A GENERAL MODEL OF ELITES AND NON-ELITES:

Applied to American Society 1980-2008

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Abstract: Both Marxian and elite theories tend to be inadequate for analysis because they are tied to deterministic theories of change and they neglect the role of culture. This paper proposes a general model that takes seriously the significance of economic and political power, but systematically recognizes the independent effects of culture and ideology, the role of cultural elites, and the power and role of non-elites. The use of the model is then illustrated by analyzing key changes and developments that have occurred in the U.S. from approximately 1980 to (but not including) the economic downturn in 2008.

Introduction

In earlier work a typology of elites and non-elites was applied to a large traditional agrarian society (Milner 1994: chap. 6). The purpose of this paper is to show the utility of the same model for analyzing a contemporary highly developed society. My claim is that when supplemented with information about specific historical conditions the model is a useful tool in understanding power relationships and social change—without lapsing into a deterministic theory of social change or a philosophy of history. An additional aim of the model is to allow systematic comparisons across societies, though this goal is not pursued in this paper.

Social analysts have long debated the role and relative power of elites and non-elites, of ruling classes and the ruled. The most influential accounts have embedded their analyses in broader theories of social change. Marx saw the dynamics of class conflict rooted in the changing forces of production as the driving force of historical

change. A proletarian revolution was supposedly inevitable and would lead to

socialism, communism and more just human institutions. Elite theorists such Pareto,

Mosca, and Michels, on the other hand, had a more gloomy view of history. In the

most pessimistic versions, probably best represented by Pareto, new elites may emerge

and replace old ones, but little of significance changes: the masses are always ruled

and manipulated by a minority. Weber was more ambiguous about the future;

dominant groups usually play a disproportionate role in shaping the future, but modern

liberal democracies often increase the relative power of non-elites. Moreover, for

Weber the future is not predetermined toward either a Marxian revolution leading to

prosperity and equality, or toward an endless cycle of elite manipulation leading to

cynicism and disappointed hopes.[1]

Most contemporary work has been more empirical, less tied to philosophies of

history, and usually focused on the concentration of power in contemporary societies.

(See Appendix I for a brief review of this literature.) This body of work is wanting in

several important respects. First, it tends to be largely atheoretical. Second, it over

emphasizes the role of either political elites or economic elites, and usually neglects

the important role of cultural and ideological elites. Third, it rarely treats non-elites in

a systematic fashion with the same seriousness that it devotes to elites.

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[1] Weber was somewhat ambiguous on this point. While in principle history was open and contingent,

always subject to the possibilities of charismatic "breakthroughs," his discussions of the trends toward

rationalization, including burearucratization, often sound rather bleak and inevitable.

The Theoretical Grounding

The Goal: What we need is a general model of the relationship between different types of elites and non-elites that suggests the typical patterns of cooperation and conflict that are likely to arise between and within key social categories, but does not limit itself to classes and class conflict. Such patterns have been previously observed, but there has not been available a systematic framework that aids in identifying similarities and differences across cultures and historical periods.

Types of Power: There are three *key types of power*, each rooted in a particular kind of sanction: force, goods and services, and expressions of approval and disapproval. The first is the elementary source of political power, the second of economic power, and the third of status power.[2] These three vary significantly with respect to their *expansibility. Political* power can be expanded enormously in absolute terms. Some societies have spears, and some have nuclear missiles. The relevant

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[2] Status may result from having economic or political power, but the reverse can be true. The latter is the case for Oprah Winfrey, and Martin Luther King, and a number of media celebrities that have entered politics, e.g., Ronald Reagan. Knowledge is also a source of power, but it is not a sanction per se. Knowledge is in certain respects expansible and alienable, but I will not discuss these issues here. See [Citation removed to maintain anonymity] for an elaboration of this point. Different discussions of the three types of power by Weber and his various successors (e.g. Etzioni 1975, Runicman 1966) emphasize different aspects of these three types of power. I focus on the kind of sanction, in part, because this helps to relate the types of power to specific concrete actions and hence helps to link micro and macro conceptualizations. Poggi provides a useful review of these (2001: 16-20). Each of these conceptualizations draws attention to various aspects of different forms of power. Which of these tripartite distinctions is most useful probably depends on what is the focus of a particular analysis.

question in most political conflicts, however, is the relative power of the actors involved. One may have nuclear bombs, but the other side could have even more devastating ray guns. With respect to *economic* resources, both relative and absolute levels are significant. It is an advantage to be in the top ten per cent of the income distribution, but it may be better to live in a rich society than a very poor one, even if you are in the bottom tenth. *Status* power, in contrast, is relatively inexpansible because it is primarily a relative ranking or positional good; if everyone receives A's or drives a limousine, the status significance of these is soon discounted. Resources also vary with respect to their *inalienability*. Most material resources can be transferred from one individual, group, or society to another—either by purchase or force. Status is inalienable because it is "located" in other people's minds, and hence cannot be simply appropriated or purchased.

The point is that different types of resources vary in the extent to which they are inalienable and inexpansible, and hence those with one kind of power often seek to convert some of it into other types of power. Powerful warriors often seek wealth and legitimacy. Rich merchants seek the protection of friendly political regimes and the blessings of religious authorities. Priests seek protection from kings and contributions from merchants.

Relationship between different types of sanctions, power, and elites: The relationship between different types of sanctions, power, and elites can be variable; they can be mutually supportive or antithetical or both. If goods are constantly appropriated by force, the accumulation and exchange of goods and services are next to impossible. Therefore, force must be organized to repress the illicit use of force.

Conversely, those who provide protection must have food, clothes, shelter, and amenities, which obviously require the production of goods and services. But an orderly exchange of goods and services for protection (and vice versa) does not occur automatically; legitimate rules about the terms of exchange are required.[3] Force alone is inefficient as a way of gaining compliance—especially for complex tasks. Conversely, influencing the strong by withholding goods is ineffective since they can take what they want—unless they honor property rights or want others' respect. The actions of both protectors and producers are more efficient if they are legitimate.

Whose approval is needed for something to be legitimate? Typically—though perhaps not universally—the specialists in force want to get as much as they can for the protection they provide, and the producers want to pay as little as possible. An acceptable compromise usually requires the assistance of some relatively neutral third party, someone whose main source of power is rooted in neither force nor wealth.

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[3] Legitimacy results when actions or social arrangements are taken for granted (a cognitive phenomenon) or are seen to have relatively high status in the eyes of other elites and non-elites (an attitudinal phenomenon), usually because they are seen to be justified in relationship to some more abstract notions of justice and/or sacredness shared by elites and non-elites. The extent of legitimacy of a regime, a law, a program, or any pattern of behavior is variable. And different subgroups of elites and non-elites may vary in the degree to which they see something as legitimate. This concept of legitimacy avoids both a naïve optimism or a cynical pessimisms. For a survey of the literature on legitimacy see Smelser (2001), esp. R. Stryker, "Legitimacy," pp. 8700-8704; C. K. Ansell, "Legitimacy: Political, pp. 8704-8706; and B. Badie, "Legitimacy: Sociology," pp. 8706-8709. For a more extended discussion of the concept of legitimacy and its relationship to the notions of status, see Milner 1994.

This is a key role of status elites and more specifically ideological elites.[4] Religious leaders and intellectuals are the most important historic forms of status elites. Their power is rooted primarily in the status derived from their conformity to norms not directly concerned with the control of force or material resources. Typically, this is based upon the possession of esoteric types of knowledge including ideologies. Such elites are usually experts in the "other world." Even if they are completely secular, they are seen as living in "ivory towers." Somewhat ironically, this detachment gives them the power to bestow or withhold approval and legitimization for the profane structures of this world. Moreover, they often play an important role in shaping the content of norms and the structure of values (e.g., the relative importance or unimportance of social inequality, kinship ties, or religious affiliation). Since their own power is not primarily based on force or possession of material resources, they are dependent upon those who have these for protection and material necessities. In sum, the different types of power can be mutually supportive, but they also offer much potential for conflicts of interests.

A Model of Elites and Non-Elites

Obviously, those who are engaged in the same activity may cooperate or compete with one another, e.g. one rich merchant with another. Here, however, I will concentrate on relationships between different types of elites and between elites and non-elites. For example, on how warriors and politicians relate to merchants; how

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[4] Poggi (2001) refers to "ideological/normative," perhaps drawing on Etzioni's (1975) use of the latter term. I will discuss the relationship between ideological elites and other types of status and cultural elites shortly.

merchants related to religious elites; how a prosperous unionized working class relates to bowery bums. I want to propose a relatively simple analytical model of key social categories that are relevant to most complex societies.[5]

   Elites and non-elites: The *first distinction* is between elites and non-elites. Contemporary studies of elites focus on those who are in the top positions in powerful organizations usually numbering a few thousand people.[6] Obviously, elites vary in the size of the arena within which their power is relevant and the degree of their control within particular arenas. Some are local, some national, and some international. They also vary in the degree of their consensus and solidarity. In contrast to elites, most people, even those relatively well off, have relatively low levels of political, economic, and status power; hence, they are *non-elites*. Collectively, however, they may have considerable power through voting or rioting, choosing products in the market place, or affirming or ignoring the exhortations of status elites. The source of their power, which is numerical superiority, is also the source of their vulnerability; it is difficult to organize and motivate masses of people. The balance of elite power and the collective power of non-elites is, of course, historically variable.

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[5] By complex society I mean societies ranging from advance horticultural societies, through agrarian societies, to modern industrial and post-industrial societies.

[6] For example, Burton and Higley (2001) say, researchers have estimated that political elites in large and institutionally complex Western countries such as the USA number roughly 7500 people (Dye, 1983), closer to 5000 in middle-sized countries like Australia(Higley et al., 1979), France (Dogan, 1994), and the former West Germany (Hoffmann-Lange, 1993), and between 1000 and 2000 persons in small countries like Denmark and Norway (Higley et al., 1976; Pedersen, 1976)." In the seventh edition of his book on elites Dye (2002) estimates the number of top elites positions in the U.S. as 7314.

Types of power and types of elites: The *second distinction* is between different types of elites based on the type of power they use most frequently. *Political elites* may or may not be warriors, but the fundamental form of power that they have is force. In modern societies, political elites normally vie for control of the state and use its monopoly on force to backup their policies and orders. *Economic elites* typically own or control the means of production. The concrete form of these means of production varies depending on the period and the society. The mode of control may involve the commands of a medieval lords (or their stewards), the decisions of officials in a planned economy, or exchanges in the market. In the latter case market power takes various forms such as ownership of property, union solidarity, or human and cultural capital. *Status elites* have accumulated high levels of approval. This may be tied to the individual or to the office they occupy, or in some cases both; Jesus represents the first, many popes are examples of the second, and Pope John XXIII is an example of the third. Historically most status elites have been religious elites and intellectuals who played a key role in articulating and inculcating ideologies.

Further differentiation: The *third distinction* points to tensions and alternatives within each of the four key categories. Members of the same category often take on alternative roles and strategies. Let us begin with non-elites. Many strata and cleavages may exist within this broad category of *non-elites*. The most fundamental cleavage separate "decent" members of the society, who receive at least a minimum level of respect, and the excluded disreputable. The disreputable are not necessarily disadvantaged with respect to all kinds of resources. Jews may have been outcasts but they were not necessarily poor; political dissidents can be imprisoned but

still have high status in the eyes of much of the population; the Old South's "poor white trash" could and did participate in democratic politics. The most intense forms of discrimination create outcast groups such as the untouchables of pre-independence India, or blacks in the Old South. Other less extreme examples of the disreputable include the *lumpen proletariat*, under-classes, political prisoners, slaves, stigmatized racial or ethnic groups, recently arrived or illegal immigrants, and religious minorities. The size of such disreputable groups varies by society and the definition use by the analyst, but the disreputable members of society usually run between one and fifteen percent of the total population.[7]

The usual effect of stigmatizing and excluding the "undeserving" is to create higher levels of solidarity between elites and "respectable" non-elites. Outcasts are a reminder to non-elites that their situation could be much worse. The recurring dilemma for respectable non-elites is whether to direct their antipathies at elites or at outcasts. Elites, especially those I will refer to as conservative elites, often emphasize the distinction to between the respectable and unrespectable to maintain the support or acquiescence of the former.

Why four rather than six categories: Another possible differentiation within non-elites would be with respect to the different forms of power: a political non-elite, an economic non-elite, etc. Yet, most non-elites in most societies cannot be seen as either specializing in or even primarily concerned about only one of the three forms of

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[7] Obviously slave societies are the exception, especially those of early capitalism. For example, in the sugar plantations in the British Caribbean in early nineteenth century slaves made up 70-95 percent of the population (Higman 1984, esp. Table 4.2). In the U.S. South between 1790 and 1850, blacks were 35-38 percent of the population and 92-95 percent of these were slaves (Gibson and Jung 2002).

power. It is true that if the definition of elites is kept relatively narrow, restricting it to

thousands, not tens of thousands, of people —as I propose—then in complex societies

there are non-elites whose *occupation* does make them specialists, e.g., policemen,

lower level clergy, stock brokers, etc. But neither in their own view of themselves or

the way others view them are they seen as specialist in a particular form of power in

the same sense that terms like "politician," "capitalist," and "archbishop" or "public

intellectual" are. Therefore, it seems to me that to talk about three kinds of non-

elites—and hence having six primary categories would be misleading. Moreover, it

would significantly complicate carrying out and presenting empirical analyses.

Certainly the nature of non-elites relationships with elites varies for the

different types of elites. For example, non-elites may be especially resentful (or

appreciative) of one type of elites, but not of another. Or they may be more concerned

about changes in one sector or another, e.g., more concerned about gay marriage than

declining real wages. This should not be ignored. It does not, however, require

making such distinctions part of the basic model.

