

SITUATIONAL STRATIFICATION

ARE RECEIVED SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES capable of grasping the realities of contemporary stratification? We think in terms of a structured hierarchy of inequality. A prominent imagery is Bourdieu's (1984) field of economic power and a hierarchy of cultural tastes internalized in individuals, with these two hierarchies mutually reproducing one another. The image helps explain the frustrations of reformers attacking inequality by attempting to change educational attainment. Empirical researchers report on inequalities in income and wealth, education and occupation, as changing slices of a pie, and as distributional shares for races, ethnicities, genders, and ages. We see an abstract scaffolding of hierarchy manifested in a shell of objective-looking quantitative data. Does this image of fixed, objective hierarchy come to grips with the micro-situational realities of lived experience?

The distribution of income and wealth in the United States has become increasingly unequal since 1970 (Morris and Western 1999). Yet observe a typical scene in an expensive American restaurant, where the wealthy go to spend their money: waiters greet customers informally, introducing themselves by name and assuming the manners of an equal inviting a guest into their home; they interrupt the customers to announce menu specials and advise what they should order. As Goffmanian ritual, it is the waiters who command attention for their performance while the customers are constrained to act as polite audience. Other examples abound: Celebrities of the entertainment world appear on ceremonial occasions in deliberately casual attire, unshaven or in torn clothes; far from presenting a demeanor giving ritual honor to the occasion, they adopt a style of self-presentation that would have associated a generation earlier with laborers or beggars. The demeanor style, widely adopted among youth and others when occasions allow (e.g., "casual Fridays" at work), constitutes a historically unprecedented form of anti-status or reverse snobbery. High-ranking government officials, corporation executives, and entertainment celebrities are targets of public scandals delving into their sexual lives, employment of housekeepers, use of intoxicants, and even their efforts at privacy; social eminence, far from providing immunity for petty derelictions, opens up the high ranking to attacks by lower-ranking functionaries. A muscular black youth, wearing baggy pants and hat

turned backward and carrying a boom box loudly playing angry-voiced rap music, dominates the sidewalk space of a public shopping area while middle-class whites palpably shrink back in deference. In public meetings, when women and ethnic minorities take the role of spokespersons and denounce social discrimination against their groups, white men of the higher social classes sit in embarrassed silence or hurriedly join in a chorus of support; in public opinion-expressing and policy-making settings, it is the voice of the underdog that carries moral authority.

How are we to conceptualize these kinds of events? The examples given are micro-evidence; my contention is that they characterize the flow of everyday life in sharp contrast to the ideal type of a macro-hierarchy. The hierarchic image dominates our theories, as well as our folk concepts for talking about stratification; indeed, the rhetorical tactics of taking the morally superior stance of the underdog depends upon asserting the existence of a macro-hierarchy while tacitly assuming underdog dominance in the immediate speech situation. Conflicts over the issue of so-called "political correctness," which might be called authoritative imposition of special consideration for the underdog, hinge upon this unrecognized disjunction between micro and macro. In social science, we generally accord the status of objective reality to statistics (e.g., the distribution of income, occupations, education), yet ethnographic observations are richer and more immediate empirical data. Our trouble is that ethnographies are piecemeal; we have yet to survey situations widely through systematic sampling, so that it could be argued with confidence what is the general distribution of the experiences of everyday life across an entire society.

My argument is that micro-situational data has conceptual priority. This is not to say that macro-data mean nothing; but amassing statistics and survey data does not convey an accurate picture of social reality unless it is interpreted in the context of its micro-situational grounding. Micro-situational encounters are the ground zero of all social action and all sociological evidence. Nothing has reality unless it is manifested in a situation somewhere. Macro-social structures can be real, provided that they are patterned aggregates that hold across micro-situations, or networks of repeated connections from one micro-situation to another (thereby comprising, for instance, a formal organization). But misleading macro "realities" can be built up by misconstruing what happens in micro-situations. Survey data is always collected in micro-situations by asking individuals such questions as how much money they make, which occupations do they think are the most prestigious, how many years of schooling they have, whether they believe in God, or how much discrimination they think exists in society. The aggregate

of these answers looks like an objective picture of a hierarchic (or, for some items, a consensual) structure. But aggregated data on the distribution of wealth does not mean anything unless we know what "wealth" actually is in situational experience; dollars in inflated stock prices do not mean the same thing as cash in the grocery store. As Zelizer (1994) shows with ethnographies of the actual use of money, there are a variety of currencies in practice confined to certain social and material advantages in restricted circuits of exchange. (Owning jewelry worth a certain "book value" does not mean that most people, if they are outside the network of jewelry merchants, can realize that value and convert it into other kinds of monetary power; at best, they can use its book value for bragging purposes in ordinary conversation.) I will refer to such circuits as "Zelizer circuits." We need to undertake a series of studies looking at the conversion of reified macro-distributions, which we have constructed by taking survey aggregations as if they were real things with fixed transituational values, into the actual distribution of advantages in situational practice. For instance:

Occupational prestige surveys show most people believe physicists, medical doctors, and professors have very good jobs, above business executives, entertainers, and politicians, and that these in turn rank above plumbers and truck drivers. Does such consensus show anything more than a pattern of how people tend to talk when they are asked extremely abstract, uncontextualized questions? Although surveys show that "professor" ranks high as a bare category, any specification ("economist," "sociologist," "chemist") brings down the prestige rating (Treiman 1977); further specification ("assistant professor," "junior college professor") brings it down yet further. "Scientist" and especially "physicist" rank very high in recent surveys, but does this mean that most people would like to sit next to a physicist at a dinner party? "Plumber" may rank low in the survey, but in practice their income outranks many educationally credentialed white-collar employees, and this may translate into material resources to dominate most life situations; plumbers may sit in the box seats at the stadium while white-collar workers are in the remote grandstand. What is the real-life standing of construction workers when they display a style of outdoor muscular activity that receives respect in a time when the prestigious style of automobile is the big trucklike "sports utility vehicle"? Occupational prestige can be understood in a realistic way only if we can survey situations of occupational encounters, and judge the actual situational stratification that takes place.

The common interpretation of years of education as the key to the hierarchy of stratification, either as principal indicator or as major component of a composite index, gives a skewed picture of micro-situa-

tional stratification. Mere correlation between years of schooling and income is an aggregate of outcomes that hides rather than reveals how educational stratification operates. Years of schooling are not a homogeneous currency: years in different kinds of schools are not equivalent in terms of what kinds of subsequent educational and occupational channels one can enter. For example, years in an elite prep school or highly ranked private college have no particular value for one's occupational level, unless they are translated into admission into a particular kind of schooling at the next higher level. It is valuable to attend a liberal arts college well known by graduate school admissions officers if one is going on to specialized graduate education in fields connected with one's undergraduate specialty, but it gives no special advantage, and may even be counterproductive, if one immediately enters the labor force. Educational credentials should be regarded as a particular kind of Zelizer currency, valuable in specific circuits of exchange but not outside of those circuits.

It is the point where years of schooling are translated into recognized credentials that they leap in social value; while those credentials themselves fluctuate in their consequences, depending both upon the aggregate amount of competition among credential holders at a particular historical time (credential inflation), and also upon the extent to which credentials are earmarked for particular kind of specialized jobs or professional licensing barriers (see studied cited in Collins 2002). Years of education are only a vague proxy for what kinds of credentials people hold, and that in turn gives only a vague picture of what micro-situational uses they have in people's lives. We need a micro-distributional research program to look at educational stratification; this would include both the situational advantages and disadvantages of official recognition at each level of school experience, from elementary on through secondary and advanced, and thereafter into the occupational and sociable encounters of adult lives. It does not automatically hold that a student who performs well by the official criteria of the school system will enjoy micro-situational advantages. In poverty-level urban black secondary schools, the student who gets good grades typically receives much negative interaction from peers, who accuse him / her of "acting white" or thinking that she or he is better than they; they do not rank high in the immediate community stratification but low. Many such high-achieving students give way under micro-situational peer pressure and do not go further in the school system (Anderson 1999, 56, 93-97).

The micro-situational critique holds a fortiori for inferences from survey attitude data to depictions of a larger social structure. The fact that approximately 95 percent of Americans say they believe in God

(Greeley 1989, 14) says little about how religious American society is. Comparisons of survey responses with actual attendance show that people strongly exaggerate how often they go to church (Hardaway et al. 1993, 1998); and in-depth probings of religious beliefs in informal conversation shows quite disparate and, from a theological viewpoint, largely heretical beliefs lumped under survey responses that seem to show conformity (Halle 1984, 253–69). Similarly, we ought to be suspicious of survey reports on how much discrimination by race or gender exists—or sexual harassment, experience of child abuse, etc.—until these are backed up by attempts at situational surveys that do not rely on reconstructions, one-sided recollections of social interactions, or opinions. Answers to such questions are ideological and often partisan, subject to social movement mobilization and waves of attention in the public media or by particular professional interest groups. To say this is not to take a position that most social problems are exaggerated by surveys; under some conditions, they may be minimized and underestimated. The point is that we will not know with any high degree of plausibility until we shift our conceptual gestalt, away from accepting macro-aggregate data as inherently objective, and toward the translation of all social phenomena as a distribution of micro-situations. We need to be open to the possibility that the actual experience of stratification in social encounters is highly fluctuating, subject to situational contestation; and that to understand stratification, above all in present historical circumstances, we need a theory of the mechanisms of micro-situational dominance. These mechanisms might be connected to our older hierarchic image of economic, political, and cultural power; but they might not; or the connection may be becoming increasingly tenuous. Why this is happening would call for a historical theory of change in micro-situational circumstances.

