11. Class structure, class consciousness and class formation in Sweden, the United States and Japan

This chapter will try to apply some of the elements of the models elaborated in the previous chapter to the empirical study of class formation and class consciousness in three developed capitalist countries – the United States, Sweden and Japan.[1] More specifically, the investigation has three main objectives: first, to examine the extent to which the overall relationship between class locations and class consciousness is broadly consistent with the logic of the class structure analysis we have been using throughout this book; second to compare the patterns of class formation in the three countries; and third to examine the ways in which the micro, multivariate models of consciousness formation vary across the three countries. The first of these tasks centers on exploring the "class location $-limits\rightarrow$ class consciousness" segment of the model, the second focuses on the "class structure $-limits\rightarrow$ class formation" segment, and the third centers on the "macro $-mediates\rightarrow$ micro" aspect of the model.

In the next section we will discuss the strategy we will deploy for measuring class consciousness. This will be followed in section 11.2 with a more detailed discussion of the empirical agenda and the strategies of data analysis. Sections 11.3 to 11.5 will then present the results of the data analysis.

[1] In the original edition of *Class Counts*, there are two additional empirical chapters on problems of class consciousness, the first dealing with the interaction between class and state employment in shaping class consciousness, and the second on the relationship between individual class biographies and class consciousness. These had to be dropped from the present edition because of space constraints.

11.1 Measuring class consciousness

Class consciousness is notoriously hard to measure. The concept is meant to denote subjective properties which impinge on conscious choosing activity which has a class content. The question then arises whether or not the subjective states which the concept taps are really only "activated" under conditions of meaningful choice situations, which in the case of class consciousness would imply above all situations of class struggle. There is no necessary reason to assume that these subjective states will be the same when respondents are engaged in the kind of conscious choosing that occurs in an interview. Choosing responses on a survey is a different practice from choosing how to relate to a shopfloor conflict, and the forms of subjectivity which come into play are quite different. The interview setting is itself, after all, a social relation, and this relation may influence the responses of respondents out of deference, or hostility or some other reaction. Furthermore, it is always possible that there is not simply slippage between the way people respond to the artificial choices of a survey and the real choices of social practices, but that there is a systematic inversion of responses. As a result, it has been argued by some (e.g. Marshall 1983) that there is little value in even attempting to measure class consciousness through survey instruments.

These problems are serious ones, and potentially undermine the value of questionnaire studies of class consciousness. My assumption, however, is that there is at least some stability in the cognitive processes of people across the artificial setting of an interview and the real life setting of class struggle and that, in spite of the possible distortions of structured interviews, social surveys can potentially measure these stable elements. While the ability of a survey may be very limited to predict for any given individual the way they would think and behave in a "real life setting," surveys may be able to provide a broad image of how class structure is linked to likely class behaviors.

Deciding to use a questionnaire to tap class consciousness, of course, leaves open precisely what kinds of questionnaire items best measure this concept. Here again there is a crucial choice to be made: should questionnaires be mainly built around open-ended questions or pre-formatted, fixed-option questions. Good arguments can be made that open-ended questions provide a more subtle window on individuals' real cognitive processes. When you ask a person, "What do you think are the main causes of poverty in America?" individuals are more

likely to reveal their real understandings of the problem than when you ask the fixed-option question, "Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the statement 'One of the main reasons for poverty is that some people are lazy and unmotivated to work hard'?" Fixed-option questions risk putting words into people's mouths, giving them alternatives which have no real salience to them.

On the other hand, open-ended questions often pose severe problems in consistent coding and data analysis. There have been innumerable sociological surveys with ambitious open-ended questions which have never been systematically analyzed because the coding problems proved insurmountable. Open-ended responses often are used primarily anecdotally to add illustrative richness to an analysis, but they frequently are abandoned in the quantitative analysis itself.