Political elites: In their most rudimentary form *political* elites are experts in

force and have the potential to both protect and exploit. People are often very

ambivalent about warrior elites. To draw on a Rogers and Hammerstein song from

The King and I, "they may 'protect' you out of all you own." Among sociologists it is

Charles Tilly who has frequently articulated the link between protection and extortion

(e.g., Tilly 1985). Therefore, the category paired with police-warrior is that of robber-

invader. The potential link between protection and extortion or repression is well known, and sometimes it is hard to tell the cops from the robbers.[8]

Historically robbers are politically relevant primarily when they become bandits, that is, an organized group of marauders. If they become guerrillas they not only reject the legitimacy of the existing state, but also offer an alternative ideology, a new vision of for organizing and running the society. If that is to come about they must be selective about whom they rob. Guerillas who are politically successful primarily attack government institutions and the rich, rather than extorting non-elites, though typically guerillas do some of both. Robin Hood is the classic example of the good bandit/guerilla. No clear-cut line exists between robbers, bandits and guerillas, or between these and the police or army, except in the degree to which they are seen as legitimate. The extent and intensity of their support can vary, but it must be substantial by this definition of legitimacy.[9] Raw repression—even if it is effective in repressing opposition—is not legitimacy in the sense used here. Of course, people's acceptance of a norm or support of particular elites may be due to misinformation, deception, and mystification.

A common means for gaining the support of non-elites is to evoke or create external enemies, often by starting wars or exaggerating their likelihood. Rulers may also seek legitimacy by identifying themselves with other high status entities. This typically involves deference to gods and religious elites, but in contemporary societies associations with celebrities—e.g., sports stars, movie stars and renowned

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[8] "Robbers" in this context includes political thugs and secret police.

[9] See endnote 3 for a definition of legitimacy.

intellectuals—may also be useful. The ruler's dilemma is how to use force to achieve

elite and societal interests, and, at the same time, avoid antagonizing powerful

neighbors and maintain internal legitimacy by showing restraint and respect for

traditions, laws, and the gods. The dilemma of the ruled is whether the threats of

outsiders, criminals, and bandits are worse than the demands of political elites and

their subordinates. The degree to which elites pursue their own self interests and

privileges rather than those of the broader collectivity obviously varies by the cultural

and historical context.

The classical defining activities of political elites are maintenance of internal

order and protection against external enemies.[10] With respect to *internal order,* a

dilemma emerges. Political elites must decide who needs policing. Should the

primary concern be non-elites and law and order? Or should it be elites themselves by

placing some limits on the exploitation of non-elites? Should a president increase the

police force to keep order in low-income areas or outlaw predatory loans and union

busting? With respect to *external relations* the dilemma is to what degree does a

political elite rely on a large, heavily armed military for protection as contrasted to

developing relations of trust and cooperation with outside groups? The former course

can increase mistrust, lead to an "arms race," or make rulers vulnerable to coup

d'é·tats. The latter course can lead to disaster if external neighbors are duplicitous.

Typically, "conservatives" or "the right" are preoccupied with internal "law and

order" and external "defense," while "liberals" or "the left" give more attention to

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[10] See Poggi's very thoughtful review of this dilemma, related issues and their relationships to previous

theory, see his *The Development of the Modern State* (1976), "Introduction," pp. 1-12.

limiting internal exploitation and maintaining "good relations" with other societies. The terminology used to describe these differences varies with the historical and cultural context, but this kind of distinction occurs within most political elites.[11]

Economic elites: *Economic elites* are often differentiated according to the means and modes of production they control. Typically, this involves a conflict between traditional and emerging forms. In agrarian societies, there were often conflicts between agriculturalists and herders.[12] Later merchants, traders, and bankers threatened the power of traditional landed elites. In contemporary industrial societies much of the debate over class formation has been over whether a new class is emerging whose power is rooted in knowledge and human capital rather than ownership of physical and financial capital. Those who control the older dominant form of production in any given historical period usually need the assistance of those who control new forms of production and vice versa, and hence new forms of both

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[11] I want to stress that the terminology is very historically conditioned. Some "conservatives" for example, Bismarck and the British Tories, were concerned with limiting economic exploitation of workers by "liberals" associated with ascendant commercial classes. The meaning of the terms "right" and "left" are even more historically variable. Whatever the labels, however, political conflict within elites often revolve around relative emphases on external and internal security and whether these are obtained by a carrot or a stick. The concepts of "conservative," "liberal," "right," and "left," and terms like "arms race," "law and order," "defense," and "good relations," are examples of contemporary phrases that have analogs that are relevant in most historical situations. There is no assumption that the motivations of liberals are necessarily less self-interested than conservatives or vice versa.

[12] I grew up watching Hollywood Westerns. It is striking how many of these revolve around conflicts between those who are associated with different modes of production: cowboys versus Indians, ranchers versus farmers, cattlemen versus sheepmen, etc.

cooperation and conflict emerge. The landed nobility and gentry of pre-industrial societies needed the goods and services of commercial elites if they were to have anything but the most provincial of lives. Therefore, while old and new economic elites often are in competition, they also often need each other. However, it is difficult for established elites to utilize the goods and services of rising elites without at the same time contributing to their legitimacy and wealth.

Status elites: The concept of status elites requires further elaboration. Typically, they have extraordinary levels of bravery, knowledge, virtue, beauty or eloquence. Civil rights leader Rosa Parks and World War I hero Sergeant York were both status elites because of their bravery, but they had little wealth or political power, and they were not cultural elites. *Cultural elites* are status elites because of their knowledge, skill, or eloquence. Helen Hayes, Martha Graham, Louis Armstrong, and Leontyn Price were famous and highly respected cultural elites, but they were not ideological elites.[13] *Ideological elites* engage in cultural and political debates and propose (at least implicitly) various visions of the way things should be or are supposed to be. These visions may be of either an earthly world or a heavenly world; they can be progressive, reactionary, or for the status quo. Arthur Miller, Billy Graham, Harriet Beecher Stowe and George Bernard Shaw were ideological elites, as

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[13] This is not to deny that any given pattern, such as a form and style of cultural performance, excludes other possibilities and a style that is "non-ideological" can be a way of discouraging criticism of existing social and political patterns. Nonetheless, there are patterns of cultural performance that are much more explicitly ideological than others and that is the focus of my term "ideological elites."

well as cultural and status elites.[14] These distinctions are ideal-typical concepts that

actual cases approximate.

Within status elites and particularly ideological elites, a cleavage often

develops between those who support (and legitimate) existing activities or elites, and

those who are more critical of these. The ideal-typical distinction here is between

priests and prophets (Weber 1968: 439-50; Wach 1971: 346-51, 360-68).[15] Priests

typically focus on mediation between this-worldly and otherworldly perspectives and

on the legitimization of worldly structures. In contrast, prophets tend to be critical of

existing structures or to renounce them as being of no ultimate value. Intellectuals and

religious elites who are too involved in political and economic structures forfeit an

independent basis of status and legitimacy. Professors who become cabinet members

soon have their objectivity questioned. Conversely, complete detachment and

rejection of the world makes the status of religious and intellectual elites largely

irrelevant; their status is restricted to cloisters, universities, or the world-to-come.

Hence, status elites face cross-pressures to both support and criticize existing patterns.

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[14] Of course, some ideological elites are not as accomplished in the purely cultural realm as others and

vice versa. George Bernard Shaw was more of a great dramatist than a great ideologue; Harriet Beecher

Stowe more of a great ideologue than a great novelist.

[15] I am aware that my distinction of priest vs. prophets misses some of the nuances of Weber and

Wach's discussions of different types of religious leaders, but my dichotomy is sufficient for the

purposes at hand and could be elaborated if this was needed to understand particular historical settings.

In given historical situations, cross-pressures frequently produce social cleavages within ideological elites.[16]

Interdependence between types of power and categories of elites and non-elite: Changes in one category affect people in other categories. Where Communist parties came to power, the status and power of the old economic and political elite declined precipitously; the economic security of non-elites generally improved; and formal status differences declined since everyone became a "comrade." The political power and rights of non-elites, however, did not increase, and in some respects decreased. Conversely, when these Communist regimes collapsed and the power of political elites declined, political freedoms of non-elites increased dramatically, but their economic security declined and significant differences in wealth and status emerged. In a similar manner, shifts of power within a given type of elite usually have implications for non-elites.

The centrality and legitimacy of particular forms of power: In traditional India, religious status and Brahmans were uniquely important compared to other types of elites, and Untouchables were especially ill-treated. In the Soviet Union, party and government officials were supreme and political dissidents were the outcasts. In the capitalist U.S., economic elites are especially prominent and legitimate. It is not

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[16] Not surprisingly intellectuals, including sociologists, have written about their role in society. See, for example, Seymour Martin Lipset and Asoke Basu ("Intellectual Types and Political Roles," in Coser, 1975), for a useful fourfold typology that suggests alternative roles. One dimension of this typology is very similar to my prophet-priest distinction, but their distinctions can be subsumed within my typology as subcategories of status elites. More recent writings on intellectual elites include Cummings (2005) and Etzioni and Bowditch (2006).

accidental that "entrepreneur," "businessman," and even "capitalist" are generally

positive terms, while "government official," "politician," and "bureaucrat" are looked

upon with suspicion and even derision. Most Americans presume the "private sector"

is always more efficient and legitimate.[17] The government, voluntary associations and

churches should be "run like businesses." No one ever suggests that a business should

be run like a church or a government agency. Similarly, those who do not "earn" an

income (e.g., "welfare chiselers," "welfare queens," "loafers," "deadbeats," and

"bums") are reprehensible. Ironically, living off inherited wealth is seldom considered

a moral lapse; it is okay to inherit wealth but not poverty. The broader point is that

societies and historical periods vary in the centrality and legitimacy of particular kinds

of power. This in turn affects which elites have special rights to deference and

dominance, and which non-elites deserve derision and degradation.

Summary: This simple model suggests that there are typically three types of

elites in addition to a large population of non-elites. Both cooperation and conflict are

probable between each of these four categories and the probable patterns of such

conflict and cooperation are predictable. Thus far, the argument has been that all

complex societies have a tendency to develop four basic categories and these have

internal tensions that potentially will produce a further differentiation of each, or eight

categories. Of course, each of the eight categories can undergo further *internal*

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[17] See Poggi (2001:156) for a description of how and why economic elites perceive their moral

superiority. This presumed legitimacy of the economic elites is in contrast to other historical cases. It

is well known that commercial groups had at best an ambiguous moral status in European feudal

societies (see Tawney 1962) and were often looked down upon by the warrior-aristocracy as "mere

merchants."

differentiation. These are simply the minimum number required to illustrate the logic

of the model. The typology is summarized in Figure 1. As noted above, which

particular elite is the dominant varies in different historical context. In this

representation I show the priests as the dominant elites simply to stress that it should

not be assumed that either political power or economic power is always preeminent.

Exogenous variables and the logic and limits of the model: Elites and non-

elites are at the center of my story. Nonetheless, variables that are not included in the

model (and hence in a formal sense are either exogenous or intervening), affect the

composition of elites and non-elites and their interrelationships. These changes in turn

have effects on other aspects of society. This is not to deny that the actions of elites

and non-elites can affect these exogenous factors. I will, however, focus on the

effects, not the causes of these exogenous variables and how they shaped the pattern of

relationships between elites and none-elites.

How is it to be decided what exogenous variables are important? An adequate

and theorized answer would require a general theory of social change—and I have no

such theory to offer. On the other hand, the selection of such variables need not be

completely ad hoc. In any given historical period, there are usually particular

developments that are obviously important in shaping changes in social organization

and culture. Toward the end of the Middle Ages, it was obvious that the development

of firearms was making old forms of military and political organization and cultures of

chivalry obsolete. A little later, the modern cultural and ideological notions of nation,

citizenship, and democracy that emerged out of the American and French Revolutions

have affected most societies since that time. My point is simply that selection of

exogenous variable need not be a matter of deductive theorizing, but neither need it be simply the whim of a particular analyst.

The model is a lens to identify common tendencies, not a substitute for more detailed historical and social analysis. The aim is to provide enough theory to guide research and organize findings, but not so much that we become captives of a philosophy of history. Stated another way, the aim is to provide a more useful amount of selectivity and simplification. The crucial test for any theory is not whether it fully grasps social life. Rather, the test is whether the simplifications it proposes are more adequate and more useful than our previous perspectives.

Adapting the Model to the Contemporary U.S.A.

Exogenous Variables

I will identify two sets of exogenous variables. One focuses primarily on cultural factors; the second draws attention to key changes in technology, the content of work, forms of communication, and the nature of social networks. Certain cultural traditions seem to be particularly characteristic of the U.S. since relatively early in its history. Seymour Martin Lipset (1996) wrote an influential book entitled *American Exceptionalism*, in which he argues that the core values of the United States are exceptional— not in the sense of being particularly virtuous—but in the sense of being statistical outliers. Its people and culture are unusually religious and moralistic. Americans see themselves as going to war against evil, not to defend their interests. They are more patriotic and willing to serve in the military. Yet, they are suspicious of the power of the state and stress individual rights. Americans are both unusually egalitarian and oriented toward achievement. Accordingly, they support mass public

education and equality of opportunity, but individual responsibility. This results in unusually high levels of charitable giving, but less public funding to assist the poor, and the stigmatization of those who do receive public assistance. The U.S. is fervently capitalist in its ideology and economic structure and has never had a politically significant socialist movement. Lipset makes clear these characteristics are not the same as public opinion, which is much more fluid. Rather he refers to deep-seated cultural values and assumptions, which evolved out of the country's early historical experience, and continue to shape private behavior and public policies. To draw on Lipset's notion is not to endorse every detail of it, but rather to use one well-known characterization of American tradition and culture as a reference point in helping to explain contemporary developments and events.