Sociologists, like most highly educated persons on the left side of the political spectrum, are so deeply imbued with the hierarchic image that we react with cynical amusement to instances of the officially illegitimate privilege in everyday life. We consider it sophisticated to pass around stories of the corruption of police officers, such as their withholding traffic tickets from the elite or in return for bribes, and regard the political world as made up of those who have “clout” or “backdoor influence.” Yet to what extent is this folk belief, untested by situational evidence that may go to the contrary? A former government official related this experience to the author: Stopped for speeding by a state police officer, he said, “Do you know who I am? I’m your boss.” (The official was head of the state agency under which the state highway patrol was located.) The officer replied, “My boss is the people of the state of [X],” and proceeded to write the ticket. The official was politi-

cally very liberal, yet he narrated this incident with indignation, outraged that the underground system of entitlement did not work for him. One could interpret this as an instance of micro-situational stratification. The patrol officer, with bureaucratic impunity, could exercise situational power over his own superior, much in the way a “whistle-blower” has official immunity to report violations of organizational superiors. Further interviewing with patrol officers suggests another dimension of the situation. In this state, members of the law enforcement community, when stopped for a traffic violation, express their membership by the code words “I should have known better,” and then offer to show identification. Patrol officers do make exceptions to official rules, but they do so in a ritual of solidarity and equality; they react negatively to attempts at imposing hierarchic authority.

MACRO- AND MICRO-SITUATIONAL CLASS, STATUS, AND POWER

As yet we lack situational surveys. The best we can do is to sketch what the contemporary situation of societies like the United States appears to be at the turn of the twenty-first century. I will suggest a micro-translation of the Weberian dimensions of class, status and power.

Economic Class as Zelizer Circuits

Economic class is certainly not disappearing. On the macro-level, the distribution of wealth and income has been becoming increasingly unequal, both within societies and on a world scale (Sanderson 1999, 346–356). What does this translate into in terms of the distribution of life experiences? Let us divide the question into material wealth as consumption experiences, and wealth as control over occupational experiences. Extremely large amounts of wealth are virtually impossible to translate into consumption experiences. The fact that owners of large blocks of stock in Microsoft or a few other commercial empires have net worth valued in the tens of billions of dollars (fluctuating according to stock market prices) does not mean that these individuals eat food, inhabit dwellings, wear clothes, or enjoy services greatly different from several million other individuals who may be ranked within the top 10 percent or so of the wealth distribution; and if one counts temporary experiences of luxury consumption, the overlap may be with an even wider group. Most wealth arising from financial ownership is confined within Zelizer circuits that stay close to their point of origin; by this I mean that individuals who have hundreds of millions of dollars or more can do little with that money except buy and

sell financial instruments; they can trade control of one segment of the financial world for control of another segment.

Wealth of this scale needs to be located not in consumption but in occupational experience. In terms of micro-situational experience, possession of large amounts of financial instruments means a life routine of frequently interacting with other financiers. The main attraction of having extremely large amounts of money may be the emotional energies and symbolic membership markers of being on the phone at all hours of the night and day, engaging in exciting transactions. In terms of sheer consumption power, the extremely wealthy have maxed out on what they can get as material benefits; yet most of them continue to work, sometimes obsessively lengthy hours, until advanced ages (some of the tycoons struggling for control over world media empires are men in their seventies and eighties). It appears that the value of money at this level is all in the micro-experience, the activity of wielding money in highly prestigious circuits of exchange. Money here translates into situational power, and into nothing else.

The main diversion of these circuits is that wealth from financial circuits can be shifted to charitable organizations, and thus out of the control of the original owners. From the point of view of the donor, this is trading wealth for honor, the moral prestige of being a charitable donor, often getting a concrete token of reward in the form of his or her personal reputation being broadcast by having a charitable organization named after oneself: the Rockefeller Foundation, Carnegie Corporation, Milken Foundation, and now the Gates Foundation, Soros Foundation, etc. Yet the two circuits of capital are not far apart. Foundation executives typically take their endowments and put them back into financial markets, drawing only small parts for operating expenses, their own salaries, and some stream of grants to nonprofit organizations. Counting up the personnel in the nonprofit sector, one arrives at a group of upper-middle or upper-class persons who are not many network links removed from personal contact with the financial magnates who donated the money in the first place (Ostrower 1995).

As one descends the hierarchy of wealth and income, the proportion of money that translates into actual material consumption increases. For the lowest income levels, money may be entirely a matter of consumption goods. Yet even here, as Zelizer (1994) documents, money that can be spent on prestigious or at least exciting social encounters tends to have preference over mere mundane money: immigrants to the early-twentieth-century United States who spent money on lavish funerals because these were key social ceremonies of display within the ethnic community; men whose priority is to have drinking money to participate with the all-male group at the saloon; prostitutes whose

money is spent on the locally prestigious "action" style of drug parties, while their welfare checks go towards household expenses.

Let us conceive of the entire structure of economic class as a variety of circuits of money used to enact particular kinds of social relations. I am not speaking here of social relations as status groups, communities of leisure sociability analytically distinct from classes; but rather of the interactional enactment of the economic class structure, the world of occupations, commerce, credit, and investment. The "upper class" are those who engage in circulating money as ownership, and in the process linking tightly with one another in webs of negotiation. Such persons may or may not be part of the Social Register or otherwise take part in the sociable gatherings and rituals of the upper class conceived as a status group, which in turn may consist of people who only passively receive money from spouses or inheritance, and who do not take part in the actual circuits of financial exchange. Thus, contrary to the Bourdieu model that sees cultural activity as reinforcing economic dominance, and vice versa, I suggest that the upper-class status group tends to siphon off economic capital from the circuits in which it is generated, and gradually loses touch with the anchoring that creates and perpetuates wealth. Money is process, not thing; the upper class is a circuit of financial activity, and to withdraw from that activity is gradually to be left behind. Upper-class status group snobbery about "old money" versus "nouveau riche" reverses the actual situation of economic power.¹

We have yet to map out the actual structure of the circuits of monetary exchange for a given historical period (such as our own). Roughly, we might recognize the following:

1. A financial elite of active participants in financial transactions on the scale where particular individuals can wield sufficient blocks of capital that they personally count as reputations in financial coalitions. Their experience of financial circuits is personal, in contrast to the impersonal participation of the next category.

2. An investing class (largely drawn, in more conventional terms, from upper-middle and lower-upper classes) who have enough money from highly paid occupations or direct ownership of business enterprises to act as players in the game of financial investments (the stock market, real estate, etc.) but who are anonymous participants, without access to personal circuits among the deal-makers. Their micro-situational economic reality consists in reading market reports, talking with their brokers, circulating financial gossip, and bragging as part of their conversational capital among sociable acquaintances. This group is depicted by advocates of the neoliberal ideology as comprising everyone

in modern societies, an ideology of classlessness through universal ownership of small bits of market capital. The ideology ignores differences in the social circuits of capital that I am presently describing; but it does reflect an aspect of reality that the strictly macro-hierarchical view of class has difficulty conceptualizing.

3. An entrepreneurial class that uses its money directly to hire employees, purchase and sell goods, thus typically participating in local or specialized circuits of exchange. Its key micro-situational experiences are those of bargaining repeatedly with particular persons in their organization or industry; that is to say, members of this class operate in a world of personal reputations, both their own and those of others.² Unlike members of other classes or economic circuits, their routine experience includes the monitoring of competitors in order to seek out market niches as described in the network theory of Harrison White (1981, 2002). Entrepreneurial circuits tend to be invisible to most people, and are visible only within very local or specialized communities; hence the social prestige of individuals in such positions, as measured in occupational prestige surveys, may be modest. The actual amounts of money flowing through these circuits, and the income commanded by these individuals, can vary all the way from millions to tens of dollars; thus this sector spans virtually the entire class structure as conventionally laid out in a hierarchy of dollars.

4. Celebrities, which is to say, highly paid employees of organizations specializing in public entertainment (film, music, sports, etc.)—organizations that, in the nature of their business, aim at focusing public attention on a few individuals who are treated as stars (Leifer 1995). Athletes, in fact, are manual workers, at the bottom of a chain of command insofar as they take orders from coaches, and are hired and moved around by management. Some small proportion of them (necessarily a small proportion, since mass attention arenas are intrinsically competitive) have acquired the bargaining power for extremely high salaries, corresponding to the size of these markets for entertainment products. Celebrities as wealth holders face the same problem as the financial upper class in converting their wealth into consumption. Many of them are cheated by their agents or brokers who offer to connect them to the unfamiliar world of financial investments; those who do best seem to be those who convert their wealth back into financial control of organizations in the same entertainment industry that they came from (e.g., hockey stars who buy a hockey team). This suggests the following rule: those who keep their wealth within the same Zeller circuit in which it originated are best able to hold its monetary

value, and to maximize their micro-situational payoffs of experiential prestige as well.

5. A variety of middle-class / working-class circuits shaped by occupational markets and the networks of information and contact that sustain them (Tilly and Tilly 1994). Here money is not translated into ownership in any other form than mere consumer property. There are suggestions in the empirical sociology of economic networks that for large, one-shot expenditures (houses, cars, etc.) such persons spend their money in networks of personal contact, whereas they spend small amounts on repetitive consumer expenditures in impersonal retail organizations (DiMaggio and Louch 1998). Some of these networks withdraw money from the other circuits of exchange in the form of profit and thus constitute a hierarchy (or more likely, several kinds of hierarchical relations). We have yet to measure, and to conceptualize, the mechanisms by which "profit" moves across circuits. In general, it appears that those located "lower down" in the circuits have difficulty seeing what goes on in the circuits above them, let alone finding social and financial entrée into those networks. For instance, the lower down one goes in the social class hierarchy, the more individuals' conceptions of those above them simplify into ideas about celebrities [4], who are actually the most peripheral of all rich people to the circuits of wealth.