The problems with coding open-ended questionnaire responses are greatly compounded in cross-national comparative research. Even if one could somehow devise a common coding protocol for open-ended questions in different languages and cultural contexts, it would be virtually impossible to insure that the coding procedures were applied in a rigorously comparable manner across countries. This has proven exceedingly difficult even in the case of coding occupational descriptions into internationally agreed-upon categories. It would be much more difficult for open-ended responses to attitude questions. In the comparative class analysis project we found it hard enough to get the projects in different countries to stick to a common questionnaire. It would be virtually impossible to enforce acceptable standards of comparability to the coding of open-ended questions.

Thus, while it is probably the case that open-ended questions provide a deeper understanding of an individual's consciousness, for pragmatic reasons our analysis will be restricted to closed questions. In general in research of this kind, systematic superficiality is preferable to chaotic depth.

The survey used in this research contains a wide variety of attitude items, ranging from questions dealing directly with political issues, to normative issues on equal opportunity for women, to explanations for various kinds of social problems. Many of these items can be interpreted as indicators of class consciousness, but for most of them the specific class-content of the items is indirect and presupposes fairly strong theoretical assumptions. For example, Marxists often argue that the distinction between explaining social problems in individualist terms

("the poor are poor because they are lazy") instead of social structural terms ("the poor are poor because of the lack of jobs and education") is an aspect of class consciousness. While this claim may be plausible, it does require a fairly strong set of assumptions to interpret the second of these explanations of poverty as an aspect of anticapitalist consciousness. For the purposes of this investigation, therefore, it seemed advisable to focus on those items with the most direct class implications, and to aggregate these questions into a fairly simple, transparent class consciousness scale.

Five attitude items from the questionnaire will be used to construct the scale. These items are all questions in which respondents were asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed with each of the following statements:

1 Corporations benefit owners at the expense of workers and consumers.
2 During a strike, management should be prohibited by law from hiring workers to take the place of strikers.
3 Many people in this country receive much less income than they deserve.
4 Large corporations have too much power in American/Swedish society today.
5 The nonmanagement employees in your place of work could run things effectively without bosses.

The responses to each question are given a value of −2 for the strong procapitalist response, −1 for the somewhat procapitalist response, 0 for "Don't know," +1 for the somewhat anticapitalist response and +2 for the strong anticapitalist response. The scores on these individual items were combined to construct a simple additive scale going from −10 (procapitalist extreme value) to +10 (anticapitalist extreme value). (For methodological details on the construction of this variable, see Wright 1997: 450–452.)

11.2 The empirical agenda

Class locations and class consciousness

Before we engage in the detailed discussion of the patterns of class formation and the multivariate models of class consciousness, it will be useful to examine the extent to which the overall relationship between

class locations and class consciousness is consistent with the basic logic of the concept of class structure we have been exploring. To recapitulate the basic idea, class structures in capitalist societies can be analyzed in terms of the intersection of three ways people are linked to the process of material exploitation: through the ownership of property, through the positions within authority hierarchies, and through possession of skills and expertise. If class locations defined in this way systematically shape the material interests and lived experiences of individuals, and if these interests and experiences in turn shape class consciousness, then there should be a systematic relationship between class location and class consciousness. Underlying this chain of reasoning is the assumption that, all things being equal, there will be at least a weak tendency for incumbents in class locations to develop forms of class consciousness consistent with the material interests linked to those locations. The perceptions of those interests may be partial and incomplete, but in general, distorted perceptions of interests will take the form of deviations from a full understanding of interests, and thus, on average, there should be a systematic empirical association of class location and consciousness of interests.

In terms of the empirical indicators of class consciousness we are using in this chapter, this argument about the link between class location and consciousness suggests that, as one moves from exploiter to exploited along each of the dimensions of the class structure matrix, the ideological orientation of individuals should become more critical of capitalist institutions. If we also assume that these effects are cumulative (i.e. being exploited on two dimensions will tend to make one more anticapitalist than being exploited on only one), then we can form a rather ambitious empirical hypothesis: Along each of the rows and columns of the class-structure matrix, there should be a monotonic relationship between the values on the anticapitalism scale and class location. In terms of the 12–location class structure matrix with which we have been working, this implies three more specific hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. The working-class location in the matrix should be the most anticapitalist, the capitalist-class location the most pro-capitalist.

