and electoral and other support of officeholders, different forms of pressure or influence upon officeholders and those wielding power, and exchange—by negotiation—of support or social resources for the agreement of officeholders to carry out desired policies. In general, these forms of participation are effective primarily when applied collectively by the groups and organizations of the middle strata. However, this era of public-opinion polling has also rendered salient the expressed opinions and wishes of middle-strata individuals.

*Voting and recruiting votes.* Individual voting, of course, is an obvious mode of political participation, and the active recruitment of votes for political parties and candidates is a derivative. However, the extent of voting participation, or voter turnout, is far from uniform in the middle strata. In general, voter turnout in the United States is lower than in many other countries, and while the U.S. shares some stratum patterns with other countries, it differs in others. For example, businessmen, white-collar employees, government employees, and members of voluntary organizations are more likely than average to vote in national elections in the United States and in Western Europe; and unskilled workers, service workers, and nonmembers of organizations are less likely to vote. But semiskilled and skilled workers in Western Europe show high participation in voting, while in the United States their participation is low. Lipset (1960) suggests that a stratum will have a higher rate of voting if (1) its interests are strongly affected by government policies, (2) it has access to information about the relevance of political decisions to its interests, (3) it is exposed to social pressures demanding voting, and (4) it is not pressed to vote for different political parties, i.e., its vote is actively sought by only one of the competing parties.

In a recently reported study carried out in Indianapolis, Olsen (1972) found that participation in voluntary associations (excluding trade unions), in church activities, and in community events were strongly associated with voting in the 1960 and 1964 presidential elections and in the 1966 congressional election. Additional factors associated with voting were age, education, contacts with political content in the mass media, and "political orientations," i.e., having a party preference and being interested in politics (cf. the discussion in chapter 2, above.) Of these, the "political orientation" factor is most important, a finding consistent with that of an early, now classic, study of voting by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1944). Olsen suggests that "political orientations" may be viewed not necessarily as an initial *cause* of high voting participation but rather

as indicative of other phenomena—social participation and political contacts—which affect the individual's decision to vote.

*Influencing officeholders, candidates, and parties.* Officeholders, whether elected or appointed, and candidates for office are susceptible to influence and pressure both because they are human beings with needs and desires for approval and because they are constantly trading the satisfaction they provide in the present for future electoral or other political support.

Individuals may use their personal acquaintance or connections with officeholders or candidates to influence their exercise of power. This, however, is a form of privileged access to power and resources, and those enjoying extensively such connections, contacts, access, and personal influence are probably properly viewed as belonging to the privileged strata.

The middle strata may affect political thinking, decisions, and behavior through participation in political organizations, movements, and local and national parties or clubs. Through such participation they may have a voice in choosing candidates, formulating party platforms, and influencing officeholders once elected or appointed, but only when *organizational* consensus or *collective* opinion is persuasive or influential.

It is useful to compare the relatively low participation of the American middle strata in direct political party membership and activities with the participation in other countries. In Western Europe, a considerably larger number and variety of organizations—trade unions, youth movements, church organizations, business clubs, etc.—are directly affiliated with political parties. The parties, in turn, directly organize a wide variety of activities—for example, newspaper publishing, banking enterprises, housing projects, and cultural and recreational pursuits. Thus, the ongoing involvement of the middle strata in political party clubs and organizations is more extensive than in the United States, where the local and national political party organizations have relatively few permanent members.

By contrast, a third mode of affecting political affairs—through pressure groups, lobbies, and both permanent and ad hoc interest groups and organizations—strongly permeates all levels of political life in the United States and involves the middle strata very extensively. The participation of the middle strata in this mode takes place largely through the economic, church, and voluntary organizations so pervasive in these strata. Any business group, any professional organization, any trade union, and any church body can and does become a pressure group when its interests or the interests of its members are up for discussions, decision, or action before a political body. Thus, especially in the United States but elsewhere as well, the organizations so central to the social location and interaction of the middle strata, and so symbolic of their status, are also major vehicles for their participation in the political process.