6. Disreputable or illegal circuits, ranging from gray markets outside the official tax and licensing system, to markets of criminalized commodities and services (drugs, sex, arms, age-restricted alcohol and tobacco, etc.), and to stolen property and outright robbery. All these are circuits, entry to which (and competition over) make or break the individual in their illicit / criminal career. The sheer amount of money flowing through some of these circuits and accruing to particular individuals may be substantial, overlapping with middle or even occasionally high levels of the income hierarchy abstractly conceived. But although cross-over among these networks (money-laundering) is considered highly desirable by some participants, the weight of social organization from both sides is against much interconversion of currencies and melding of circuits of exchange. Illicit circuits avoid the rake-off by which the government is normally involved in all the reputable circuits of exchange, and through which governments are usually committed to regulating and providing infrastructure in the interests of the members of those circuits. The very fact that some of these circuits are illicit means they must be kept hidden from the regulators of the official circuits; the result is that the rituals and symbols of everyday encounters within these circuits are very different in tone. Tacit

recognition of these differences are a mechanism by which persons conceive of moral exclusions among classes (documented by Lamont 1992, 2000). Monetary circuits comprise different cultures, we might say, bearing in mind that "culture" is not a reified thing but merely shorthand for referring to the style of micro-situational encounters.

7. An ultimate lower class on the margins of society might be conceptualized as comprising those outside any circuits of monetary exchange. Yet even the homeless, beggars, and scavengers, are involved in the tail end of various circuits, receiving donations, handouts in kind, discarded or stolen goods. Analytically, this group would include all those who receive a trickle downward from the more actively mutual circuits of exchange, including welfare recipients and other entitlements (pensions, etc.) What makes this group experience such dishonor is not merely their low level of material consumption, but the fact that they are severely circumscribed in how much further exchange they can do with what they receive: currencies they receive are often earmarked for certain kinds of expenditures only (e.g., food stamps); gifts in kind are also largely already specified as to their use value (Zelizer 1994). Some exchange may go on even here, largely on the barter level. Denizens of this level of monetary stratification have their micro-situational encounters shaped in a fashion that is experientially different than any other class: barter relations are highly specific, lacking the sense of symbolic honor and freedom that goes from possessing financial tokens that are widely negotiable.

Micro-translating economic class shows, not a hierarchical totem-pole of classes neatly stacked up one above another, but overlapping transactional circuits of vastly different scope and content. Because these circuits differ so much in the particularity or anonymity of connections, in the kind of monitoring that is done and in orientation toward economic manipulation or consumption, individuals' experiences of economic relations put them in different subjective worlds, even if these are invisible from a distance.

Status Group Boundaries and Categorical Identities

Status is one of the loosest terms in the sociological vocabulary. Leaving aside the vacuous usage of "status" as stratified rank in general, and confining it to a specific sphere of cultural honor, we may distinguish several meanings. The most abstract is status as measured by occupational prestige surveys. This decontextualized questioning about categories may show little more than the distribution of ideologies about events outside people's own experience. This leaves two

main versions: the Weberian concept of status groups, as a real organization of social networks; and deference, as micro-situational behavior.

Weber (1922/1968, 932–33) defines status group as a community sharing a cultural lifestyle, a recognized social identity, and publically (even legally) recognized honor or social ranking. The clearest examples of this ideal type are medieval Estates (clergy, aristocracy, bourgeoisie, peasantry); the term is more widely applicable to ethnic and religious communities and other lifestyle groups. Weber promoted the term to contrast with economic class, in that status groups are not mere statistical categories but groups with real social organization. Status groups may also be organized around economic classes, provided that these classes have a cultural distinctiveness and enact themselves as groups. For example, the economic upper class may be organized into "high society" and listed in the Social Register. It is a historical question whether class-based status groups continue to have as strong boundaries as in previous periods, or whether economic class has reverted to a mainly statistical category. If status groups structure life experience along different lines than class in the abstract, such a historical shift would mean that class identity, conflict, and capacity for mobilized action would be considerably weakened.

To what extent is there closure of status communities—how sharply are they bounded in everyday life? And how much ranking is there among status groups—when are they neatly aligned in a publicly recognized hierarchy? When are they mere horizontal divisions, like mutually alien tribes? Historical change can occur in either aspect: cultural lifestyles among status groups may be homogenizing; and / or groups may assemble less often, and their identities may become less salient as to where members spend their time. The Social Register still exists, but members may spend little time in these circles as compared to other settings (e.g., with entertainment celebrities), and their gatherings receive much less public attention than at the turn of the twentieth century (Amory 1960; for historical comparisons: Annett and Collins 1975; Elias 1983). Similarly for noneconomic-based status groups: many ethnic and religious groups do not structure their members' lives much, receding into mere statistical categories without relevance for life experience (Waters 1990).³

The most important contemporary research on stratified group boundaries is Lamont (1992, 2000). In Weberian terminology, Lamont is describing how occupational classes are turned into bounded status groups, and similarly for racial group boundaries. Lamont's interview method gives a summary of how working-class and upper-middle class men reflect on their boundaries, and describes the vocabulary in terms of which they legitimate those boundaries. These vocabularies

or ideologies of class and race boundaries differ between the United States and France, Lamont emphasizes, because of differing national vocabularies or cultural repertoires deriving from political histories of those states. This research strategy provides evidence that some group boundaries and cultural judgments as not merely constructed situationally, but derive from cultural repertoires that circulate widely and originated at great distance from the local situation, so as to be all but impervious to situational influences.

Consider, however, Lamont's findings: these arise from the micro-situation of talking with an interviewer who brings up the question of group identity and its relationship with outsiders, and brings this up in a much more explicit manner than generally occurs in ordinary conversations. The interviewed men put on their best front to legitimate themselves. White American working-class men describe themselves as disciplined and hard-working, set off by contrast with their complaint against blacks and the lower classes generally, whom they see through a stereotype of welfare chiselers and criminals. It appears that the white working class have created their self-image as disciplined workers mainly by this contrast, since ethnographic studies of workers on the job have generally shown a style of alienation from the demands of work, attempts to control the work pace, and preference for their private lives over their work lives (see note 9 in chapter 3). The same pattern of creating an ideology about one's own group by contrasting it with an antagonistic group is found among black American working-class men, who describe themselves as caring and having compassion for their fellows; this self-description is set up in opposition to their view of whites, who are seen—no doubt accurately enough, in light of the concerns of black people for relief from the heritage of racism—as domineering and lacking in compassion. The ideological element in this becomes apparent from Anderson's (1999) ethnographic data on interactional pattern of males in the black inner city, which shows not a predominance of compassion and solidarity but the situationally dominant "code of the street," a display of toughness, wariness and readiness to resort to violence. Like their white counterparts, black working-class men appear to be creating an ideology that reflects not so much the actual patterns of their own behavior but a favorable view of themselves in the light of the perceived faults of the most salient outsiders.

Similarly, Lamont's (1992) interviews with upper-middle-class American men yields a picture in which they state their boundaries in terms of their dislike of those who lack moral standards of honesty and truthfulness, and thereby present themselves as people who value moral standards above all else. Yet these are presumably the same peo-

ple who are viewed from the outside by Lamont's white working-class sample (both groups are situated in the New York metropolitan area) in just the opposite way, as lacking in integrity and straightforwardness. The same people are either honest or dishonest, straightforward or devious, depending on whether they are recounting their own ideology from the inside or are depicted by the adjacent class that sees them from below. What Lamont's data show, then, is that generalized cultural vocabularies circulating in rather large national groups are pressed into service by individuals situated in different relationships to each other. The use of cultural repertoires also results in situationally constructed ideologies, each one a narrative drama in which individuals portray themselves as part of a group of good guys whose characteristics maximally contrast with another group of bad guys.

Status groups have varying degrees of micro-situational reality: some are loosely overlapping networks, only segments of which ever see one another face to face (e.g., all Italian-Americans). Some may be closely bounded because they enact their membership and their lines of exclusion by who takes part in social encounters.

Here it is useful to array situations along a continuum from formalized and tightly focused to informal and relatively unfocused interaction. Since every interactional situation can be assessed in terms of the strength of the ingredients for IRs, this is tantamount to a continuum from very strong to very weak rituals. In everyday life, this continuum underlies the typology presented in figure 7.1.

Status group relations occur largely within the middle category, sociable situations, although to some extent also in official ceremonies. Sociable occasions vary in their degree of formality. At the highly focused end of the continuum, there is ritual in the formal sense: scheduling is carried out in advance; the event may be widely publicized; what is done follows traditional scripts and is possibly rehearsed; here we find weddings, traditional dances, testimonial dinners. In the old-fashioned etiquette of the higher classes (described in Goffman 1959, 1963; Annett and Collins 1975), there was considerable scripting of the details of behavior: the ritual procession of gentlemen escorting ladies in to dinner, seating guests, toasts and other drinking rituals, polite forms of conversation, card games, and other collective amusements after dinner. Descending toward less sharply focused or more "casual" situations are largely improvised interaction rituals: lunches and other shared eating with acquaintances (often as a friendly offstage framing for business talk), parties, attending commercial entertainment events.⁴

At the upper end, this continuum overlaps with formal ceremonies such as political speeches, government ceremonies, parades, school graduations, church services. All ceremonies enact social member-

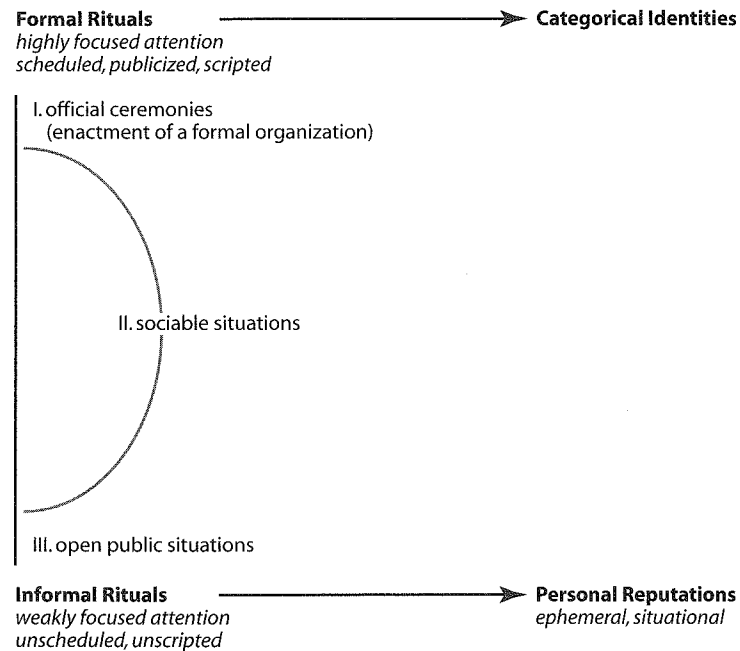


Figure 7.1 Continuum of formal and informal rituals.

ships, although some connect much looser communities than others. Political speeches may attempt to assemble and affirm the belonging of all the citizens of a nation, the members of a political party, or supporters of a particular candidate, but the identities that they enact may take up rather small portions of people's lives, peripheral to more regularly enacted status group activities. Weberian status groups are located toward the middle of the continuum; here rituals imply more intimate and more frequently enacted commitments. Still further down is the ephemeral civility of the minor Goffmanian interaction rituals: casual conversations, shared greetings, little jokes, bits of gossip, small talk about the weather, or how long a wait there is for a bus. At the bottom end, relationships dissolve into unfocused interaction: the public crowd or just physical copresence on a street or some other widely accessible place (Goffman 1963, 1971, 1981). Yet even here, Goffman notes, there is at least tacit monitoring; amplifying the point, we shall see how behavior in public places varies considerably in how much restraint, politeness, or contentiousness is enacted. Here, too, can be variations in situational stratification, even if it is highly ephemeral.