Hypothesis 2. Within the owner portion of the matrix, the attitudes should monotonically become more procapitalist as you move from the petty bourgeoisie to the capitalist class.

Hypothesis 3. Within the employee portion of the matrix attitudes should become monotonically more procapitalist as you move from the working class corner of the matrix to the expert-manager corner table along both the rows and the columns.

The exploitation-centered class concept does not generate clear hypotheses about the class consciousness of the petty bourgeoisie compared to the contradictory class locations among employees. There is no clear reason to believe that the petty bourgeoisie should be more or less procapitalist than those wage earners who occupy a contradictory relationship to the process of exploitation, managers and experts. On the one hand, petty bourgeois are owners of the means of production and thus have a clear stake in private property; on the other hand, they are often threatened and dominated by capitalist firms in both commodity markets and credit markets, and this can generate quite a lot of hostility. Given that the questions we are using in the class consciousness scale deal with attitudes towards capitalism and capitalists, not private property in general, there may be many petty bourgeois who take a quite anticapitalist stance. In any case, the framework makes no general predictions about whether the petty bourgeoisie will be more or less anticapitalist than the "middle class" (i.e. contradictory class locations among employees).

Class formation

In the previous chapter we defined class formation in terms of solidaristic social relations within class structures. Individuals occupy locations in class structures which impose on them a set of constraints and opportunities on how they can pursue their material interests. In the course of pursuing those interests, collectivities of varying degrees of coherence and durability are forged. The study of class formation involves the investigation of such collectivities – of their compositions, their strategies, their organizational forms, etc.

The research on class formation reported in this chapter is quite limited and focuses entirely on the problem of the class composition of what I will call "ideological class formations." Our approach will be largely inductive and descriptive. The central task will be to map out for the United States, Sweden and Japan the ways in which the various locations in the class structure become grouped into more or less ideologically homogeneous blocks.

The research is thus, at best, an indirect approach to the proper study

of class formation itself. Ideally, to chart out variations in class formations across countries we would want to study the ways in which various kinds of solidaristic organizations – especially such things as unions and political parties – link people together within and across class locations. A map of the ways in which class-linked organizations of different ideological and political profiles penetrate different parts of the class structure would provide a basic description of the pattern of class formation. Data on the class composition of formal membership and informal affiliation in parties and unions would provide one empirical way of approaching this.

The data used in this project are not really amenable to a refined analysis of the organizational foundations of class formation. I will therefore use a more indirect strategy for analyzing the contours of class formation in these three countries. Instead of examining organizational affiliations, we will use the variation across the class structure in ideological orientation towards class interests as a way of mapping out the patterns of solidarity and antagonism.

This strategy of analysis may generate misleading results for two reasons. First, the assumption that the class mapping of attitudes will roughly correspond to the class mapping of organized collective solidarities is certainly open to question. Even though people in different class locations may share very similar attitudes, nevertheless they have different vulnerabilities, control different resources and face different alternative courses of action – this is, in fact, what it means to say that they are in different "locations" – and this could generate very different tendencies to actually participate in the collective actions of class formation.

Second, the method we are using to measure ideological-class coalitions is vulnerable to all of the problems that bedevil comparative survey research. It is always possible that apparently identical questionnaire items might actually mean quite different things in different cultural contexts, regardless of how good the translation might be. A good example in our questionnaire is the following question: "Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with this statement: workers in a strike are justified in physically preventing strike-breakers from entering the place of work?" The problem with this question is that in the Swedish context there is not a well-established tradition of strikes using picket lines to bar entrance to a place of work. As a result, the expression "physically prevent" suggests a much higher level of potential violence to a Swedish respondent than it does to an American. For a Swede to agree with the question, in effect, they must feel it is legitimate for workers to assault a strikebreaker. For this reason, although this item appears in the survey we have not included it in this analysis.