Finally, middle-strata individuals have opportunities to influence or pressure officeholders, candidates, and political parties and groups by

means of their *own* candidacies or officeholding. But again, the holding of a major office, or even candidacy for a major office, typically renders an individual privileged insofar as access to power, influence, and social resources is concerned, thus placing him in the privileged strata. Indeed, we shall note later that personal political candidacy, officeholding, or close participation in politics is a form of individual social mobility, of movement from the middle strata to the privileged strata. But middle-strata candidates for *minor* offices are important participants in the political process as well.

*Political sanctions, negotiations, and trades.* Sanctions, negotiations, and trade-offs are frequent means of influencing the political process, where the sanctions can be means *other* than simply withholding electoral support or supporting opposing candidates. Strikes and demonstrations, or the threat of strikes and demonstrations, have long been familiar as political weapons all over the world, and violence, actual and threatened, is all too familiar as well. In the United States these have more commonly been weapons of economic rather than political conflict, but in the 1960s they appeared as political sanctions too. In that decade, demonstrations involving middle-strata youth and adults were organized to gain political objectives concerning civil rights, American involvement in the war in Vietnam, the plight of Soviet Jews, the American space exploration program, the Democratic party's choosing of a presidential candidate, the use of university campuses for recruitment of military and arms industry personnel, and the universities' own policies regarding recruitment, grading and promotion of students and faculty, and academic programs and standards. In addition, demonstrations have focused on civil and criminal court proceedings with political overtones, among them school segregation and busing proceedings and the trials of Angela Davis and Huey Newton.

But a variety of other resources—money, fame, privileges, recognition, and public acknowledgment and approval—may be mobilized and traded for political action of one sort or another. Some congressmen are famous for their success in arranging the location of military bases, flood-control projects, veterans' hospitals, national parks, or government contracts and purchases in their districts or states. And a variety of other things can be "traded" for middle-strata votes and support—for example, high- or low-level appointive jobs to local personages (ethnic leaders or precinct captains or simply somebody's cousin or friend), a new local school or park, water or sanitation improvement, support of integration or opposition to busing, appointment of women to public office or a promise to ban pornography, a "fixed" traffic ticket or underassessment of the value of a piece of property; even a kiss for a baby or playing Santa Claus at a kindergarten.

Thus, the middle strata no less than the privileged or underprivileged strata recognize that power is a resource convertible to other social rewards and that transactions involving power work in both directions. The votes or support or legitimation which create and consolidate power are

routinely given or withheld in exchange for virtually any other type of satisfaction or social reward.

*Unorganized, individual opinions.* A relatively novel, but apparently increasingly important, way of influencing the political process is simply to hold firm opinions on issues and on courses of action. In an effort to anticipate organized pressure, perhaps, politicians and political bodies are tending more and more to seek out the opinions and attitudes of the public, including the middle strata, on current and future issues and affairs. Traditionally this process has involved the officeholder in personal visits and conversation with his clients, of the politicians in "grass-roots" interaction with his constituents. Increasingly, however, polling and sampling institutions have sought to rationalize and systematize such evaluations of grass-roots, or indeed of interest-group, opinions and attitudes. In fact, such polling and sampling institutions, promoting their products, may have had the effect of rendering such unorganized and only semiarticulate attitudes more salient than ever before in political disclosure, strategy, and tactics. To the extent that "public opinion" concerning great and small issues is readily discernible and measurable, it may become an increasingly important factor in political action. Thus, President Nixon's stand on school integration and busing, in defiance of the courts, was broadly supported by public opinion as measured in a variety of surveys and studies. More generally, President Nixon was long able to defy the legislative and judicial branches of government, as well as the communications media and organized political opinion, on a variety of fronts and issues under the supposition that he had the massive backing of unorganized individual opinion in the nation. As it turned out in the Watergate issue, the same unorganized individual opinion so carefully studied and invoked previously in the president's favor ultimately opposed his conduct and use of power in office.