Figure 7.2 Eton boys in upper-class regalia arriving for cricket match, cheekily (and uneasily) observed by working-class boys (England, 1930s).

This continuum provides a backdrop for a situational survey of both status group inclusion / exclusion and deference behavior. Let us highlight two subdimensions: (a) how much time group rituals take up of people's lives, whether they are regularly enacted or occasional and hence represent everyday or episodic communities; (b) at the moment that a ritual community is activated, how much enthusiasm and solidarity it experiences; regularly enacted status groups are not necessarily stronger in generating enthusiastic commitments than temporary ones.⁵ Accordingly, I will suggest two generalizations.

Where there is a repeated round of formal, highly focused ritual occasions (weddings, dinners, festivals) involving the same people, status group boundaries are strong. Who is included and excluded from membership is clear to everyone, inside and outside the status group. All the more so to the degree that ritual gatherings are publicly visible: for example, when the "Four Hundred" met to dine and dance in the ballroom of the most luxurious hotel in New York City, and crowds of the non-elite classes lined the sidewalks to watch them enter and exit, the status group boundary and its ranking system was widely public. Here status has a thing-like quality, following the principle, *the more ceremonial and public the ritual enactment, the more reified the social mem-*

bership category. Conversely, *the less scripted, advance-scheduled, and widely announced the sociable gathering, the more invisible the social boundaries*. A sociometric order may still exist, in the sense that some persons habitually associate with others; but their gatherings convey only a very local recognition of ties—personal connections rather than categorical identities or statuses. Such privatized and fragmented networks may continue to sustain cultural differences, in that distinct cultural capitals circulate within particular sociable networks; but they are invisible to outsiders, not widely recognizable as lifestyle groups.

Status group boundaries, and hence categorical identities, blur to the extent that they are grounded in weakly focused sociable rituals. Full-blown Weberian status groups, recognizable by visible signs (at one time, even mandated by sumptuary regulations; for a Japanese example, see Ikegami 2004) can exist only when the round of everyday life is highly formalized. Under these conditions, people carry categorical identities (“gentleman,” “aristocrat,” “burgher,” “peasant,” “common laborer”—even if these are no longer legal categories). Toward the other end of the continuum, identities are increasingly personal. A particular person is known by name, among a smaller or wider social audience, and may have a particular reputation. Widely known reputations are rare, confined to particular athletic stars, actors, other famous or notorious individuals: the judge hearing the O.J. Simpson trial, not judges in general. Most individuals are known only inside local networks, and invisible outside of them no matter their fame inside. In many ways this is a hierarchy of fame or attention rather than a hierarchy of honor. In sum, *formal rituals generate categorical identities; informal rituals generate merely personal reputations.*

The second generalization casts light on what kind of situational status may exist even in the absence of recognized status group rituals and boundaries. Regardless of how formal or informal the ritual is, rituals also vary in intensity. Some rituals are more successful than others in creating collective experience: some are flat, perfunctory, mere going through the forms; others build up shared emotions (sentimentality, tears, awe, laughter, anger against outsiders or scapegoats), and regenerate feelings of solidarity. Intensity variations are possible at any point on the continuum: a formal ceremony (a wedding, a speech, a ball) can fail or succeed, just as a party can be a bore, a friendly amusement, or a memorable carouse. Here we have a second continuum: situations rank in terms of the attention they generate; situations have higher and lower prestige, depending on how they are enacted. At high levels on the formality or focus continuum, the intensity of the ritual does not matter as much; society is structured by formal inclusions and exclusions at such ritual occasions, and the resulting categor-

ical identities are pervasive and inescapable, so that rituals may be rather boring and still convey strong membership. As we descend toward relatively informal and unfocused rituals, more effort needs to be put into making them emotionally intense, if they are to be experienced as having much effect upon feelings of social position. This may explain why contemporary Americans often are “hot dogs,” making noisy attention displays when they are at sports or entertainment events, large parties, and other public occasions.

Thus the second generalization: *to convey an effect, the more informal or improvised rituals are, the more that participants need to be ostentatious, to make blatant appeals to emotion and to visible or highly audible action, if they are to make any impression or reputation.* Those starved for institutionalized ritual status (e.g., black lower class; teenagers and young people generally) tend to seek out means of intense situational dramatization.⁶

The dimension of ritual intensity stratifies people in terms of their personal access. The individual who is at the center of attention in a sociable gathering—the life of the party, the class clown, the ceremonial leader (in Bales’s [1950, 1999] small group studies, the expressive leader)—has the highest personal status in that situation, and in networks where his or her reputation circulates through conversation. The intensity of the situation might also be generated by a sense of threatening violence and display of the ritual of challenge. Anderson (1999, 78, 99) notes that “staging areas” in the inner city are densely populated places where youths go to show off, and receive a sense of status just from being there; in such settings, fights are referred to as “show-time.” Such courting of risk in order to show off one’s character in handling the situation is what Goffman (1967) referred to as “where the action is.” Further examples include gambling scenes where a good deal of money is risked; as Goffman (1969) suggests, a similar structure may account for the appeal of highly respectable, even elite forms of economic action, such as manipulating financial markets. An abstract status hierarchy such as occupational prestige ranking is far indeed from the distribution of experiences that make up micro-situational status. A geeky intellectual physicist or somber surgeon may rank high in the abstract, but would likely cut a poor figure at a youth party. Again we see the need for a new kind of survey of the distribution of intensity, focus, and membership in situations.

Intense sociable rituals may exist here and there across the landscape, but are invisible to most people. This clearly differs from a society historically in which the community knew who was fighting the duel, who was the belle of the ball or the Debutante of the Season; that is, a situation in which personal reputations were anchored within an

institutionalized status group structure. Today personal reputations are broadcast only to the extent that rituals are visible within contemporary society, and only inside those specific networks where the rituals take place. Such enclosed networks or "status goldfish bowls" exist today mainly among children. Small children in day care centers fall into cliques: little groups of bullies and their scapegoats, popular play leaders and their followers, fearful or self-sufficient isolates (Montagner et al. 1988). High schools probably have the most visible and highly structured cliques—preppies, jocks, religious evangelicals, druggies, rebels, nerds (formerly known as grinds)—evidence on this goes back for decades (e.g., Coleman 1961, Stinchcombe 1964); contemporary high schools have more complex clique structures, mainly by addition of religious and intellectual / artistic counterculture cliques (Milner 2004). If there is a trend, it is in the direction of more overt conflict among different status groups, as manifested in school violence by outcast or status subordinates against dominant cliques.

Schools are one of the few arenas in which quasi-status-groups can be formed, with institutionalized lifestyle differences, social honor or dishonor, and categorical identities going beyond personal reputation. These are quasi-status-groups insofar as membership in them is not permanent, but they are real in their social effects during the years that they shape youths' lives. The local structure of youth groups is formed against the backdrop of a larger categorical exclusion. Youth are one of the few groups in modern society who are singled out for subjection to special legal disabilities and restrictions, in ways similar to those of legally defined medieval estates: youths are excluded from ritual forms of leisure consumption, such as drinking or smoking; they are the only group that is divided off by an officially enforced taboo on sex with nongroup members. The world is segregated into places where youths cannot go; significantly, these are places where sociability rituals occur (places of carousing such as bars and parties), or places of entertainment where the most intense forms of sociable excitement—sexual activity—is depicted; the effect is to dramatize a hierarchy of ritual intensity reserved for adults. The official adult world, as enunciated by politicians on formal public occasions, rationalizes these exclusions as protecting youth from evils, an attitude that further sharpens the moral divide between the subjective worlds of adults in their official mode and of youths' experience. The real-life situational effect is that young people, whether they are below a limit (at one time 18 years old, now generally raised to 21) or are somewhat older, routinely experience demands to prove their age, both from petty officials and from ticket-takers, ushers, and shop clerks who are transformed into officials who can demand subservience and exercise exclusion. Youth are thus the

only contemporary group that is officially subjected to petty humiliations because of their categorical status, in this respect resembling black people who are unofficially subjected to similar tests; both groups are assumed dishonorable until proven otherwise. This is a reason why youth culture is sympathetic to black culture, and emulates especially its most rebellious elements.