Now let us consider the second set of variables. The industrial revolution harnessed non-animal power—primarily fossil fuels—and developed machines that greatly increased the capacity to manufacture and process material *objects and substances*. The transformation of late twentieth and early twenty-first world is primarily based on technologies that increased capacity to process and communicate *symbols*.[18] Computers and the Internet are the most obvious examples. Such developments significantly contributed to the expansion of social networks, and in turn to the globalization of the economy and the expansion of multi-national corporations and institutions. Another important consequence was the shift of

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[18] This is not to deny that important developments continue to be made in processing objects and substances such as creating more effective computer chips, nanotechnologies, or stronger plastics. However, much of the development that has occurred in material sciences is dependent upon the ability to process large amounts of information, i.e., symbols.

personnel from manufacturing to service activities and from manual to symbolic labor—with an accompanying increase in the importance of education and professional training. The declining importance of physical strength and increasing significance of manipulating symbols helped to swell women's participation in the paid labor force. All of this has contributed to higher levels of prosperity for many and an increased emphasis on consumption and consumerism. In addition to its economic effects, it has also greatly increased the centrality of the mass media for political and social life.

Theoretical Elaboration: New Forms of Cultural/Ideological Elites

As societies become larger and more complex, it is very difficult for elites to be socially visible by physical presence; even the largest stadiums hold on a small percentage of the population. For status elites, social visibility is a prerequisite to rank and power,[19] and in contemporary societies this usually involves the mass media. This structural change has accentuated the creation and importance of celebrities (Marshall 1997, Milner 2005, 2010). Celebrities are status elites, but not necessarily or usually what I have earlier referred to as cultural and ideological elites. Since celebrities play an increasingly important role, it is necessary to elaborate the typology of elites to take this into account. More of the specifics of this change will be outlined shortly.

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[19] The long-term maintenance of high status requires the careful management of visibility; being too visible or accessible can lower one's status. The point here, however, is that a prerequisite to status is a significant level of social visibility. This may not require personal visibility, but rather visibility for ones work or specialized activities. Famous writers, for example, may be personally reclusive.

Explaining the Behavior of U. S. Elites and Non-elites

Now we turn to the task of showing how the model is useful in organizing our understanding of contemporary patterns and events. I will discuss the different types of elites in a slightly different order than they were presented in the general model, in part to emphasize that it is not assumed that any given type of elite is necessarily or always more important or dominant.

Economic Elites

Old and New Economic Elites

The general model suggests that in most historical contexts economic elites who engage in different types of economic activity will engage in both cooperation and conflict. Usually this is a distinction between those associated with older modes of production and those associated with newer modes.

In contemporary society there are a number of major tensions between the older elites whose power is rooted in ownership of physical and financial capital and a "new class" whose power is based on specialized kinds of esoteric *knowledge*. Elites in more traditional industries and services such as agriculture, construction and food services usually favor liberal immigration policies to insure a supply of cheap labor. Those who lead high tech industries usually support easy immigration of the highly educated and technically trained, but are more ambivalent about admitting others since they are more concerned about the quality of public education, good housing, and advanced infrastructure. The consequences, especially the political consequences, of this are complex. For example, the way professional knowledge influences political attitudes is heavily influenced by the markets and sectors that professionals work in.

Professionals working for government and non-profits are more likely to be liberal, while those who are employed in businesses are only slightly less conservative than managers (Brint 1994). Hence, while it seems clear that knowledge provides a new basis of economic power, it is by no means clear that the so-called new class will simply replace the owners of physical capital as the most powerful economic elites. Nor does power based on knowledge necessarily lead to more liberal political opinions.

Neither does the increased importance of knowledge necessarily reduce the significance of *property* and lead to more economic independence for the well educated. There is, in fact, an interesting counter trend. Some highly trained professionals require extensive physical capital that costs too much for individual practitioners. Consequently, more centralized and socialized modes of organization are important, and this may make them more subject to hierarchical authority. This process is evident, for example, among physicists and physicians, who increasingly work with elaborate networks of colleagues to utilize very expensive technology that they do not own. Nonetheless it is probably the case that on average those of the educated professional and managerial classes are less dependent upon property than were the main street businessmen and small factory owners of earlier years. But note that this trend primarily applies to the lower levels of economic elites. While contemporary upper elites need high levels of human capital, extensive wealth is still rooted in the control of property. Bill Gates, who founded Microsoft, knew this; Steve Jobs, who founded Apple Computers—and lost financial control of it for several years—had to learn this lesson the hard way.

It is not accidental that the richest people in the U.S. are primarily those who founded computer, media, or investment companies—all industries that are highly dependent on cutting-edge knowledge (Forbes 2006). Nor is it accidental that older more traditional industries—such as simple manufacturing—are moving their operations overseas. They are moving to economies not dominated by knowledge industries where the cost of labor is lower. Moreover, many of these industries such as steel and automobiles have faced serious economic problems that often involved significant reductions in the size of their workforce and operations. In short, knowledge and human capital are increasingly crucial for economic power and the importance of physical and financial capital has declined for the highly educated, but the highest levels of wealth usually involve an ability to combine knowledge with property.

Changing Forms of Capitalism and New Types of Elites

The above argument about the increased importance of knowledge is well known and oft repeated. But there are other important changes and differences in economic activities and the structure of economic elites that such arguments do not capture. The new knowledge, technology, and cultural innovations have often interacted with new forms of property to reshape the power relationships between different types of economic elites. As Max Weber (1968) noted there have been various forms of capitalism. Charles Tilly (1984:8) characterizes the changing nature of capitalism in the nineteenth century by noting, "Production rather than exchange became the nexus of capitalism." Stated more generally, at different historical periods new challenges emerge that become the key economic problem for that particular

period. Accordingly, new types of economic elites tend to emerge.

In early America what might be called *merchant capitalism* was a key source of economic power. Usually firms were controlled by an individual or family. In American history Stephen Girard of Philadelphia, John Brown of Providence, and various members of the Van Cortlandt family of New York are probable examples. By the middle of the eighteenth century the process of industrialization began and intensified during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, producing what might be called *industrial capitalism*, in which the chief source of wealth was in manufacturing rather than trade. But as technologies became more complex and expensive, large joint stock companies became more dominant—even though they were sometimes controlled by a single individual. Moreover, since these bigger corporations required extensive working capital, they often became closely linked to banks. One result was a tendency toward *monopoly capitalism*. In the U.S. this was the period of the so-called "robber barons" in the late nineteen and early twentieth century. With the introduction of various kinds of anti-trust laws, monopolies and cartels became more difficult, but more subtle forms of reducing competition soon emerged. Beginning in the late 1950s John Kenneth Galbraith (1973, 1985) developed a model of what might be called *advanced industrial capitalism*. In this model very large corporate entities were seldom monopolies per se, but they exercised a great deal of influence over prices. In part this was based on their abilities to shape consumer demand through various kinds of marketing techniques and to limit competition within industrial sectors. It was also dependent upon an implicit industry-wide pact between labor unions and corporations in which the cost of wage and benefit increases were passed

on to consumers. Those who worked in smaller businesses outside of the corporate

sector were much more subject to market competition and usually received much

lower returns for either labor or capital. Top managers were the dominant power

figures and consumers, workers, stockholders and even corporate board members had

limited abilities to resist their dominance.[20]

The point of this sketch is not its historical adequacy, but rather to point out

that there have been different forms of capitalism and different types of economic

elites. Now I want to mention three more recent forms. In the latter stages of

industrial capitalism, the key problem for most industries and for the economy as a

whole became sustaining demand for the vast array of commodities that the industrial

infrastructure was capable of producing. This is the basis of what has been called

consumer capitalism. This change is reflected both in the importance of Keynesian

and monetary policies in managing the economy as a whole. It is also apparent in the

centrality of marketing and advertising and the focusing of these efforts on concerns

about status, lifestyle, and fashion.

Another important change started in the 1980s. Banks, insurance companies,

mutual funds and pension plans began to accumulate very large blocks of corporate

stocks. Their interests were in high performing companies that gave high returns on

their investments. When companies failed to produce adequate returns, these

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[20] Of course, the industrial revolution is usually associated with the nineteenth century, but large

corporate industrial firms did not become the predominant actors in the economy until the twentieth

century. The title of Galbraith's work is *The New Industrial State* (1985), so what I am referring to as

"industrial capitalism" involves changes in cultural, organizational, and governmental infrastructures as

much as to changes in the technology of production.

investment entities often demanded the replacement of existing managers or the reorganization of corporations. Michael Useem (1997) has called this newer pattern *investor capitalism*. Here the dominance of corporate managers is frequently challenged by the managers of financial and investment companies. The details and explanations of these developments are complex and often in dispute, but it seems clear that the power of those who manage capital for others have on average gained in power relative to those who manage the production of actual commodities (Lounsbury 2001). Capital management firms often control very large pools of capital. Such entities as private equity firms and hedge funds, which are largely the province of institutional investors and very wealthy individuals, are often incorporated "off shore" with the aim of reducing taxes. They frequently have very complex legal structures and investment strategies and are less subject to government regulation and public disclosure. There is considerable debate about the degree to which these new forms of controlling capital increase the efficiency of economies versus increase market volatility and economic instability. The key point for our purposes is that new types of economic elites are emerging. One indicator of this is that people such as Warren Buffet, the founder of Berkshire Hathaway, and Michael Milken, the junk bond "king" (and convicted criminal), have become well-known celebrities.

As the model suggests, we should expect that in addition to resisting and competing with newer forms of production and new elites, older economic elites usually have to work out various forms of cooperation with newer elites—even though in the long run this often erodes the power of older types of elites. The story of Napster and how consumers gained access to copyrighted music is a good example of

this process (Wayne 2004; Spitz and Hunter 2005; Rojek 2005). It also illustrates the interaction between new technology and social institutions. New technologies made it possible for consumers to share copyrighted music virtually free via the Internet, transforming valuable commodities into free goods. The record companies initially fought most forms of Internet distribution, and they were successful in securing court rulings and new laws preventing such sharing. While they won in the courts, it was doubtful that they could prevent illicit sharing of files. Consequently, they have increasingly negotiated various arrangements to charge relatively low prices for the distribution of copyrighted material over the Internet. It seems likely that this compromise will erode the long-term profit margins and economic power of record companies and book publishers (Wayne 2004; Spitz and Hunter 2005; Rojek 2005). A similar story of resistance and grudging cooperation is likely emerging between traditional telephone companies and new forms of audiovisual communication via the Internet.

Perhaps the most significant development is not a new elite based on some form of economic specialization or innovation, but rather how many of the various types of economic elites are increasingly *global elites*. It is clear that business activity is much more internationally oriented than in earlier periods. Between 1976 and 2005, U.S. owned assets abroad increased from $457 billion to $10 trillion. Foreign owned assets in the U.S. increased at an even faster rate from $292 billion to $12.7 trillion (U.S. Department of Commerce 2006). This globalization of business is apparent in multinational corporations such as Benz-Chrysler, Microsoft, Sony, USB and Shell. For example, The Shell Group operates in 140 countries, is incorporated in the U.K., is

headquartered in the Netherlands, and in October 2006 had an executive committee of five: two members were Dutch, and one each was Swiss, British, and American. The executive director for oil and chemical products speaks "English, Dutch, French, German and, to a lesser degree, Swedish and Italian."[21]

In addition to multinational corporations, an array of international organizations has become economically very important and highly visible including the European Union (EU), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the World Bank, which is another indicator of an economic elite whose focus is well beyond a particular nation-state. While the leaders of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) are not usually economic elites, they do contribute to the development of a world culture, which is often a crucial foundation for international business ventures (Boli and Thomas 1999). There are burgeoning numbers of both profit and non-profit INGOs that are hired by donor governments to carry out various kinds of technical assistance programs in developing nations (see Cooley and Ron 2002).

The development of internationally oriented elites is hardly a debatable point, but the details of the nature and extent of the global elite is hotly debated. Multinational corporations have increased from 3000 in 1900 to 7000 in 1970 to about 63,000 in 2000 (Gabel and Bruner 2003, Mataloni 2005). The development of the World Economic Forum, based in Geneva, Switzerland, and famous for its annual meeting in Davos, is an indicator and symbol of the extent to which the leaders of these corporations, governments, and other celebrities have become a self-conscious

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[21] http://www.shell.com/home/content/aboutshell-en/who_we_are/leadership/executive_committee.html

and socially integrated elite. This is not to suggest that they are of one mind or engaged in a conspiracy. The sponsors and participants of the Forum see themselves as well-meaning global citizens, while their critics see them as a self-serving, non-elected ruling class.[22]

In sum, as new challenges and opportunities arise, new types of elites tend to emerge that "specialize' in addressing these. Of course, to point out that a particular issue or problem has become more central and that this has given rise to new types of economic elites is not to suggest that the challenges of other periods or that the older types of elites have completely disappeared.

Relationship of Economic Elites to Political Elites

As the general model suggests, economic elites are highly dependent upon political and ideological elites. At a rudimentary level some degree of law and order are a prerequisite to successful economic activity and this is, of course, the responsibility of political elites. But in addition economic elites need governments that foster infrastructure such as roads, ports, communication facilities, and data collection such as census information. Favorable tax laws, restraint in regulating businesses, and sympathetic courts are also highly desired qualities. Ironically, under advanced capitalism businesses have become highly dependent upon governments for another important function: and regulating the business cycle through taxes, government expenditures, and the money supply, especially interest rates. This is one of the reasons that names of the Federal Reserve Bank chairmen—for example, Paul

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[22] See www.weforum.org for the "official" view of the World Economic Forum.

Volcker, Alan Greenspan, and Ben Bernanke—have become virtually household names.

