

The Three Class Worldviews

In the broadest terms, testing the theory of the New Class is very simple. We first identify people holding liberal or leftist attitudes. Then we see whether such people are concentrated among those groups (the highly educated, professionals, perhaps government employees) whose objective class interests incline toward the expansion of government and toward hostility toward those institutions (the business firm, the family, the church) that rival government.

What is in principle quite simple is often in practice quite complex. This will indeed be the case here. We will examine a variety of statistical databases in our search of individuals holding New Class attitudes. Each of these databases has important limitations and shortcomings. Partly this is the result of their having been originally collected by other social scientists (not this author) for purposes other than testing the theory of the New Class. This fact—that the author is engaging in secondary analysis—does have one thing to commend it. The author had no opportunity to stack the deck in favor of the theory of the New Class.

Our databases do, however, complement one another quite effectively. Some provide a historical perspective, while others provide a more detailed snapshot of contemporary attitudes. Some deal with the mass public, others deal with politically important elites. Some deal with individuals, while others deal with groups and thus pick up the effects of group interaction.

Analysis One: Cluster Analysis of Survey Data

Our first analysis uses sample surveys containing data on a wide range of politically relevant attitudes. These surveys each involved interviewing a representative national sample of people in their homes. The interviews often lasted over an hour, and this allows a very detailed, in-depth analysis of the attitudes of each individual interviewed. Specifically, we use the

1972, 1976, 1980, and 1982 National Election Studies (NES) of the Center for Political Studies of the University of Michigan (Inter-University Consortium, 1975; Inter-University Consortium, 1982; Inter-University Consortium, 1983).

If there is a New Class, it must be an enduring feature of American politics and not a transient phenomenon. Although our analysis of these surveys lacks a long historical time-frame, it does include a wide variety of elections conducted in a wide variety of national political contexts. The 1972 survey came at a time when the New Class seemed to be emerging as a powerful force in American politics. An important watershed was the 1972 Democratic National Convention, which under "reformed" rules of delegate selection, hosted a very left-leaning group of delegates who nominated a very liberal candidate (George McGovern) who went on to lose the general election in a landslide.

In 1976, by contrast, some degree of normalcy seemed to have returned to American politics. Issue voting was down, and party voting was up (Nie et al., 1979). By 1980, the political climate and the political agenda appeared to have shifted substantially to the right, with the New Class facing an avowed enemy in Ronald Reagan and having in Jimmy Carter a standard bearer who excited neither it nor the electorate as a whole.

A great virtue of these surveys is that different sorts of attitudes are sampled. Analysis of *single attitudes* is likely to be misleading. We expect, for example, the New Class to favor the expansion of government welfare programs. However, the Traditional Working Class also favored (for different reasons) such expansion. We do not wish to confuse economic liberals who share the worldview of the traditional working class with economic liberals of the New Class who hold radically different views on many issues. In other words, support for National Health Insurance on the part of a respondent who favors legal abortion must be interpreted differently from support for National Health Insurance on the part of someone who opposes abortion.

Thus we have chosen to do a *cluster analysis*. In this analysis we have, roughly speaking, asked the computer to find the attitudes that are most closely linked to each other and group them into three categories (clusters). Cluster analysis is clearly appropriate if we believe that ideas come, not individually, but in *socially determined packages*. As we discussed in Chapter 1, the packages may be problematic in purely logical terms. In regard to issues such as marijuana or abortion the conservative policies are the big government policies. Liberals are pro-choice where abortion is concerned, but Milton Friedman's book *Free to Choose* represents conservative economics. But we take the notion of *ideology* seriously, and thus expect that certain sets of attitudes go together in a way that can be explained by collective interests, not logical consistency.