Before leaving the area of political activity and participation, we turn to the question of stratum consciousness and stratum solidarity among the middle strata.

### ***Stratum Consciousness and Stratum Solidarity***

#### ***Political Alignments of the Middle Strata***

In our discussion of voting we did not indicate *for whom* the middle strata vote. This is neither for lack of interest, nor for lack of data relating the votes of occupational, educational, racial, religious, or other substrata with one or another political party. Counts and comparisons in the United States, for example, indicate that in general the lower and individual's socioeconomic status (measured by occupation, education, income, or any other objective criterion), the more likely he is to vote Democratic in national elections and, in the most populous areas, in local elections as well. Conversely, the higher an individual's socioeconomic status, the more

likely he is to vote Republican. The votes of Catholics, blacks, Jews, *Irish, and other religious, ethnic, and racial minorities* have long been associated with the Democratic Party. Voters in large cities have tended to favor the Democrats, while suburbanites and rural voters (except, until recently, in the Democratic "solid South") have favored Republicans. Outside the middle strata, the privileged strata, with some important exceptions, have supported the Republican Party, while the underprivileged strata have supported Democratic Party candidates.

But on the whole, it has not been possible either to predict in advance or to explain after the fact the conditions under which positions are taken or votes are cast—along economic, religious, or racial lines, or by sex or age, or by geographic or sectional interests, or according to ethnic or cultural concerns, or by one rather than another when these are not congruent. And, at least for the middle strata in the United States, our counts have not taken us very far in understanding political alignments in general; more particularly, we do not understand the interconnections between inequalities of social position and strata and political behavior, associations, and institutions.

Outside the U.S. it has frequently been possible to connect the middle strata to distinct political parties, movements, and institutions. Thus, labor parties and social democratic parties in Europe and Canada have attracted not only the identification, money, and votes of the manual-worker strata, but they have also drawn upon the leadership of labor unions for candidates, party workers, and activists at all levels. Conversely, once in power or in governing coalitions, labor and social democratic parties have channeled the fruits of power—e.g., political appointments, connections, and prestige—to the leadership of unions and other "working-class" organizations, just as they have channeled benefits and a greater share of total social rewards to the manual and lower white-collar strata generally. Similarly, there are political organizations, parties, and institutions explicitly identified with the "old middle class," with the "new middle class," with the "farm-owning" strata, or with business and professional strata, all of them explicitly committed to furthering the interests of their respective strata as well as the national interests of their country. Thus, in Western Europe the Communist Party ordinarily claims to represent *all* the wage- and salary-earning strata, even though the party leadership is closely connected with communist industrial unions. Christian Democratic parties in Europe are typically identified with white-collar strata (professionals and businessmen); and Social Democratic and Socialist parties are generally closely identified with noncommunist trade and industrial unions and with unionized white-collar strata.

That these kinds of connections are not readily inferred for the United States has long been a sore point for both political analysis and the analysis of social strata. A question which recurs in American social analysis—whether on the part of historians, journalists, political scientists, economists, or sociologists—is: Where are the clearly discernible, stable,

and institutionalized political expressions and manifestations of social inequality and of social-strata organization in the United States?

The answer is that they lie in political movements of various types, and with various longer or shorter histories, but *not* in a stratum-connected configuration of stable political parties. But this leads only to the question which some have viewed as lying at the heart of the intersection between social structural and political analysis in America: Why is there no stable, social-strata-based configuration of political parties in the United States? To explain the discontinuity between social strata and political organizations, virtually all social scientists have referred in one way or another to the link first formulated by Marx: *class consciousness*—or rather its absence—in American society and especially in the American middle strata. Thus, they explain the discontinuity in terms of absence of class or stratum consciousness, of stratum solidarity, of collective images of strata position vis-à-vis other strata, of images or goals of alternative, more favorable, strata positions vis-à-vis others, and of readiness to engage in collective activity to achieve such improved positions.

