Social stratification and social co-ordination

A. Szirmai

1. Introduction

In this article I will present a tentative framework for the comparison and synthesis of competing theoretical approaches in sociology (1). My aims are twofold. In the first place, I will argue that "social stratification" and "social co-ordination" can be identified as basic dimensions of sociological analysis, which can fruitfully serve to order and to some extent synthesize different traditions. In particular I will devote attention to the relationships between micro-theoretical approaches and more historically oriented macro-approaches to the study of social stratification and social order. In the second place, I will try to combine insights from the figurational approach in sociology with insights from more orthodox currents of theorizing in sociology (2).Figurational sociology contains extremely valuable insights about the basic role of interdependence and power in social life and about the dynamic and relatively autonomous nature of social processes. However, communication with adherents of other approaches in sociology is hindered by a lack of precision in terminology and a certain disregard for developments and achievements in other schools of thought and research.

2. Power and Dependence

My point of departure for the analysis of all social life is the fact that human beings are fundamentally dependent on each other for the fulfilment of their needs and the realization of their interests (3). As people are dependent on other people, these other

Sociologisch Tijdschrift, jaargang 12, nummer 4, februari 1986

people have power over them, power used in the widest possible sense of "influence" (4). People are connected with each other in chains of dependence and interdependence, which give rise to power balances between them. As all persons who have power over others, are in turn dependent on these others for the fulfilment of their (perceived) needs and interests, they use their power (influence) to harness other people's actions to the fulfilment of these needs and interests. Social structures - or, to use the more dynamic term, social figurations - are the by and large unintended results of the continuous attempts of people to influence each other mutually and co-ordinate each other's actions in the light of their mutually dependent needs and interests. Every actor does this from the perspective of his or her own needs.

The ways in which people try to influence each other (try to exercise power over each other) can be distinguished into three familiar categories: 1. Persuasion; 2. positive sanctions and incentives; 3. negative sanctions, coercion, force.

Under the heading of persuasion fall all attempts to influence others by appeal to common norms or standards, by peaceful transmission of culture, by socialisation, by appeals to spontaneous emotional ties, by appeals to common interests or by appeals to accepted norms concerning who has the right to command and who has the obligation to obey. I will call the pattern of co-ordination resulting from the succesful exercise of persuasion: *cultural co-ordination*. The fact that persuasion can lead to more or less voluntary cooperation does not mean that no power is being exercised. Like the other types of exercise of power, persuasion follows from people's dependence on each other. If people are dependent on other members of the group to which they belong, this will make them sensitive to all appeals to group norms.

Under the heading of positive sanctions fall all attempts to influence the behaviour of others by directly giving them something in return: goods, services, money, time, protection, attention, etc. The boundary line between positive sanctions and

appeals to common rules is vague. All people engaging in exchange relationships tend to develop diffuse normative expectations about what parties owe each other. On the other hand, as exchange theorists such as Homans have stressed, all normatively regulated relationships can also be analysed in terms of exchange, the norms defining parties, mutual obligations (5). This exchange approach to norms and cultural co-ordination is useful in reminding us that patterns of cultural co-ordination are just as much power-dependence relations as patterns of co-ordination characterized by more explicit exchange relationships. Nevertheless, it makes sense to distinguish explicit quid pro quo relationships from relationships characterized by more diffuse patterns of mutual expectations (6).

The exercise of negative sanctions conforms to Max Weber's definition of power as the opportunity to impose a course of action on others against their will (7). Negative sanctions range from the denial of goods, services and social contacts to straightforward coercion and the application of force. The distinction between positive and negative sanctions is just as fluid as that between positive sanctions and persuasion. When exchange relations become very unequal they can hardly be distinguished from coercive relations. Nevertheless, the distinction remains useful. The successful exercise of negative sanctions results in a patterns of coordinated action of people which differs from coordination by way of exchange or persuasion. In coercive relationships human action are typically coordinated more from the point of view of the interests and goals of the more powerful and less dependent people and less from the point of view of the less powerful and more dependent people.

The terminology used so far - application of persuasion, use of sanctions and incentives - implies a certain intentionality. This is certainly justified from the point of view of individuals. Every individual is constantly trying to harness other people's actions to his own ends. But it can be misleading in two senses. First people are not always conscious of their own goals and aims, nor of the methods they apply in manipulating their fellow human beings (8). Next, and even more important, the collective results

of all these attempts and co-ordination are other than intended. The continuous exercise of all kinds of influence results in unplanned networks or figurations of social relationships, which develop over time in a relatively autonomous fashion. These relatively autonomous changes in networks of relationships are accompanied by changes in the very needs, goals and interests that people strive to realize and the groups and social categories with which they identify.

3. The two dimensions

The exercise of power discussed in the previous section can be studied from two perspectives. On the one hand one can study power relationships from the point of view of how and to what degree human actions are co-ordinated. On the other hand, the exercise of power leads to the ranking of people in terms of their capacity to influence each other. Consequently all social entities (9) which are the unintended results of people's attempts to harness each other's actions to their (perceived) needs and interests, can be analysed along two basic dimensions: a horizontal dimension of social co-ordination and a vertical dimension of social stratification (10).

The basic question with regard to *social co-ordination* is: what types and degrees of co-ordination result from people's attempts to exercise power over each other? This basic question gives rise to a series of more specific questions such as: how many people are connected with each other and in what manner? How differentiated are the relationships between people? How do the more, respectively less co-ordinated relationships between people in chains of interdependency develop in the short and in the long run? When does co-ordination result in the formation of social groups or societies, what kind of ties connect the people forming such social entities?

The basic question with regard to *social stratification* is: what types and degrees of unequal distribution of chances to exercise influence over other people result from the attempts of people to co-ordinate each other's actions? This basic question

again gives rise to a series of more specific questions like: how unequal is the distribution of various kinds of material and immaterial rewards, such as money, goods and services, wealth, esteem, honor, etc.? How are these distributions related? How are these distributions perceived and evaluated? How much upward and downward mobility is there? How do relations of inequality between people in chains of interdependency evolve in the short and in the long run?

It must be stressed that both stratification and co-ordination presuppose interdependence. Whenever people or groups are not dependent on each other, the problem of co-ordination or the question of who is more powerful does not arise. When people become more and more dependent on others, the problems of co-ordination and stratification become ever more urgent.

I would argue that the two dimensions or axes can serve to order and synthesize the fragmented discipline of sociology in a systematic fashion. They show how contributions from various research traditions and theoretical approached, which have been developing in isolation from each other, can be fitted together and related. For instance, it is illuminating to discuss topics such as markets, bureaucracies, informal hierarchies, anomie, social conflicts, the division of labour, urbanization and population density which are usually studied by specialists, from the common perspective of social co-ordination or lack of social co-ordination.

It also becomes clear that changes along one of the two dimensions are always accompanied by changes along the other dimension. All human attempts to exercise power within the framework of interdependence relationships, result both in patterns of horizontal co-ordination and vertical stratification. In the following sections the dimensions will be analysed in detail. Here two examples must suffice. Research conducted in the anomie tradition of Durkheim deals with certain failures in co-ordination in modern industrialised societies. From the perspective of the two dimensions, it is obvious that a breakdown of social co-ordination has immediate implications for the stability of social

stratification. Nevertheless, the relationships between anomie and social stratification are hardly ever discussed. A second example is furnished by the effects of increasing social differentiation. Increasing differentiation can be interpreted as a change in how human activities are co-ordinated. As activities become more differentiated people become ever more dependent on other people in increasingly lengthy chains of interdependence. This gives rise to increasing problems of co-ordination, which can either result in breakdowns of co-ordination or in new forms of co-ordination. Among the structural characteristics of present-day societies which evolved as the unintended consequence of attempts at co-ordination of differentiated activities is the predominance of modern bureaucratic organizations (11). In turn these new co-ordinative institutions imply changes in social stratification. The rise of bureaucracies leads to new power and dependency relationships between people and new distributions of social rewards.

It would not be correct to say that the two dimensions stratification and co-ordination exhaust the content matter of sociology. Nevertheless, all the important questions, problems and processes studied by sociologists can be meaningfully rephrased in terms of changes along the two dimensions or in terms of the consequences of such changes for individuals, e.g. alienation, urban problems, migration, social mobility, work movation, ingroup-outgroup relations, social conflict, the design of organizations, etc. It should be stressed that the presentation of the two basic dimensions of sociological analysis is not meant as a substitute for substantive theory. The value of the dimensions is mainly heuristic. They make it possible to relate sociological theorizing and research in widely differing fields and traditions of work (12).