As the general model suggests, "conservative" politicians are more likely to be sympathetic to economic elites. This was certainly the case during the Republican administrations of Ronald Reagan, George H. Bush, and George W. Bush, especially with respect to tax and regulatory laws. "Liberal" politicians may be more inclined to assist non-elites through such things as consumer protection laws and welfare polices, but they are also vitally concerned with sustaining economic growth. This was symbolized by James Carville's famous epigram, "It's the economy, stupid," during Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign. Even more telling was the centrality of balancing the Federal budget and reducing the national debt to the Clinton administration's economic policies.

The more general point is the important ways in which contemporary political elites support and assist economic elites in sustaining the economy. Later we will discuss how economic elites support political elites and links between economic and status elites.

Status Elites

Priests and Prophets

One of the things that the model points to is the frequent presence of the analogs of priests and prophets. Let us begin the discussion of status elites by looking at the subcategory of status elites who are explicitly *ideological elites*, especially intellectual and religious elites. Since the 1990s there have been frequent laments about political polarization and a "culture war." This is in part rooted in both the

increase in internal cultural pluralism, and changes in the international context, especially the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of international terrorism. The priests of capitalist democracy are the neoconservatives (and their intellectual disciples and descendents).[23] They are proud of their apparent victory over Marxists and other leftists. This perspective is represented in such institutions as the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation. During most of the administration of George W. Bush, the neoconservative priests seemed to have the upper hand. They were, however, confronted with the dilemma that while they generally support the globalization of economic activity and the projection of U.S. power around the globe, they are at best ambivalent about international political institutions and cultural pluralism. Nonetheless they are children of the Enlightenment and committed to modernity.

For many years they joined with or at least did not object to their more liberal brethren's attempts to secularize the culture, including a strong emphasis on the separation of church and state. Both neoconservatives and liberals defined religion as a "personal choice" that should be respected, but largely confined to people's private lives. Despite the fact that church attendance and people's affirmation of their belief

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[23] The initial neo-conservatives were often liberals or leftists who became disillusioned with the radical turn of the 1960s, e.g. Seymour Martin Lipset and Lewis Feuer. Many associated with *The Public Interest* such as Irving Kristol and James Q. Wilson were the "first generation" neo-conservatives. Daniel Bell and Nathan Glazer who were also founders of this publication usually took more intermediate positions. Later neo-conservative concerns and ideas were often given a more conservative and even libertarian slant. For an informative critique of neo-conservatism by a well-known intellectual who has been closely associated with this movement, see Fukuyama (2006).

in God remained much higher than in Europe, public life became more secularized. Through both laws and court ruling religious rituals and symbols were increasingly barred from public events, especially those that had any significant connection with the government. The American Civil Liberties Union and, somewhat ironically, Jewish and the traditional Protestant denominations were supporters of these trends. The ideological elites discussed so far—conservative and liberal alike—generally accepted most elements of the modernity derived from the Enlightenment.

The trend toward a more secularized society did not go unopposed. Partly in reaction to secularization, a more energized form of conservatism emerged, often referred to as the "religious right." Their conservatism included one or more of the following concerns: to question evolution by incorporating notions of "intelligent design" into the school curriculum, to closely link religious piety with patriotism, to define the U.S. as a "Christian nation," to regulate pornography, to place the Ten Commandments in public buildings, and to emphasize traditional "family values" including traditional sex-roles. Many of these issues were not new and had antecedents in the religious fundamentalism characteristic of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, especially in the Bible Belt. This earlier form of religious conservatism was in large measure a reaction against Darwinian theories of evolution, the use of historical methods to study the Bible, liberal theology, and the Social Gospel of the first third of the twentieth century.

The newer religious conservatives revised and elaborated these concerns and spread them through new institutions including the Moral Majority, Focus on the Family, and The Discovery Institute. In addition a large number of new conservative

congregations have been founded, some of which are mega-churches that have

thousands of members. On issues of abortion and sex-roles these conservative

Protestant groups are allied with both official and unofficial Roman Catholic

institutions. Especially strong agreement exists about the unacceptability of abortion

and homosexuality. Several denominations, including the Roman Catholic Church

and the Southern Baptist Convention, officially allow only straight men to enter the

ordained clergy. Most of these groups back conservative positions on foreign policy,

including the Iraq War and strong support for the state of Israel. While large numbers

of Catholics and those who call themselves "evangelicals" are sympathetic to the

concerns of the religious right it would be a mistake to simply collapse these

categories, for some Catholics and evangelicals are liberal or even radical in their

social and political views (Goodstein 2006).[24]

So far this discussion of ideological elites has focused on the "priests," those

who want to conserve or restore what they see as traditional American values. This is

not to suggest that all the prophets have disappeared. Though I will describe them

more briefly, the prophets advocate a variety of concerns including multiculturalism,

feminism, environmentalism, animal rights, expansion of international law and human

rights, and resistance to economic globalization. Intellectually they are often

associated with various forms of postmodernism that include a critique of some forms

of rationalism and science. These contemporary prophets of the left are faced with the

dilemma that is the mirror image of the one faced by the priests of the right: they are

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[24] See also the Sojourners magazine and movement, http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm; accessed

2/13/2008.

usually sympathetic to cultural pluralism and international institutions, but ambivalent about economic globalization, which many of them see as that spreading and accentuating consumerism, threatening the loss of existing jobs, creating ecological problems, and leading to the homogenization of culture. That is to say, each side advocates some forms of globalization and is highly suspicious of other aspects of this historical trend. There are, of course, also prophets of the right. During the first decade of the 21st century examples might include, Ron Paul, Andrew Sullivan, and Richard Posner.[25]

While many of these disputes certainly have ties to economic and political interests, they cannot be reduced to these. Rather they are often about status issues and what is considered sacred, in the broad sociological sense of that notion. Hence, it is predictable that various varieties of "priests" and "prophets" would be apparent. To point out that contemporary cultural conflicts can be viewed with old lenses, is not to deny that important changes have occurred in the nature of status elites. We now turn to two of these key changes.

Celebrities

One corollary of new media technology, expanded networks, and new cultural arenas has been the emergence and expansion of new category of status elites:

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[25] I have called these "prophets" of the right, not because they are representative of right wing opinion, and hence "priest," but because each is eccentric, unpredictable, or innovative. Often they call into questions the usual assumptions of both the right and the left. For example, Paul was a Republican presidential candidate highly critical of the war in Iraq; Sullivan is conservative on foreign policy, but a Catholic gay activist; Posner, a U.S. appellant judge, has advocated legitimizing the sale of babies in the market for adoption. These are not the positions of the usual "priests" of the right.

celebrities. As I indicated when I discussed the general model, celebrities are status elites, but not necessarily or usually what I have earlier referred to as cultural and ideological elites, that is, religious or intellectual leaders. The essence of celebrity is social visibility; such visibility can be due to characteristics that are either positive or negative. Franklin Roosevelt and Einstein were celebrities, but so were Hitler and Charles Manson. Still other celebrities are, to use Daniel Boorstin's (1992) phrase, "known for their well-knownness," for example, Paris Hilton. Of course, many celebrities are highly accomplished, but this need not be the case.

In a small relatively isolated village virtually everyone knows everyone, thus there is great overlap between the people one knows personally and the people one knows about. Stated another way, nearly all are socially visible. In large complex societies much of the information and knowledge that a given individual has comes through the mass media rather than direct experiences or interpersonal interactions. They know more *about* many people that they do not know personally. Conversely, most people are largely invisible to most of the world they know about. Stated another way, social visibility in this expanded, largely virtual world is scarce and hence valuable. Becoming visible becomes an important source of status—almost independent of what one does to become visible. Moreover the celebrity status one acquires through visibility can become useful in legitimating unrelated activities. Therefore, as we shall see, politicians seek the endorsements of movie, TV, and sports stars, even though there may be nothing to suggest that such celebrities have any special knowledge or insights into political issues. In short, in large complex social

networks only a small percentage of individuals can be publicly visible, and hence those who do achieve visibility, that is celebrities, tend to have relatively high status.

The result is that celebrities as a category are probably more consequential than ever before. On the other hand, in large social networks there are many more celebrities, and the relative status of the average celebrity has decreased. For example, at the beginning of the twenty-first century no movie star or entertainer had the near-universal visibility and fame of earlier stars such as Humphrey Bogart, Cary Grant, Kathryn Hepburn, Ingrid Bergman, Frank Sinatra or Elvis Presley.[26]

Widely known celebrities probably do make a contribution to cultural and social integration. Celebrities become an item of cultural commonality. Not everyone in the U.S. liked or approved of Elvis Presley, but virtually everyone knew who he was. As the general model would indicate a key role of many status elites is to bolster the legitimation of political and economic elites, but also the political and economic systems they operate in. In part they may do this because they believe in the legitimacy of these institutions. One does not need to be a cynic, however, to suspect that their legitimizing efforts are not unrelated to the political protection and economic support they receive for these activities. Michael Jordan probably did believe that Nike athletic shoes were an excellent product, but it is doubtful that his endorsement and identification with Nike products was unrelated to the millions of dollars he received from the company. In the contemporary U.S. celebrities are central to the

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[26] Part of this is, of course, due to the enormous increase in the size of the world population and the percentage of that population that is exposed to the mass media. The absolute size of the audiences that are familiar with any one celebrity are not necessarily smaller than in earlier periods.

process of legitimizing and stimulating consumerism. In advanced capitalism this has economic, socio-cultural and political consequences. Celebrity appearances in advertisements endorsing beer, fast foods, tennis shoes, watches, credit cards and automobiles are only the most overt example. Perhaps more important is the indirect legitimation of the sensuality and consumerism of the "good life" that supposedly makes up much of the content of these celebrities lives. This is an oft repeated story.

Another indicator of the increasing centrality of celebrities is the development of a whole range of what I would call *secondary celebrities*. They are associated with a myriad of "entertainment news," "talk shows" and tabloid magazines about "lives of the rich and famous." For reasons we will take up shortly they tend to focus on celebrities' private lives. These secondary commentators are roughly divided between those who are cheerleaders or unofficial publicist for celebrities, and those who are gossip columnists that "dish the dirt" about sexual and other forms of aberrant conduct. This contrast is a less respectable variation on the priest and prophet roles. This displacement of ideological elites by celebrities is one source of what many see as a decline in the quality and content of public discourse and debate.

Pluralism

The increased importance of celebrities is obviously tied to the increased centrality of the mass media, which has created larger and larger audiences.[27] But

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[27] The Super Bowl is only one obvious example: "Thirty-five years ago . . . worldwide television broadcast viewership . . . was less than 100 million people and the US television networks which held the rights to the game in the USA charged approximately $40,000 for 30 seconds of commercial airtime. . . . [T]hree and a half decades later, Super Bowl 2000 was watched by over 134 million viewers in the USA and by nearly 800 million television viewers worldwide. US advertisers . . . paid .

when cultural fields grow, they often fragment.[28] As the model indicates, one reason is the inexpansible nature of status and the consequences this has for elites and the formation of subcultures. As social networks become larger, a smaller and smaller percentage of members can be visible elites, or even have any direct contact with such elites. Hence, they tend to create alternative subcultures with different values and symbols. This is observable among American teenagers (Milner 2004: chap. 6). In a high school of 200 students, ten percent or twenty of the students can be a "popular crowd" who is visible to all the other students. In a school of 2000 ten percent is 200 individuals, which is far too large a group for everyone to know. As the participants in a cultural arena increases, only a minute percent of the total population can belong to a single visible elite. Hence many ambitious individuals are excluded. The excluded often construct alternative subcultures and elites; in schools many no longer copy the popular preps but become hippies, punks, band nerds, skaters, brains, etc. They create their own norms and symbols and admire individuals who best express these. An analogous process occurs as societies become larger. While these

. . an average of $2,200,000 to air 30-second commercials" (Tomkovick, Yelkur and Christians, 2001: 89). At the 2004 Olympics in Athens, "The IOC President, Jacques Rogge . . . announced that the television audience for the 2004 Athens Games broke all the records. With more than 300 TV channels in 220 countries and territories broadcasting 35,000 hours of the Games (2,000 hours a day), with 3.9 billion people having access to the images of the Games, a spectacular increase in live coverage, as well as peak audience hours, this was the greatest coverage of the Olympic Games ever" (International Olympic Committee 2004).

[28] For example, the sources from which Americans receive their TV news have become more diverse, though this does not necessarily mean increased diversity of information or interpretation (The Pew Research Center 2004).

alternative subcultures are usually rooted in a structural context they also involve cultural and ideological innovation. "Black is beautiful" and hip-hop are obvious examples of cultural innovations intended to redefine the identity and the status of many African-Americans.

For elites and those with high levels of education, embracing cultural pluralism is often a choice. In addition to structural factors and cultural innovation, the ideological interpretation of both of these factors has an important independent affect. For example, Canada more than the U.S. and the U.S more than most European countries has developed an explicit ideology that legitimates cultural pluralism and diversity. This is not, of course, to say that Canada or the U.S. always live up to their ideology. Nonetheless societies with a well-established ideology of pluralism are different from those where immigrants are expected to completely assimilate or when the dominant ideology openly expresses disdain for other cultures or subcultures. How culturally heterogeneous a postmodern society can be and avoid serious inter-group conflict remains unclear.[29] It is probably dependent on groups being able to be both different and sharing core common commitments.[30] Pluralism is often a choice. Most educated professionals do not face significant levels of discrimination that literally forces them to live in ethnic or religious neighborhoods. Moreover, they may choose not to go to church on Sunday, but to spend their leisure time preoccupied with

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[29] Significant levels of force and coercion can often hold pluralistic societies together. Most empires have relied heavily (though not exclusively) on such force.