We have already presented definitions of stratum consciousness and stratum solidarity; and in our discussions of social classes and their identification we considered briefly some studies of subjective social-class identification, viewed by many as indicators of class consciousness. We turn now to a brief overview of empirical materials bearing on stratum consciousness and solidarity among the middle strata.

#### The Study of Class Consciousness and Its Correlates

There have been a number of attitude and opinion surveys in the United States, conducted both before and after the 1945 study by Centers which we first cited in chapter 4. These surveys, in which respondents were asked to identify their "social class" or to place themselves in the appropriate social class, comprise the main body of empirical evidence bearing on American "class consciousness" or stratum consciousness (for detailed summaries, see Landecker 1963; Lopreato and Hazelrigg 1972). They are frequently cited as showing that—

1. American manual and nonmanual workers do exhibit class consciousness and class solidarity;
2. there are several elements or dimensions to class or stratum consciousness and solidarity, and they must be studied separately;
3. some factors bearing upon variations in degree of class consciousness have been identified and studied—in particular, class crystallization is associated with some dimensions of class consciousness—and the degree of class consciousness is a factor in the extent of political solidarity and its expressions.

In chapter 4 we discussed the Centers study from the point of view of its potential for identifying social classes and determining the social class



location of each individual. Similar kinds of materials have been used to study various aspects of class consciousness. Thus, for example, on the basis of responses to one of Centers's interview items, Centers and others infer that the political opinions of businessmen and professionals, on the one hand, and of manual workers on the other, correspond closely to their objective self-interest. The interview item posed to respondents the hypothetical proposition that the "working people" should be given more power and influence in government. Of the respondents in large business, 24 percent agreed, 74 percent disagreed, and 2 percent answered "don't know"; among those in white-collar employment, 50 percent agreed, 46 percent disagreed and the rest said "don't know"; of the semiskilled manual workers, 66 percent agreed, 25 percent disagreed, and 9 percent answered "don't know."

The majority, but by no means all, of the respondents in the Centers study revealed a self-identification consistent with objective social position, and Glantz, in a 1958 study, attacked the idea that such consistency is indicative of class-consciousness. He reasoned further that:

If class consciousness is supposed to mean more than a simple awareness of economic position, we should expect this awareness to be accompanied by class related politico-economic values. Indeed, it would appear that class consciousness can emerge only when an individual is aware of his politico-economic interests, and in such a way that he recognizes his unity *with others and the general value of class opposition.*

Class consciousness, so construed, can be observed when an individual responds to appropriate politico-economic situations, stories, or statements by accepting the values of his own class and rejecting the values of an antagonistic class, particularly if he claims initially that he owes his allegiance to his occupational fellows [Glantz 1958, p. 362].

Glantz proceeded to try to measure class consciousness so conceived and, moreover, to plot its relationship to political cohesiveness (which he viewed not only in terms of voting behavior but also in terms of whether or not voting choices are explained by the respondent in terms of social or economic class considerations). Class consciousness was measured on the basis of responses to two questions: the first asked about which groups—business or labor—the respondent felt he owed allegiance; the second probed at business or labor orientations by getting the respondents to agree or disagree with six partisan statements.

Only half of the big businessmen and less than half of the small businessmen reported allegiance to the business groups. Of these, most of the big businessmen (77 percent) and half of the small businessmen were also "business oriented" and therefore class conscious by the Glantz criteria. Of workers, just over half of the union members and somewhat less than half of the non-union members reported "allegiance" to labor; and of those that did, one-half to one-third of the union members and one-third of the non-union members were also "labor oriented" and hence class conscious (see

**Table 7.4 Glantz study: Class Consciousness, by Objective Socioeconomic Position.**

<i>Objective Socioeconomic Position</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>"Class Conscious"</i>
<i>Total</i>	263	67
Big business	43	17
Small business	65	16
Non-union-member workers	62	8
Union-member workers	93	23

Table 7.4). Thus, only a fairly small minority of respondents, regardless of objective socioeconomic status, were found to be class conscious. Of the class-conscious big businessmen, all reported voting Republican in the two previous elections, although the reasons given were not strongly suggestive of "class" considerations. However, almost all of the other big businessmen also voted Republicans. Of workers belonging to unions, those who were class conscious were more likely to report having voted Democratic in the previous two elections than those who were not; and union members, class conscious or not, more frequently reported voting Democratic than did non-union members. Of workers voting Democratic, however, some 72 percent of the class conscious but only 34 percent of the others gave the Democratic Party's association with labor interests as a reason for voting Democratic.