This problem of cultural incommensurability of questionnaire items might mean that cross-national differences in patterns of ideological class formation might simply be artifacts of slippages in the meaning of questions. Our hope is that, with enough discussion among researchers from each of the countries involved and enough pretesting of the questionnaire items, it is possible to develop a set of items that are relatively comparable (or at least that the researchers from each country believe mean the same things). In any event, the precise wording of the items is a matter of record which should facilitate challenges to the comparability of the meanings by skeptics.

Our empirical strategy, then, is to treat the class distribution of class-relevant attitudes held by individuals as an indicator of the patterns of ideological coalitions within class formations. Where individuals in different class locations on average share similar class-relevant attitudes, we will say that these class locations constitute an ideological coalition within the structure of class formations. By using attitudes as an indicator of solidarity and antagonism in this way, I am not implying that class formations can be reduced to the attitudes people hold in their heads about class interests. The claim is simply that the formation of ideological configurations contributes to and reflects solidaristic collectivities and is therefore an appropriate empirical indicator for studying the relationship between class structure and class formation.

The specific methodology we will use to distinguish ideological-class coalitions tests, for each of the twelve locations in the class structure matrix, whether the average person in that location is ideologically closer to the working class, the capitalist class or an ideologically intermediary position between these two poles (for details, see Wright 1997: 453–456). Locations that are closer to the intermediary position will be referred to as part of the middle-class ideological coalition, whereas those closer to the polarized class locations will be referred to as part of the working-class coalition or the bourgeois coalition. The basic objective of this part of the analysis is to examine how these ideological-class coalitions differ in the United States, Sweden and Japan.

Class consciousness

Our analysis of class formation revolves around examining differences and similarities in ideological orientation across locations in the class structure matrix. In the analysis of class consciousness the unit of analysis shifts to the individual. Here the task is to construct a multivariate model of variations in individual consciousness, measured using the same anticapitalism scale, and see how these models vary across countries.

These models contain six clusters of independent variables: *class location* (11 dummy variables); *past class experiences* (dummy variables for working-class origin, capitalist origin, previously self-employed, previously supervisor, and previously unemployed); *current class experiences* (union member, density of ties to the capitalist class, density of ties to the working class); *consumption* (home owner, unearned-income dummy variable, personal income); *demographic variables* (age and gender); and *country* (two dummy variables). (See Wright 1997: 456–457, for precise operationalizations.)

We will first merge the three national samples into a single dataset in which we treat nationality simply like any other variable. This will enable us to answer the following question: which is more important for predicting individuals' class consciousness, the country in which they live or their class location and class experiences? We will then break the data into the three national samples and analyze the micro-level equations predicting class consciousness separately for each country. Here we will be particularly interested in comparing the explanatory power of different groups of variables across countries.

11.3 Results: the overall relationship between locations in the class structure and class consciousness

The results for the overall linkage between class location and class consciousness in Sweden, the United States and Japan are presented in Figure 11.1. With some wrinkles, these results are broadly consistent with each of the three broad hypotheses discussed above.

In all three countries the working-class location in the class structure matrix is either the most anticapitalist or is virtually identical to the location which is the most anticapitalist. Also in all three countries, the capitalist class is either the most procapitalist or has a value which is not significantly different from the most procapitalist location. These results are thus consistent with Hypothesis 1.

SWEDEN

	Owner	Employee			
		Expert	Skilled	Nonskilled	
Capitalist	−3.41	−2.36	0.60	1.05	Manager
Small employer	−0.70	0.56	2.07	3.50	Supervisor
Petty bourgeoisie	0.87	1.98	4.60	4.61	Non-management

UNITED STATES

	Owner	Employee			
		Expert	Skilled	Nonskilled	
Capitalist	−2.17	−2.62	−0.68	−1.09	Manager
Small employer	0.35	−0.73	1.30	2.28	Supervisor
Petty bourgeoisie	1.08	0.16	2.67	2.66	Non-management

JAPAN

	Owner	Employee			
		Expert	Skilled	Nonskilled	
Capitalist	0.17	0.32	2.10	1.83	Manager
Small employer	0.76	0.68	2.68	1.57	Supervisor
Petty bourgeoisie	3.08	1.09	2.61	3.07	Non-management

The numbers in the cells of the class structure matrix are values on the anti-capitalism attitude scale (range, −10 to +10), in which negative values indicate a procapitalist orientation and positive values a proworking class orientation.

