

# Journal of Negro Education

---

Class and Caste: A Definition and a Distinction

Author(s): Oliver C. Cox

Source: *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Spring, 1944), pp. 139-149

Published by: [Journal of Negro Education](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2292848>

Accessed: 24-10-2015 05:55 UTC

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*Journal of Negro Education* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of Negro Education*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

# Class and Caste: A Definition and a Distinction

OLIVER C. COX

## CASTES AS RIGID CLASSES

Recently, writers on aspects of social stratification have been thinking of social status in terms of a continuum of societies. At one end are societies in which the status of the individual tends to remain fixed for life; at the other are societies in which the opportunity for advancement of status of the individual is recognized and even encouraged. In other words, at the one end are caste systems, at the other open class systems.

In 1498 the Portuguese adventurers who landed at Calicut with Vasco de Gama observed that in India society was organized in a number of endogamous groups with inferior and superior social positions held in perpetuity. They compared this with the social mobility familiar to them in the West, and called it caste. Since then, almost numberless writers have made the same observations. A recognition of relative rigidity of social status among different status systems, then, is no contribution of modern sociologists.

What is new, however, is an insistent attempt by many students of social stratification to identify rigidity of social status, in whatever social context it is found, with caste; and to conceive of castes as mere petrified, rigid, or endogamous social classes. For instance, A. L. Kroeber says:

"Castes . . . are a special form of social classes which in tendency at least are present

in every society. Castes differ from social classes, however, in that they have emerged into social consciousness to the point that custom and law attempt their rigid and permanent separation from one another.<sup>1</sup>

Yet if we examine these situations more closely, we should recognize that the structure of a class is categorically different from that of the caste. If we think of a social class as a status stratum consisting of individuals with heterogeneous economic, political, and religious interests, then historically we have no instance in which a class became increasingly stable until at length it crystallized into a caste. Evidently the factor which is supposed to produce the rigidity or inertia

<sup>1</sup>*Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, "Caste." Dr. Shridhar V. Ketkar concludes that "Classes are converted into castes by becoming endogamous." *The History of Caste in India*, Vol. I, p. 28. According to Ogburn and Nimkoff, "Class societies may be represented as extending all the way from those like the above (castes), which are relatively rigid or closed, to those which are flexible and open." *Sociology*, p. 317. And Davis and Dollard say that: "Caste in the (American) South is nothing more nor less . . . than a system of limiting social participation between color groups, and thus differentiating between these groups with regard to the most fundamental opportunities in human society. In this latter respect it is quite like our system of social classes. It differs from the class system in its arbitrary and final definition of the individual's status . . ." *Children of Bondage*, pp. 19-20. To the same effect, see Talcott Parsons, "An Analytical Approach to the Theory of Social Stratification," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XLV, May, 1940, p. 855. E. A. Ross is explicit: "Class hardens into caste when the jealous upper class resists or retards the admissions of commoners, however great their merit or wealth." *Principles of Sociology*, New York, 1930, p. 341.

in the transformation of a class to a caste is endogamy. But, historically speaking, endogamy has had the function of securing the segregation of class membership rather than that of solidifying classes. At this point we should mention that a class, one conceptual segment of a classification, does not move; only status-bearing entities may have social mobility.

The belief that the caste system consists of four castes constituting a status gradient has led to very much confusion. As a matter of fact, there has never been any support for this belief.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, so far as the caste system is concerned, an endogamous social class is anomalous. The social class may include castes, while the caste includes the person. The social class may be thought of as a form of social stratification and differentiation; the caste may be a form of social differentiation only. Castes may have collateral social status; classes must of necessity be hierarchically superposed. Thus two different castes may be socially equal—that is, they may be of the same social stratum—just as, say, stationary engineers and electricians may be of the same social class. Frequently in class systems lateral status extends beyond the immediate society, so that an American, a Greek, an Englishman, and an Italian, for instance, of the upper social class in their respective countries, will tend to recognize each other

in free association on common ground. In other words, an Englishman may go to France and marry within his class with impunity. The caste, however, is socially bounded on every side.