In an analysis of national sample survey data originally collected for a 1956 election study, Hamilton (1966) compared the class identification, values, and income of employed clerical and sales workers and their wives—often denoted the "lower middle class"—with those of skilled workers and their wives, the "upper working class." In response to a query on the "class" with which they identified, Hamilton found that about half (52 percent) of those in clerical and sales employment-described themselves as "working class." Of these, more than 90 percent reported that the families in which they grew up were "working class" (compared to only 30 percent who did so among those identifying themselves now as "middle class"). Among the white-collar "clerical and sales" respondents, those identifying themselves as "working class," were also those with the lowest incomes. The values of respondents identifying themselves as "working class" or "middle class" were ascertained according to their expressions of agreement or disagreement with statements about the role of government in economic and social affairs: among the "clerical and sales workers," those identifying themselves as "working class" tended also to favor "liberal" stances and values, while those identifying themselves as "middle class" were more conservative.

## Wanted: Convincing Measures of Stratum Consciousness and Solidarity

As we have seen, "empirical" studies of class consciousness have typically been based on subjective social-class or social-stratum identification, on data on opinions and attitudes, or on reactions to, and assessments of, hypothetical situations. For the most part—in the absence of "forced answer" situations, wherein respondents are obliged to choose among a pre-determined list of identifications—a large proportion of respondents in such surveys carried out in the U.S. do not identify themselves clearly with any class or stratum. But the conclusions of these surveys are subject to serious question, for they are based on data which do not describe matters of fact or actual behavior at some point in the past; rather they reflect opinions, attitudes, and expected behavior in hypothetical situations. Tumin notes that

possible indicators of stratum consciousness include responses to questions about self-identification ("To what class do you belong?"); voting behavior, i.e. parties, persons and issues voted for or against; and responses to questions on ideologies and attitudes, e.g., conservatism vs. liberalism. These have to be used with considerable caution because of the subjectivity of self-identification and the indirectness of evidence supplied by voting and attitude responses.

*Moreover, as a number of studies have shown, the amount of stratum solidarity is likely to vary considerably with the issue at stake. Different issues tap the sentiments of the various identities any individual possesses [Tumin 1967, p. 54; italics mine].*

What, then, are alternative approaches to the description and measurement of stratum consciousness and stratum solidarity?

Clearly, the direct measurement of "consciousness"—whether of any type of stratum (occupational, ethnic, educational, or economic) of social class—rests in the realm of psychological observation and measurement. But "consciousness" can also be inferred indirectly from behavior—individual or collective. In particular, behavior which may be construed as *stratum-solidary* behavior implies stratum consciousness. Strikes and demonstrations are, of course, excellent examples of stratum-solidary behavior: as individual acts they are usually pointless, and individual participation can ordinarily be construed as implying identification and solidarity with a group as well as conflict vis-à-vis some other one or several groups. More generally, actions taken in the context of organizations, cliques, or informal groups—on behalf of the entire group and disregarding, or with negative regard for, those outside the group—are what we understand to comprise manifestations of group solidarity. If the groups are hierarchically related to one another, then they are, or belong to, social strata, and this activity reflects stratum solidarity. Thus, it is to the activities and behavior of groups, cliques, and organizations, rather than to surveys of individual respondents, that we must look for clues about the variations, correlates, and consequences of stratum consciousness and stratum solidarity.