4. Social co-ordination

As Barrington Moore jr. puts it in *Injustice. The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt* "(...) certain problems always arise wherever and however a number of human beings attempt to live together and reproduce their kind. These problems can be lumped together

under the general notion of the problem of social co-ordination" (13). Barrington Moore distinguishes three basic problems of co-ordination: the problem of authority, who is going to make suggestions and who is going to follow them; the problem of the division of labour; and the problem of allocation, the distribution of goods and services. In a similar fashion Goudsblom has distinguished four central problems of social living, namely who gets what, who commands who, who does what and who belongs to whom (14). I believe these questions can be reduced to two basic questions: how are people connected with each other and how are they ordered in terms of more or less power over each other? The advantage of this simple scheme is that it shows that every question of the type asked by Moore and Goudsblom has both a vertical and a horizontal aspect at the same time. For instance, authority relationships represent a solution to the question how people should be ordered in terms of power relations and a solution to the question how their activities should be co-ordinated. In the following three sections I will first deal with the horizontal dimension of co-ordination, before turning to the vertical dimension of stratification in sections 5, 6 and 7.

One should distinguish between the *degree of co-ordination* and the *type of co-ordination*. The term "degree of co-ordination" indicates that co-ordinatio is a variable. The fact that people are faced with a given degree of interdependence, does not mean that their attempts to co-ordinate their actions meet with success. Social figurations can be characterised by high degrees of co-ordination, but co-ordination can also be almost absent. Both more and less co-ordinated human relationships present regularities which can be studied by sociologists.

How a given degree of co-ordination is achieved depends on the type of the co-ordinative mechanisms prevailing in a social figuration. Three types of co-ordination can be distinguished, corresponding to the three types of exercise of power discussed in section 2: cultural co-ordination, exchange co-ordination and coercive co-ordination.

In the case of cultural co-ordination, human actions

become co-ordinated because people accept the same rules guiding behaviour, the same goals, perceptions and standards, because they spontaneously indentify with each other's needs or wishes (e.g. within families or groups of friends) or because they more or less agree about rules stating who should command and who should obey. The methods of co-ordination are persuasion, socialization and appeals to common culture. When human figurations are characterized by a relatively high degree of interdependence and a more or less effective co-ordination of human actions through the development of imposition of common rules and culture, it makes sense to speak of "social systems" characterized by cultural co-ordination. The advantage of using the neologism cultural co-ordination instead of the more familiar term social integration, is that it highlights the fact that problems of co-ordination can be solved in various ways, only one of which is the development of common culture and the legitimization of the rights of some to command and the obligations of others to obey (15).

The second type of co-ordination is co-ordination by way of exchange. Exchange co-ordination arises when individuals try to satisfy their needs and wishes by using positive sanctions. They manipulate each other's behaviour by means of quid pro quo incentives. Economic markets are the most obvious examples of co-ordination by way of exchange. But quid pro quo exchanges operate in a wide variety of social settings and are not limited to the exchange of economic goods and services. Of course, exchange relationships cannot operate without a modicum of cultural co-ordination. For instance, economic markets can only function if participants accept the norm that contracts should be honoured and the use of violence foresworn. But the role of norms is far more limited, than in the case of cultural co-ordination proper.

The third type of co-ordination is co-ordination by way of negative sanctions. These can range from informal sanctions such as refusing to talk with somebody, through economic sanctions such as strikes and lockouts, to the straightforward use of brute force and coercion. For instance, as experiences

with Nazi and Stalinist terror have unfortunately shown, the application of mass terror can serve to co-ordinate human actions very effectively from the point of view of an elite. However, it does seem that prolonged co-ordination cannot be based on terror and coercion alone.

The three types of social co-ordination are closely related to three well-known traditions of theorizing about social order: the consensus tradition, the exchange tradition and the conflict tradition (16). Authors such as Goudsblom and Nisbet have cogently argued that each of these three types of theories are intimately entwined with major ideologies of the nineteenth century (17). Economic exchange theories should be understood against the background of the triomphant liberalism of the nineteenth century. Theories of normative order - running from Comte's writings, via Durkheim to modern functionalism and many systems theories - should be interpreted within the context of the conservative ideological reactions to the French and the industrial revolutions. Power and conflict theories of social order are associated with the ideologies of the socialist and radical movements of the nineteenth century. Within the framework of the present discussion I would say that each of these theoretical and ideological traditions stress different basic mechanisms by which actions of interdependent human beings are co-ordinated.

The more people are dependent on each other, the stronger the need for co-ordination. But there is not the slightest reason why co-ordination should necessarily be successful. Markets can allocate inefficiently, appeals to common norms can be unsuccessful and coercive co-ordination may leave people indifferent or create resistance. When people are mutually dependent on each other, but their actions are not effectively coordinated - either by norms, incentives or sanctions - we either have a situation of social anomie (anomic co-ordination) or a situation of social conflict (antagonistic co-ordination).

In this view social conflict represents none other than attempts of groups or individuals to co-ordinate o control each others actions. Just like cultural co-ordination and exchange co-ordination, social conflict

presupposes that the conflicting groups are dependent on each other - positively in that both parties to the conflict control resources that the other party needs, negatively in that the expansion of one party threatens the autonomy of the other party. The conflict relationship is the result of parties' mutual attempts to establish a system of coercive co-ordination. If one of the parties "wins", the result is a case of "succesful" co-ordination by means of coercion (18). Often, however, conflict relations are not resolved and develop in a relatively autonomous fashion over time, e.g. the relationships between competing nation-states or power blocks, the arms race etc. Such cases of strong interdependence and persisting conflict relationships can be characterized by the term "antagonistic co-ordination".

Conflict relationships are usually characterized by strong internal co-ordination of the conflicting subgroups. In particular, conflicts tend to strengthen the cultural co-ordination in these subgroups. However, when normative co-ordination breaks down in a social figuration, when exchange relations are disrupted or when coercive co-ordination fails, the result is not necessarily antagonistic co-ordination between highly co-ordinated subgroups. The breakdown of co-ordination can also result in a free for all competition between individuals, unregulated by norms or rules. One immediately recognizes the condition described by sociologists as anomie (19). In such situations of anomic co-ordination exchange relationships are not circumscribed by the limits of a normative kind which normally regulate exchange. When conflicts occur, individuals are thrown back upon themselves without the support that membership in culturally co-ordinated subgroups offers in situations of antagonistic co-ordination. Finally, guidelines for action derived from collectively accepted cultural norms are obviously lacking.

Interpreting both social conflict and anomie as modes of - ineffective - social co-ordination along the horizontal dimension can clarify the old problem of when one should speak of anomie and when of conflict. When social co-ordination breaks down, some theorists - usually the more radical ones - are prone to speak of social conflict, while other

theorists of a more harmonic bent diagnose the same situations as anomic. For instance, the rise of terrorism in the industrialized countries since the sixties has been interpreted as an expression of social conflict and a harbinger of social change in power and class relationships on the one hand, and as an indication of the increasing anomie of modern society on the other. Is the increase in divorce and abortion to be interpreted as a symptom of normative breakdown, or does it mean that people take the norms of child rearing and marriage more seriously, refusing to accept badly co-ordinated relationships? Though such questions can not easily be answered, the treatment of anomie and conflict as degrees of co-ordination can serve to put the discussion on a more rational basis.

When the breakdown of social co-ordination, especially of exchange and cultural co-ordination in a social figuration or a society is followed by the formation of conflicting subgroups, each of which are internally co-ordinated, the use of the term anomie is misleading. When the breakdown of social co-ordination gives rise to normatively unregulated or weakly regulated relations between individuals without the formation of well co-ordinated subgroups in society, there is more reason to use the term anomic co-ordination. This discussion also makes it clear that anomic co-ordination can be a half-way house between well co-ordinated social relationships and antagonistic co-ordination between groups and collectivities, while conflict relationships can in turn "dissolve" into anomic co-ordination.

Summing up, I have identified a horizontal dimension of sociological analysis running from the pole of highly or effectively co-ordinated relationships, via anomically co-ordinated relationships to the pole of antagonistically co-ordinated relationships between highly co-ordinated subgroups. Co-ordination can be achieved in various ways. I have distinguished three types of co-ordination, cultural co-ordination, exchange co-ordination and coercive co-ordination, all of which can result in higher respectively lower degrees of co-ordination on the horizontal dimension.