Social classes are not founded upon occupational limitations in the sense that castes are. One of the principal features of castes is that they identify themselves functionally. Thus, if it were possible to conceive of the "middle class" in the United States as becoming endogamous, the resulting social entity would be very much different from any group that we have ever known as a caste in India. It would contain priests, racketeers, dancers, nurses, tanners, doctors, butchers, teachers, sewerage workers, undertakers, farmers, mechanics, Protestants, Mohammedans, Catholics, Jews, white-, black-, and redmen, and so on. Clearly, no one could fit this social agglomeration into the concept of caste.<sup>3</sup> "Class and caste stand to each other in relation, not of parent and child, but of family and species. The general classification is by classes, the detailed one by castes. The former represent the external, the latter the internal view of social organization."<sup>4</sup>

The greater the disparity in position between social class and social class, the less frequent are inter-class marriages and the stronger are the sanctions against them. Indeed, the two extremes of most class hierarchies may be thought of as endogamous

<sup>2</sup> On this point E. A. Gait says: "It has . . . been shown by Senart and others that the division into castes has no direct relation with the division into classes. The castes came into existence independently, without any regard to the classes. The individual castes no doubt claimed to belong to one or other of the classes, but this they still do." *Census of India, 1911*, Vol. I, Part I, p. 365.

<sup>3</sup> Of course, reasoning would be seriously inverted if we were to assume that should the class become endogamous, it would soon cease to be so diverse. The group must first cease to be diverse before it can achieve caste endogamy, and not vice versa.

<sup>4</sup> Gait, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

with respect to each other. Yet, obviously, classes are not transformed into castes directly as difference in social position increases.

#### STRUCTURE OF CLASS AND CASTE HIERARCHY

Since in a class society status attributes are achieved competitively, the shape of its hierarchy must of necessity be pyramidal. In other words, the greater the desirability of the status, the greater the difficulty of achieving it. The higher one rises, the keener is the rivalry and the fewer the rivals. Thus the size of the class tends to vary inversely with superiority of status. The shape of the caste hierarchy, however, is unpredictable, for caste membership is principally a function of the birth rate of caste populations. Although we have no data on caste membership by "natural districts" in India, figures for the country as a whole show that some of the higher castes such as Brahmans and Shaikhs have the largest membership. Indeed, the Brahmans have a larger membership than any other.<sup>5</sup> We may venture the speculation that since the lowest castes are usually recruited from those primitive tribes on the periphery of the caste system, it is probable that the shape of the caste hierarchy may appear like an inverted truncated pyramid.

The class hierarchy is a status continuum. We think of it as including discrete strata only for purposes of comprehension and analysis. Castes, however, are distinct segregable social groupings. While class strata—if they are to be meaningful—must be few,

the number of castes may be practically unlimited. Castes may be classified; but classes are already social classifications. As we have indicated elsewhere, there may be social classes within castes,<sup>6</sup> a rather tautologous conception when applied to the class system. A crucial difference between a class and a caste is that with reference to the social order, the caste is a status bearing entity; while the social class is a conceptual stratum of status bearing entities. Therefore the class is not a form of social organization.

To illustrate, we may think of segregating all the castes in Brahmanic India according to some scheme of classification, and pigeonhole all the castes under the following headings: high, low-high, middle, low, and lowest. Here, then, will be a hierarchy of classes of castes. We may be able to describe these classes and even show that a vague sense of their approximate status tends to determine differential behavior attitudes of persons within them. But what finally is the nature of these two structures: our classes, and the castes? Clearly the classes are not forms of social organization and, as such, we should expect them to have little if anything in common with the castes constituting them. Moreover, it would seem obvious that other taxonomists, according to their criteria of classification, may arrive at quite different distributions of castes.

In a class system it is the family or person who is the bearer of status; in the caste system it is the caste. The

<sup>5</sup> See: *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, New Ed., Vol. I, Table XII, p. 498.

<sup>6</sup> See also Abbé Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies*, 3rd Ed., Oxford, 1906, pp. 82-92.

caste system emphasizes group status and morality; the individual without a caste is a meaningless social entity. He is an object naturally ignored by the rest of society. Thus a man's class does not determine his rank in society, for class is rank; a man's caste, however, does tend to decide his rank. In other words, his class is his rank, while his caste *has* a rank to be determined. We define an individual's status, not by first determining his class position, but rather we determine his class position by ascertaining his status.