5. MIDDLE-  
STRATA  
SOCIALIZATION:  
EDUCATION  
FOR WHAT?

The opportunities and perils faced in early, middle, and late socialization by the young generally and by the young of the various social strata in particular are among the most widely heralded and intensively investigated topics in the social sciences. From Freud's investigation of "oral" and "anal" personality types (1943), through the examination of tradition-directed, inner-directed, and other-directed character introduced by Fromm (1947) and elaborated and popularized by Riesman (1950), to the studies of toilet training and sexual freedom conducted by a generation of anthropologists and social psychologists, and continuing to the most recent studies of equality of educational opportunity (Coleman et al. 1966) and of ability and talent development in the schools (Flanagan et al. 1962, 1964), the far-reaching personal and social effects of parental handling of offspring in infancy and childhood have been emphasized, illuminated, and reemphasized.

A tradition of scholarship and empirical investigation has discovered and rediscovered that patterns of infant and childhood socialization differ in the different social strata, although the studies are not in agreement about the directions or extent of the differences, about the directions of recent changes, nor about the impact and consequences either of the different patterns or of shifts in them (Bronfenbrenner 1958). What is clear, however, is that blue-collar (or "working class") socialization differs from white-collar (or "middle class") socialization; and that the rules of behavior, school participation, and dating, and the values, orientations, and expectations of children and youth in the lower middle strata are different from those in the higher middle strata.

Whatever the extent of such differences among the middle strata in the past, there are good reasons to believe that they will diminish considerably in the near future. Although differences in toilet training, achievement motivation, inner- or other-directedness, and educational aspirations have been imputed variously to stratum differences in parental educational level, social character, traditions, orientations, and other sociopsychological factors, it is more likely the case that these differences have structural and more concrete bases and origins, e.g., size of families, stability of employment and income, and not only parental educational level but also parents' general integration in the language, information, and symbols of the society. And it is precisely in these areas and attributes that the different middle strata have recently shown strong indications of convergence.

**Factors in the Convergence of Early Middle-Strata Socialization**

*Decline in blue-collar fertility and family size.* Earlier in this chapter we noted the "modernization of blue-collar families" and related it to smaller family size, greater independence for wives, and increasing geographic mobility of nuclear families; and we noted, too, that the "modern" blue-collar families coexist with "traditional" blue-collar families. We add here that the central element in the "modernization" process, the decline of

fertility and family size in the blue-collar strata, is continuing and indeed extending progressively to more and more of the blue-collar substrata, including the Catholic, ethnic, black, and other minority-group substrata.

Both the decline of fertility and the extension of family planning and birth-control practices in the blue-collar strata are well-documented trends (Grabill, Kiser, and Whelpton 1958; Kiser, Grabill, and Campbell 1968). Nevertheless, American couples generally, and blue-collar couples in particular, have until recently been characterized by less-than-fully-successful family planning. There have been frequent birth-control "failures," both with respect to the timing of pregnancies and births and with respect to the fact of additional pregnancies or total number of pregnancies and births (Ryder and Westoff 1971). But the liberalization of views and practices concerning induced abortions, and the recent Supreme Court decision upholding the rights of women to abortion on demand, promise to change drastically the rate of success in family limitation, at least for non-Catholic couples and probably ultimately for many Catholic couples as well. For *any* system of contraception, however inherently effective or however punctiliously or non-punctiliously practiced, will "work" with near perfection when backed up by the possibility of correcting errors by abortion and by the willingness to seek such correction. Thus, an important source of stratum differences in socialization—the fact that the lower middle strata have had more children than the upper middle strata, and very often more than they wish—is diminishing sharply even if not disappearing entirely.

*Stabilization of blue-collar employment and income.* The great economic achievements of organized labor since the end of World War II, together with the overall shift in occupational structure of the labor force, have had the effect of virtually guaranteeing stable minimum income levels for a large part of the population previously subject to cyclical and less-predictable fluctuations in employment and income. For the middle strata generally, absolute privation is largely a matter of history—an experience in the distant memory of older couples, entirely *unknown* to younger couples, and relatively rarely viewed as a concrete threat. Even relative deprivation is less severely felt and less frequently a threat in the lower middle strata than was the case in the past.