The idea of types and degrees of co-ordination

forms a counterbalance to the temptation to discuss sociological regularities mainly in terms of culturally co-ordinated systems. Social actions can be highly co-ordinated, even when cultural co-ordination is weak. Social relations with low degrees of co-ordination can present just as interesting regularities as well co-ordinated social systems. In all cases the object of study consists of the attempts of interdependent individuals and groups to influence each other. But whether the resulting relationships are highly or weakly co-ordinated, they show relatively autonomous regularities and develop in a relatively autonomous fashion.

Among the most important long-run social changes along the horizontal dimension are processes of social differentiation, which in themselves entail changes in social co-ordination of human activities and give rise to new forms of co-ordination. As differentiation develops people become increasingly dependent on the specialized activities of other people. More and more people are caught up in lengthening chains of interdependence. Traditional modes of co-ordination break down and if no satisfactory alternatives are found, anomic or antagonistic co-ordination is the result. However, new mechanisms of social co-ordination come into being as the - usually unintended - consequences of attempts to solve problems of co-ordination. Among the most striking innovations are economic markets, which by now co-ordinate the actions of millions of people all over the world, modern bureaucratic techniques which serve to co-ordinate specialized productive activities of individuals in an hierarchic fashion within organizations and mechanisms of centralized planning which serve to co-ordinate behaviour within the framework of nation-states (20). Market mechanisms offer an example of co-ordination by way of exchange. Bureaucracies belong under the heading of cultural co-ordination. But in contrast with cultural co-ordination in informal settings, bureaucratic co-ordination is cultural co-ordination of a more hierarchical sort (more inequality on the vertical dimension). Bureaucracies do not function on the basis of a substantive consensus on what the various members of a society should be doing, but on the basis of a consensus about the procedures of the

division of labour and rights to command or duties to obey (21).

Coercive co-ordination in modern societies is exercised by repressive state apparatuses such as the secret police, the public police force and the army (22). Modern mass media offer a last example of co-ordinative mechanisms which have evolved in reaction to the problems of co-ordination in differentiated mass society. They represent a modern version of cultural co-ordination. Individuals and groups with access to mass media try to influence and shape "public opinion", in accordance with their preferences, prejudices and interests (33). Once more, one should take care not to overestimate either the conscious nature of most of these attempts at cultural co-ordination or their effectiveness. Public opinion tends to develop in a relatively autonomous fashion and cannot be guided at will. Massive efforts to influence public opinion certainly have effects, but the sum total of these effects is often different from what was intended or expected

5. Social stratification

Whenever and wherever people become dependent on each other, their attempts to exercise power over each other lead to some ranking of individuals and groups in terms of their chances to influence each other and to influence the processes of social co-ordination. More powerful individuals and groups are those who are less dependent on others than others are dependent on them. They have more opportunities to influence these others and the whole process of social co-ordination by way of persuasion, incentives and coercion. Basically, the vertical dimension of sociological analysis refers to such inequalities in power chances. These inequalities in power in turn give rise to unequal distributions of social rewards and inequalities in mutual evaluations of people (24).

In all conceivable societies, the rankings of people in terms of power chances and social rewards are not stochastic but systematically structured. Individuals chances to attain positions in hierarchies of power

and to enjoy the corresponding rewards and privileges are influenced by their parents' rankings. The degree of intergenerational mobility varies, but mobility is never so great that every individual has the same chance to reach high positions in society. It is this structured nature of inequality which is expressed by the term "Social Stratification".

Most sociologists would agree that the study of developments in social stratification is one of the topics most central to the discipline of sociology (25). What I would like te stress, is that stratification is not just an important topic but one of the two basic and interrelated dimensions of sociological analysis. The dependence of people on each other and on their natural environments lead to continuous attempts to influence each other and control each other's actions. These attempts result in social figurations which develop over time and are characterized by changing patterns of horizontal co-ordination and vertical stratification. Wherever we find co-ordination, we find some form and degree of stratified inequality and vice versa.

As in the case of social co-ordination (section 4), one should distinguish between *degrees of stratification* and *types of stratification*. The term "degree of stratification" refers to the degree of inequality in the distribution of power chances (26). The type of stratification depends on the type of co-ordination which gives rise to inequalities. Cultural co-ordination is associated with (lower or higher) degrees of legitimated inequality. Exchange relationships give rise to inequalities which are legitimated as long as there is consensus about the rules and procedures of exchange. Exploitative inequalities arise from coercive co-ordination.

Summing up, we may say that social stratification is the vertical aspect of social relationships and social co-ordination is the horizontal aspect of social relationships. Any change in co-ordination implies changes in stratification. Any theory of social order or, as I call it, social co-ordination, is at the same time a theory of social stratification. Therefore, it is misleading to contrast vertical theories of class conflict with horizontal theories

of social (dis)integration. What one should be comparing in such discussions are *coercive views of social stratification and co-ordination* with *consensual views of legitimated social stratification and cultural co-ordination*. One should also note that the interrelatedness of the two dimensions applies for all social configurations, not only the more co-ordinated configurations we often call societies or "social systems", but also the less well co-ordinated configurations such as formed by nations at war or power blocks in political competition with each other.

6. Stratification: unequal distribution of power or unequal distribution of rewards

With regard to the vertical dimension of social stratification a lot of confusion is caused by the fact that some theories of stratification deal with the *unequal distribution of power chances* while other theories deal with *unequal distributions of social rewards*.

Exchange theoretical approaches to social stratification deal almost exclusively with the distribution of social rewards: income, social esteem, prestige, attention (27). The same holds for functionalist theories of stratification. Functionalist theories state that some positions are inevitably more important for a society than others. In order to motivate the best qualified people to occupy these positions, societies have developed consensus about inequalities in social rewards such as income, esteem, deference, freedom from obnoxious restrictions and other privileges (28). Empirical research on occupational prestige focuses overwhelmingly on the distribution of "prestige" over occupations, *id est* the distribution of the social reward esteem. On the other hand, Marxist approaches to social stratification clearly focus on unequal positions in economic power structures, rather than on rewards. The same holds for non-Marxist conflict theorists such as Dahrendorf who focus on positions in power and authority structures (29).

A similar confusion reigns in discussions concerning

the dimensions of stratification. When Max Weber, struggling with the Marxian legacy, distinguished classes from estates and parties, he was clearly thinking of different power bases (in the economic, the political and the social spheres). But in the modern discussion concerning the different types of relative deprivation stimulated by Runciman's study *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice*, it is no longer quite clear when the participants are speaking of inequalities in power and when of inequalities of reward. In his chapter on the three dimensions of inequality Runciman remains close to the Weberian formulations. However, when discussing relative deprivation in the sphere of class, he seems to be writing about economic grievances, in other words about dissatisfaction with economic rewards. When discussing relative deprivation with regard to status, Runciman's focus is almost entirely on the social rewards "esteem" and "prestige" (30).

In another well-know contribution to the modern stratification discussion *Ueber den Ursprung der Ungleichkeit unter den Menschen*, Ralph Dahrendorf discusses the origin of inequalities in the distribution of the social rewards wealth and prestige (31). These inequalities of rewards are expressions of the differing value people place on various social positions. In the last instance, differences in reward and valuation can be traced to the underlying power structure of society. One might say that two of the three Weberian dimensions are conceived of as rewards, the third as the unequal distribution of power. The distinction Gerhard Lenski makes between power on the one hand and privilege and prestige on the other is very similar (32). He considers the distribution of power to be the most basic aspect of stratification. Privilege refers to the distribution of various material rewards and enjoyments, and is a derivative of the inequalities in power. Prestige refers to the distribution of social esteem, a secondary distribution reflecting both differences in power and differences in privilege.

Having stressed the priority of power and dependence relationships in the earlier sections of this chapter, I can easily agree with Dahrendorf and Lenski that power relations are the most fundamental aspect of

social stratification. Unfortunately they do not sufficiently distinguish between the various sources of power and different types of exercise of power in the way that Weber has done. Therefore, two question become entangled: the question of the relationship between power structures and distributions of reward on the one hand and the question which types or dimensions of power relationships are more fundamental than others. The latter question will be taken up in section 7. Here I will continue the discussion of the relationships between positions in networks of power relationships (or power structures) and the distribution of social rewards.

The confusion surrounding power positions and social rewards is easy to understand. Social stratification is characterized by circularities. Power can be used to acquire social rewards and social rewards are resources for the exercise of power. Being rewarded increases the chances of an individual to influence other people and the processes of social co-ordinati themselves.

For instance, attainment of high office in a power structure often has the character of a reward for services rendered to others. And there is no doubt that the exercise of power is rewarding in itself. At the same time being rewarded by appointment or attainment of a position of power obviously improves the power chances of an individual.