If we were thinking of status hierarchies only, it is not class and caste which we should compare, but rather individuals and families in the class system, and sub-castes or castes (endogamous units) in the caste system. In both cases the number of statuses would be large beyond comprehensible limits. To make the hierarchy wieldy, then, some scheme of classification with reference to the purpose in hand is consciously or unconsciously devised. We may illustrate the position of the person in the class system and in the caste system by the diagram on page 143.

#### THE PROBLEM OF CLASSIFICATION

Because class is collective rank, each class must inevitably have a hierarchical position. Quite obviously, then, there can never be a dispute concerning the place of a class. A caste, on the other hand, may have no determined place in the caste hierarchy; it will thus be able to claim distinction only. In other words, castes sometimes find themselves in the position of the individual whose precise class rank is either undetermined or indeterminate. Yet the individual lives

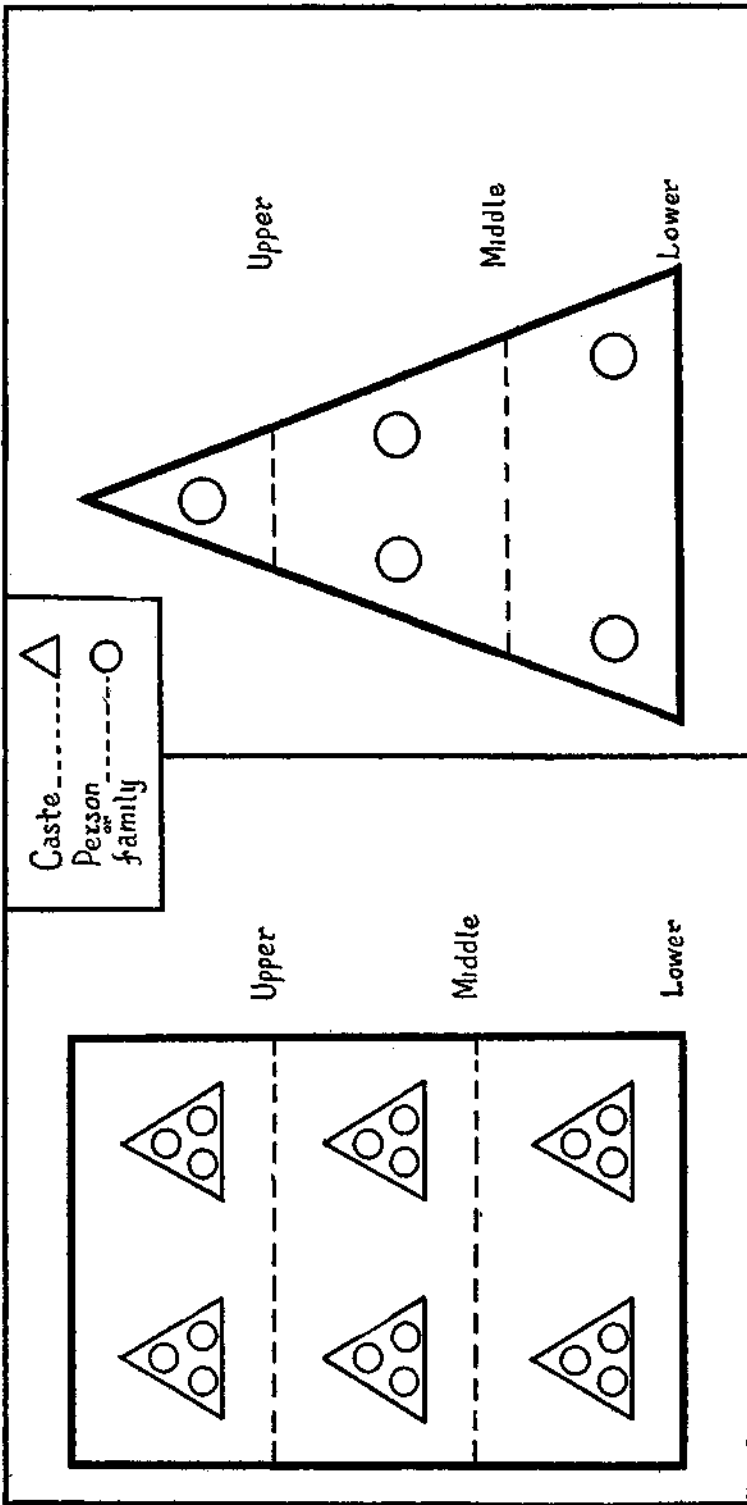
on, and so does the caste. Hierarchical organization is essential to the caste system, but not to the individual caste. It is this latter fact which is responsible for considerable inter-caste conflict. Each caste is supposed to have an immemorial right to a definite niche in the caste hierarchy, but the integrity of this sanctum rests finally upon public opinion.<sup>7</sup> And it is in this latter capricious area that impregnable caste position must be maintained.

