



Concepts and Generalizations in Comparative Sociological Studies

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CONCEPTS AND GENERALIZATIONS IN COMPARATIVE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES *

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Comparative sociological studies attempt to develop concepts and generalizations at a level between "pure theory" and descriptive area studies. They help to elucidate the time-and-space limitations of sociological concepts that have less than universal applicability and to uncover the generalizations hidden in many "composite concepts." Positively, they can help us develop typologies of social actions and structures and assess their characteristic range of variation. These contributions are exemplified on the basis of classic comparative studies and of the author's studies of the "political community."

LIKE the concepts of other disciplines, sociological concepts should be universally applicable. The concept "division of labor," for instance, refers to the fact that the labor performed in a collectivity is specialized; the concept is universal because we know of no collectivity without such specialization. Where reference is made to a principle of the division of labor over time—irrespective of the particular individuals performing the labor and of the way labor is subdivided (whether by sex, age, skill or whatever)—we arrive at one meaning of the term "social organization." We know of no society that lacks such a principle; furthermore, we can compare and contrast the social organization of two societies by showing how their division of labor differs.

It is possible to remain at this level of universal concepts. A whole series of mutually related concepts can be elaborated deductively in an effort to construct a framework of concepts applicable to all societies. Such efforts in "pure theory," however, should be subjected to periodic checks of the analytic utility of the concepts. For example, the concept "ascription" apparently refers unambiguously to a principle of assignment to roles based on the attributes rather than the performances of a person.

Other concepts can be related *logically* to "ascription": emphasis on personal attributes is incompatible with emphasis on universal standards, a neutral or impersonal attitude, and equalitarianism. Empirically, however, the meaning both of these terms and of their interrelations is in doubt. To be analytically useful, universal concepts require specifications which will help us bridge the gap between concept and empirical evidence. Emphasis on the ascriptive criterion of birth may refer equally well to a person with an ancient aristocratic lineage as to a person whose family acquired its title by purchase. In one cultural setting emphasis on beauty may outweigh emphasis on high birth; in another it may not. Such differences, rather than the predominance of ascriptive criteria as such, provide the clues for a sociological analysis of diverse social structures.

These considerations point to a persistent problem in sociology. Concepts and theories are difficult to relate to empirical findings on the one hand, while much empirical research is devoid of theoretical significance on the other. Many sociologists deplore this hiatus, but the difficulties persist and tend to reinforce the claims of "pure theory" and "pure methodology," respectively. Comparative sociological studies represent an attempt to develop concepts and generalizations at a level between what is true of all societies and what is true of one society at one point in time and space. In fact, many sociological concepts imply such an "intermediate level" of analysis, though frequently they are used as if they applied universally.

* Revision of a paper presented to the Fifth World Congress of Sociology, Washington, September, 1962, and published in its original form in *Transactions of the Fifth World Congress of Sociology*, Louvain: International Sociological Association, 1963. I am indebted to my colleagues William Petersen and Neil Smelser for their criticisms of the earlier draft.

CONCEPTS OF LIMITED APPLICABILITY

Concepts of socio-historical configurations are a case in point. Stratification is present in all societies, but stratification by "class" is present only in some. Classes depend upon the voluntary coalescence of interests among individuals and thus they differ from stratification by "estate," or court-rank, or clan-affiliation. Again, the exercise of authority requires subordinate agents everywhere, but their organization in a "bureaucracy" is a more specific phenomenon. Bureaucracy in the sense of Max Weber's concept of governmental organization under the rule of law applies principally to the countries of Northwestern Europe from the nineteenth century onward. However, several *elements* of bureaucratic organization can be found centuries earlier, as T. F. Tout has documented in his five-volume work, deceptively entitled *Chapters in the Administrative History of England*. Also, elements from the "bureaucratic" complex have been adopted in many countries throughout history—with varying success to be sure.