[30] The evidence about the preconditions for democracy that elite studies have focused on are relevant here, but they focus more on the minimum conditions for democracy rather than the full requirements of pluralistic society as it is envisioned by its postmodern or communitarian advocates.

bicycle riding, antique collecting, opera, hiking, Buddhist meditation, or a myriad of other lifestyle activities and the status groups that form from these activities. Similarly, they can often choose whether to take up the culture and symbols of their ancestors or to shed these and assimilate into being "just Americans." As we shall see, this is often not the case of less educated and less well-to-do non-elites.

Political Elites

The typology suggests that non-elites are often ambivalent about whether political elites are seen as the cops or the robbers. We will take up this issue shortly, but it needs to be put in the context of several contemporary developments.

Politicians as Celebrities

As the centrality of the mass media grew, celebrity status was increasingly important for attaining public visibility. Accordingly, during the 1980s and 1990s celebrities became more central to politics. In the past, when campaigning politicians primarily spoke to local groups and were covered by local print media, they could tailor their message to specific audiences. If they were accused of inconsistencies, they could claim they were misquoted. Politicians now face instant sound and image recording of virtually all of their public words and around-the-clock news, communicated to their whole constituency. This means that messages tailored to specific audiences are more difficult, and hence a main form of communication becomes brief, generalized sound bites directed to large heterogeneous audiences— even if they are delivered to a particular specialized audience on some specific

occasion.[31] This tendency is exemplified by the phrase "staying on message," which

has become a common part of the cultural vocabulary. There are now public relations

firms who specialize in helping not only politicians, but firms and individuals to "stay

on message."[32] Obviously being brief, clear and articulate is a virtue, but often

political discourse involves simply repeating the same cliché. There is a counter

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[31] See Scheuer (1999) for an analysis of the effects of the simplification of communication via sound bites.

[32] One such firm, "Consensus Communications," explains their philosophy of "Strategic Public Relations" in the following terms:

> **Your Message.** It's not something you leave on voicemail. Your message is the concise story that communicates the essence of your business to potential clients and investors. Your message is the straightforward description of your company's perspective on an issue – so that the public supports what you're doing – and doesn't succumb to misinformation that could tarnish your image. Your message is the compelling, easy to understand encapsulation of a complex issue – so that you can take it before government decision makers for action or to the public for support. In today's fast-paced world, you sometimes get just one chance to communicate your message – so every word counts – and so does every opportunity. **Our Job.** Our job is to help you develop, communicate and manage your message – so that when the stakes are their highest – you are on message. **Our Approach.** We develop creative communication strategies by analyzing your situation, conducting sophisticated market research, and taking it to the streets and actually shaping public opinion. http://www.onmessage.com/philosophy.htm; accessed 12/21/2006.

Of course, one example does not demonstrate the extensiveness of these tendencies. However, a Google search for "on message" produced 538,000 hits and "staying on message" produced 10,000 hits showing that these phrases are a common and frequent notion in public discourse.

tendency that draws on the information derived from the enormous amounts of data accumulated by retail stores about the purchasing habits of virtually all consumers and similar information about individuals use of the Internet and the World-wide Web. This enables both marketers and political campaigns to send very specialized messages to audiences that are likely to be especially receptive (Howard 2004). The effectiveness of such targeted techniques in influencing politics is still unclear (Gitlin 2008), while the importance of high visibility in the more generalized media seems apparent.

To gain access to these more centralized media, the politician needs to become a celebrity.[33] Conversely, it is not surprising that celebrities become politicians (West and Orman 2003; Street 2004). Obvious examples include Shirley Temple, Jack Kemp, Ronald Reagan, Sonny Bono, Bill Bradley, John Glenn, Clint Eastwood, Jesse Ventura, and Arnold Schwarzenneger. Inheritance of such celebrity status is also important: Joseph Kennedy, Jay Rockefeller, Richard M. Daley, Jessie Jackson Jr.,

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[33] While it is true that the Internet, cable channels, and low-power radio outlets have increased the variety of voices that are available through the media, and that more people use local news outlets than national ones, it is nonetheless the case that since the Telecommunications Act of 1996 the ownership of U.S. media outlets is more concentrated and that the content of much of the news and information are derived from a few national media companies. There is great controversy over the extent to which concentration of ownership limits and biases the content of media. For alternative views on these issues, see (McQuail and Siune 1998, Bagkikian 2000, Compaine and Gomery 2000, Graber 2006: chap. 2, and "Concentration of Media Ownership," *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia;* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concentration_of_media_ownership; accessed 3/9/06. For an overview of where Americans get their news, how much time they spend doing this, and how their ideological and political leanings are related to their news sources, The Pew Research Center . . . . (2004).

Mary Bono, Jeb Bush, Al Gore, and George W. Bush. By many accounts George W.

Bush was a second- or third-rate Texas oilman who because of his name and family

connections was recruited to be the front man for the Texas Rangers baseball team.

He parlayed the visibility of this job and his family name into the Texas governorship.

However his presidency is evaluated, the key point here is that it is hard to imagine

that he would have become President of the United States if he had not started out as a

semi-celebrity because of his father and become associated with baseball celebrities.

Much more important than celebrities becoming politicians is the adoption of

the tools of the celebrity by most politicians: the press agent, the publicist, the pollster,

and the media coach. Contemporary politicians must pay as much attention to style,

personality, and image as to policy (Verser and Wicks 2006). But this is a two-edged

sword, because if high visibility and the projection of appealing personal qualities

become the key means to success, critics and competitors have every reason to draw

attention to their opponent's unappealing personal qualities. Just as movie stars

spawned gossip columnists, celebrity-politicians have led to a press preoccupied with

their personal lives and especially scandals. The historic American exceptionalism,

which draws attention to politicians' personal morality (especially with respect to

sexual conduct) as much as it does their public policies, takes on real significance in

the political arena. Bill Clinton's sex life and George W. Bush's National Guard

career are obvious examples. This tendency further contributes to negative

campaigning.[34]

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[34] This is not, of course, a totally new phenomenon. When he was running for president Thomas

Jefferson was accused of having a black mistress; most of the contemporary evidence seems to indicate

The enormous cost of becoming a celebrity-politician via the mass media has made politicians increasingly dependent upon special interests and economic elites. There is evidence that fundraising and organizing by means of the Internet has increased the participation and importance of small donors, though most of these contributors are well above average with respect to wealth and education.[35] Whether they rely on large or small donors, most American politicians now spend a substantial portion of their time raising money, and a large portion of this is spent on purchasing access to the mass media. There is much debate about what the political and civic consequences are of the increased attention paid to fundraising (Bailey 2004). It is undoubtedly the case that this need for money has on occasion led to bribery and corruption of public officials.

The key theoretical point is that the nature of political resources has shifted: visibility through the mass media is increasingly important, especially in democratic regimes. This has contributed to a number of other changes. It has advantaged those who already are celebrities or who are skilled or gifted in the ways of the celebrity. This in turn has changed the nature of political organization, including decreasing the significance of political parties and increasing the importance of fundraising by candidates. In turn, the closest advisors of most politicians are no longer those with

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that this was the case. Andrew Jackson and Alexander Hamilton fought duels over statements by political opponents that they considered slanderous. Nonetheless the frequency and intensity of negative campaigning is generally perceived to have increased.

[35] See Institute for Political Democracy and the Internet (2006), and Nagourney (2006), See McKibben (2006) for a view that sees these developments as a fundamental rebalancing of political power in the U.S.

extensive interpersonal networks in politics, that is, the local and state party activist, but rather specialist in the media and public relations.

Relationship of Political Elites to Other Elites

Economic elites in the U.S. are seldom enthusiastic about political elites who want to raise taxes. On the other hand, they are often enthusiastic about politicians who provide various subsidies to economic activities. These include key infrastructures such as highways, sports stadiums, and airline security. They can also include tax incentives for investments and commodity price supports. Economic elites tend to support politicians who are committed to "law and order" (and especially the protection of property) and the expansion of territory and markets. Conversely, politicians are appreciative of economic elites who provide campaign contributions, large fees for speeches, and free trips to expensive resorts.

In most complex societies established political elites seek the support of priestly religious elites and ideologues to add to their legitimacy. Only rarely do political leaders who are in power embrace prophetic religious leaders or radical intellectuals. In the contemporary U.S. the relationship between political and religious elites, per se, has become more complex and differentiated. Conservative politicians may stress their religious devotion publicly, and support issues of concern to the Christian right. In general, however, contemporary politicians have been reticent about publicly expressing their religious commitments in an increasingly secularized and pluralistic society. The defeated 2004 democratic presidential candidate John Kerry is an example. Religious leaders are seldom key advisors to middle-of-the-road or liberal politicians; if they are this is usually done behind the scenes. The success of

conservative politicians in mobilizing religious communities caused more liberal politicians to more directly articulate their religious commitments, and this was seen in the campaigns of both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama in 2008. In contrast, politicians of all stripes have little reticence about drawing on the support of popular celebrities. Similarly, contemporary political elites often draw on an array of intellectuals for both advice and public support.

Conservatives and Non-elites

In most societies, and especially democratic ones, a key issue is how conservative political elites gain the support of respectable non-elites—especially for policies that often benefit elites more than non-elites (see Hunter and Wolfe 2006: especially 53-55, 68-71, and 92). I argued above that the key functions of political elites were, on the one hand, to deal with external enemies and to create internal order. The latter task usually involves both suppressing deviance from traditional patterns (especially among the lower classes), and, placing some limits on the exploitation of the lower strata by economic elites. The political elites who fail in these endeavors are usually replaced by either outside conquerors or internal rebellions. The latter can occur on battlefields, in the streets, or at polling places.

From World War II to 1989, the Cold War contributed to a kind of social solidarity that allowed both high expenditures on the military and modest expansions of the welfare state (Higgs 1987). The claim that the expansion of defense spending by the Reagan administration bankrupted the Soviet Union and led to its demise is, at the very least, debatable (Chernoff 1991). It seems very likely, however, that this military build up and the characterization of the U.S.S.R as an "evil empire" was

effective in creating an alliance between conservative political elites and the majority of the non-elites. As we noted above it is in part attributable to American exceptionalism that includes an especially high level of patriotism and commitment to capitalist ideology. During this period, however, conservative elites could not be totally negative about the state because it was the key organizer of the military and the related industrial complex. With the end of the Cold War, this motivation for non-elites supporting conservative elites evaporated. Likewise the rationale for conservatives to support an expanded state disappeared. Hence, conservative elites needed a new way to attract the support of respectable non-elites.

Internal Enemies

One way to create such support was a new "war." The enemy became the unrespectable non-elites. This ideological attack identified welfare chiselers,[36] illegal immigrants (Perea 1996), urban gangs (Miller 2001), and foreign drug cartels

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[36] See, for example, Boushey (2004) and Katz (1996). Katz's important history of welfare in America indicates that "wars" against the poor occurred a number of times. He specifically labels the 1980s as "the war on welfare" (1996: chap. 10). It is clear that most Americans have a negative view of welfare recipients (Gilens 1999). This has probably been accentuated by portrayals in the mass media. See Bullock, Wyche and Williams (2001) for a survey of the literature on the images of the poor in the press that led up to welfare reform (Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996). They report: "During the 1980s and early 1990s considerable attention focused on the depiction of poor, inner-city African Americans. The image of urban Black men as members of a threatening and violent underclass prevailed both in the news media (Gans 1995) and in popular films, . . . single Black mothers were, and continue to be vilified as 'lazy welfare queens' using the system to avoid work or as ignorant, promiscuous women caught in a self-perpetuating 'cycle of dependency.'" (236).

(Shannon 1998, Robinson 2007) as responsible for many of the society's problems.[37]

Welfare reform and "law and order" were proposed—some would say touted—as the solutions. This is not to suggest that there were not real problems with welfare programs, immigration, crime, or drug use. It is to suggest that the stereotypical vilification of welfare recipients immigrants and urban youth was not unrelated to the political elites need for support from respectable non-elites. Moreover, for conservatives, the state, that is, "the government," also became a stereotyped and vilified enemy. There are, of course, differences between liberal and conservative politicians over these issues. It is not accidental, however, that with the collapse of the Soviet Union both Republicans and "New Democrats" like Bill Clinton gave strong support to welfare reform and law and order. Clinton also declared that the "era of big government is over" (Clinton 1996).

The Robbers: Bandits and Guerrillas

A preliminary remark: it may seem peculiar to treat bandits and guerrillas as a subcategory of political elites rather than as a category of unrespectable non-elites. The key point, however, is that these are not simply disadvantaged outcast groups or individual deviants. They are groups that reject the legitimacy of the established political order, and often they aspire to bring down or replace existing political elites. Of course, relatively few are successful, just as most prophets are ignored or suppressed and most new businesses fail.

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[37] Attinger's (1990: Sept 17) description in *Time magazine* of life in New York City exemplifies the negative view of problems created by primarily the lower strata of society.

It is not surprising that at the height of the anti-government, anti-poor rhetoric, and as the initial impacts of economic globalization began to be felt, the category of bandits and guerrillas became relevant to American life. Those on the margins of society increasingly resorted to illegitimate force to secure economic resources and status. Urban gangs and drug organizations were the most obvious examples. As one government report noted, "The last quarter of the 20th century was marked by significant growth in youth gang problems across the United States. In the 1970's, less than half the States reported youth gang problems, but by the late 1990's, every State and the District of Columbia reported youth gang activity. In the same period, the number of cities reporting youth gang problems mushroomed nearly tenfold . . . ." (Miller 2001).