The primary character of income is also that of a social reward. It can be used for the direct satisfaction of an individual's needs and wishes. But the accumulation of income in the form of wealth also forms a resource for the exercise of power: e.g. the power of the capitalist over the activities of other people co-ordinated in a firm. Even the use of incom for consumption can be seen as a form of exercise of power. Income is used to motivate other people to offer goods and supply services.

The dual character of reward and resource holds for phenomena such as esteem and prestige as well. Exchange theorists have made us familiar with the reward character of esteem. But prestige is one of the most important sources of obedience and power.

People with high prestige can "get things done" without having to pay with positive sanctions or having to exert coercion. With the "social capital of prestige" one can exercise influence on the processes of co-ordination in a social figuration. This is why Weber was right in distinguishing "estates" as a third dimension of social stratification.

Thus, the conclusion of this section is that social stratification refers both to inequalities in power chances and to distributions of rewards. In discussing theories of stratification, one should take care to distinguish between theoretical statements referring to the reward aspect of stratification and statements referring to the power aspect. The exercise of power between interdependent individuals and groups - whether by persuasion, positive sanctions, or coercion - results in hierarchical orderings of individuals and groups in terms of their chances to influence the processes of social co-ordination. People use their power to acquire social rewards and to enjoy the direct satisfactions and the life chances which flow from these rewards. In turn social rewards can be used as resources in the daily power struggle. Stratification is a dynamic process in which individuals and groups are struggling to improve their positions in existing stratifications and to influence the degree and nature of stratification in accordance with their ideas and interests.

7. Prestige and the legitimation of inequality

In this section I will deal with the *dimensions of social stratification* and in particular with the relationships between the so-called prestige dimension of stratification and other dimensions (33). The question of the dimensions of social stratification was raised by Max Weber when, in reaction to Marx' class conception of social stratification, he identified two other important dimensions of the distribution of power in society, namely parties and estates. Since then two questions have loomed large in the discussions of stratification: How many dimensions of social stratification should be distinguished? Are some dimensions more funda-

mental than others?

Siding with Weber and Runciman I think it is useful to distinguish three and not more than three dimensions of stratification, the economic, the political and the prestige dimension. Discussions of stratification in countries where private property of the means of production has been abolished, have convinced me that the political dimension of stratification should be distinguished from the economic (34). With regard to the social dimension, Lenski may be right in stating that prestige and status represent "frozen power" and reflect the economic and political power stratification of earlier time periods. But as Weber has argued, at any given time, high prestige can be an independent source of power. Attempts to distinguish more than three dimensions - e.g. educational inequality, symbolic inequality - only succeed in complicating the discussion (35). All these other dimensions can either be easily subsumed under one of the three basic dimensions or they refer not to dimensions but to criteria which determine upward or downward mobility on one of the dimensions.

Thus, both on the level of power relationships and on the level of social rewards I will distinguish the economic, political and prestige dimension of inequality. I will start with a discussion of the three dimensions of inequality in chances to exercis power. *Economic stratification* refers to the unequal ordening of individuals and groups in terms of power deriving from their control over scarce economic resources in the processes of production, distributi and market exchange. An important source of power is the private ownership of wealth, capital goods or land. But economic power also derives from high positions in productive organizations which control wealth, capital goods or land - e.g. managers. The possession of scarce and valued qualifications is a third source of economic power.

Though economic stratification is usually associated with social co-ordination by way of exchange, this is not necessarily the case. When the power and dependence relationships between participants in processes of economic exchange become very unequal

- for instance in the case of monopoly - economic stratification coincides with coercive co-ordination. The Marxian interpretation of exchange relationships is that they are typically coercive in nature because one class has exclusive control over the means of production.

Inequality in the political sphere refers to the unequal orderings of individuals and groups in terms of power deriving from their location in centralized processes of social co-ordination in social configurations (be they states, organizations, associations or other figurations). While economic stratification basically derives from the control over scarce goods, services and factors of production, political stratification derives from the struggles about "rights to command". In this context one can think of power based on leadership of influential social movements and parties, of power based on high positions in co-ordinating bureaucracies, but also of power based on the possibilities of the exercise of force to get one's commands obeyed. When rights to command are legitimated, political stratification goes hand in hand with cultural co-ordination. When rights to command are not legitimated, political power involves the exercise of force and is associated with coercive co-ordination. Ultimately, all political stratification, whether legitimated or not, derives from differences in control over or access to the means of physical coercive co-ordination (36).

One should remember that both the degree of stratification and the degree of co-ordination can vary. Political stratification exists not only in more co-ordinated social figurations, but also in antagonistically co-ordinated figurations. In a situation of social conflict (antagonistic co-ordination) where the power relationships between the conflicting parties are more or less in balance, there is a low degree of political inequality. When one of the parties gains a power advantage, he will increasingly be able to influence (co-ordinate) the course of action of the weak party. In our terminology, the increase in political inequality implies a shift from antagonistic co-ordination to a higher degree of - coercive - co-ordination.

The *prestige or social dimension of stratification* refers to differences in chances to exercise power over other people deriving from differences in prestige. (I will make no attempt to follow the subtle distinctions various authors make between terms such as social evaluation, prestige, esteem, status. I will use them interchangeably.) What is particularly interesting about this kind of stratification is that it need not be directly based on locations of individuals and groups in the processes of production, distribution and exchange, nor in the centralized processes of social co-ordination. "Social capital" can be an independent source of inequalities in power. Social power derives from the fact that groups in society succeed in getting their life styles and consumptive habits accepted as valuable, while at the same time limiting the access of other people to these life styles and patterns of consumption. One way of limiting access to life styles is by making them hereditary, another way is making them very complicated and difficult to imitate and a third way is by setting high educational requirements for entry into a group and controlling the access to educational facilities.

Just as we can distinguish three dimensions of inequality in power relations, we can distinguish three dimensions of inequalities in rewards. *Economic rewards* are goods, services, money and the ensuing satisfactions and life chances. *Political rewards* consist of appointments into positions of power in co-ordinative structures. The reward character of such appointments lies in the fact that the exercise of power is satisfying in itself. *Social rewards* consist of all expressions of positive evaluation by others: honour, attention, deference, prestige, etc.

Having distinguished the three dimensions of inequalities of power chances and of social rewards we can now turn to the question which of the dimensions is the most fundamental. The Marxist tradition stresses the primacy of the economic dimension of stratification. The existence of political and prestige stratification is acknowledged, but such stratifications are ultimately determined by economic

stratification. The Weberian tradition stresses the autonomy of an independent dimension of political stratification. Dahrendorf has attempted to reformulate economic stratification in terms of the political dimension, by re-interpreting class conflict as a special case of conflict about structures of authority. The formulations of economic and political stratification in the preceding paragraphs place this chapter squarely in the Weberian tradition. There are few modern publications which deny the importance political power relations as an independent source of social stratification, though there are still differences of opinions between Marxists and non-Marxists about the relative weight of the two dimensions (37).

Before turning to the question of the importance of the third dimension of stratification, the prestige dimension, a few remarks are needed about the relationships between the three dimensions of stratification and the three types of co-ordination identified in section 4. It is tempting to equate each of the three dimensions with one of the three types of co-ordination: economic stratification with co-ordination by way of exchange, political stratification with coercive co-ordination and prestige stratification with cultural co-ordination. For the prestige dimension of stratification such identification is correct. Unless there is a certain consensus in a society about who and what is valuable there is no stratification by prestige. If one can influence other people on the basis of high prestige, this is none other than an appeal to common norms about who is important and who is not, who has the right to give commands and who has not. In other words, prestige stratification and cultural co-ordination are inevitably associated.

Such association definitely does not hold for the other two dimensions of stratification. Political stratification can be of a coercive nature. But it has often been noted that coercive co-ordination and stratification of social figurations over longer periods of time tends to be rather unstable. Powerful groups therefore always attempt to develop systems of legitimation for their exercise of power. Successful legitimation means the accordance of

high prestige to the groups in power. Their higher value, their rights to give commands become accepted. In other words, coercive systems of co-ordination and stratification in the political sphere shift in the direction of cultural systems of co-ordination and stratification.

In the same fashion economic stratification is not exclusively associated with co-ordination by way of exchange. We have already seen that when economic exchange relations become unequally balanced, the method of co-ordination is coercive in nature. On the other hand when the distribution of economic power and the distribution of economic rewards is not legitimated, there will be pressure to change the distribution and the economic power relations underlying it. If rich and economically powerful groups succeed in getting their positions and their rewards legitimated, this implies that a certain consensus has been created about the procedures of exchange and the value of the contributions of the participants in exchange. Thus legitimated economic inequality is usually accompanied by a certain measure of cultural co-ordination.