The pervasive everyday enactment of group barriers supports a youth counterculture. Youth styles of demeanor are shaped directly in opposition to adult styles: wearing hats backward because the normal style is forward; wearing baggy pants, torn clothes because these are counter-stylish (documented by Anderson 1999, 112). The counterculture starts at the border with adult culture and proceeds in the opposite direction; a status hierarchy develops inside the youth community building further and further away from adult respectability. Over the years there has been escalation in the amount, size, and location of body piercing, of tattoos and body branding. Many of these practices resemble those used in a hierarchy of religious status among Indian *fakirs*, holy outcasts demonstrating their religious charisma by the extremes to which they are willing to demonstrate their distance from ordinary life. There are a variety of cultural styles and clique structures within the youth quasi-status-group; the more extreme forms of counter-adult culture occupy one kind of niche, while others (athletes, preps, grinds, evangelicals) make compromises with or even positive commitments to the respectable adult world they expect to join. Nevertheless, the anti-adult counterculture in one degree or another appears to be the most pervasive; we may expect that every escalation of adult moral crusades that ritually demean youth will be matched by a corresponding degree of polarization in the youth counterculture.

I have argued that youth counterculture is anchored in the publically enacted, legally enforced exclusions practiced against teenagers that give the group a stigmatized corporate identity. Yet the youth counterculture is widespread among young adults as well. This occurs because of several structural continuities: young people as a whole are poor in autonomous economic resources; when they hold jobs, these are typically at the most menial service level; the inflation of educational credentials has expanded the length of time they stay in school and thus occupy a status that is outside adult occupational ranks. In addition, the mass media industries take the youth culture as their target audience, since they are the most active consumers of entertainment; hence youth culture with its showy alienation is also among the most recognizable set of emblems in the otherwise privatized public consciousness. And there is one economic elite, entertainment celebrities, who tend to display the counterculture symbols of their fans; al-

though celebrities are outside the main circuits of economic power, nevertheless they are the most visible successful people in the class structure. Counterculture styles are thus reinforced not just as signs of alienation on the part of the status oppressed, but as positive status emblems both within the youth community itself and in the world of free-floating public reputation. If contemporary society mostly lacks visible status group boundaries, the one quasi-status-group boundary that officially exists, youth vs. adult, provides publicly recognizable markers of status hierarchy throughout everyday life that reverse the solid but invisible structures of class and power.

Categorical Deference and Situational Deference

On the most fine-grained micro-situational level, we come to deference behavior—the fleeting gestures by which one individual defers to another. In tightly organized societies historically, everyday life was filled with blatant gestures of deference—bowing low, deferential forms of address (“My Lord,” “My Lady,” “If you please, Mistress,”), deferential tones of voice (described in Chesterfield 1774/1992; for Japanese examples, see Ikegami 1995). All these are examples of asymmetrical rituals. Goffman (1967), on the other hand, describes most rituals in mid-twentieth century as mutual or symmetrical: showing polite recognition of others by handshakes, greetings and small talk, hat-raising, door-holding. Individuals reciprocated, thereby showing their status equality; but Goffman also indicated that being included in a little circle of reciprocity was itself a display of a status order, since higher status persons were those who practiced the most elaborate manners, and excluded those who could not properly perform mutual deference ceremonies.

It would be useful to have a survey of how much and what kind of deference is shown across situations in contemporary society. Deference behavior can be mapped onto our typology of situations. Ignore for a moment how much deference is displayed at work (better to consider this later as a form of organizational power) and the kind of deference built into formally scripted ceremonies.⁷ Most interesting would be a survey of deference in relatively unstructured sociable situations, and in unfocused publics.

Contemporary people, I suggest, receive relatively little categorical deference. Most deference is by personal reputation and that depends on being in the presence of the network where one is personally known. A famous sociologist will get some deference (mainly in terms of speaking rights in conversation) at sociology meetings, and at parties with other sociologists, but not outside this sphere; most such pro-

fessionals get what deference they experience inside gatherings of a subspecialty. Our survey would want to discover how many specialized networks exist that pay attention to one another enough to give honor or dishonor within their ranks. Such deference distributions are found not only in occupational communities but in various kinds of voluntary associations and interest networks, connoisseurs, arenas of display, and competition. There are a huge number of voluntary associations in the United States, and each likely contains an internal status hierarchy. Even though most of these hierarchies are oblivious to one another, a considerable proportion of Americans, perhaps as much as half the population of adults, may experience some small parts of their lives in little realms where they are given mild temporary reputational deference.

Outside such specialized organizations and networks, transsituational deference is largely confined to celebrities. Such figures are manufactured by the mass media, notably those in the entertainment business, which derives its income largely from promoting and selling “star” identities; news media also create famous identities (politicians, criminals, and subjects of human interest stories) and sell information about them. The mass media are the only place where there is a recurrent focus of attention shared by anything close to a majority of the society; this not only helps build up an intensity of significance around those characters, but makes it easier for news and entertainment organizations to fill their regularly scheduled quota of offerings to the public. (In the news world this is called “milking a story,” especially in “dead” times when no “breaking news” is happening.) The reputational hierarchy is exceedingly steep; outside the elite is a vast majority of anonymous persons, that is to say, anonymous outside of their own occupational or acquaintance circles.

Although celebrities get most of what deference there is in contemporary society, they receive much less deference than upper-class dominants in previous history. People rarely bow or give way before them; instead they try to get close to them to touch them, to get some token from them (photo, clothes, autograph); they treat them less like aristocracy than like a totemic animal in a tribal religion. The analogy is fitting since totemism is the religion of internally egalitarian groups, and the modern public is egalitarian. Touching a celebrity and carrying away a bit of him or her fits Durkheim’s description of how people behave in the presence of sacred objects, drawn in magnetically to share in a portion of collective *mana*. The celebrity is one of the few focal points in the modern attention space through which collective emotional energy can be revved up to a high level. In a Durkheimian interpretation, worship of a celebrity is the group worshipping itself—worshipping its

capacity to get excited and drawn out of one's mundane life into something transcendent. Note, too, that publicity and attention to celebrities can just as well be negative as positive; scandals about celebrities are extremely popular (need I mention the O. J. Simpson trial?)⁸ These, too, are forms of highly focused attention; scandalous emotions are especially effective in building up shared intensity. Celebrity deference is of a peculiar kind, less hierarchical than participatory.⁹

In a Durkheimian sense, the celebrities elevated by mass media attention are the only human beings today who can serve as sacred objects, emblems of the collective consciousness of any considerable part of society. It is no wonder, then, that ordinary individuals attempt to appropriate for themselves a portion of this *mana* or emblematic force, through the sympathetic magic of wearing clothing similar to that worn by celebrities or bearing their identifying marks. Tribal people painted the totems of their clan upon their bodies (Lévi-Strauss 1958/1963); contemporary people, especially those without eminence in occupations that give them at least a specialized sphere of categorical identity, wear jackets bearing the number and name of athletic heroes, and t-shirts printed with the pictures of entertainment stars. In a social structure that sustains no visible status groups, much less clan identities, only the media stars serve as emblems expressing participation in the collective energy of a focused group.

The nearest approach to deference in the classical sense, displaying overt gestures of dominance and subordination, respect and disrespect, is found in the black inner city. Elijah Anderson (1999) describes a situation in which the majority of black people are trying to pursue lives according to normal standards of the larger society: jobs, educational attainment, family and church life. But due to poverty, discrimination, and, above all, lack of police protection in the inner city, a "code of the street" prevails in which each individual (and especially each young male) tries to display physical toughness, to convey that it is dangerous to bother him. There is a good deal of demanding deference from others; fights often break out because of small signals such as looking at a man for a long fraction of a second, interpreted as hostile "staring," and locking eyes can lead to a killing (Anderson 1999, 41, 127). Uncivil behavior—blaring loud music, leaving one's car parked in the middle of the street—is generally ignored or accepted by most residents to avoid confrontations. Although two codes or ritual orders operate—the ostentatious toughness of the "code of the street," and the normal code of Goffmanian behavior in the surrounding society—the former dominates situationally in the black ghetto.

In the mainstream white community, the status order is invisible, or visible only within specialized networks; occupation and wealth does

not get deference, nor form visible status groups broadcasting categorical identities. Public interaction is an equality without much solidarity, an enactment of personal distance mitigated by a tinge of mutual politeness and shared casualness. Goffman (1963) calls it the order of civil disattention. As Goffman notes, this is not merely a matter of sheer indifference, since one needs to monitor others at a distance to avoid contact with them when they are close, ranging from little maneuverings of sidewalk traffic to avoid physical collision, to averting eyes and controlling micro-gestures in order not to intrude into the privacy of their personal space. In contrast, the status order of the black street code is openly ostentatious and often hostile. It broadcasts a blatant situational hierarchy of the tough and the dominated; here egalitarian encounters are typically a hostile egalitarianism, tested in violent conflict that can be reopened at any time. Dominant individuals demand control of the street space; others monitor them warily. Here the tacit monitoring of civil disattention is ratcheted upward into a much more focused and tense public situation. It is the dominated who display civil disattention, while the dominators demand it.¹⁰

The street code not only negates normal criteria of middle-class achievement and respectability, it is a full-fledged counterculture. Middle-class demeanor standards are taken as signs of timidity; in addition, display of any marks of conventional achievement (school, a disciplined work style, a licit job) are taken as status claims and thus implied insults to those who lack them. For this reason, Anderson argues, many "decent" or "square" black residents adopt the outward signs of the oppositional culture—wearing gang-style clothes and emblems, adopting the conversational style of the street dominants, playing the oppositional music, the scornful or angry sounds of rap. The code of the street becomes the publicly dominant culture: in part because straight youth adopt it as a protective front against the danger of violence; in part because the oppositional culture has situational prestige. The street code is a set of rituals that generate the most emotional intensity and dominate the focus of attention; the bland politeness and mild accomodativeness of normal Goffmanian social manners pales before it, and is unable to compete with it in the attention space.