Other groups were alienated because of cultural and political changes, which they saw as the abandonment of traditional values. Such concerns were sometimes linked to white supremacist and anti-feminist ideologies. Militia groups implicitly threatened to use violence as a form of resistance (Freilich 2005; Crothers 2002). In a few cases they resorted to crime to secure the money needed to sustain their political activities. The most spectacular example of violence by militia networks was the 1995 bombing of Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Often overlapping with but not identical to militias were "survivalists" many of whom were millenarians of various types (Lamy 1996). Probably the best known was the standoff with Randy Weaver in Ruby Ridge, Idaho in 1992. Another overlapping category was religious cults who were willing to use force to resist what they saw as government interference, the most famous case being the Waco Branch Davidians in 1993. A variety of

relatively left-wing movements also emerged including radical environmental activist

such as the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), which carried out at least 17 acts of sabotage

between 1996 and 2000 (Janofsky 2006, Young 2005), and animal rights groups such

as the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) (Munro 2005). Various "independence

movements" advocating withdrawal of particular states from the United States also

emerged or were reactivated in Hawaii, Alaska, and Texas (McLaren and Hightower

2006; Brock 1997).

These assorted dissenters evoked hostility and even outrage. The right wing

groups were generally condemned for offering violent resistance to government

officials, and this resistance often resulted in their being killed by the police. The eco-

and animal-rights radicals were frequently referred to as "terrorists"—even though

most contemporary uses of "terrorism" imply violence against officials and civilians,

rather than the destruction of property. Eco- and animal- rights radicals who were

convicted of crimes were given extraordinarily hash sentences (Kaste 2006). The

intensity of the reaction to these forms of radicalism seemed to be related to the fact

that they not only violated the law, like ordinary criminals, but they explicitly rejected

the legitimacy of the existing social order or political regime. Moreover, they violated

such core values as patriotism and "law and order." While none of these "bandits"

threatened to topple the existing political regime, we did see urban mayors conferring

with gang leaders in hopes of reducing the level of violence and federal officials

negotiating with armed militia in Waco and Ruby Ridge (Bell 1993; Tucker 1992). In

some areas, gangs provided quasi-police protection to the populations they dominated

by keeping out other gangs.

Many of these various kinds of resistance by unrespectable non-elites seemed to have been due to various domestic problems such as high unemployment, poor Veteran benefits, secularization, or reactions to loneliness and alienation by socially and economically marginal individuals. While the dissidents themselves raise these issues, they also frequently see themselves as resisting an intrusive government, and various kinds of external threats and conspiracies. These later accusations ranged from "sell outs" to the Communists, to world-wide Jewish and Zionist conspiracies, to the danger of the U.N. or "black helicopters" taking over the U.S. and establishing a "New World Order" (Keith 1994).

Obviously, drug dealers and some welfare recipients, survivalists, and liberationists engaged in behaviors that were clearly illegal. Nonetheless, I want to suggest that the intensity of the reaction to these groups was related to the conservatives' need for a new "enemy" in order to strengthen the support received from respectable non-elites. This in turn was due in part to changes in the international context, especially the end of the Cold War.

External Enemies

Throughout history elites, especially conservative elites, have invoked the menace of external enemies—real or fabricated—to secure the support of non-elites. Clearly, 9/11 was a watershed event that placed the issue of terrorism at the center of political discourse and the consciousness of most individuals in the U.S. It revealed an external enemy that was in some respects even more threatening than the old Soviet Union. In the terminology of this typology, contemporary terrorists are a particular type of bandit. They are guerrillas who attack not only the institutions and officials of

the state, but significant numbers of non-combatant civilians.[38] In contrast to the

mafia, terrorists' motives are more political than economic, but like mafia they are

secretly organized—though this may be a very loosely coupled form of organization.

Moreover, just as economics, politics and culture have become more global in scope,

so have the guerillas that resist dominant trends and established forms of power.

Predictably the emergence of terrorist groups strengthened the power of

conservative political elites and those economic sectors most dependent upon military

expenditures. An especially important development was the privatization of many

military functions. This was seen most clearly in Iraq where the government

contracted with many private firms to carry out a broad array of functions from

transporting and feeding troops to providing protection for government officials and

the employees of government contractors. This historic shift was largely invisible

until scandals emerged about poor services and over charges by some of these

contractors (Shenon 2007; Schmitt and Martin 2007). Even more public attention was

generated by the seeming recklessness of some of the private security firms, such as

the apparently unprovoked firing on Iraqi civilians by the troops of Blackwater USA

(Glanz, Oppel, and Kamber 2007).

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[38] There is no clear consensus about either the definition or the causes of terrorism or the extent to

which contemporary terrorism is distinct from earlier historical examples. Most definitions, however,

emphasize attacks on noncombatants. When I suggest that contemporary terrorists can be seen as a

particular kind of guerrilla, and hence a subtype of "bandit," I do not mean to suggest that this is the

only type of terrorism or that the state or other established political authorities do not engage in

terrorism. For an array of recent sociological perspectives on these issues see the symposium organized

by Senechal de la Roche (2004).

The Cops: Homeland Security and Enemy Combatants

After 9/11 government at all levels became vitally concerned with what came to be known as "homeland security." Most of the federal security and policing agencies were put under the authority of a new cabinet level Department of Homeland Security. Significant federal budget allocations went into expanding police and protective services. The Bush administration expanded executive police powers without bringing them under the supervision of either the judicial or legislative branch. This has ranged from wiretaps and computer searches of phone calls and e-mails without search warrants to secretly holding suspected terrorists as "enemy combatants" without the usual legal protections such as the right to an attorney. Most controversial was the use of aggressive interrogation techniques, such as sleep deprivation and "water boarding," which simulates the experience of drowning, techniques most would consider torture. These procedures were widely protested, but not, for the most part, thwarted. The point with respect to the present analysis is that this was a significant extension of executive policing powers and a qualification of widely recognized human rights. As the typology would anticipate, elites attempt to justify this primarily in terms of increasing internal and international security.

Indirect Consequences of External Enemies

Because conservatives in a capitalist society are usually opposed to state regulation of economic elites, the effects of conservatives in power was much broader than the impact on military and security matters. This included relaxation of a large array of government regulations with respect to the environment, consumer protections, and labor practices. It also led to large tax cuts that disproportionately benefited the wealthy (Johnston 2005). The combination of increased defense

expenditures and tax cuts led to bigger deficits and increases in the national debt,

which was an ironical outcome for a conservative administration. It seems almost

certain that such a move would have been impossible without the events of 9/11 and

the definition of the response as a "war" on terrorism rather than a hunt for criminals.

These processes were obviously accentuated by the invasions of Afghanistan

and Iraq. When a nation-state is "at war," greater solidarity is usually expressed

toward the military and the government in power. This is especially so in light of the

U.S. tradition of patriotism and seeing international relations from a moralistic—and

often self-righteous—perspective. One consequence is that political elites are able to

set aside economic issues, in the name of national security and national honor. When

foreigners criticize the actions of the nation's political elite, which was the

international community's dominant response to the invasion of Iraq, this frequently

strengthens the government's legitimacy—making it less necessary to respond to the

domestic concerns of non-elites such as wage levels and job security. In short, until a

war results in a defeat or stalemate, political elites typically have higher levels of

internal legitimacy than would have otherwise been the case. This does not exclude

the possibility of substantial internal dissent and protest, but, until the war seems lost,

such protest is nearly always trumped by increased patriotism, loyalty, and chauvinism

by the bulk of the non-elite.[39] This pattern was clearly seen following the U.S.

invasion of Iraq.

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[39] In addition to the epigram that "the first casualty of war is truth," which is variously attributed to

Aeschylus, Samuel Johnson, and Hiram Walker, there is considerable research on this issue. See

Coryn, Beale, and Myers (2004) for a brief summary of the relevant polling data following 9/11 and a

more theoretical microanalysis of the social psychological processes of chauvinism and patriotism. See

Such strategies by elites cannot, however, be an obvious failure without producing splits within political elites as well as eroding non-elite support. As it became obvious that the U.S. occupation of Iraq was unsuccessful in installing an effective new government and as law and order declined and sectarian violence increased, conservative elites began to fracture. In addition to Democrats, the critics included retired top commanders, the Iraq Study Group (co-chaired by longtime Republican and former Secretary of State James Baker), and eventually key Republican Senators such as John Warner and Chuck Hagel (Ricks 2006; Cloud and Schmitt 2006; Baker et al. 2006; Gray and Roberts 2007).

Decline of Local Elites

The model points to the likelihood of *interdependence between types of elites*; a change in the power of one category is likely to affect other categories. U.S. society has become more integrated economically. People on the East Coast regularly eat vegetables grown in California, Florida, and Texas, and talk with call centers in Utah, Kansas, and India; people in the Midwest and the West Coast regularly deal with banks, insurance companies, and brokerage houses on the East Coast. One result is that local economic elites like bankers and owners of local businesses have declined in significance. Prosperity in many areas is increasingly dependent upon attracting large companies to build factories, facilities or offices in the vicinity. This has not only eroded the position of local economic elites, but of local political elites. Corporations look for areas that have a favorable business climate: low taxes, weak unions, low

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Erenberg and Hirsch, eds. (1996), especially Gerstell, "The Working Class Goes to War,"(105-127) for a variety of historical analyses of the waxing and waning of American patriotism and chauvinism.

labor costs, and local officials who are appropriately deferential. Moreover, corporations often pressure local politicians in to giving them tax moratoriums or in providing infrastructure and buildings at public expense. This often takes the form of making it clear that a given community is in competition with several other specific communities. The winner of the contest is often the community that offers the corporation the best deal. Whatever one thinks about the legitimacy and desirability of such tactics by corporations, the key point is that local economic and political elites are less powerful and more dependent upon regional, national, and global economic elites.

Status and cultural elites are also affected. The relative stature and importance of local clergy has certainly declined. The same is true for local journalist relative to the national media. The programming of many "local" radio stations is in fact determined by the various chains that own most of these stations. In higher education "distance learning" has become a common phenomenon. This usually involves some kind of Internet based instruction where students are not in residence. There are at least two large private university systems, Strayer University and Phoenix University, that provide educations primarily through such arrangements to students all over the country and beyond. In addition, most major universities have various kinds of continuing and professional education at a number of satellite sites. Finally, there are several commercial companies that offer video versions of course lectures by popular, well-known scholars. The result is that the stature and job security of faculty at local colleges has decreased.

Of course, this argument can be overstated. Local economic and political elites do enact zoning laws. They can shape the attractiveness of their cities to business investment, vary in their skill at bargaining with outside business interests, and in their creativity in initiating local enterprises. A more prosperous postmodern society has probably increased the numbers of local artists and drama groups. Nonetheless local areas are more affected by global structures and trends, and the powers of local elites are circumscribed by such factors (Reichl 2005).

Non-elites

The typology draws attention to the distinction between respectable and disreputable members of the non-elite. But non-elites are differentiated in additional ways. This is often due to exogenous variables such as new technologies. We will now turn to a consideration of some of these factors.

Technological and Economic Changes

During the 1990s and the first years of the new millennium, the U.S. has experienced relatively steady but modest economic growth and relatively low unemployment. This is, however, only part of the story. As Robert Reich and others have pointed out, there is an increasing polarization within the middle and working classes rooted in alternative modes of production. Those who creatively manipulate symbols (e.g., writers, system analysts, CPAs, and advanced computer programmers) are doing well. Others face eroding wages, increased job insecurity, and rigorous supervision through computerized Enterprise Systems. This includes those in the manufacturing, routine symbolic manipulation (e.g., secretaries, data entry clerks, and phone bank operators), the low-skilled service sector (e.g., food services, cleaning and

janitorial services, childcare, and retail clerks), agriculture workers, and even professionals such as healthcare workers and physicians.[40]

Changes in the distribution of income parallel changes in the occupational structure.[41] To quote the U.S. Bureau of the Census (2005):

> Generally, the long-term trend has been toward increasing income inequality. Since 1969, the share of aggregate household income controlled by the lowest income quintile has decreased from 4.1 percent to 3.6 percent in 1997, while the share to the highest quintile increased from 43.0 percent to 49.4 percent. Most noticeably, the share of

[40] See Reich (1989) for a brief non-technical summary of this argument. See Sassen (2001) for an influential statement that highlights the polarizations thesis for global cities. See Hamnett (1994, 2002) for discussions that qualify this argument and raise the issue of whether it applies to all global cities. See Walks (2001) for a detailed analysis of the polarization in Toronto. See Nightingale and Fix (2004) for a more U.S. oriented analysis that focuses on the interaction between the changing mode of production and immigration from low wage areas of Latin America. Their findings include: "Although demand for high-skilled workers continues to increase, two-thirds of all jobs in the U.S. labor market do not require high skills or education, and the demand for low-skilled workers also is expected to continue over the next decade . . . . Those with strong technical skills and college educations receive higher wages; and those with fewer skills and education are relegated to the secondary labor market where wages and job security are low and few employee benefits are offered . . . . Over 2 million persons are in poverty even though at least one person in their family works full time, year round." See Head (2007) concerning the increased social control of workers through the use of computer-based Enterprise Systems that monitor the details of employees work.

[41] This is not to argue that the changing distribution of income is simply the result of changes in the occupational structure. Changes in the family structure and probably in the tax structure have also contributed to greater income inequality.

income controlled by the top 5 percent of households has increased

from 16.6 percent to 21.7 percent. Over the same time period, the Gini

index rose 17.4 percent to its 1997 level of .459.

Since 1997 the trend toward inequality has accentuated. By 2001 the lowest fifth

received 3.5 percent of the total income, while the top fifth received 50.1 percent. The

data for 2002 show the top fifth receiving 49.7 percent, but there is no increase in the

proportion going to the bottom fifth. Stated in other terms, in 1970 the average (mean)

income of the households in the top fifth was 3.7 times that of bottom fifth. By 2001

the top fifth on average made over 14 times as much as the bottom fifth (U.S. Census

Bureau 2008: Tables H-2 and H-3). Though comparable data is not available, it is

almost certain the relative increases for the top five percent and the bottom five

percent (or the top and bottom one percent) was even much greater. Conversely, the

relative position of households in bottom four-fifths of the population declined, while

the top fifth became not only absolutely, but relatively much richer. In relative terms

the rich have been getting much richer, and everyone else has been getting poorer.