These two examples point to the special nature of the prestige dimension of stratification. On the one hand inequality of prestige is an aspect of the economic and the political dimensions of stratification themselves. Both economic and political inequality can be more respectively less well legitimated. And what else is legitimation than the accordance of high esteem to groups possessing economic and political power? Economic and political inequalities cannot be sustained indefinitely if attempts at legitimation are unsuccessful. On the other hand inequality of prestige forms a seperate and independent dimension of stratification. Weber's example for this kind of stratification is the continuing importance of members of the aristocracy in societies where the economic and political power bases of aristocracies have been largely undermined.

I do not want to argue that the prestige dimension should be placed on the same footing as the economic and political dimensions of stratification. By and

large I am convinced by Lenski's formulation that status systems or prestige systems represent "frozen" economic and political power relations of the past (38). Thus, compared with economic stratification and political stratification, the prestige dimension is interpreted as a secondary dimension. But the very fact that economic and social power can be "frozen" indicates that inequalities of prestige do have an independent role to play in stratification and co-ordination. Also prestige is more than a passive reflection of existing power differentials. Individuals and groups are engaged in continuous struggles for higher prestige, because high prestige is a resource which improves their chances in other types of power struggles.

What is new about the present formulation is the connection which has been established between the study of *prestige as a social reward and prestige stratification as a dimension of stratification* on the one hand, and the study of *legitimization processes* on the other. Legitimization processes are usually discussed in the context of economic or political stratification. Prestige is usually discussed as a type of reward or as a dimension of social stratification. Here, both legitimization processes and the formation of prestige stratifications are interpreted as part of same struggle for the social rewards esteem and prestige (39). These rewards are both enjoyable in themselves and resources to be used in further exercise of power in social relations.

The dual nature of prestige as legitimization and prestige as independent resource can be illustrated by legitimization of economic inequalities. Differences in economic power and the (resultant) differences in economic rewards cannot be maintained indefinitely without some legitimation of inequality. Legitimation means that powerful people succeed in eliciting social esteem, succeed in getting a view of themselves and their activities as important and valuable accepted. If a person is accepted by others as valuable, they will not begrudge him his powerful position and they will find his high rewards acceptable. This is the essence both of legitimization and of high prestige. Such legitimization of in-

equalities of power and reward also implies that people lower in the hierarchy of power will tend to accept their lower positions and their correspondingly lower rewards.

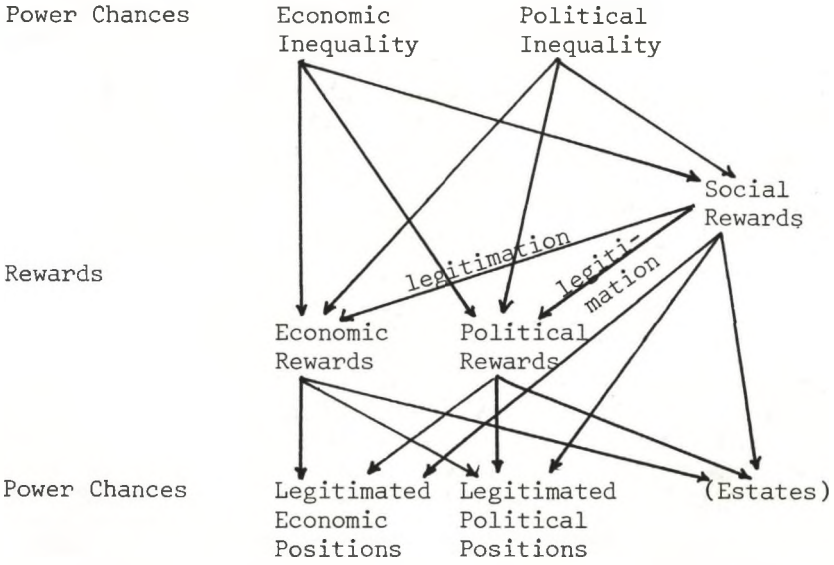
Though powerful elites always strive to have their high positions legitimized, legitimization is not only a trick of the powerful, as suggested by conflict theorists in the Marxist tradition. People also become powerful because they have qualities or do things which are valued by other people. For instance, if people value brilliant performances of professional sportsmen or film actors, they are willing to pay for such performances both in the form of high income and high social estimation. The estimation serves as a legitimization for the ensuing unequal distribution of incomes.

Where the contributions of individuals are clearly delimited, the value other people place on the contributions are immediately transformed into legitimizations of the rewards of the contributors - as long as the procedures of exchange themselves are experienced as legitimate. But in our complex and bureaucratized society and economy, it is increasingly difficult for people to assess each other's (productive) contributions. How does one know what the contributions of civil servants to common welfare are worth and how does one know how much white-collar workers or managers contribute to industrial production (40). The assessment of the value of the contributions of individuals and groups increasingly comes to depend on their overall prestige and social standi Prestige becomes a general measure of groups social worth and greatly influences their economic rewards and their chances of exercising power in the economic and the political sphere. Groups are continuously struggling to increase their prestige. Good examples of such attempts of groups to improve their general standing are furnished by processes of professionaliz tion. By professionalization members of occupational groups try to establish or improve the worth of their activities in public eyes.

The difficulty of ascertaining productive contributions may well be one of the reasons why occupational prestige is so important in our society and why

sociologists have devoted so much research to this topic. By now it should not be difficult to recognize in the study of occupational prestige an attempt to measure legitimization of economic inequalities. When the occupational prestige of a group declines, this means that the legitimacy of its rewards is in question. Lower social evaluation has a negative influence on the height of the rewards the members of the group can obtain in exchange relations or on the labour market. For instance, the present tendency to lower the relative incomes of public employees in the Netherlands was preceded by a decade of criticism of the social worth of public employees and of the public sector in general. Once their occupational prestige was undermined, it was not hard to reduce their incomes.

Figure 1. Power Chances, Rewards and Dimensions of Stratification



I have attempted to summarize the argument about dimensions of stratification, inequalities of power and inequalities of reward in figure 1. This figure emphasizes the circularities between rewards and

chances to exercise power and the intermediary position of social rewards. In the first row of figure 1 I distinguish economic and political hierarchies of power/influence. Both economic and political power can give rise to economic, political and social rewards. These rewards which appear in the second row of the figure, represent chances to enjoy various satisfactions and life chances. The arrows from social reward to economic and political rewards illustrate that social rewards contribute to the legitimacy of the distributions of economic and political rewards.

Rewards can be enjoyed for their own sake, but they also serve as means for influencing other people; they are also sources of power and influence. Each of the three types of reward can contribute to further inequalities of political, economic and social power. The arrows from social rewards to legitimated economic and political positions in power hierarchies express the idea that the social reward of prestige serves to legitimate structures of economic and political power inequality. Estates have been put between brackets to emphasize that they refer to "frozen" legitimizations of past economic and political inequalities. For simplicity's sake the third row of figure 1 refers to legitimated positions. But of course the legitimacy of economic and political inequality is a matter of degree.

8. Theories of stratification and co-ordination

Let us summarize the discussion up to this point. I have identified stratification and co-ordination as basic dimensions of sociological analysis. On the horizontal dimension of co-ordination social configurations range from well-co-ordinated to antagonistically co-ordinated configurations. On the vertical dimension of stratification configurations can be ranked by the degree of inequality of power chances. Besides degrees of stratification and co-ordination I have distinguished three types of stratification and co-ordination: cultural stratification and co-ordination in which the predominant mode of exercising influence is persuasion and appeal to common culture, exchange

co-ordination and stratification in which the predominant mode of exercising influence is the application of positive sanctions and coercive co-ordination and stratification in which the predominant mode of exercising influence is the application of negative sanctions. With regard to the dimension of stratification, a distinction has been made between the inequality of power chances and the inequality of social rewards. Both on the level of power chances and on the level of rewards three spheres or dimensions can be distinguished: the political dimension, the economic dimension and the prestige dimension.

With the help of this conceptual framework we can reformulate competing theories of social order and social stratification in such a manner that systematic comparisons between them become possible. It helps us to sort out implicit notions about relationships between stratification and co-ordination, about the predominance of certain types of co-ordination and stratification or about the predominance of certain dimensions of stratification (41).