This helps explain why the oppositional culture of the black lower class, rooted in violence, has been adopted as a prestigious demeanor style among groups whose life situation involves very little violent threat: middle-class white youth and certain stars of the entertainment media, practitioners of the "reverse snobbery" noted at the beginning of this paper. In detail, however, white counterculture style is not black street style. Black hoodlums favor expensive athletic clothes, flashy cars, sexy women displaying all the conventional erotic signs; white

counterculturers display torn clothes, body piercing, unshavenness, grubbiness, sexuality dramatized as kinky and grungy; black street toughs are not being casual, whereas white counterculture takes normal casualness to an extreme. The "code of the street" arises where dominance through violent threat is situationally projected, whereas middle-class youth and entertainment celebrities are presenting a purely symbolic rebellion, not a claim to physically dominate others.

What are the devices, the situational weapons by which the oppositional culture dominates interactions? In the black street situation, these are sheer coercive power and its threat: a display of muscles, as well as a demeanor indicating willingness to use weapons, and to fight at the slightest question of honor. Sexiness and good looks are prestigious, especially for women; these are keys to the sexual action scene, a focus of excitement and a contest to score sexual conquests and to display one's connections with the dominants of the street. Vocal prowess, especially in insults and repartée, is another situational weapon; it goes along with the use of prepackaged sounds of anger and scorn in rap music, and of loud noise generally through technological amplification to dominate the auditory attention space.

The black street situation looks like the extreme case of episodic situational resources prevailing over resources drawn from macro-structural connections. Nonimmediate connections are not entirely cut off, since street encounters are influenced by transsituational factors such as a person's reputation for ready violence or a past record of backing down; such (positive or negative) transsituational resources operate mainly in encounters where community members know one another personally or through gossip networks. The street encounter is also influenced by ties to kin or other allies, and by some local categorical status group markers such as gang emblems. These street encounters are near one end of the continuum, but they are not historically unique. The same "virtues" come to the fore—fighting prowess, physical strength, a ritualistic style of looking for challenges and risking one's life over honor and precedence, and a verbal culture of boasting and insults—in a number of other situations: among the best documented are the Homeric Greeks, and Viking Scandinavia at the period of the Norse sagas. All these are situations in which the state is very weak or nonexistent; power is in the hands of ad hoc bands of warriors, without even much continuity by kinship.¹¹

Even here, it would be simplistic to conclude that sheer violence is the basis of deference. It is always more effective to threaten than to fight, and coalitions are important even for the strongest. Accordingly, interaction in routinely threatening situations takes the form of rituals of intimidation and displays of honor. There is some suggestion in An-

derson's data that even the toughest "criminal element" does not merely prey on the weakest in the community; to build a reputation as tough, it is necessary to challenge someone else who is tough. Fights among Homeric heroes express the same structure, even though the literary picture is no doubt idealized. Thus even violence passes through the filter of ritualization if it is to be an effective device for situational domination.

In mainstream American society, public encounters are mildly accommodative; ghetto street styles are largely confrontational on the part of the situational dominants, and confrontation-avoiding, on the part of those who are situationally subordinated. Anderson (1999, 20) notes that black youths sometimes use the street code situationally to intimidate whites, venturing onto middle-class turf to do so. Mainstream white interactional style is based on background conditions in the macro-structure, the existence of a strong state and deep state penetration into everyday life by police, educational, and other regulatory agencies. White middle-class persons are used to long-distance organizational networks, operating in an impersonal style of bureaucratic regulation, controlling much of the conditions under which people encounter one another. Violence is to a considerable degree monopolized by state agents; it is not much of a factor in most daily encounters. When whites encounter the black street style, they are made to feel extremely uncomfortable—almost as in a Garfinkelian breaching experiment.

Yet it is not easy for whites to treat the black street code as simply criminal, since it operates with highly stylized rituals that tend to mask overt threats. In addition, since the public successes of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the official media of white society, and especially the cultural media of education and entertainment, has made a point of emphasizing racial equality and opposition to categorical discrimination. This egalitarianism of official pronouncements and in the ceremonial statements of the law courts, is reinforced by the normal style of middle-class public encounters, egalitarian casualness, including its general tendency to countenance any demeanor styles and behavior as long as they keep their ritual distance. As Goffman (1967) commented, our ritualism lets each individual walk through everyday life with a shell of privacy and forbearance, without strong ties of ritual membership, but also with a security from being intruded upon. People in this ritual style are unable to deal with a confrontational street style, with its blatant inequality of the situationally strong over the situationally weak. Middle-class whites following the Goffmanian code defer to confrontational blacks more than "decent" ghetto residents do, since the latter adopt the street code for situational protection. Encoun-

ters with whites thus tend to reinforce the performers of black street codes in their feelings of contempt for white social order (Anderson 1999); at the same time, the discomfort of whites, even unexpressed, helps reinforce an interactional dividing line that maintains the racial barrier.

Categorical identities have largely disappeared, replaced by pure local personal reputations in networks where one is known, and by anonymity outside. But if categorical identities are upheld by ritual barriers in interaction, black / white ritual standoffs between the street code and the Goffmanian public code are one of the few remaining bases for categorical identities.

D-Power and E-Power

Power is another conventionally reified concept. The Weberian definition, imposing one's will against opposition, is not yet sufficiently micro-translated. We may distinguish between the power to make other people give way in the immediate situation, and the power to make results happen. There is an old dispute about whether the latter necessarily involves the former; Parsons (1969) argued that power is not primarily zero-sum (I win, you yield) but a matter of social efficacy in which the entire collectivity accomplishes something it did not have before. Let us call the first D-power (deference-power or order-giving power), and the latter E-power (efficacy-power). The latter sometimes exists in micro-situations, but only if the result wanted can be carried out right before the order-giver's eyes.¹² Here D-power and E-power would coincide empirically. But in many situations D-power is formal or ritualistic: one person gives orders, in extreme cases with an imperious tone and demeanor, while the other acquiesces verbally and in bodily posture; but it remains a question as to whether the orders are actually carried out, and even if they are, whether the result will be what the order-giver wanted. D-power is always socially significant, even if it is completely severed from E-power; it is consequential for meaningful social experience, shaping the "culture" of personal relations. D-power is enacted in the power rituals described in chapter 3. A society in which there is much inequality in D-power will be one in which there are sharp differences in social identities, and a good deal of smouldering resentment and suppressed conflict (for evidence, see Collins 1975, chapters 2 and 6). Concentration of E-power may well have no such effects: this is a hypothesis, awaiting empirical evidence. It is congruent with the historical trend of the late twentieth century: the disappearance of D-power, reinforced by lack of class-categorical identities, gives a superficial sense of egalitarianism.

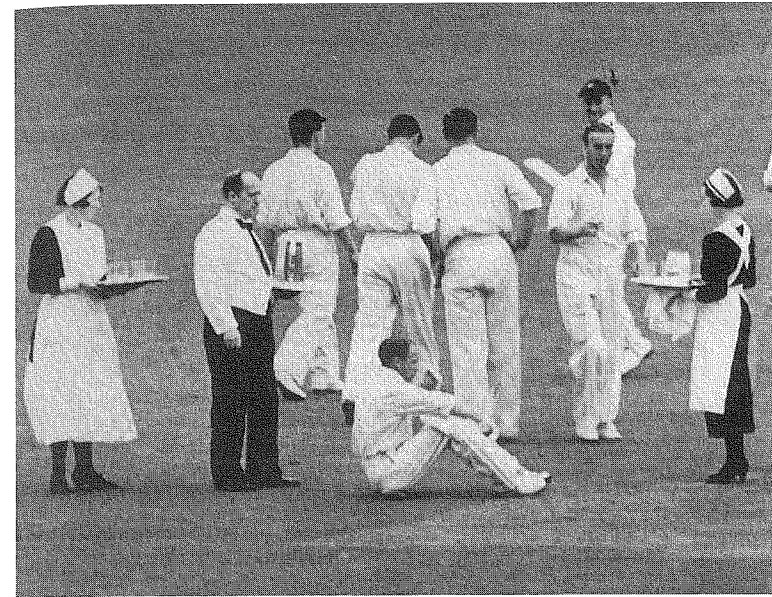


Figure 7.3 D-power in action: serving refreshments to upper-class cricket players (England, 1920s).

E-power is typically transsituational or long-distance; if it is real it must involve events that happen because orders and intentions are transmitted through a social network. E-power is generally macro, involving actions of large numbers of people and situations. Setting a large organization in motion is a mild form of E-power; if the organization achieves an intended result there is even more E-power; further along the continuum, the highest kind of E-power is to change an entire social structure, so that the patterns in which networks link people are permanently changed for the future.

There have rarely been efforts to measure the distribution of power along either dimension. Blau (1977) suggested measuring power by organizational span of control: an individual is powerful to the extent that she or he gives orders to a number of subordinates who in turn have a number of subordinates, and so on until the total chain of command is quantified. But such a measure remains confused by too glib a summary of what command means. If we could measure by micro-situational sampling the chain of command in organizations, we would find variations in how much D-power is being enacted in different situations of interaction among superiors and subordinates. Probably what Blau has in mind is E-power, assuming that the orders actually get car-

ried out, and that the chain of command is a way in which the will of a person "higher up" is carried out by persons "lower down."

But this is just what needs investigation. There are many ways in which slippage can occur. The organizational literature has shown workers controlling their own work pace, resisting controls by their immediate (and thus by more remote) superiors (Burawoy 1979; Willis 1977; Etzioni 1975); they give token D-power by deferring to their supervisors when they are present, but return to their own way of doing things when the supervisors are not present (i.e., they use the appearance of D-power compliance as a front to cover up their E-power in-subordination). The divergence between D-power and E-power is particularly sharp in the case of what Marcia Marx (1993) calls the "shadow hierarchy" of women administrative assistants who defer to (usually male) line authority but wield most of the invisible power to make things happen in a bureaucratic organization, or impede them from happening. There is a considerable literature analyzing how much actual control can be exercised in terms of how visible the work operations are, how standardized and countable the work output, and how much uncertainty there is in what is expected to happen (for summaries, see Collins 1988, chapter 13; Etzioni 1975). Managers may resort to indirect controls (shaping the physical environment, manipulating communications and information) to constrain the alternatives available to persons down the chain of command. Such shifts to indirect controls are declines in D-power, which managers hopefully trade for E-power. But even here E-power remains ambiguous or multi-dimensional; some organizations may be able to constrain how employees do their jobs but are unable to make the organization itself profitable or to outcompete its rivals. Generals have a lot of D-power (click heels; salute; yes sir!), and a military chain of command can be calculated fairly easily in terms of how much accumulated heel-clicking there is between one officer's realm of D-power and another's. But other contingencies intervene, which slow up how quickly and to what extent the army will actually do what the general orders; and yet further contingencies determine whether it will actually win the battle.