Until recently, stratum differences in stability of employment and income were important sources of differences in socialization of the young. Whereas the white-collar strata enjoyed relatively secure employment and income, the blue-collar strata were characterized by a dominance of income-earning activities and concerns and by privation, relative deprivation, and unstable consumption power. So great were the differences in resources allocable to the young in the different strata—from food and clothing to hobbies, entertainment, piano and dancing lessons, and adolescent dating—that the ideology and hope that the public schools and other free educational, cultural, or other facilities would themselves provide "equal opportunities" could never have been more than a good intention. So different



*Burk Uzzle, Magnum*

were the material worlds of the children and youth of the different strata that the very hope and supposition that their aspirations, plans, or concrete expectations might be similar would seem to have been entirely at odds with reality. But in fact, many of these differences have been greatly reduced with the stabilization of blue-collar employment and income.

*Revolutions in communications and information.* Finally, the spheres of images and symbols—whether of ideas and values and norms, or of consumption items, or of behavioral patterns—once so sharply distinct in the different strata, have more recently been converging under the impact of the several communications and information revolutions. In the first place, most aspects of the inner worlds of the various strata were previously accessible and visible to the other strata mainly through “serious” literature and theater, although perhaps to a degree through the social sciences. More recently, however, they been exposed to much wider publics, mainly through television. News, the dramatization of serious literature, and plain entertainment have all served this purpose, however indirectly.

The development, and as some have it (e.g., Galbraith 1967) the manipulation, of mass consumer markets entailing the mass dissemination of advertising messages has also operated to standardize language and images among the several middle strata. The Sears catalog, television, *Time*

magazine, Sesame Street, and the Book-of-the-Month Club are all busily selling products—and images and symbols and language—to a mass consumer population. Captain Kangaroo, Leonard Bernstein, Billy Graham, and President Ford share their ideas, information, images, and symbols with vast audiences comprising all strata; and the Dallas Cowboys, the New York City Ballet, real murder in Vietnam or in Munich, or play murder in Hawaii—and their language, images, and symbols—are accessible to all strata, in living color, at the touch of a TV button.

Thus, the material and symbolic worlds of blue-collar and white-collar children, of Catholic and Protestant children, and of businessmen's and bus drivers' children have in considerable measure converged. Perhaps the most important single indicator of this convergence in the United States is the universal *recognition*, among the middle strata, of the connection between formal education and income, social status, and opportunity, and the translation of this recognition into the concrete pursuit of higher educational opportunities by all the middle strata. We conclude this chapter with a brief review of this process.

### ***Higher Education—For Mind, Market, and Marriage***

*The upgrading of educational requirements.* While large proportions of youngsters of the underprivileged strata struggle through elementary school and drop out of high school at early ages, among the middle strata, blue-collar and white-collar alike, high school attendance is universal and only a very small minority do not complete high school. At the same time, however, there has been an upgrading of educational requirements for virtually all but the least prestigious and lowest-paying occupations, and whether this reflects an actual need for more skills and knowledge or simply a demand for higher educational credentials, it has rendered high school diplomas alone insufficient for entering what the middle strata consider to be acceptable employment, jobs, or careers.

Increasingly, white-collar jobs filled in the past by high school graduates with “college preparatory” or “commercial course” backgrounds now demand at least some postsecondary education or certification and often prefer applicants with college degrees. Blue-collar jobs previously filled by apprentices with no high school education at all, or by high school graduates with technical or “manual arts” backgrounds, increasingly demand postsecondary technical or “engineering” training to ensure that the worker will be able to manage the intricacies and complexities of more advanced technologies, productive processes, or simply the latest tools. Again, it is characteristic of the middle strata that unlike the relatively *incommunicado* underprivileged strata, they are integrated in the economy and informed of these developments and requirements; thus, whether blue-collar or white-collar, they have responded with sharply increased rates of high school completion and advanced study. Nevertheless, there remain very steep socioeconomic-status differences in the rates of college attendance, in the

types of colleges or other postsecondary educational institutions attended, in rates of completion of higher education, and in the purposes, meanings, and consequences of higher education.