Such historical delimitations of the applicability of a concept are clear only in principle; they are very vague in practice. Though it is possible to date the inception of "bureaucracy" in England from the Northcote-Trevelyan Reforms of 1861, even so marked an institutional innovation is no more than a "high-water mark" of changes in English administration whose century-old continuity can be documented easily. The delimitation in time and space of other sociological concepts presents even greater difficulties, since most such concepts are not reflected in legal or administrative documents.¹ Thus it is both difficult to identify the space-and-time dimensions of certain sociological concepts and difficult to deny that they possess an historically limited applicability. It may be argued that this is all the more reason for treating such concepts as unanalyzed composites of several analytic dimensions which need to be un-

tangled conceptually, and once untangled each of these dimensions would be universal. Perhaps so, but it has yet to be demonstrated that this gain in universality is not obtained at the expense of analytic utility. So far it appears to me that it is necessary to use "composite concepts" if one wishes to apply concepts rather than elaborate them deductively. Hence I see the utility of logical decomposition more in the clarification of concepts than as a ground for abandoning them.

Usually, we meet these difficulties by constructing a contrast-conception. "Bureaucracy" is hardly a usable concept as long as it stands alone. It gains clarity when we contrast it with the "patrimonial" form of government, as Max Weber has done, because in this way we learn of a non-bureaucratic type of government administration that has a century-long development of its own. Again, stratification by "class" is a better analytic tool when contrasted with alternative types of stratification. While such paired concepts are never wholly satisfactory, they do enable us to delimit the space-and-time dimension of a given concept to some extent.²

Comparative analysis reveals also that many concepts are generalizations in disguise. Urbanism is a case in point, as are other concepts of complex structures, such as industrial society, bureaucracy, democracy, feudalism, caste society, etc., together with related "developmental" terms, such as urbanization, industrialization, and so on. These concepts define social structures with regard to their several distinguishing characteristics. If we are to refer to social structures, we must define a cluster of attributes that distinguishes one structure from another.³ It is a fiction to suppose that

² I prefer to avoid the term "ideal type" since it requires too many explanations of its meaning to be useful. Cf. the earlier discussion of "paired concepts" in Reinhard Bendix and Bennett Berger, "Images of Society and Problems of Concept-Formation in Sociology," in Llewellyn Gross, (ed.) *Contributions to Sociological Theory*, Evanston: Row, Peterson & Co., 1959, pp. 92-118.

³ The "pattern variables" as formulated by Talcott Parsons are an aid in this respect, provided their application to specific structures is spelled out. "Universalism," for instance, may be an attribute of urbanism and of bureaucracy, but it is necessary to explicate how this characteristic, which distinguishes urban from folk and bureaucratic from

¹ No doubt it is due in part to these difficulties of chronological delimitation that sociologists and historians do not get along well intellectually; yet they need each other, for historians use sociological concepts and sociologists ought to derive part of their evidence from history.

these attributes generally occur together; after all, the conventional definition, say, of urbanism puts into abstract terms what we have learned about some Western cities as distinguished from non-urban types of settlement. Hence, comparative sociological studies are needed to delimit the applicability of those attributes; here we are back to the space-and-time dimension of sociological concepts. Even more important, such studies would enable us to examine critically the implicit and, in my judgment, unjustified generalization, according to which the several attributes of "urbanism" tend to occur and vary together.

Recent observations in India suggest that the generalizations and expectations we associate with the term "urbanization" may be excessively culture-bound. In India kinship ties between urban and rural residents remain strong. Examples: In a recent flood disaster in Poona about one-third of the people made homeless (some 30,000) simply rejoined their families in the villages; in Bombay, textile workers on strike go back to their villages for the duration of the strike; in many cities husbands go to work by themselves, leaving their wives and children in the countryside. A recent survey of the "urban social situation in India" concludes that rural-urban differences with regard to such key factors as caste and joint family have not in fact developed as expected.⁴ We know about somewhat similar

patrimonial administration, becomes manifest in each, and how these manifestations may be linked. Moreover, sociologists interested in social change have often used the logical compatibility among such pattern-variables as universalism, achievement, affective neutrality, self-orientation and others as if this indicated an empirical coherence among these several elements. Thus, they harken back to W. G. Sumner's "strain of consistency [of the folkways] with each other, because they all answer their several purposes with less friction and antagonism when they cooperate and support each other." See W. G. Sumner, *Folkways*, Boston: Ginn & Co., 1940, pp. 5-6. One would suppose that Sumner was too much of an evolutionist to be aware of the Hegelian legacy in this approach, and given the decreasing interest in the history of ideas among sociologists a number of them may no longer be aware of the evolutionary theory implicit in their use of "pattern variables."