The functionalist tradition in sociology stresses the importance of cultural co-ordination. On the horizontal dimension social configurations are seen as varying from culturally well co-ordinated configurations to anomically co-ordinated configurations. Authors in this tradition tend to redefine antagonistic co-ordination in terms of anomic co-ordination. Functionalist theories of stratification focus on the explanation of inequalities in rewards. They emphasize distributions of esteem and prestige. Distributions of economic rewards such as income are seen as dependent on prestige distributions. Basically, functionalist theories of stratification imply that members of well co-ordinated configurations (social systems) tend to develop a consensus about activities which are important for the survival of their configuration. In order to motivate capable individuals to perform these activities members of a configuration are willing to accept unequal political, economic and social rewards. The unequal evaluation of activities and positions, in other word the prestige stratification, serves to legitimate

both inequalities of political and economic reward and inequalities in economic and political power chances.

Weaknesses of this theoretical approach have often been noted. First it fails to answer the question how cultural consensus is attained. Consensus is simply posited. Second, though it offers an explanation of the existence of inequalities of reward, it cannot explain differences in the degree of inequality of rewards between societies. Third, it underestimates the importance of coercion, power and exploitative relationships. Finally, it fails to explain why social configurations change.

Exchange theories are more dynamic in this last respect. They emphasize the role of individual interest and quid pro quo exchange in processes of social co-ordination. Consciously or unconsciously individuals strive to attain the maximum amounts of economic and social rewards they value, with a minimum of effort and sacrifice. In order to realize their goals, they enter into social and economic exchange and apply positive sanctions to motivate other people to act according to their own needs. Exchange results in some degree of co-ordination of people's various specialized activities and contributions. Normative expectations emerge from stabilized exchange relationships, but when normative and cultural patterns no longer reflect the needs and interests of individuals as expressed in exchange relationships, exchange will function as a source of cultural change.

Exchange theories focus attention on how individuals make their choices and determine their strategies of action under the social constraints facing them. Exchange theory in a broad sense encompasses not only the economic theory of market exchange or Homans' sociological version of economic exchange theory, but all theories which analyse how individuals determine their strategies of action in interaction with others: game theoretical approaches to individual behaviour; theories of rational choice applied to political behaviour; theories of cognitive dissonance which reveal how individual actions and

cognitions are influenced by the tensions of cognitive dissonance, theories of relative deprivation and theories of equity which explain individual actions and attitudes by the tendency to reduce the tensions and frustrations caused by incongruities between standards and actual situations

One can also categorize symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology and related approaches under the heading of co-ordination by way of exchange. These theoretical approaches focus on the symbolic aspects of exchange and interaction, rather than on the exchange of "real" values. They show how much value itself depends on impression management. Symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology are extremely rich in insights, but low in their level of formalization. They stress the importance of the situational context of exchange to such an extent, that generalizations become almost impossible. What these approaches have in common with other exchange approaches, is that they show how individuals manipulate the behaviour of others - in this case by manipulating symbols - to elicit desired behaviour.

Like functionalism, exchange theories of stratification focus on the distribution of rewards, rather than on the inequality of power chances. In economics neo-classical theory and human capital theory explain income inequalities. Homans focusses on the distribution of both material rewards and social rewards such as honour, esteem, prestige, attention, approval The inequality of rewards emerges in a relatively autonomous fashion from processes of exchange. It is influenced by the relative scarcity of the contributions the parties to exchange offer each other. According to neo-classical analyses of distribution, the degree of inequality of rewards will tend to decline under competitive conditions.

The central weakness of all exchange theoretical approaches to co-ordination and stratification is, that they tend to take the initial distributions of capabilities to fulfil other people's needs and of resources which can be used as positive sanctions to elicit desired behaviour by others, as given. Exchange theories neglect the fact that such initial

distributions are themselves the outcomes of precedin processes of stratification. Therefore, exchange theoretical explanations of the distribution of rewards over individuals and groups can only be partial.

Exchange theoretical approaches also tend to take the structures of individual preferences, needs and wishes as given. Given some schedule of preferences, exchange theorists can analyse the subsequent processes of exchange and interaction. But they neglect the fact the preferences, needs and interests themselves change over time in processes of stratification and co-ordination. For instance, groups in society are continuously struggling to create social needs for things and services they have to offer: religious services, goods, therapies, defense, specialized knowledge, etc. "Marketing" has existed since the beginning of human society.

Finally, exchange theories of social co-ordination and stratification neglect the criticism levelled by Durkheim against the liberals of his time, namely that effective co-ordination of human activities by market exchange requires the prior acceptance of common rules and norms of exchange, such as the norm that contracts and agreements should be honoured or that clashes of interest should not be resolved by resort to violence. In other works exchange can only function within a consensual framework concerning the rules governing exchange (42).

Conflict theories stress the predominance of group or class interests in processes of co-ordination and stratification. Members of powerful elites or ruling classes act to further their collective interests and to impose their rule on society, thereby co-ordinating other groups in the light of their own dominance and interests. According to conflict theorists processes of exchange are seldom voluntary. They proceed against the background of considerable inequalities in power chances. Exchange theorists tend to disregard the collective advantages of groups who control crucial resources in the processes of exchange. These resources can be used to acquire disproportionate shares of wealth, income and power. To

buttress their powerful positions and their disproportionate rewards, powerful groups strive to legitimize the unequal power structures and unequal distributions of rewards by "creating" a cultural consensus. What consensus there is in society is seen as the result of cultural manipulation. In this view the type of co-ordination is coercive. When weaker groups organize to further their group or class interests - as seen as inevitable in the long run - coercive co-ordination is replaced by antagonistic co-ordination.

With regard to the vertical dimension of stratification, all conflict theories focus on inequalities of power chances rather than on inequalities of rewards. Inequalities of reward are but reflections of inequalities in power chances. This is what makes it difficult to compare conflict theories of stratification with exchange and functionalist theories. In the Marxist tradition the emphasis is on inequality of economic power. In the non-Marxist conflict tradition running from Pareto, Mosca and Michels to Ralph Dahrendorf the emphasis is on inequalities of political power. In most conflict theories of stratification coercive exploitation will tend to increase inequalities in power and inequalities in reward. In the long run exploitation will undermine the legitimacy of the power structure, will stimulate class or group conflict so that coercive stratification will be replaced by antagonistic stratification.

The major weakness of conflict theory is that it denies the possibility of authentic cultural co-ordination or of processes of exchange which benefit all parties within a framework of consensus about the rules of exchange. All cultural co-ordination is denounced as false consciousness, which does but hide "latent" conflict. Conflict theories have difficulty with dealing with periods in history in which social harmony reigns. Marxist theory in particular has found it hard to explain the non-occurence of revolutions in Western societies.

It would be unwise to join in the old essentialist debate about which type of theory of co-ordination and stratification is the "true" or "correct" one.

It is always possible to reformulate problems in terms of one of the three basic perspectives. All human behaviour can be interpreted in terms of rational exchange, but the result is that exchange theory becomes tautological. All human behaviour can be phrased in terms of latent conflict between groups and classes. And as long as cultural consensus is defined loosely enough, it is not hard to show that social conflicts are nothing but strains and dislocations of an anomic kind.

I believe the formulations in this article offer a fruitful framework for synthesizing the insights of various traditions in a more constructive manner. Social co-ordination and social stratification derive from the fact that people depend on each other and therefore try to exercise power over each other in the light of their perceived individual and group interests and needs. Social figurations develop in a relatively autonomous fashion as a result of these attempts at co-ordination. The constant striving to attain individual and group interests is what gives social life its dynamic character. In this respect the approach in this chapter shows some similarities with that of conflict theoreticians.

But there is no reason why attempts of individuals and groups to realize their interests should inevitably result in coercive or antagonistic co-ordination between collectivities. If powerful groups succeed in legitimating their rule, if legitimization and cultural consensus arise as the result of spontaneous processes of cultural co-ordination, if people start identifying with each other and perceive their interests as mutually compatible, the resulting configurations can well be studied from the perspective of consensus approaches. When consciousness of group or class interests is weakly developed and people are involved in chains of exchange relationships of an atomistic nature, exchange theories offer the most fruitful mode of analysis.

The exercise of power in social configurations is never exclusively of one type. People influence each other with combinations of persuasion, incentives and coercion which differ from configuration

to configuration and vary over time. Each of the sets of competing theories tends to overemphasize certain types and aspects of co-ordination and stratification, while denying the importance of others. The mutual exclusiveness of the various theoretical approaches in sociology should be replaced by a conception of variation along the dimensions of co-ordination and stratification. Thus the question which perspective is more "correct" is replaced by the empirical question which perspective is most suited for the analysis of aspects of a given social configuration at a given period in history.