Those at the bottom are probably worse off not only relatively, but absolutely. These

figures are in constant dollars (corrected for inflation) so we are talking about real

changes in economic power. In short, there have been dramatic and real increases in

income inequality that have produced significant differences in the life experiences of

substantial proportions of the population.

Because of the combination of (1) strong anti-state and pro-business ideology,

(2) globalization, and (3) rapidly changing production technology, trade unions have

been largely unsuccessful in protecting the economic interest of non-elites. Union

membership has fallen significantly, from a high of 37 percent of the work force to about 13.9 percent in 1999. Moreover, the highest rates of unionization are among government workers, many of whom cannot strike, while union membership in manufacturing has fallen to 15.6 percent (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008). Relatively well paying manufacturing jobs have been replaced with a combination of low-level and high-level service jobs—both more difficult to unionize.[42]

The increasing economic inequality and insecurity that has resulted from these various changes has created the image, and to some degree the reality, of an alienated, underemployed urban underclass largely composed of blacks, Latinos and other minorities.[43] The dot.com take-off of the 1990s and the real estate boom of the 2000-

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[42] For a review of the state and trends for labor unions through the 1990s see Clawson and Clawson (1999). They specifically report, "Depending on the time period studied, the methodology used, and the comprehensiveness of the factors taken into account, analysts believe that structural and compositional factors account for 20% to 60% of the decrease in union density" (1999:98).

For a review of changes in the wage structure, see Katz and Autor (1999). It is generally agreed that there has been increasing inequality, and that the premium received for having a college degree has increased. There is no clear consensus about the source of these changes, but suggested causes include: (1) increased demand for the highly skilled because of more sophisticated technologies, (2) the effect of global competition in retarding and lowering the wages in lower skilled jobs, (3) a greater inequality in skill levels due to internal demographic trends and an increase in the numbers of lower skilled immigrants, (4) institutional and political changes such as the decline in the power of unions, the effectiveness and prevalence of minimum wage laws, and changes in societal ideologies about equality and competition.

[43] This is, of course, a complicated issue. In general there is still considerable social distance and often suspicion between blacks and whites in general. See, for example, Hacker (1992: 23ff). A similar distancing is the case for the very poor and others. A debate over the extent to which an underclass

2005 mitigated this, but this was eroded by the economic downturn starting in 2007 .
Many people have experienced the loss of jobs due to declining consumer demand,

exists is ongoing. There are relatively high rates of movement in and out of officially defined poverty, but the evidence about the poorest of the poor is more ambiguous, and there is a strong tendency for those who leave ghettos at one point to return later. See Quillian (2003) for longitudinal evidence that most blacks live in poor urban neighborhoods for ten years or longer while only ten percent of whites do. "Further, most of this racial difference cannot be accounted for by differences in poverty status or household structure" (243) . . . . "the measure of immobility and total exposure . . . do indeed suggest that to be 'trapped' is a meaningful descriptive term for a substantial share of the black residents of poor neighborhoods" (244). Crowder, Chavez and South (2006), however, report that the relatively limited movement of minorities into neighborhoods that are predominantly Anglo is not primarily due to differences in wealth. Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo (2006) report that in one factory, where they studied in detail the various aspects of networks that were relevant to hiring employees, differences in access to networks did not explain differences in the likelihood of being hired. Portes (2005) reports that while most second generation immigrants learn English and in many respects assimilate culturally, a substantial number assimilate into an underclass; moreover this underclass status seems to be transmitted from one generation to the next. There is also considerable discussion about the "mismatch" between where poor people, especially African Americans, live and where the jobs that are available are located. See Lichter (1988) for an analysis and discussion of this issue during the 1972-82 period. For an even stronger statement of the tendencies toward "apartheid," see Massey (1990) and Massey and Denton (1993). For an analysis about the negative effects of residential segregation, see Fainstein (1994). Findings such as those mentioned above have implications for the ongoing debate over whether an underclass is due to primarily economic factors such as low pay and scarce jobs, or to a "culture of poverty" and behaviors that cause people to fail economically. See Jencks (1992: chap. 4) for a fair, but now out of date summary of some of the complexities. For an accessible survey of this issue that argues that the elimination of an underclass will require both providing better economic opportunities and changes in the culture and behaviors of the poor, see Sawhill (2003).

technological innovation and movement of activities to lower cost labor markets.[44]

While the U.S. has not experienced the high unemployment rates of many European

countries, it nonetheless has been creating jobs at a rate that barely keeps up with

population growth. Moreover, many of the jobs that have been created provide

relatively low pay and little if any benefits or job security.[45] There is also a greater

reliance on temporary workers, and preliminary analysis indicates this enables

employers to avoid pay increases for regular employees (Houseman, Kalleberg, and

Erickcek 2003).

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[44] There is considerable debate, and a sizeable technical literature, on the extent to which an increase in

international trade and the practice of American firms moving activities overseas results in lower wages

and job security for American workers and greater economic inequality within the U.S. For brief

overviews of some of the issues see Matthew J. Slaughter and Phillip Swagel. 1997 (September).

"Does Globalization Lower Wages and Export Jobs?" Economic Issues, No. 11. Washington, DC:

International Monetary Fund, and "Event Summary: Free Trade in the New Global Economy,

Brookings Institution, January 7, 2004, panel convened by Brookings to discuss how advances in

technology, communications, and education have resulted in the transfer overseas of service sector jobs;

http://www.brookings.edu/comm/op-ed/20040107trade.htm. For a more extended treatment see Moon

2000.

[45] Houseman (1995) notes, "Although job growth was high, many argued that the quality of American

jobs—as measured by wages, benefits and job security—deteriorated. The decline of jobs in the high-

paying manufacturing sector and the growth of jobs in the low-paying service sector, the growth in part-

time and temporary employment, and the general decline in real wages among less-educated, less-

skilled workers have been presented as evidence of erosion in job quality." See Nightingale and Fix

(2004) for a view that links recent immigrants and a dual job structure. For a more positive view, but

one that focuses on the nature of jobs that will make up the occupation structure without directly

addressing the issue of wages and benefits, see Bailey (1999).

But these are not only American problems. Increasing income inequality is a worldwide phenomenon that seems to be rooted in the changing nature of technology and economic organization. Such changes and their consequences for inequality are, of course, related to choices made by human beings. Probably most of these decisions are made by elites pursuing their own interests, but this is only part of the story. Individual non-elites in many different societies and cultural traditions are also making choices that accept more economic insecurity and income inequality for higher absolute levels of income and the consumer commodities that such income makes possible, as well as some of the social pathologies that seem to result. In the U.S. the high levels of credit card debt and the high risk home loans many people took, which led to subprime mortgage crisis starting in 2008, are examples of this tendency. The high rates of illegal immigration to secure better paying, but typically very insecure, jobs is occurring in many places in the world.

Political and Military Changes

When we consider the political realm, the above economic factors were producing changes long before 9/11. As noted earlier, the Democratic Party moved to the right during the Clinton administration and in general supported globalization. The centrism of the Democrats led to new forms of resistance among segments of non-elites. The protest against the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank in Seattle in November 1999, and the 2000 presidential candidacy of Ralph Nader are the most obvious examples. Nor is it accidental that in an age of postmodernism and pluralism, that anarchism was revived to serve as the ideology and organizing

principle of a radical wing of this movement, including significant elements of the Green Party.

Through 2003, President Bush's approval ratings remained relatively high. By 2005, however, a majority of Americans disapproved of the way the administration was handling the economy and the war in Iraq (USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll 2005). In the Congressional elections of 2006, Bush's policies, especially the administration's handling of the Iraq War, were repudiated by a majority of the population, and the Democrats gained control of both the House and the Senate. However, the wars continued, in part, because it is very difficult for Congress to thwart a president's will on military and foreign policy matters, and because even those who were adamantly opposed to starting the war differ on what responsibilities the U.S. has in the aftermath of the war.

September 11 and the war in Iraq also contributed to the creation of several new categories of reprehensible non-elites. Recent immigrants in general and those from Islamic areas in particular seem suspicious and potentially threatening as terrorists or economic competitors. The U.S. Invasion of Iraq and the resulting protests from the vast majority of governments and people around the world led many U.S. elites and non-elites toward more chauvinistic forms of patriotism, in part rooted in American exceptionalism. Because of France's criticism of U.S. policy in 2003, various conservative commentators called for boycotts of French wines. The menu in the U.S. House of Representative's cafeteria relabeled "French fries" as "freedom fries." Protesters against the war in Iraq were often called unpatriotic. Even relatively pro-American elites from abroad, especially those from the Middle East were looked

upon with suspicion. These new external and internal enemies—real and imagined—gave U.S. elites a new basis of nationalistic solidarity with both respectable and non-respectable non-elites.

In February of 2006 a controversy arose that illustrated the concern about terrorism and how its impact on nationalism and chauvinism affects politics and vice versa. A multinational corporation, DP World, owned by the government of Dubai (United Arab Emirates), bought a British company that had been managing several U.S ports, and many other ports around the world. While most experts claimed that this involved no additional security risks, polls showed that a majority of Americans were opposed. Both Democratic and Republican politicians criticized the Bush administration for initially approving this arrangement. The company was pressured into selling their U.S. operations to an "American" company and on December 12, 2006 it was announced that these operations were sold to a large insurance company, AIG (Timmons 2006). Ironically, this is a very internationally oriented company operating in "more than 130 countries and jurisdictions."[46]

While it seems clear that the Bush administration used sentiments of patriotism and nationalism to gain support for their policies, and that the war intensified these sentiments, this is not to suggest that these actions were the primary creators of such sentiments. Nor could the administration always manipulate these sentiments to their advantage—as the controversy over the Dubai company's operation of U.S. ports shows. It was liberal Democratic Senator Charles Schumer from New York who led the fight against the DP World, and he drew on the same nationalist sentiments that

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[46] http://www.aig.com/gateway/aboutaig/1-70-0-0-5-index.htm; accessed 12/13/2006.

the Bush administration had used earlier. While elites' efforts are neither a necessary

or sufficient condition in creating nationalism and are often unsuccessful in their

attempts to do so, they nonetheless frequently used such sentiments for various

political ends (Whitmeyer 2002). Both the initial support for the Iraq War and the

protest against DP World are rooted in the relatively high levels of patriotism and

chauvinism that has frequently occurred throughout U.S. history and is part of

American exceptionalism.

The focus on external enemies (or immigrants who might be sympathetic to

them) seems to have played a crucial role in mobilizing non-elite support for the Bush

administration and its policies. But just as the apparent failure of the War in Iraq

caused splits among conservative elites, it also eroded the support of non-elites. Non-

elites not only withdrew their support at the ballot box, but in their willingness to

participate in the military. The military had increasing difficulties in recruiting and

retaining personnel, especially for critical combat positions (Stewart 2006). In

addition to its military implications, this means fewer jobs that non-elites find

attractive and rewarding.

If wars are lost, if the persecution of outcasts does not concretely benefit most

respectable non-elites, and if the already privileged are the primary beneficiaries of

such policies, then new forms of non-elite resistance, both legal and illegal, tend to

emerge. This is what the theoretical model would suggest and the pattern that is

observed in varying combinations in the U.S. during the 1990s and the first years of

the twenty-first century. Of course, the model would also suggest that liberal political

elites might be tempted to gain the support of non-elites by promising more welfare state benefits than the state can afford.

Status and Ideological Changes

In addition to economic and political issues, non-elites also had significant status and cultural concerns. During the election of 2004 a new kind of internal enemy was discovered and held up as a threat: the attempts by gays and lesbians to receive equal legal rights. This was not primarily an economic or security matter, but a matter of status and culture. While it was undoubtedly used by politicians to mobilize conservative supporters, to see it as only a matter of political manipulation is to misunderstand its significance. A broader array of people found the move to redefine the institution of marriage (so that it was available to same-sex couples) as threatening. This was seen to lower the status of the already weakened institution of marriage and to provide not only tolerance but also respectability to gays and lesbians. President Bush and the Republicans proposed constitutional amendments to override judicial decisions that had been sympathetic to the rights of gays and lesbians—even though they knew that there was little chance of passing such an amendment. This was a classic case of creating enemies for political purposes, but it is important to recognize that the success of this strategy rests upon more deeply rooted status concerns of non-elites. The "exceptional" American tendency to moralize about private behavior is apparent here.

The public expression of racial or gender chauvinism has decreased among both elites and non-elites. Racist and sexist rhetoric occurs, but at least publicly it is nearly universally condemned (Fears 2007). Actual patterns of behavior still reflect

significant racial, ethnic and gender biases. Indicators of this include the lower income of households headed by women and blacks, the low percentage of chief executives who are women or blacks, the "white flight" to the suburbs, and low rates (5.5 percent) of cross-race intermarriage (U.S. Bureau of the Census. 2001). Generally, the strategy of public figures is to reject the legitimacy of (status) discrimination based on ethnicity or gender, but to avoid pursuing policies that seriously threaten the status, economic, or political interests of the majority of non-elites. In short, as the model would suggest elites may very well seek out conflict with small groups of the degraded, but they generally avoid antagonizing large or well-organized subgroups.

As noted above, the continuing expansion of consumerism, though less obvious than conflicts over war, family policy, and race, is perhaps even more important in influencing the commitments and worldview of non-elites. It has become not only an economic process, but also a central measure of individual self-worth and family status. Shopping has been transformed from a largely instrumental activity into an expressive one: instead of attending church, going to the PTA meeting, or heading for the park, a family outing becomes a trip to the mall. Of course, there has long been social and expressive element to shopping that could be seen in the importance of rural families "going to town" on Saturday or in the social and entertainment aspects of weekly bazaars in pre-modern societies. It seems clear, however, that shopping and consumption make up a larger part of human experience than was the case in poorer less developed societies. The abandonment of Sabbath closing laws and stores that stay open 24 hours per day, seven days a week are indications of the increased

centrality and legitimacy of shopping and consumption relative to other activities.