The organizational literature is full of suggestions concerning how the shapes of organizational control have changed in various historical periods and in relation to various physical and economic environments and technologies (Chandler 1962, 1977). There has been enormous growth in size and centralization of organizations, from the military revolution and state penetration of the 1500s onward, with similar transformation of capitalist enterprises in the 1800s and early 1900s (Mann 1993). These imply an increasing concentration of D-power, and to some extent E-power, in the micro-encounters of top officials during that historical period. For the twentieth century, organizational ana-

lysts have generally told stories of the dispersion of control: at the top, by the dilution of managers' control by stock ownership and thus by financial coalitions; in the middle, by increasing complexity and uncertainty of tasks and hence tacit E-power or at least subversion-power (a sort of negative E-power) among staff; in the lower ranks, challenges by the countervailing organization of labor unions (a rising and falling pattern of challenge over the century) and by informal work groups, and, more recently, by a reversal in which organizations use electronic monitoring to control the details of workers' actions (Fligstein 1990; Leidner 1993). There have been waves of mergers and takeovers; but also counter-waves of divisionalization, multi-profit center structurings, franchising and out-sourcing; and recent trends toward loose networks of firms trading expertise and personnel in forms that are "neither market nor hierarchy" (Powell 1989). If D-power and E-power were constant in all forms of organization, we could add up the shifting numbers of direct and indirect levels of control through chains of command, and trace the rising-and-falling patterns of power concentration. But D-power and E-power are surely not constant. That does not mean that some such measurement could not be attempted, but it would have to be multi-dimensional and it would show a very mixed historical pattern.

Overall it appears D-power has become milder in character where it does occur; and its occurrences have become fragmented into specialized enclaves where yes sir! micro-obedience is enacted. E-power is another story; and there are some very big hierarchies, or ones located where chains of financial resources and other forms of influence ripple far and wide throughout social networks, such that what a few individuals do may have some effects upon the life experiences of millions. The ongoing shakeouts and mergers at the turn of the twenty-first century in the world communications industries, creating mega-businesses in publishing, television, satellites, telecommunications, cable transmission, and films, suggest one example of increasingly concentrated E-power. Yet it is not clear the E-power of such big organizations / networks is increasing, above the level, for instance, of the big capitalist oligopolies at the turn of the twentieth century. Big organizations are often big illusions, as far as control of their own destinies, or even their own behavior, is concerned. The so-called totalitarian dictatorships before mid-century had structures on paper that looked completely centralized; yet communist organizations had enormous difficulties in translating top policy into local behavior (Kornai 1992). The resort to terroristic methods did not increase E-power over the system, but can be seen largely as an attempt to extend D-power at greater distance from the center.

It would be premature to draw an empirical conclusion from these theoretical considerations. We will not know what is happening to the concentration of power, even as mega-mergers take place in the most important industries of today, until we attempt situational sampling of D-power in such organizations, and to model various kinds of E-power (the extent to which orders are actually transmitted, put into action, and have results). Whether the heirs of Rupert Murdoch and the like will be future dictators of an Orwellian universe; or whether E-power will remain at the level of unintended consequences and Perrow's (1984) "normal accidents"; or whether organizational members will be increasingly free of constraints, or subject to covert manipulation: these are matters still to be worked out by investigating the actual dimensions of micro-situational power.

There is an additional, ironic twist to the pattern of E-power concentration. Francis Bacon, reflecting on his experience as a life-long civil servant and organizational politician in the consolidating Elizabethan state, a career that culminated in a stint as chief minister, declared that power itself is a trap for those who wield it:

Men in great place are thrice servants: servants of the sovereign or state, servants of fame, and servants of business. So as they have no freedom, neither in their persons, nor in their actions, nor in their times. It is a strange desire to seek power and to lose liberty, or to seek power over others and to lose power over a man's self. (1625/1965, 70)

Bacon did not distinguish between the two kinds of power. Like most people, he probably thought getting efficacy power and deference power were the same thing. But his ironic lesson applies especially to those seeking to wield E-power: they are enmeshed in the communications center of the organization that they attempt to dominate, and they cannot step away from the network without losing control. As D-power has declined, the seeking of E-power has probably increased not just at the top but through the spread-out middle ranks and horizontal alliance-structures of contemporary organizational networks. We have the term "workaholic" for people caught up in such positions. E-power is largely an illusion, but it is an addiction as well.

HISTORICAL CHANGE IN SITUATIONAL STRATIFICATION

The prevailing hierarchical image of stratification as a fixed structure in which micro is tacitly assumed to mirror macro is a historical heritage. Bourdieu's mechanistic cycle of cultural capital permeating indi-

vidual habitus and reproducing the field of economic power bypasses situational interaction; not surprisingly, it is an image promoted by a survey researcher collecting data on individuals and arraying it in an abstract hierarchical space (this is especially clear in Bourdieu 1984, 128-29, 261-63) in figures laid out along the dimensions of coefficients of correspondence, i.e., the equivalent of factors in factor analysis). The image is an old-fashioned one. Like most of our images of stratification, it dates back to the time of Marx, when micro-situational reality was much more tightly linked to the distribution of power and property. In Weberian terms, it was a historical period in which classes were organized as status groups, and belonging to a class was a categorical identity, indeed the most prominent social identity. My argument is not simply that historically macro-structures once dominated, and that now the micro-situational order has come loose from the macro-order. The macro-structure, in any historical period, is always composed of micro-situations. What I am saying is that the micro-situations today are stratified by quite different conditions than existed in the early twentieth century or earlier.

The key historical difference is that societies were formerly organized around patrimonial households. This Weberian term refers to a structure in which the main political and economic unit is the family dwelling, swelled out by servants, guards, retainers, apprentices, and guests. Economic production takes place in the household or on property controlled by it. Political and military relations are alliances among households, with dominance going to the biggest coalitions amassing the most troops. The upper class consisted of the heads of the biggest households. Under this structure, it was difficult to separate economic class, political power, and status group membership. The largest households generally held the most property, mustered the most force and controlled the most political dependencies, and a similar proportionality would hold for smaller households. Often these distinctions were formulated in legal categories such as aristocracy and commoner, and sometimes in subcategories such as levels of nobility. The names of these status group categories were common parlance; Marx was among the first to claim that economic class was the underlying dimension, but class stood out in his mind precisely because the organization of everyday life centered around property-owning, power-wielding, honor-receiving household dominants.

Status group borders were constantly reaffirmed and publicized in everyday life. The individual was always being reminded of which household one belonged to and what kind of ranking that household had, within and without. Status group membership was inescapable, since there was virtually no place for persons who did not belong to a

known household or who were not under its economic control and political protection; such persons were dishonored outcasts, virtually nonpersons. Within the household, interactions were inegalitarian; one repeatedly gave or took orders, received or gave deference, depending upon how one ranked as a servant, retainer, or relative of the household heads. Individuals could move through the stratification hierarchy, but only by moving from one household to another, or by rising higher within the internal structure of one's household, by coming into closer relations of trust and dependency with the household head. Even relatively high-ranking persons usually had some situations in which they had to demonstrate their loyalty and subordination to some higher-ranking person.¹³ High-ranking persons were surrounded by attendants, and one's rank was generally represented by the size of one's entourage.¹⁴ This meant that high-ranking persons (and those who attended on them) were constantly in a ceremonial situation (this is vividly documented in regard to Louis XIV; see Lewis 1957; Elias 1983); groups were always assembled and focused on persons of rank, giving a high density of ritual interaction. The result was a high degree of social reality, indeed, reification, of the social categories focused upon, and thus a high degree of consciousness of social rank and one's closeness to persons of higher rank. In sum, everyday interaction was highly ritualized; and the rituals were largely asymmetrical, giving deference to some persons over others.

The character of everyday social interaction has changed above all due to the shrinking and replacement of the patrimonial household. This has happened gradually over the past several centuries, driven by several macro-level developments. The growth of the centralized state removed military power from households; the expansion of government bureaucracy for extracting revenue and regulating society created a new type of organizational space, bureaus in which individuals interacted for specialized purposes and limited times. Categorical identities were replaced by the inscription of individual citizens in government records for purposes of taxation, social insurance, education, military conscription, and voting rights. Bureaucracy spread into the economic realm as work became organized in places separated from the household.

The modern organization of life into private places, work places, and public places in between them is a historically recent development. This new social ecology of kinds of interactions has drastically changed the ritual density of everyday encounters and the categorical identity schemes that go with it. The realm of consumption is now separated from the places where production takes place and where politically and economically based power relations are enacted. Consump-

tion now takes place in private, or at least outside of situations where it is marked by socially visible rank. The center of gravity of daily life switches to the realm of consumption. This is reinforced by the growth of consumer industries, including entertainment and the hardware that delivers it, into the largest and most visible part of the economy (Ritzer 1999). A side-result has been to increase the salaries as well as the pervasiveness of entertainment stars; by contrast, in a patrimonial society, entertainers were merely servants, dependent upon patronage of the big households. Entertainment stars are the contemporary sacred objects, because they are the only widely visible points of attention in this private sphere, where relationships are casual (which is to say, deritualized) and free of work and power relations. One might say entertainment stars who express a casual, anti-formal style are appropriate symbols to represent the character of the modern consumption experience.¹⁵

Individuals now have a choice as to which situations they invest their emotional commitment in. They can withdraw attention from their work situations to concentrate on their private lives of consumption. This is characteristic especially of workers in subordinate positions; Halle (1984) indicates that workers identify themselves as working class only while they are on the job, whereas at home they are more likely to identify themselves as part of a pervasive middle class. Persons in high-ranking professional and managerial jobs have an incentive to identify more strongly with their work positions, but when they leave work they too enter the anonymous world of consumption.