There is another sense in which theories of stratification and co-ordination are not mutually exclusive, namely in that different theories are applicable at different levels of analysis. Both theories in the conflict tradition and theories in the consensus tradition are essentially macro-theories. They are not very suitable for analysing processes of interaction between individuals in everyday life. On the other hand theories of exchange and rational choice are essentially micro-theories. They form the micro-foundations for macro-theories.

All social processes unfolding at the macro-level of collectivities (national societies, economic organizations, international markets, antagonistic relationships between super powers) are in last instance made up out of individuals who are continuously trying to influence each other's actions. Whatever the dominant mode of co-ordination and stratification in a configuration, at the micro-level we can analyse behaviour in terms of individuals consciously or unconsciously choosing optimal courses of action and allocating their resources to elicit desired behaviour from others, within the constraints of the situation facing them.

At this micro-level we can apply the various economic, sociological and social-psychological theories of exchange, choice and interaction, whether they focus on the exchange of goods and services, on social rewards, on the symbolic nature of processes of exchange and interaction, or on tension reducing

strategies.

Strictly speaking it would be consistent with earlier formulations in this article to distinguish between the cultural, exchange and coercive exercise of power in interaction (43). But whether we analyse the relationships between a warder and a prisoner (a coercive relationship), between a group of friends (a culturally co-ordinated relationship) or the relationship between a salesman and a prospective customer (an exchange relationship), in all these relationships individuals try to minimize their costs and to maximize their gains by influencing the other party. In this context, therefore, I will lump all micro-theoretical approaches to exchange, choice and interaction under the broad heading of exchange theories. With the exception of symbolic interactionist and ethnomethodological theories, which are basically descriptive in nature, exchange theories are of an a-historical deductive type. When we know the initial distribution of resources, patterns of goals and preferences and the culturally accepted rules of exchange, exchange theories and theories of rational choice can help us analyse the resulting social processes.

It is time to return to the limitations of exchange analysis. All social processes can be analysed at the micro-level in terms of exchange and interaction But regularities in social processes can not be reduced to regularities in the behaviour of individuals. Patterns of cultural, exchange and coercive co-ordination and stratification arise as the unintended consequences of individual actions. They develop over time in a relatively autonomous fashion What all exchange type approaches have in common, is that they take the context of exchange as given. What they cannot explain is how structures of unequal power, unequal reward, patterns of preferences, needs and interests and the very rules governing exchange, evolve over time (44). At higher levels of analysis sociology cannot avoid being historical, focussing on the development over time of what people perceive to be their interests, needs and ends on the development of patterns of culture and legitimations of inequality, on the development of antagonistically co-ordinated collectivities

the members of which perceive their interests to be opposed, all of which form the framework for processes of exchange.

When studying processes of social change in history, it is hard to deny that the formation of collectivities, classes and interest groups and the never ending struggles of their members to realize their interests, to control the processes of co-ordination and to dominate in processes of stratification are the basic factors giving rise to the dynamics of social change and to its regularities. But as explained above, these processes need not be studied exclusively from the point of view of antagonistic co-ordination and stratification. Processes of legitimization and processes of formation of social consensus and common culture form integral components of developments in social configurations. The development of common culture in turn effects subjective conceptions of reality and the very substance of what individuals perceive to be their interest. The development of market and exchange relationships indicates the importance of exchange as a mode of co-ordination and stratification. Human relationships at the micro level, finally, can most fruitfully be studied from the perspective of exchange and interaction theories, against the backdrop of the power relations and patterns of cultural and exchange co-ordination obtaining in society at a given moment.

Notes

1. This article is the offshoot of an empirical study on attitudes towards income inequality, the final results of which will be presented as a Ph. D. thesis entitled *Inequality Observed*, in the course of 1986. Thinking about the relevance of individual level survey data for our understanding of developments in social stratification, I felt the need to define my position in the hoary theoretical and terminological debates surrounding phenomena such as "stratification" and "social order".

I thank Nico Wilterdink and Chris de Neubourg for their stimulating comments and criticisms.

2. See N. Elias, *Ueber den Prozess der Zivilisation*, I und II, Zweite Auflage, Bern/München, Francke Verlag, 1969; N. Elias, *Was ist Soziologie?* München, Juventa Verlag, 1970; J. Goudsblom, *Balans van de Sociologie*, Utrecht, Aula, 1974. Translated as *Sociology in the Balance*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1977; P.R. Gleichmann, J. Goudsblom, H. Korte, *Human Figurations, Essays for N. Elias*, Amsterdam, Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift, 1977.
3. This section presents no claim to any originality. It gives my rendering of ideas of Elias and Goudsblom. See Goudsblom, *op. cit.*, 1974; Elias, *op. cit.*, 1970.
4. Elias, *op. cit.*, 1970. See also R.M. Emerson, "Power-Dependence Relations", in: *American Sociological Review*, XXVII, 1962, pp. 31-39; P.M. Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social life*, New York, Wiley, 1964; M. Mulder, *The Daily Power Game*, Leiden, Stenfert Kroese, 1977.
5. See G.C. Homans, "Fundamental Social Processes", in: N.J. Smelser ed., *Sociology: An Introduction*, New York, Wiley, 1967; G.C. Homans, *Social Behaviour: Its Elementary Forms*, New York, Harcourt Brace and World, 1961.
6. See A. Heath, *Rational Choice and Social Exchange*, Cambridge University Press, 1976.
7. See M. Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Tübingen, Mohr, 1922, p. 631.
8. An excellent example of unconscious exercise of power is the way in which infants unconsciously manipulate the behaviour of their parents.
9. I see no point here in choosing between various possible terms such as societies, social systems, social structures, social figurations, networks of relationships, groups, etc.
10. Instead of the term stratification, it would be more correct to use the wider term of hierarchization. Hierarchization refers to all forms of unequal power relationships. Stratification refers the more structured forms of unequal power relationships, structured in the sense that not every member of a society has an equal chance of attaining positions of power in the network of power relationships. As all larger social entities are characterized by some degree of structuralization of inequality relationships, I have retained the more familiar term stratification.
11. Of course bureaucratization is not only an answer to problems of co-ordination caused by differentiation. It also stimulates a further division of labour and creates new problems of co-ordination.
12. The idea that there are basic dimensions of sociological

analysis is not original. It has often been said that the study of social stratification constitutes the core of sociology. See for instance W.G. Runciman, Towards a Theory of Social Stratification, in F. Parkin ed., *The Social Analysis of Class Structure*, London, Tavistock, 1974. Cohen has said the same about the study of social order, see P. Cohen, *Modern Social Theory*, London, Heineman, 1968. There are also various theoretical formulations in which what I call the horizontal and the vertical dimension of sociological analysis have been related to each other.
What I believe is new in this article, is the relationship which is laid between the two basic dimensions and the figurational analysis of social relationships in terms of power and dependence derived from N. Elias. New also is the formulation of the dimensions in such a way that they can serve to synthesize various modern approaches in sociology or at least to improve the communication between various schools of thought.

13. See B. Moore jr., *Injustice. The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt*, White Plains, N.Y., Sharpe, 1978, p. 9.
14. Goudsblom, *op. cit.*, 1974, p. 123 ff.
15. Co-ordination as used here, comes close to Durkheim's use of the term solidarity. As is well known, Durkheim distinguished between organic and mechanic solidarity. Organic solidarity refers to an highly differentiated pattern of relationships, where specialized activities are co-ordinated by way of exchange. Mechanic solidarity refers to less differentiated relationships co-ordinated by common rules and culture. See E. Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1973 (1893).
Cultural co-ordination can be associated with differing degrees of inequality on the stratification dimension. For instance the co-ordination of the actions of traffic participants is due to the fact that they accept the same rules of action: traffic rules. This co-ordination does not lead to any inequalities in power. On the other hand, bureaucratic co-ordination of activities is based on a certain acceptance of the right of higher placed persons to give commands. It immediately implies inequalities in power relationships.
16. See J. Goudsblom, *op. cit.*, 1974; P. Cohen, *Modern Social Theory*, London, Heineman, 1968; R.A. Nisbet, *The Sociological Tradition*, London, Heineman, 1970.
17. Goudsblom, *op. cit.*, 1974, pp. 129-151; Nisbet, *op. cit.*, 1970. See also K. Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, London,

Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972 (1929); R.W. Friedrichs, *A Sociology of Sociology*, New York, The Free Press, 1970; A. Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*, London, Heineman, 1971.