⁴ N. V. Sovani, "The Urban Social Situation in India," *Ariha Vijnana*, III (June-September, 1961), pp. 85-105, 195-222. The expectation to which Sovani refers should be qualified in the light of

phenomena from the earlier history of Western cities also and hence it is tempting to predict that with sufficient economic development and urbanization this tie to the country will be broken in India as well.

But what began as a definition has subtly turned into a prediction based on a generalization about "urbanism," though this prediction is hazardous. For in the West the religious consecration of family ties had been broken long before modern urbanization occurred. If by individualism we understand *this* destruction of the fetters of kinship, then individualism was a precondition as much as a consequence of that urbanization. And as urbanization in India occurs in the absence of comparable preconditions we must expect that it will take unfamiliar forms. Furthermore, it is difficult to anticipate these forms. In the UNESCO Seminar Report on this subject we read the following:

Although the great cities of Asia have large size, high density and heterogeneous populations these characteristics (which according to Wirth essentially give rise to the urban way of life), have not produced the basic changes in interpersonal relations, the nature of human beings and the social institutions, as in the Western context. Despite these relatively high densities, life has not necessarily become largely secularized, great differentiation of function has not taken place and the way of life has not changed markedly for many of the indigenous population groups.⁵

Although the report goes on to deny "increased sophistication, rationality of behavior, cosmopolitanism in outlook, or innovation and social change," with regard to these cities, these qualities of "urbanism" surely exist. But they may be more suffused with elements from the traditional culture than in Western cities, and at the same time certain sections of the urban elite may live

some evidence concerning the compatibility between Western urbanism and a "modified extended family," as discussed by Eugene Litwak, "Occupational Mobility and Extended Family Cohesion," and "Geographic Mobility and Extended Family Cohesion," *American Sociological Review*, 25 (February and June, 1960), pp. 9-21, 385-94. See also Sidney M. Greenfield, "Industrialization and the Family in Sociological Theory," *American Journal of Sociology*, 67 (November, 1961), pp. 312-322.

⁵ *Urbanization in Asia and the Far East*, Proceedings of the Joint UN/UNESCO Seminar, Bangkok, August 8-18, 1956, Tensions and Technology Series; Calcutta: 1957, p. 87.

at a greater social and cultural distance from the common people in Indian than in European or American cities. In addition, as an outsider examines the statistics of unemployment, housing conditions, and population with sympathy for the human condition, he naturally wonders whether the resilience of kinship- and caste-ties under urban conditions represents the one remaining social security for the individual in fierce competition for the scarce opportunities available.

If these impressions are near the mark, then every increase in population, every further crowding of the cities will militate against that individualism most needed to curb population and make Indian cities "urbanized" in our sense of that word. To dismiss all this as a transitory phenomenon that will give way to more familiar features of city life presupposes what we need to examine, namely that the cluster of attributes constituting "urbanism" represents a valid generalization of a pattern of interrelated social changes. Rather, it is probable that the cities of India have structural antecedents of their own that will eventually blend with the familiar physical attributes of cities under the impact of modern industry—and in this way will create a distinctive type of urbanization.