Figure 11.1 *Class structure and class consciousness in Sweden, the United States and Japan.*

The results also support Hypothesis 2 for all three countries. In each case there is a sharp ideological gradient among owners: the capitalist class is 3–4 points more procapitalist than the petty bourgeoisie, with small employers falling somewhere in between.

Hypothesis 3 is strongly supported by the results for Sweden and the

United States, and somewhat more ambiguously supported by the results for Japan. In Sweden, the results nearly exactly follow the predictions of the hypothesis: as you move from the working-class corner of the matrix to the expert-manager corner, the values on the scale decline in a perfectly monotonic manner, whether you move along the rows of the table, the columns of the table, or even the diagonal. Indeed, in the Swedish data the monotonicity extends across the property boundary as well. In the United States the results are only slightly less monotonic: in the employee portion of the matrix, skilled managers are slightly less anticapitalist than unskilled managers. In all other respects, the US data behave in the predicted monotonic manner.

The pattern for Japan is somewhat less consistent. If we look only at the four corners of the employee portion of the matrix, then the predicted monotonicity holds. The deviations from Hypothesis 3 come with some of the intermediary values. In particular, skilled supervisors in Japan appear to be considerably more anticapitalist than unskilled supervisors. The number of cases in these locations is, however, quite small (25 and 19 respectively), and the difference in anticapitalism scores between these categories is not statistically significant at even the 0.20 level. The other deviations from pure monotonicity in the Japanese class structure matrix are even less statistically significant. The results for Japan thus do not strongly contradict the predictions of Hypothesis 3, although they remain less consistent than those of Sweden and the United States.

Overall, then, these results for the three countries suggest that the patterns of variation across the locations of the class structure in class consciousness, as measured by the anticapitalism scale, are quite consistent with the theoretical predictions derived from the multidimensional, exploitation concept of class structure. While empirical consistency by itself cannot definitively prove the validity of a concept, nevertheless it does add credibility to the conceptual foundations that underlie the class analysis of this book.

11.4 Results: the macro-analysis of class formation

The basic patterns of ideological class formation will be presented in two different formats, since each of these helps to reveal different properties of the results. Figure 11.2 presents the results in terms of a one-dimensional ideological spectrum on which the values for the different class locations are indicated and grouped into ideological coalitions. Figure 11.3 represents the patterns as two-dimensional coalition maps as