The social class has objective refer-

<sup>7</sup> "As to the particular subdivision of each caste, it is difficult to decide the order of the hierarchy observed amongst them. Sub-castes which are despised in one district are often greatly esteemed in another, according as they conduct themselves with greater propriety or follow more important callings. Thus the caste to which the ruler of a country belongs, however low it may be considered elsewhere, ranks among the highest in the ruler's own dominions, and every member of it derives some reflection of dignity from its chief.

After all, public opinion is the surest guide of caste superiority amongst the Sudras, and very slight acquaintance with the customs of a province and with the private life of its inhabitants will suffice for fixing the position which each caste has acquired by common consent." Abbé Du Bois, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

The following discussion by the Hindu writer, J. H. Bhattacharya, indicates further the indecision which questions of caste status sometimes involve. "There is very considerable difference of opinion as to the exact position of the Kshettris in the Hindu caste system. Some authorities take them to be the same as the bastard caste Kshatri, spoken of by Manu as the offspring of a Sudra father by a Kshatriya mother. The people of this country include the Kshettris among the Baniya castes, and do not admit that they have the same position as the military Rajputs. The Kshettris themselves claim to be Kshatriyas, and observe the religious rites and duties prescribed by the Shastras for the military castes. But the majority of them live either by trade or service as clerks and accountants, and their caste status ought, it seems, to be intermediate between that of the Rajputs on the one hand, and the Baniyas and the Kayasthas on the other." *Hindu Castes and Sects*, Calcutta, 1896, p. 138.



### Class System\*\*

\*\*The individual within a class system is presumably free to advance in status according to his ability, or to retrograde with misfortune or failure. The classes here, as the classes in the caste system, have no status. But unlike the caste system persons or families have social status independently.

### Caste System\*

\* Within the caste system the individual has some opportunity to excel, but the caste is expected to remain stationary with respect to other castes. The status of the caste is the social status of the individual.

ence to social position; it implies two coordinates: one the composite of status criteria, and the other the number of persons capable of meriting the judgment. It is a more or less arbitrary ordinal segment of society with incomprehensible margins. Indeed, from the point of view of the individual, the class system may be thought of as a hierarchy of conceptual social status frontiers. Social classes, then, may be thought of as somewhat nebulous social strata varying in meaning and position with the status of the person seeking to estimate them. This, of course, is not intended to detract from the social significance of classes. Reciprocal classification of persons in society is an intuitive procedure necessary in organizing attitudes for consistent behavior. Even within the caste system, ranking tends to follow some generally accepted system of classification. The concept of "the four castes" is one of these generally accepted ideal types of classification.

At this point we shall make a rather plain statement: There is no such thing as an objective social class amenable to physical circumscription; neither is there in fact a recognizable social class hierarchy in class systems of advanced societies. In other words, the class system is not stratified; stratification is an idea only.<sup>9</sup> A social

<sup>9</sup>A fairly misleading definition of class is the following: "Classes are inclusive, loosely organized groupings whose members behave toward each other as social equals and towards outsiders as social superiors or inferiors, and who as individuals either stay in the group to which they are born, or rise or fall to different levels depending upon the way their social attributes correspond to the values around which the particular class system is organized." Robert L. Sutherland and Julian L. Woodward, *Introductory So-*

ciology, J. B. Lippincott Co., 1940, pp. 363-64. And an ideally meaningless definition is the following: "A social class . . . is the largest group of people whose members have intimate access to one another." Davis, Gardner, and Gardner, *Deep South*, Chicago, 1941, p. 59. One might as well set himself the task of determining where the sky begins, as to go out with such a definition, say in Chicago, to locate social classes.

<sup>10</sup>"Beliefs and Attitudes in Class Relations," in *Class Conflict and Social Stratification*, T. H. Marshall, ed., London, 1938, p. 160.