If we admit this possibility, then we face difficult questions of nomenclature and social theory. We would have to conclude that terms sociologists have adopted or adapted from ordinary speech (e.g., city, village, industry, bureaucracy, etc.) are not readily applicable in their usual connotations. Since such terms have more connotations than we are aware of in ordinary usage, it is indispensable for scholarly purposes to make these connotations explicit. As a result, when we use the term "urbanism" with reference to India we should not also apply connotations of the term that are inappropriate. Some social theorists would cite these difficulties as their reason for discarding ordinary terms altogether and substituting for them a new language. But that approach raises even greater difficulties; it is remote from ordinary experience and it interferes with effective communication since it makes references to that experience unnecessarily obscure. These terminological problems do not exist in isolation. They are often a symptom

of unresolved theoretical questions. Comparative sociological studies, I believe, can make their own specific contribution to their resolution.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE COMPARATIVE APPROACH

Among these contributions at least three may be distinguished. First, comparative studies illuminate the meaning of sociological universals by exhibiting the range of "solutions" that men have found for a given problem in different societies. Second, since many sociological concepts are composite terms, such studies provide an important check on the generalizations implicit in these terms. Third, insofar as our concepts are of limited applicability, such studies also enable us to characterize these limits and hence to specify approximately the empirical referents of contrasted social structures.

1. Comparisons between "related" phenomena in different societies are made possible by referring them to some sociological universal. "Sociological universals" is another phrase for the problematics of the social condition; they are not generalizations in the ordinary sense. A very detailed, deductive elaboration of these "universals"—such as that of Talcott Parsons—deals with these problematics as if they were logical attributes of all societies conceived as "systems."⁶ Comparative sociological studies, on the other hand, are less deductive and ambitious. Typically, they take a single issue that is to be found in many (conceivably in all) societies and seek to illuminate it by showing how different societies have dealt with the same issue. When Max Weber

⁶ Hence, Parsons' propositions that are true of all societies take a form such as the following: "From the point of view of functioning of the social system, it is not the needs of all the participant actors which must be met, nor all the needs of any one, but only a sufficient proportion for a sufficient fraction of the population." See *The Social System*, Glencoe: The Free Press, 1951, p. 28. Such a statement cannot be falsified or verified, and its remoteness from the evidence is suggested by the fact that the history of all societies records controversies over the meaning of phrases like "sufficient proportion" and "sufficient fraction." Cf. here the critical comments of T. H. Marshall concerning the use of the term "social system" in "The Welfare State: A Sociological Interpretation," *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, II (1961), pp. 285-86.

wrote on the secular causes and consequences of religious doctrines, he identified one such issue. We may call it the inner-worldly incentives implicit in religions; this issue is examined in the Western religions (culminating in Puritanism), which are contrasted with the inner-worldly incentives implicit in other religions, such as Hinduism or Buddhism. When, in his *Ancient City*, Fustel de Coulanges wrote of the steps by which a consecrated deity of the community gradually prevails over the worship of separate deities of family and tribe, he identified another issue. We may call it the social—or in this case the religious—preconditions of civic unity, which Coulanges examines over time and in a comparison between Greek and Roman society. Or, to take a modern work, when Hannah Arendt discusses anti-Semitism in Europe and race-relations in South Africa, she identifies another issue; we may call it the moral crisis of discrimination. Both those who discriminate and those who are discriminated against, lose, or are made to lose, their humanity, either because they claim and exploit as virtues what are accidents of birth or because they lose the standards of one community without quite acquiring the standards of another.⁷

In these and similar studies a recurrent issue of the human condition is identified in order to examine empirically how men in different societies have encountered that issue. If the emphasis is to be on *men acting* in societies, these studies will have to give full weight not only to the *conditioning* of these actions but in principle also to the fact that men have *acted* in face of the agonizing dilemmas that confront them. To maintain this balanced approach, comparative studies should not only highlight the contrasts existing between different human situations and social structures, but also

⁷ I note in passing, but with emphasis that all these are moral issues and that it greatly curtails the "sociological imagination" in my judgment if this moral dimension is neglected. Some sociologists manage to write even about values or power, as if values existed outside a moral framework or power involved simply a distinction between a few "bad guys" and the masses of the people whose deprivations are a synonym of their virtue. The intellectual challenge of sociological concepts can only gain if the moral issues inherent in them are laid bare.