The realm of individual privacy has increased, in part because of the separation of a private realm of consumption; in part because the increase in level of wealth has allowed the household itself to be divided into separate spaces. Even aristocrats' palaces generally lacked special rooms for sleeping, for washing, or toilets; even very personal physical activities happened in the presence of servants and followers. Among the wealthy, private bedroom and dressing chambers began to appear in the 1700s and spread in the 1800s; household architecture now added corridors so that it was possible to enter a room without passing through other rooms and disturbing their inhabitants (Girouard 1978). In the mid-twentieth century this kind of dwelling space, including bathrooms, became considered normal for everyone. These changes in the material settings of daily life made possible Goffmanian backstages as well as frontstages for the vast majority of people. This is one reason why individual reputations have become more important than categorical identities.

Habermas's (1984) phrase, "the colonization of the life world," conveys an inaccurate picture of the main trend of modern history. Ha-

bermas's phrase is congruent with the trend of state penetration, the expanding scope of obligations of individuals in direct relation to the bureaucratic agencies of the state, which went along with breaking through the barriers surrounding the patrimonial household. But Habermas's argument does not take account of the actual patterning of social situations. The patrimonial household enacted economic and political relations in a concrete and often oppressive manner throughout daily experience. State penetration has displaced and broken up the patrimonial structures, but the actual experience of dealing with government agencies usually takes place in little fragments, not as continuous pressure; and contact is enacted in impersonal bureaucratic relationships, with little of the ritualism that reifies social categories or the deference that generates pride and shame. Contemporary social structure generates a life experience in which most individuals have at least intermittent, and sometimes quite extensive, situational distance from macro-structured relationships.

Luhmann (1984/1995) has described the structural change as a shift from society organized by stratification to one organized by functional specializations. This is congruent with the shift brought about by the decline of the patrimonial household and the breaking apart of everyday interaction from the pervasive experience of property and political / military power. But stratification has not disappeared in every respect; the macro-distribution of economic inequality is becoming stronger than ever. And on the micro-level, situational power still exists, not only inside governmental and economic organizations but even in the public sphere. The most common everyday experiences of this kind are encounters with petty bureaucratic functionaries such as security guards, flight attendants, ticket-takers, and police patrols. These are rather limited situational power-wielders, who have more capacity to impede and delay people than positively to control much of their behavior; petty functionaries hold a kind of very local, negative E-power, but little D-power as they are given little respect or deference. Such situations contrast with the earlier historical experience: in patrimonial households, even armed guards were extremely rank-conscious, and would rarely if ever take it upon themselves to impede a social superior. In the transitional period as well, when patrimonial households were being displaced but class-based status identities were still widely recognized categories, even police acted as if they were in the lower status group, and gave polite deference to persons identified as "gentry." The police officer was received "below stairs" with the other servants, not "above stairs." The police and other specialized bureaucratic functionaries have thus risen in situational power as they no longer are under any pressure to defer to categorical identities.

An Imagery for Contemporary Interaction

In place of a hierarchical image, we need a horizontal-spatial imagery of today's situational experiences. Contemporary life is something like being in an ancient or medieval picaresque story. These were adventure stories, sagas of what happens once an individual is off on his own, venturing outside the patrimonial households where he has a place in the social order. When Odysseus or the Argonauts leave home, or the knights in Malory or Spenser set out from their castles, they are in a realm where their economic and political positions do little or nothing for them. In their most extreme adventures, they venture outside the status order, where they have no categorical identities among the monsters or alien beings that they encounter; at best, a personal reputation of their prowess in battle or cunning may have circulated to some of those whom they visit.

The daily experience of modern people has much of the same quality, although now it applies to women as well as to the men who alone were protagonists of old picaresques. We have our home bases, networks within which we are personally known, including some occupational or skill-practicing communities where people will give some deference to those who are high-ranking. But these are highly specific, localized regions, and what we get there does not carry over into the majority of our social contacts. The macro-ties of our networks are no longer relevant; we are voyaging in a vast realm of situations in which there is very little that will produce solidarity with other people whom one encounters, or deference or power, except what one can carry with oneself in the most palpable way. People who are particularly strong and athletic, or threatening, or good-looking and sexy, or quick-spoken, witty, or just plain loud,¹⁶ can attract attention, and perhaps dominate a momentary situation. People who are particularly lacking in these qualities can be situationally dominated. It is structurally the same as whether Odysseus will outwit the cyclops, or Jason will succeed in capturing the golden fleece because the daughter of the king falls in love with him. This is not to say that background resources of social class might not help one's situational maneuvering. But resources must be translated into whatever makes an immediate situational impression. Carrying a great deal of money can get you service (but not necessarily much politeness) at an expensive restaurant, but it can also get you robbed; being an important person in some profession, or a powerful person in some organization, will get you nothing (except possibly contempt) if you are voyaging in some other part of the social landscape. James Joyce fleshed out the analogy in depicting a modern-day Ulysses traveling in and out of urban networks of 1904



Figure 7.4 Situational dominance by energy and sexuality: impromptu dancers during a counter culture gathering (1960s).

Dublin, weaving among little pockets of reputation, solidarity, and hostility. Joyce's description pertains too much to the transitional period, depicting a small city where reputational networks were still fairly widespread. If we shrink those networks to little family and occupational enclaves, and expand the overarching mass media of entertainment with their pseudo-familiar reputations of manufactured star images, we arrive at our contemporary world.

Perhaps a better image would be a highway, especially a high-speed interstate freeway. Here there is formal equality; all cars are equal, and all are subject to the same laws, and situationally tend to adhere to a very loose code of civility (not crowding other cars or cutting them off). As in Goffman's (1971) model of human foot traffic, drivers monitor each other mainly to keep their distance; eye contact, even when it is possible (at stop lights, and when cars are in parallel lanes), is generally avoided, and gestures of any kind are very rare. Civil inattention is the prevailing custom.

The situational equality of a highway is generally an equality of motivated indifference, not of solidarity or hostility. The one clear exception are police cars, to which everyone defers, and which demand deference in the form of signals with flashing lights or sirens, and which break the rules that they enforce on others (speeding, crossing the median, etc.). By a simple behavioral criterion, who gets out of the way

for which vehicles, police cars are the kings of the road. But there is also some purely situational dominance. This may be mildly correlated with sheer physical property: an expensive, fast car lords it over ordinary cars by passing them; overt deference is displayed as a car captures the dominant trajectory of motion or momentum on the highway, so that other cars get out of the way when they see it coming.¹⁷ Thus transsituational resources, mainly money, may translate into the material possessions that enable one to dominate the situational encounters of the highway. Small, old, or badly maintained cars, likely belonging to poor people, hug the side of the road and defer to virtually all bigger and faster cars. Here we see that economic power translates into situational dominance to some extent, whereas political power translates not at all on the highway (unless one is a government official with a police escort, or oneself the police). But dominance is not strictly a matter of economic class: truck drivers sometimes exercise situational dominance, especially on relatively unpoliced rural roads, using their sheer size to muscle their way into controlling lanes. There is also an emergent, completely situational order of dominance, as with the car who gets to pass other cars and gets others to defer (although sometimes contests occur over who drives in front of whom, struggles over who gets to be the hero of the road). Within a range of cars that have roughly the same speeding power, some are driven by persons who build up the aggressiveness to scare most others off. It may be that some persons (or even categories of persons, like teenagers) may occupy this "road elite" more than others, and may even have the transsituational repetitiveness that makes this practice a "personality" trait. In terms of IR chains, they have built up EE in the realm of driving. But there is no clear categorical identity of which drivers are especially dominant or dominated; and it may well be the case that road dominance is episodic and transitory, arising from particular buildup and losses of emotional energy derived from driving within a particular configuration of drivers at a particular time.

Categorical identities, grounded in repetitively enacted social communities with publicly visible rituals, have largely disappeared. What is left are individual reputations, most of which carry little social charisma, little of the *mana* of social emotion that attract desires for contact or the propensity to give deference; and reputations are generally circumscribed to very limited networks compared to the totality of the public sphere. One reason race is a social category so resistant to dissolving into the equalitarian civil inattention of public places is that race is one of the few markers of status group identity that is still visible. Most of the situations have disappeared in which class-based status groups can be enacted, and the situations that are left have with-

drawn into privacy, where they no longer give public emblems of membership. Ironically, as black Americans differentiate across the class structure, the fact that class distinctions are not publically recognized contributes to lumping all black people into a single, ritually excluded category. Social mobility gives rewards in material consumption and life conditions, but it no longer gives public deference or status. Black Americans would probably be better off today if there were more class consciousness; class categories could help dissolve the racial category and make this categorical exclusion and discrimination more difficult in the ritual dynamics of everyday life.

The trend of contemporary life, based on the momentum of macro-institutional patterns, is in the other direction. We are increasingly a world in which power operates only within specific organizations and casts no halo; in which economic class is meaningful largely if one stays within the circuits of exchange that generated the money, with some small micro-situational advantages that come from investing money into material consumption that help dominate face-to-face situations; in which categorical reputations have largely dissolved, and personal reputations circulate only in limited networks, except for the artificially constructed reputations of entertainment stars. Race may be the big exception, because the situational rituals of lower-class black street encounters are so sharply different from the public rituals of the larger society. In a world in which most status-group structures, most enactments of ritual barriers around communities, are invisible, the black street culture is the most visible ritual barrier. The publicity given to it, both negative and positive, in the news and entertainment media, makes it the last vestige of the status-group organization of premodern society, the structural equivalent of a world of patrimonial relationships surviving in the midst of a world of impersonal bureaucracies and privatized networks of personal reputation. This grudging and ambivalent admiration reflects the disquietude we feel living in a world of situational stratification.