<sup>11</sup>Observe, for instance, with what leisurely assurance Davis, Gardner, and Gardner speak of themselves: "The researchers concluded that the three main class divisions recognized by the society could be objectively described.

"Because of the limitations of time, it was impossible to stratify every individual in the society by the interview-observation technique; but once the characteristics of the known individuals had been determined, criteria were available for placing any individual about whom some important facts were available." *Deep South*, Chicago, 1941, p. 63, (Italics mine.)

ciology, J. B. Lippincott Co., 1940, pp. 363-64. And an ideally meaningless definition is the following: "A social class . . . is the largest group of people whose members have intimate access to one another." Davis, Gardner, and Gardner, *Deep South*, Chicago, 1941, p. 59. One might as well set himself the task of determining where the sky begins, as to go out with such a definition, say in Chicago, to locate social classes.

<sup>9</sup>"Beliefs and Attitudes in Class Relations," in *Class Conflict and Social Stratification*, T. H. Marshall, ed., London, 1938, p. 160.

<sup>10</sup>Observe, for instance, with what leisurely assurance Davis, Gardner, and Gardner speak of themselves: "The researchers concluded that the three main class divisions recognized by the society could be objectively described.

"Because of the limitations of time, it was impossible to stratify every individual in the society by the interview-observation technique; but once the characteristics of the known individuals had been determined, criteria were available for placing any individual about whom some important facts were available." *Deep South*, Chicago, 1941, p. 63, (Italics mine.)

that persons in the middle of the middle class are no more in class than are persons on the conceptual borders of that class. A still more serious limitation is the problem of determining how much of the middle is the middle class. In other words, a qualitative continuum can be divided only arbitrarily. We could hardly imagine a status hiatus between our selection of classes.

Therefore, no definition of social class, which conceives of class as a segregated reality, can be acceptable. Simpson's complaint that we have not "an objective measure of class" is a suggestion that we should labor upon a tangible yardstick to measure a largely intangible construct. The latter writer also desires a definition of class which will show the objective "differentiation of population in terms of fundamental material characteristics."<sup>11</sup> The difficulty with this is simply that the population is not objectively differentiated into classes.

A remarkable misdirection of view has evidently been responsible for sterile conceptions of status systems. Most definitions have concentrated not upon the society itself but upon an ideal construct developed for the purpose of aiding in understanding the nature of status differentiation in society. Most definitions have described, not an ongoing status system, but some taxonomic concept devised for easy comprehension of such a system. The system in reality has no inherently verifiable social classes. When we say, for instance, that difficulty besets a person's rising from one

social class into another, we do not mean that that person is ever conscious of the exact location of a class barrier. Obstacles to status advancement are myriad and diffused. His problem is of the same kind every step of the way up; only it becomes gradually more difficult as he advances toward the vertex of the status system.

Persons behave toward other persons and not toward social classes; for a class is merely a segregating concept; it cannot have a status as persons may. A social class is, in fact, what people think it is; and the criteria of status may vary from society to society, or from community to community—indeed, from status-circle to status-circle. Wealth, education, health, family record, talent, and so on may be status values; but since these may vary by infinitesimally small increments; since they are generally interdependent variables, so that, for example, wealth without education may not mean the same thing as wealth with education; and since they may not always be precisely known,<sup>12</sup> the margin for discretion is always great. The following analogy may be helpful: We all know the difference between daylight and dark-

<sup>11</sup> Note, for instance, with what care individuals guard the facts concerning their financial worth. To ask a man what is his salary, or how much money he has in the bank is to enter into his most private affairs. Furthermore, it will evidently do the researcher no good to try to discover such social facts as are not generally known in the community, for then he is likely to become the arbiter of social status. He should rather allow himself to be guided by the beliefs which people hold about one another's status. Social status is the product of an interplay of personal estimates of status bearing objects in the community; and a man may so live as to keep the community fooled or guessing about him.