underscore the inescapable artificiality of conceptual distinctions and the consequent need to move back and forth between the empirical evidence and the benchmark-concepts which Max Weber called "ideal types."⁸

2. Many sociological concepts are composite terms formulating a limited body of the evidence. If we use such terms without regard to this limitation, we make unwarranted generalizations—however inadvertent. Here comparative studies help us to be on guard. For example, if city life as we know it goes with secularism, are there other types of city life which go with the maintenance of religious beliefs?⁹ More generally, if X goes with Y, can we also find evidence that X can go with non-Y? The second type of evidence would not invalidate the first. But by considering both we protect ourselves against spurious generalizations. The gain is not only negative, however.

In *Contributions to Indian Sociology*¹⁰ the question has been raised, for example, whether the term "village" is applicable to Indian society, because in all too many instances the minimum degree of cohesion commonly associated with this term, is absent. Such a question should not remain on the conceptual level, however. People's orientations toward kin and caste always compete to some extent with the demands of the village as a community which more often than not are articulated by political authority. Accordingly, two relatively antagonistic principles of "community" are at work here. Research into the prevalence of one or

⁸ Perhaps the simplest statement of this issue is contained in Max Weber, "Agrargeschichte des Altertums," *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1924, p. 280, where an enumeration of different varieties of craftsmen is followed by the assertion that it is necessary, nevertheless, to make do with one concept of the "ancient Greek craftsman" to refer to all of them.

⁹ See, for example, Milton Singer, "The Great Tradition in a Metropolitan Center: Madras," *Journal of American Folklore*, 71 (July-September, 1958), pp. 347-388.

¹⁰ Cf. the discussions of the editors, Louis Dumont and D. Pocock, and of F. G. Bailey in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, I (April, 1957), pp. 26-27 and *passim*; III (July 1959), pp. 88-101; and IV (April, 1960), pp. 82-89.

another of these principles might enable us to formulate a typology of villages which would reveal the special features of Indian villages.¹¹

An example from Max Weber's sociology of religion shows the analytic usefulness of comparative studies for the construction of such typologies. Weber points out that in ancient times religious prophecy involved oracles concerning future political and military events. Three types of prophecy may be distinguished. In the bureaucratic kingdoms of Egypt and Rome emotional prophecy of the Biblical type did not appear because the religious police suppressed prophets as dangerous demagogues. In Israel such prophecy had a long tradition, on the other hand, because it was supported by families of pious notables and the monarchy was not strong enough to suppress it. Ancient Greece represents a type of prophecy "midway" between that of Egypt and Israel: only the famous oracle at Delphi was permitted to prophecy, but the ecstatic states of the priestess, Pythia, were considered portents which had to be controlled and interpreted by the priesthood. The three cases are distinguishable in terms of the degree of political or religious control exercised over the prophets. These are primarily political distinctions differing from the religious distinction between the *ethical* prophecy of Judaism and the *exemplary* prophecy of India. Both the political and the religious dimensions provided Weber with an analytic tool that enabled him to study prophecy comparatively, as a clue to the distinctive social structures of ancient societies.¹²

3. Social structures have a space-and-time dimension, as discussed earlier. To formulate concepts appropriate to such structures it is necessary to allow for the variations which are compatible with—or even characteristic of—each type of structure.¹³ The enumera-

tion of a cluster of interrelated attributes is not sufficient for this purpose.

Max Weber's analysis of legal domination exemplifies a concept of "structure" in which the variations typical of the rule of law are incorporated. A belief in legality means first and foremost that certain formal procedures must be obeyed if the enactment and execution of a law or regulation is to be considered legal. But while legal rule-making tends to eliminate the idiosyncracies of personal rule, it also militates against the exercise of judgment in the individual case—in the interest of developing a consistent body of rules that are the same for everyone. Yet attention to rules in the interest of equity may engender an interest in rule-making for its own sake—just as too much regard for equity in the individual case can jeopardize the integrity of the rule-making process. Hence, the rule of law endures as long as piecemeal solutions for these conflicting imperatives are found and neither the concern with equity nor with the formal attributes of rule-making is allowed to predominate. In this way a social structure is understood not as a natural system with defined limits and invariant laws governing an equilibrating process, but rather as a system of historical dimensions which we examine in terms of the piecemeal solutions men have found for the characteristic problems of that structure.¹⁴