A detailed analysis of the connections between socioeconomic background, or parental status, and educational achievement has emerged recently in the important sequence of studies carried out by Sewell, Haller, Hauser, Featherman, B. Duncan, and O. D. Duncan and their associates and students. We return to this topic later in our discussion of rules of access to social strata and roles.

*Purposes and meanings of higher education.* An enduring stratum difference tapped only very indirectly by the recent studies revolves around the purposes and meanings of higher education in the different strata. Traditionally, the privileged strata have attached great value to learning, information, and the arts for their inherent interest and by way of appreciating, participating in, and extending a historical and cultural tradition. This outlook has filtered down from the aristocracies to the bourgeoisie, from the privileged elites to the upper middle classes, and in modern times it has been cultivated by a middle-class intelligentsia and higher educational "establishment" which, in turn, promote and teach knowledge and culture for their own sake among their student clientele and among the agencies of the middle and upper strata supporting them. Aside from the sheer enjoyment and appreciation of ideas, information, and the arts, the upper strata and the upper middle strata have also recognized the instrumental function of cultural continuity: affairs of state are better managed with an appreciation of history and of cultural variations than without; and technology is more effectively exploited and controlled with scientific sophistication than without.

The lower middle strata, on the other hand, have more restricted expectations of education, and these are commensurate with their more general concern with economic and social status and security. For males, education is sought primarily to fulfill vocational prerequisites and obtain career credentials; for females, it is sought to meet job requirements and, hardly less importantly, to secure marriage market credentials. Educational credentials do not necessarily assure preferred employment, or any employment, for either males or females; and once employment is obtained, they do not assure promotion, or satisfactory progress, or career paths, for the job market is still, within bounds, open and competitive. But educational credentials give aspiring jobholders the *right to enter and compete* in a desired job market; and lack of credentials effectively excludes others from the market.

By the same token, sending one's daughter to college does not necessarily assure her a career; nor does it assure her successful marriage to a doctor, lawyer, engineer, or heir to a large fortune, or any marriage at all. But the girl who never attends college is effectively barred from meeting such eligibles in circumstances that might lead to courtship and marriage. It is in the movies, but only very, very infrequently in real life, that the



dimestore salesgirl marries the rich playboy or even the local doctor. The college co-ed marrying the medical student may have a few lean years ahead, and so may the co-ed dating the engineering, law, or science student, but middle-strata parents who make the effort to send their daughters to college will more often than not have good reason to conclude that their "investment" was a wise one.

#### SUMMARY

The middle strata include those in the population with average, but stable, access to social rewards and social resources. They enjoy relatively stable employment and can count on at least minimum earnings, both of which permit ongoing attachments and relationships in the family, in organizations and the community, and at school and with friends. The middle strata include white-collar entrepreneurs (businessmen and fee professionals—the so-called "old middle class"), salaried white-collar workers (the so-called "new middle class"), blue-collar entrepreneurs (tradesmen, proprietors, and farm owners), and organized or unionized blue-collar employees. And in many communities the middle strata are further divided by race, religion, or ethnicity.

Despite certain convergences and overlappings of income, consumption, and educational achievement, the white-collar and blue-collar substrata retain different values, family characteristics, and educational objectives, and distinctive patterns of work satisfaction, child socialization, consumption, recreation, and leisure, with the white-collar groups generally enjoying greater satisfactions, rewards, and resources than the blue-collar groups. The link between the middle strata and political organization is difficult to establish and describe because of problems in measuring and analyzing stratum consciousness and stratum solidarity. In the next chapter we turn more explicitly to questions of interstrata relations.