18. The most extreme case of co-ordination by coercion is the straightforward elimination of the members of one of the conflicting social entities. The term co-ordination has certain rational connotations which may be misleading. It suggests that there are rational reasons such as conflicting economic interests for engaging in social conflict. Within such a rationalistic framework the extermination of the Jewish minorities by the German Nazi regime would be hard to understand. It must be stressed, therefore, that there is nothing rational or objective about what people perceive to be their needs and interests. Feelings of dependence or threat are just as potent a motive for antagonistic co-ordination, as some objective clash of economic interests.
19. The discussion of anomic co-ordination clarifies a point made in the introduction to this article and in section 3: questions studied by sociologists can be rephrased either in terms of changes along the two basic dimensions or in terms of consequences of these changes. Thus anomic co-ordination refers to a structural phenomenon, namely the breakdown of social co-ordination. But many of the topics studied under the heading of anomie - e.g. suicide, violent crime, urban problems, stress.- refer to the consequences of such breakdown for individuals. This formulation comes very close to that of Emile Durkheim who studied suicide statistics as indicators of the structural conditions in society. See E. Durkheim, *Le Suicide*, Paris, Presses Universitaire de France, 1973 (1897), pp. 14-16.
20. For an excellent discussion of the relationships between differentiation, markets and organization, see J.A.A. van Doorn and C.J. Lammers, *Moderne Sociologie* (Modern Sociology), 13th. ed., Utrecht, Het Spectrum, 1976, p. 196 ff. See also O.E. Williamson, *Markets and Hierarchies*, New York, Free Press, 1975. This conception of markets and hierarchies as alternative forms of co-ordination can also be found in the economic literature comparing market economies and centrally planned economies. See for example J. van den Doel, *Konvergentie en Evolutie* (Convergence and Evolution), Assen, Van Gorcum, 1971.
21. This characterization of bureaucracies as forms of cultural co-ordination serves to illustrate the point

that different types of cultural co-ordination are associated with different types of stratification. Of course, as conflict theorists will argue, a bureaucracy is a power structure, within which co-ordination is achieved by commands and directives. But the characteristic of a bureaucracy is that these rights to give commands is legitimated.
As I will further argue in section 8, it is not very fruitful to split hairs over the question whether a coercion view of society is more "true" than a consensus view. All attempts at social co-ordination involve the exercise of some type of power. If one recognizes that the exercise of power in bureaucracies derives from appeals to legimated rights to command, what one calls such exercise of power is mainly a question of terminology.

22. Of course these repressive apparatuses can also be found in all ancient empires. What is new about the repressive apparatuses of modern societies is their bureaucratic organization and their "total" character which offers possibilities of far deeper penetration into the daily lives of citizens and far greater opportunities for co-ordination. See for instance K. Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism*, New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1957.
23. This is well expressed in the term "Die Bewusstseinsindustrie" coined by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, see H.M. Enzensberger, *The Consciousness Industry. On Literature Politics and the Media*, selected & with a Postscript by M. Roloff, New York, Seabury Press, 1974.
24. For a similar formulation see G. Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, New York, 1966. The idea that all aspects of stratification can in last instance be traced to inequalities in power, can also be found in J. Goudsblom, *On High and Low in Society and Sociology: A Semantic Approach to Social Stratification*, Amsterdam, mimeographed.
25. As Runciman writes: "The study of stratification has been claimed to be the central question of sociology in much the same way that the study of kinship has been claimed to be the central question of anthropology." See W.G. Runciman, Towards a Theory of Social Stratification, in F. Parkin ed., *The Social Analysis of Class Structure*, London, Tavistock, 1974.
26. Usually the term "degree of stratification" is taken to refer to the degree of rigidity in a system of inequality. For the sake of symmetry with the term "degree

of co-ordination", I have used "degree of stratification" to refer to the degree of inequality of power chances in a configuration.

27. Examples of such exchange theoretical approaches are the neo-classical theory of income distribution in economics and G.C. Homans' version of exchange theory in sociology. See J. Pen, *Income Distribution*, Harmondsworth, Penguin; 1971, G.C. Homans, *Social Behaviour. Its Elementary Forms*, New York, 1961.
28. Early formulations of the functionalist theory of stratification are T. Parsons, An Analytical Approach to the Theory of Social Stratification, in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XLV, Nov. 1940, pp. 849-862; K. Davis and W.E. Moore, Some Principles of Stratification, in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 10, no. 2, 1945, pp. 242-249.
29. R. Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*, Stanford University Press, 1959.
30. W.G. Runciman, *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966.
31. R. Dahrendorf, *Ueber den Ursprung der Ungleichkeit unter den Menschen*, Tübingen, 1961.
32. Lenski, *op. cit.*, 1966.
33. In the stratification literature the term "dimensions of stratification" is used to refer to the different spheres in society in which stratification processes occur: the political sphere, the economic sphere and the social sphere. It should not be confused with the term "stratification dimension of sociological analysis" as defined in sections 3 and 5 of this article.
34. See Dahrendorf, *op. cit.*, 1959; D. Lane, *The End of Inequality? Stratification under State Socialism*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1971; M. Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System*, New York, 1957.
35. See for instance R. Kreckel, Dimensions of Social Inequality, in *Sociologische Gids*, Vol. 23, nr. 6, 1976, pp. 338-362.
36. There is nothing new in these formulations. They all derive from Max Weber's discussion of power and authority. What I am trying to do is to formulate these conception in a manner consistent with the stratification and co-ordination terminology developed in this chapter.
37. See A. Giddens, *The Class Structure of Advanced Societies*, London, Hutchinson, 1973; Th. Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, Cambridge University Press, 1979; W.G. Runciman, *op. cit.*, 1966; Elias, *op. cit.*, 1969; R. Bendix and S. Lipset eds., *Class, Status and Power*, London,

Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974.

38. See G. Lenski, *op. cit.*, 1966, pp. 45 ff.
39. Anthony Giddens comes to the diametrically opposite conclusion. According to Giddens, one should seperate the subjective aspects of social stratification such as legitimation and class consciousness from the discussion of estates and status groups.
See S. Giddens, *The Class Structure of Advanced Societies*, London, Hutchinson, 1973, p. 80.
40. See for instance L. Thurow, *Generating Inequality*, New York, Basic Books, 1975, Appendix A: A Do-It-Yourself-Guide to Marginal Productivity.
41. There is an enormous literature on the comparison of schools and approaches in sociology. Some of the works which have been of importance for the argument in the following paragraphs are listed here: J. Goudsblom, *op. cit.*, 1974; A. Gouldner, *op. cit.*, 1971; S.N. Eisenstadt and M. Curelaru, *The Form of Sociology: Paradigms and Crises*, New York, Wiley, 1976; L. Rademaker and H. Bergman, *Sociologische Stromingen* (Sociological Approaches), Utrecht, Het Spectrum, 1977; P.L. van den Berghe, Dialectic and Functionalism: Towards a Theoretical Synthesis, in *American Sociological Review*, 28, 1963, pp. 695-705; R. Dahrendorf, Toward a Theory of Social Conflict, in *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2n June, 1958, pp. 170-183; N. Elias, *op. cit.*, 1970; W. Arts, S. Lindenberg and R. Wippler, eds., *Gedrag en Struktuur* (Behaviour and Structure), Boekaflevering Mens en Maatschappij, Universitaire Pers Rotterdam, 1976; T. Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action*, Vol. I and II, New York, The Free Press, 1968 (1937); H. Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1969; A. Wells, ed., *Contemporary Sociological Theories*, Santa Monica Calif., Goodyear, 1978; A. Heath,*op. cit.*, 1976; T. Huppes, Economic Sociology or Sociological Economics, in Huppes, ed., *Economics and Sociology: Towards an Integration*, Leiden, Martinus Nijhoff, 1976; M.J. Mulkay, *Functionalism, Exchange and Theoretical Strategy*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971; J. van den Doel, *Democracy and Welfare Economics*, Cambridge, 1979.
42. See for instance Parsons'discussion of Durkheim in *The Structure of Social Action*, op. cit., 1968, p. 311.
43. Symbolic interactionist and ethnomethodological approaches tend to stress symbolic and cultural manipulation. Theories of rational choice are applicable both in situations where positive incentives are being applied

and in situations where negative sanctions are being applied.

44. For a critical discussion of the application of exchange theory to political processes see A. Szirmai, Theorie als intellectueel simulatiemodel (Theory as an Intellectual Simulation Model), in *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift*, Sept. 1978, pp. 346-368.