Where analysis emphasizes the chronology and individual sequence of such solutions, it belongs to the historian; where it emphasizes the pattern of these solutions, it belongs to the sociologist. Comparative sociological studies are especially suited to elucidate such patterns because they tend to increase the "visibility" of one structure by contrasting it with another. In this way, they may help us identify the issues con-

city are related to each other, then social structures are distinguished from each other by their different "principles." However, such "principles" may be more or less fully developed, the relations between different "parts" may be strong or weak. Or, concretely, absolutist monarchy exists whether the ruler is effective or not, democratic government exists whether it is sustained by a viable two-party structure or jeopardized by a multiplicity of parties.

¹⁴ Cf. the lucid statement of this difference between natural and historical systems in E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Social Anthropology*, London: Cohen & West, 1960, pp. 56-62.

¹¹ See the striking characterization of these distinguishing features of the Indian village in B. B. Misra, *The Indian Middle Class*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 310-312.

¹² Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, Glencoe: The Free Press, 1952, pp. 270-71, 281, 287-88, 290-92, 295, and my summary statement in *Max Weber, An Intellectual Portrait*, Garden City: Anchor Books, 1962, pp. 247-48.

¹³ If by "structure" we mean the principle in accordance with which the different "parts" of a so-

fronting men in their attempts to develop their country along the lines of one pattern or another. And by exposing concepts and generalizations to a wider range of evidence than is sometimes customary, comparative sociological studies are likely to impart a salutary degree of nominalism to the terms we use.

COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF THE
"POLITICAL COMMUNITY"

Since the foregoing comments are mainly cautionary and descriptive, it is well to supplement them briefly by illustrating the type of comparative approach here envisaged. As in the classic studies cited earlier, the starting point is the identification of a universal, in this case the friction between private interest and public authority. Where each individual or group takes the law into their hands until checked by the momentarily superior force of an opponent, anarchy reigns and a *political community* does not exist. Some subordination of private interest to public authority is the *sine qua non* of such a community. While governments vary greatly with regard to the subordination they demand and the rights they acknowledge, the term "political community" may be applied wherever the relations between rulers and ruled involve shared understandings concerning this "exchange." These understandings concern the *legitimacy* of public authority, its organization and demands upon the individual; they exist side by side with the fact that individuals find their private interests enhanced through cooperation with others. Accordingly, men are engaged in the pursuit of "ideal and material interests" leading to social relationships based on a coalescence of these interests, and they are engaged in actions "governed by the conception that a legitimate order exists."¹⁵ This formulation points to the universal problem of reconciling private concerns and the actions that sustain public authority.

In a comparative study of changing social structures since the French revolution the

¹⁵ For a fuller statement of this distinction in the work of Max Weber and an analysis of its intellectual derivation see Bendix, *Max Weber*, pp. 476-77 and *passim*.

following inquiries¹⁶ may be distinguished:

1. If the subordination of private interest to public authority is a characteristic feature of political community, then it should be possible to distinguish between types of political communities by types of subordination. It is important, for instance, to formulate the type of subordination characteristic of the "medieval political community," to contrast this with the subordination characteristic of the Western nation-state and, if possible to formulate the "crisis of transition," in which the "medieval" subordination gives way and is superseded by one typical of the nation-state.¹⁷

2. If two social structures differ in the type of subordination characteristic of them, then they will differ also in the type of protest they provoke among the subordinated. Accordingly, the millenarian movements, social banditry, and populist legitimism characteristic of medieval political life may be contrasted with the quest for national citizenship characteristic of protest-movements in some countries of Western Europe during the nineteenth century.¹⁸

3. Though social structures may be distinguished one from the other, no structure is static. A further task is to analyze the transformation a given structure undergoes without losing its distinguishing characteristics. In the present case this may be attempted by comparing the manner in which kindred Western European societies have extended national citizenship to those segments of the population which previously had been excluded from the rights of citizenship. In the early type of nation-state these rights were available only to social notables, whereas subsequently these rights became an attribute of all adults as citizens of the nation-state.¹⁹

¹⁶ These illustrations are taken from my own current work. My hope is that other scholars interested in comparative studies will accept my characterization of this level of analysis.