These consumerist trends de-emphasizes participation in political, civic and cultural

institutions, and hence reinforces the individual over the collective, the self over the

community. This further obscures the link between the "personal problems" and

social problems, which are nearly always, in part, rooted in distribution of power and

the policies of various elites.[47] A cultural preoccupation with the status of the

individual or family in a gradational hierarchy—by acquiring the latest status

symbols—reduces the likelihood of more open and organized conflict between elites

and non-elites.

The increased importance of celebrities has also influence the lives of many

non-elites. The increased importance of being publicly visible reduces the importance

of more traditional sources of respect such as being a good spouse, parent, and citizen.

The corollary emphasis on consumption not only accentuates the importance of

economic activities, but implicitly decreases the importance of kinship, friendship,

community participation and politics (Putnam 2000). People become admired because

they lead a lifestyle that is modeled after "the rich and famous" or because they have

become quasi-celebrities. This was seen in the enormous increase and popularity of

"reality" and "discover-the-idol" television. In these shows "ordinary" people

subjected themselves to stressful situations or try to perform like show-business

professionals in order to secure "fame and fortune." Of course, not everyone found

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[47] This is not, of course, to deny that individuals may benefit from various forms of therapy or self-help

regimens, or, conversely, that corporations and state agencies may use therapeutic techniques primarily

for various kinds of social control rather than healing per se.

such shows appealing, but they did become an important ingredient of contemporary popular culture. Such shows were a further indicator and cause of the shifting basis of status. Simply being visible in the media, by whatever means, became a mark of individual importance and status.

The amplified importance of visibility has changed the criteria of status and the content of what is communicated. Images have increased in importance relative to text. An obvious example is the pictures of supermodels that saturate the mass media and the commercial world. A corollary is that beauty, youth, and sexiness have become more important in multiple areas of life. People spend significant amounts on exercise, cosmetics, clothes and plastic surgery to increase their attractiveness for romantic relationships and to improve their job prospects.[48] There are now over 3000

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[48] According to a website sponsored by fifty-five board certified plastic surgeons from all over the U.S.:

> "Since 1997, there has been a 457 percent increase in the total number of cosmetic procedures. Surgical procedures increased by 114 percent, and nonsurgical procedures increased by 754 percent. The top five surgical cosmetic procedures in 2007 were: liposuction (456,828 procedures); breast augmentation (399,440 procedures); eyelid surgery (240,763 procedures); abdominoplasty (185,335 procedures); and breast reduction (153,087 procedures). The top five nonsurgical cosmetic procedures in 2007 were: Botox injection (2,775,176 procedures); hyaluronic acid (1,448,716 procedures); laser hair removal (1,412,657 procedures); microdermabrasion (829,658 procedures); and IPL laser treatment (647,707 procedures). Women had nearly 10.6 million cosmetic procedures, 91% percent of the total. The number of cosmetic procedures for women increased 1 percent from

plastic surgeons in the U.S. and Canada who specialize in "aesthetic plastic surgery."[49] It is not just movie stars, models, and entertainers who need to be good looking. This is becoming a prerequisite for TV journalists, politicians, authors of mass-audience books, and even many salespersons, waiters and waitresses. Good looks have always been an asset (Mazur, Mazur, and Keating 1984; Frieze, Olson, and Russell 1991; Jackson, Hunter, and Hodge 1995). It seems to be becoming a near prerequisite for some jobs—often jobs whose ostensible function have little to do with appearance. Politicians and journalists are only the most obvious examples. The other side of this increased importance of good looks is that being overweight becomes a social as well as a physical handicap.

The concern with "image" is not restricted to a few professions. There are a number of firms that specialize in "branding" individuals by advising them about how they should present themselves both in person, in resumes, in dating service materials and on their personal websites. The explicit assumption and rationale is that the person is a product that must be marketed, and that careful attention should be paid to image and branding. Care is devoted to constructing an image that accentuates the positive and downplays the negative, but avoids making claims that are clearly false. The usual cost is from a few hundred to several thousand dollars. Some firms advise about a thousand clients per month (Lee-St. John 2006; Langfitt 2006).

2006." http://www.cosmeticplasticsurgerystatistics.com/statistics.html#2005-HIGHLIGHTS; accessed 5/10/2008.

[49] See American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, http://www.surgery.org/public/; accessed 2/14/2008.

Not only has the criteria for elite status shifted, but the relationship between elites and non-elites has been transformed. Lower status people have often attempted to improve their standing by associating with their betters. Similarly, fans often identify with celebrities, not only because they admire them, but as a way to increase their own status. This is analogous to religious behavior; people seek associations with gods in part to transform their own spiritual status—and sometimes their worldly status too—by being linked to something that is much greater than they are. The more intimate such relationships are, the more they affect the status of the subordinate.

Praying daily and worshipping regularly usually shapes people's lives more than attending church a few times a year. Marrying a celebrity affects your status more than shaking hands with one. Since few people have direct personal contact with celebrities, fans seek intimacy with their "gods" by learning about their private lives, including embarrassing and deviant behaviors. So the preoccupation with "private lives" and "dirt" is not primarily because of the personality flaws or distorted values of contemporary individuals. People now relate to much of the broader world through the mass media. In such relationships little interpersonal interaction, much less intimacy, is involved. Consequently, the media creates various forms of virtual intimacy by focusing upon the private lives of celebrities.

To summarize, non-elites have many concerns that are related to, but not reducible to matters of economics and politics. More specifically the greater attention to celebrities, image, visibility, good looks and sexuality are the cultural backdrops that contribute to the individualism and consumerism characteristic of contemporary U. S. society. On the other hand, the religiosity and traditionalism, which are elements

of American exceptionalism, produce a reluctance to accept cultural pluralism and changing patterns of interpersonal relations, especially where intimacy is involved. This is reflected in resistance to sex education, adolescent sex, and marriage between homosexuals. The first set of factors foster individualized competition rather than conflict between elites and non-elites, while the second generate internal "enemies" that further contribute to elite and non-elite solidarity.

Conclusion

This model and the analysis of the contemporary U.S. attempts to avoid two pitfalls. One is assuming that social change and power dynamics are fundamentally reducible to "material factors" and that the course of history is largely determined and predictable. This is the weakness of most forms of Marxism and of classical elite theory. The other pitfall is to lapse into a historical or cultural particularism that eschews the possibility of seeing common patterns across time and cultures. The proposed model is not a general theory of social change that eliminates the significance of human agency and historical uniqueness. On the other hand, it identifies key forms of power and power relationships that are important in most complex societies and points to tensions, conflicts, and relationships that are extremely common across societies and historical periods. While this analysis does not try to reduce change to one or two key variables, it does recognize the usefulness of identifying key exogenous variables and analyzing how they affect the patterns to which the model itself draws attention. There is, however, no assumption that these variables are the only things that are important or that these factors will be crucial in all historical periods. Obviously, it is impossible to capture the complexities of

American society from 1980-2008 in a few pages. It has, however, been possible to survey a wide variety of contemporary developments and to related them in a systematic fashion—and to see them as examples of patterns that are common in many societies. The key claim of this paper is that the model of elites and non-elites helps us to systematically identify and organize a wide array of data in a more parsimonious manner than previous perspectives.

APPENDIX I: Previous Research on Elites in the U. S.

Starting with the work of C. Wright Mills (1956), research centered on the degree to which the U.S. was ruled by a power elite. Domhoff (1999, 2006) and Dye (2002) have made notable but varying contributions to this perspective. Useem (1984) has focused on the ties between the corporate elites of different companies. A parallel stream of research focused on the distribution of power in particular local communities (Hunter 1953; Dahl 1961; Aiken and Mott 1970; Waste 1986, 1987; Peng 1994). As an alternative to power elite perspectives, more pluralistic models emphasized that a variety of interest groups compete to affect both the agenda of policy debates, the policies that are adopted, and the execution of these policies. Complex alliances of groups with multiple and even conflicting interests often win out on one issue, but lose to a different coalition on another issue (Dahl 1961; Lindbloom 1965; Rose 1967).

Starting in the mid-1980s a debate emerged about the degree to which the U.S. was engaged in a culture war over issues like abortion, sex education, assisted suicide, gay and lesbian rights, and the place of religion in public life (Hunter 1991). A subsidiary debate developed over whether the non-elites were really polarized or

whether this was simply the preoccupations of a relatively small number of religious, intellectual and political elites (Hunter and Wolfe 2006). Other empirical work has focused upon surveying various elites about their perceptions, opinions, values, commitments, and strategies in order to suggest future outcomes (Verba 1985, 1987; Reis and Moore 2005).

Historians and historical sociologists have made extensive use of the concept of elites as a way of interpreting the events of particular historical periods. Few of these studies have been theoretically guided. Those that have (e.g.,Mann 1986, Lachmann 2003) have addressed such long-term trends, such as the rise and fall of empires, that their concepts have limited use for understanding shorter-term phenomena. Moreover, while the importance of elite coalitions and conflicts is emphasized, they provide no systematic guidance about what types of coalitions and conflicts are likely to emerge.

Since the 1980s much of the work on elites has focused on their role in fostering political stability and democracy, especially in developing countries or former communist societies (Higley and Burton 1980; Etzioni-Halevy 1997; symposium introduced by Burton and Higley 2001). While this work has made considerable progress describing the characteristics and correlates of successful (and unsuccessful) emerging democracies relatively little progress has been made theoretically. This is the way that Higley and Moore characterize the field:

It is frequently observed that theorizing about political elites has not

kept pace with . . . research. Certainly, there is no general theory that

drives the field, and its absence is the main challenge that political elite

studies confront. The multifaceted survey studies in recent years have

thrown much cold water on the old models of plural elites, power elites,

and ruling classes that derived from mainly biographic research. The

debate between adherents of those three models generated much of the

heat in and around elite studies during the 1960s and 1970s. But this

debate has cooled greatly in recent years, largely because the richer

data stemming from survey research show that political elite structures

are more complex than the old models recognized. There is as yet no

clear replacement for the old models. Searching for a serviceable

typology that could undergird such a theory is, in our view, one of the

principal tasks of elite studies today (Burton and Higley 2001).

Note that the above remarks specifically focus on *political* elites and make no mention

of other kinds of elites.

A continuing tradition of scholarship has attempted to revise Marxism in

various ways. Most scholars acknowledge that Marx's understanding of capitalism

was highly prescient about the economic contradictions that would lead to business

cycles and economic instability. Nonetheless, Marx greatly underestimated the ability

of capitalist societies to cope with these problems through the legitimation of labor

unions, Keynesian and monetary policies, and an expanded welfare state. The most

common forms of Marxian revisionism see the state as the tool of the capitalist class

that does what is needed to protect the basic interests of this class and the viability of

capitalism, even if this requires restricting and disciplining particular capitalists (e.g.,

Althusser 1984; Poulantzas 1978; Miliband 1969, 1977). Such state action may or

may not be conscious and intended. These perspectives ignore or downplay that the

modern state has interests of its own—bigger budgets, more personnel, etc.—and

assumes that the capitalist class is more unified and homogeneous in its outlook and

interests than is in fact the case. Fred Block (1987) suggests a more credible

interpretation: politicians and the state want to maintain "business confidence" and an

expanding economy because state revenues and popular support are dependent upon

these. Acting "behind their backs," they pursue the long-term viability of capitalism

and capitalists (see also Poggi 2001). In Block's summary phrase, there is a "ruling

class that does not rule." While this is more convincing perspective, the analysis is

largely restricted to economic and political elites pursing their material interests.

There is no serious consideration to matters of culture, ideology, religion, nationalism,

honor, and status. The same is true of Wright's attempt to move beyond a

capitalist/proletariat dichotomy and build a more complicated model of class relations

(1985). Moreover, these attempts at revising Marx, as with most forms of Marxism

and elite theory, understate the role of human agency and historical contingency.

What seems to be needed is a new conceptual approach to considering the relationship

between the different types of power, the different types of elites, and the relationship

between elites and non-elites.

Figure 1

Typology of Elites/Nonelites and Their Antagonists
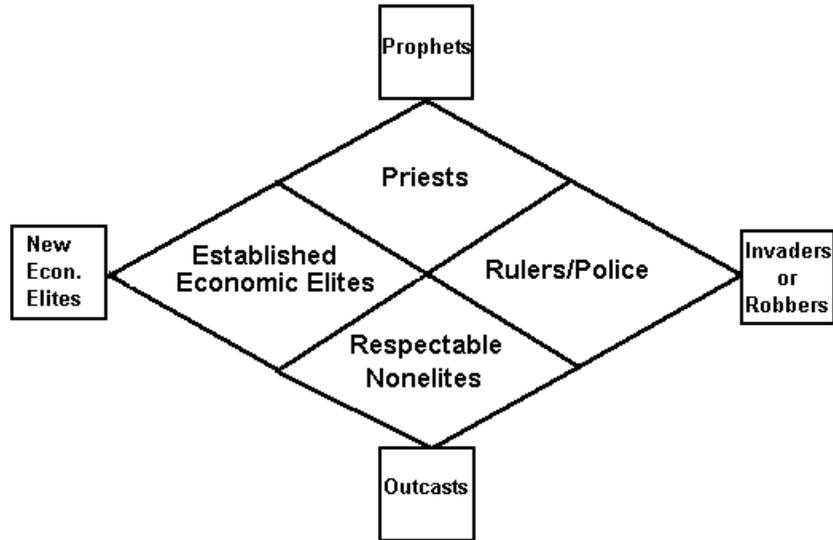
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