<sup>12</sup> "Class Analysis: What Class is Not," *American Sociological Review*, 4:830-1, D-1939.



ness. But could we speak of a hierarchy of light or of definitely distinguishable classes of light between noon and midnight? There are some valleys and hills, and even spots in shadow and in reflected light, all affecting the imperceptible gradations of light; and, although this illustration is much simpler than the problem in hand, we may expect real differences of opinion as to minute degrees of light. However, persons will readily understand what illumination is meant by noon, twilight, and nightfall. So, too, in our own society, we have a general idea of what is meant by the upper-, middle-, and lower-class.<sup>13</sup>

Since the criteria of classification in both class and caste systems are more or less subjective, and since a class is not an organized entity, we should expect a tendency in persons of the class system and of the caste system to represent themselves as belonging to that class which is their immediate aspiration. In other words, persons like to claim membership in certain classes, and will do so if their claim can be at all supported. Consequently, not infrequently that class to which they assign themselves will differ from the class to which they are assigned by their neighbors. Census commissioners in India have discovered an inclination and willingness among castes to give themselves a dignified class status instead of stating their position with respect to other castes in the district. Ordinarily the *varna* class-terms are resorted to. In fact, Census Commissioner J. H. Hutton concludes: "The use of *varna* . . .

<sup>13</sup>In this study we have used the terms "class hierarchy" and "class stratum" conceptually.

is quite impossible, since practically every Hindu who claims to be a Hindu at all would claim to be either Brahman or Kshatriya. Even castes of Chamars in the United Provinces have dropped their characteristic nomenclature, and at this census returned themselves as Sun- or Moon-descended Rajputs. This, of course, does not imply any correspondingly respectful treatment of them by their neighbors."<sup>14</sup> In like manner we should expect many persons in America, for instance, who might be objectively classified as lower class, to claim membership in the popular middle class.

Social status is largely an imputed social attribute; it cannot be carried as one might carry his weight.<sup>15</sup> The difference between the estimation of position by the status bearer and the outside observer is probably due to difference in point of view. The observer sees the probable social indices of position, while the person

<sup>14</sup>*Census of India, 1931*, Vol. I, Part I, p. 432. See also *Census of India, 1921*, Vol. I, Part I, p. 223. Hutton's observation indicates also that it is a man's "neighbors," and not his anonymous class, that is of continual concern to him as a status bearing entity. He is treated categorically, that is, as a class member, only by persons far away from him in status.

<sup>15</sup>"A person's status in a group has a double aspect. On the one hand it rests in the minds of his associates, since it is the way they treat him and consider him. On the other hand, status is registered in the mind of the individual himself, as a sort of reflection of how he stands in the eyes of others. Thus he may accept or submit to the place assigned to him and be content, in which case the accommodation between him and his fellows is complete as a functional relationship. Or he may resent the place given him and desire a different position. In this case, his status is unsettled and he finds himself in conflict with others." E. T. Krueger and Walter C. Reckless, *Social Psychology*, Longmans, Green and Co., 1934, p. 83.

or caste tends to concentrate upon the meaning of these. For example, differences in wealth may be taken objectively as a significant factor determining status; but many lower class persons may argue that being "a good Christian" puts them in a higher class than having more money does the non-religious individual. And this notwithstanding obvious deferences which they may yield to the wealthier. It should also be remembered that the personal estimate of so tangible a thing as a dollar tends to vary with the income of the estimator. Moreover, the great class strata in which a person or caste claims membership are not the only determinants of behavior. Very much smaller differences in status are recognized; and the more rigid the class system, the greater the social significance of small differences in status. What a person really has is not class but status; class is a conceptual status pigeon hole. In any society a person tends to be what he does; and the social estimation of what he does tends to be his social status. Women and children usually derive their status from that of the family.

#### CLASS AND CASTE MOBILITY

A man's caste is a personal matter—it is primary, and possesses him traditionally. "To a Hindu his caste is the determining factor in his life, and beside it his age, civil condition, birth-place, and even his occupation are matters of comparative indifference."<sup>18</sup> A man's social class, on the other hand, is impersonal, secondary, and to him only vaguely circumscribed; he

cannot perceive it unless through cliques or "gangs," and its members as a whole are strangers to one another. The caste is a sympathetic unity; the class, once again, is a conceptualized social status segment of society. The class is internally competitive, with family set against family in ceaseless emulation; the caste is internally cooperative, with families fraternally interested in each other. Members of a class are constantly striving upward and away from their fellows, a situation which leads to their individuation; the interest of caste members, on the other hand, is bound up with the fortune of the caste in a sort of fatalistic fraternal solidarity. An individual may leave his class behind him and forget it with impunity; a man's caste status, however, cannot be so easily sloughed off. The following is an instance of sentimental attachment of individual and caste:

The Bengal Talis . . . have largely deserted their traditional occupation of oil-pressing in favor of trade, and are a fairly prosperous community. Under Warren Hastings, a high official who belonged to their community, having amassed a great fortune, offered a munificent gift to the temple of Puri, in the hope of raising the status of his caste. The local priests refused to accept the gift from a member of a caste which was then regarded as unclean. The would-be donor appealed to the pandits of Hooghly and Nabadwip, and persuaded them to decide that the Bengal Teli is a trading caste, deriving its name, not from *tel* "oil" but from the *tula* or "balance" used by traders in their business. In consequence of their ruling, the Telis of Bengal proper are now regarded as a clean Sudra caste.

. . .<sup>17</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Census of India, 1921*, Vol. I, Part I, p. 223.

<sup>17</sup> *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, article on "Caste."

There is no rivalry between social classes, for classes are not functional entities. Rivalry is a characteristic function of status bearers, such as persons in the class system and castes in the caste system. The greater the stability of the class system, the greater the social distance between persons of different classes; and naturally the greater the difficulty of upward movement. The extreme of social distance between person and person on this earth is probably attained in southern India between the Brahmans and the "unsightables." In the United States, inter-class social distance is "short" and comparatively easily bridged. When we say that a person born in a certain caste cannot aspire to rise out of it, we do not mean that he is hopelessly barred from advancement. He may not rise leaving his caste behind him; yet, though difficult, it is not impossible for him to move up with his entire caste. Of course, the caste does not rotate upward in the way illustrated by W. Lloyd Warner;<sup>18</sup> it moves up as a person or family might. Therefore a person's status might change while his caste affiliation remained intact.

So far as the individual is concerned, in the caste system the limits of ambition are definitely narrowed; his caste competitors are identified, hence rivalry tends to become conflict,<sup>19</sup> and failure is not so heavily penalized as in the class system. Generally in class societies ambition is

theoretically limitless; competition tends to be individuated and anonymous; hence rivals are not ordinarily openly identified; and failure is more tragic, because responsibility is atomized and personalized. A person may be declassed, may fall in class position, but he cannot be out-classed in the sense that he may be outcasted. A social class cannot expel an individual for the simple reason that it is not organized for such a function. The declassed individual is still within some class; but the outcaste has no caste whatever.

In conclusion we may differentiate briefly between class, caste, and race so far as status is concerned. The idea of degrees of rigidity of social status of the family or individual as belonging to a caste or class is not similar to the idea of status of the individual as belonging to a race. In other words, whether a man is a Beniya or a Chamar does not imply the same type reference as if we were thinking of him as a Hindu or an Englishman. The caste is a status bearer in a caste system; the person and family are status bearers in a class system; the social class refers to a classification of statuses; while racial subordination and superordination refer to an inter-group power relationship. The biological fact that the Britisher in India, for example, cannot become a Hindu does not of itself make him a white-caste member. The whites hold their position as a conquering race, not as a part of the caste system.

To make this point clear, let us consider a hypothetical social-status continuum which is intended to represent societies whose social structure permits different degrees of freedom of

<sup>18</sup> See "American Caste and Class," *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XLII, Sept., 1936, p. 225.

<sup>19</sup> G. S. Ghurje, for instance, observes that: "Contemporary caste-society presents the spectacle of self-centered groups more or less in conflict with one another." *Caste and Race in India*, New York, 1932, p. 181.

movement from one status position to another. Let us say that the United States is free, England is midway, and Brahmanic India is least free. Now think of inserting into this same continuum the status relationship between say, whites and Hindus, Mohammedans and Hindus, and Negroes and whites in South Africa. Clearly the two social phenomena are incommensurable. We may put it thus: Classes segregate a people conceptually by grade or rank, while race or nationality differentiates them in their aggregate.

In India that man who refers to himself as a *high-class, white* man means first that he is socially better

than men below him in class status, and, secondly, that he is racially different from the Indians about him. The idea, *white-man*, may mean also that he is *better* than all Indians; but this attitude tends to organize all Indians, regardless of caste status, against white men of all classes, a fact which tends to dichotomize them definitely into power groups. There is no social gradation in the latter relationship. It is not necessary for social classes or castes to defend their position by building forts and trenches about them; yet white men in both India and South Africa, for instance, never lose sight of the fact that they must retain control of the trigger.