¹⁷ For an attempt to formulate these three models with the aid of Tocqueville's analysis see the author's "Social Stratification and the Political Community," *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, I (1960), pp. 3-32.

¹⁸ Cf. the discussion of this contrast in my essay, "The Lower Classes and the 'Democratic Revolution,'" *Industrial Relations*, I (October 1961), pp. 91-116.

¹⁹ A preliminary formulation of this approach is

The three kinds of studies here suggested are capable of extension in many directions. For example, the distinction between the medieval political community, the modern nation-state and the crisis of transition is applicable principally to the countries of Western Europe, and one should explore the limits of this applicability. But one may also apply an analogous approach to other areas of the world which differ from the Western European pattern, to be sure, but which nonetheless possess common structural characteristics of their own.²⁰ With regard

contained in R. Bendix and Stein Rokkan, "The Extension of National Citizenship to the Lower Classes: A Comparative Perspective," Paper submitted to the Fifth World Congress of Sociology, Washington 1962.

²⁰ Examples are the Latin American countries which have in common the Spanish colonial heritage, European frontier-settlements like the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand which have the British legacy in common, and others. Such groupings are not always that simple and there are countries, like Japan, which probably are in a category of their own. Such historical clustering of social structures may then be analyzed with the aid of sociological universals; but I confess to considerable scepticism concerning the use of such universals without regard to such clusters, or in the absence of an attempt to spell out in what respects two or more social structures are alike or

to these characteristics it should be possible to formulate models of the pre-modern social structure, of the transition which followed, and of the modern social structure which has developed to date.²¹

These are only a few positive illustrations of comparative sociological studies aiming at propositions that are true of more than one but less than all societies. This essay will have served its purpose if it directs attention to a type of inquiry which—at the macro-sociological level—seeks to hold a balance between grand theory and the descriptive accounts of area-studies.

different. I have made such an attempt in a comparison of German and Japanese modernization. See Reinhard Bendix, "Pre-conditions of Development: A Comparison of Germany and Japan," Conference on Modern Japan, Bermuda, 1962.

²¹ In an effort to articulate the distinguishing features of Western European societies, I have attempted to formulate such models for Russia from her autocratic rule in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to her totalitarian structure of the post-revolutionary period. See my *Work and Authority in Industry*, New York: John Wiley, 1956, Chapters 3 and 6 and "The Cultural and Political Setting of Economic Rationality in Western and Eastern Europe," in Gregory Grossman (ed.), *Value and Plan*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960, pp. 245-70.

ON CHURCH AND SECT *

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The church-sect typology as developed by Troeltsch and modified by others is of limited use in classifying religious groups because it is applicable only to a specific historical context and it encompasses a variety of elements which tend to vary independently. A single-variable definition of broad applicability is proposed. Grounded in Weber's systematic typology of religion, the new definition should facilitate the comparative study of most groups in the Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions. Some guidelines for using the typology are suggested. These are illustrated by applying the typology to the major religious groups of the United States.

SINCE Ernst Troeltsch formulated the church-sect typology more than half a century ago it has come to be regarded by most sociologists of religion as a singu-

larly useful device for the analysis of the characteristics of organized Christian groups in relation to their environment.

Yet the typology as developed by Troeltsch has been subjected to a great deal of criticism. During the past generation many students have reworked it in various ways to

* Revised version of a paper presented to the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, New York, October, 1962.

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[Footnotes]

⁴ **Occupational Mobility and Extended Family Cohension**

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American Sociological Review, Vol. 25, No. 1. (Feb., 1960), pp. 9-21.

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