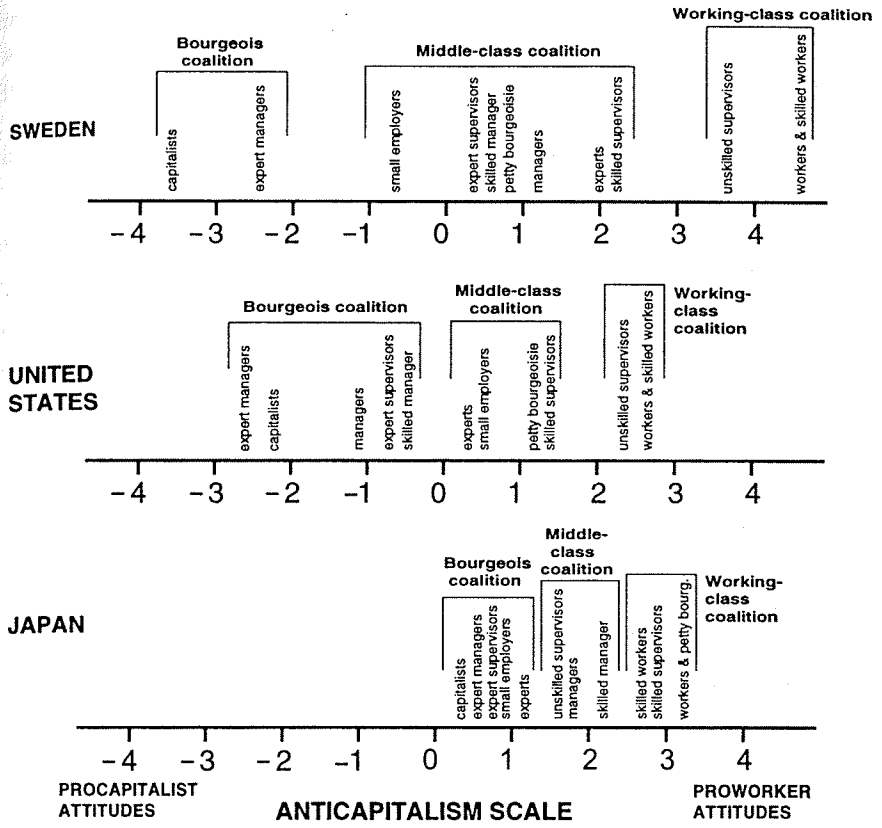

Figure 11.2 *Class and the ideological spectrum in Sweden, the United States and Japan.*

discussed in chapter 10. The numerical data on which these figures are based are presented in Figure 11.1.

Before turning to the rather striking contrasts in patterns of class formation between these three countries, there are two similarities which are worth noting. First, in all three countries skilled workers are in the working-class ideological coalition and have virtually identical scores on the anticapitalism scale as nonskilled workers. This finding supports the common practice of treating skilled and nonskilled workers as constituting "the working class." Second, in all three countries, in spite of the quite different overall configurations of the bourgeois ideological coalition, expert managers are part of this coalition. The most exploitative and dominating contradictory class location among employees (expert

SWEDEN

Capitalists	Expert managers	Skilled managers	Nonskilled managers
Small employers	Expert supervisors	Skilled supervisors	Nonskilled supervisors
Petty bourgeoisie	Experts	Skilled Workers	Nonskilled workers

UNITED STATES

Capitalists	Expert managers	Skilled managers	Nonskilled managers
Small employers	Expert supervisors	Skilled supervisors	Nonskilled supervisors
Petty bourgeoisie	Experts	Skilled Workers	Nonskilled workers

JAPAN

Capitalists	Expert managers	Skilled managers	Nonskilled managers
Small employers	Expert supervisors	Skilled supervisors	Nonskilled supervisors
Petty bourgeoisie	Experts	Skilled Workers	Nonskilled workers

Bourgeois coalition

Middle-class coalition

Working-class coalition

Figure 11.3 *Patterns of ideological class formation.*

managers) is thus consistently part of the capitalist class formation, while the least exploitative and dominating contradictory location (skilled workers) is part of the working-class formation.

In other respects, the three countries we are considering present very different patterns. Let us look at each of them in turn.

Sweden

As indicated in Figure 11.2, the ideological spectrum across the locations of the class structure is larger in Sweden than in the other two countries, spanning a total of over 8 points on the anticapitalism scale. On this ideological terrain, the three ideological-class coalitions are well defined and clearly differentiated from each other. (The mean values on the anticapitalism scale for each of the coalitions differ from each other at less than the 0.001 significance level.)

The working-class coalition contains three class locations: the working class plus the two class locations adjacent to the working class – skilled workers and nonskilled supervisors. This coalition is quite clearly demarcated ideologically from the middle-class coalition. The bourgeois coalition is sharply polarized ideologically with respect to the working-class coalition. It consists of capitalists and only one contradictory class location, expert managers. Like the working-class coalition, the bourgeois coalition is clearly demarcated from the middle-class coalition. Social democracy may have become a stable ideological framework for Swedish politics in general, affecting the policy profiles of even conservative parties, but the Swedish bourgeois coalition remains staunchly procapitalist. Finally, the middle-class coalition in Sweden is quite broad and encompasses most of the employee contradictory locations within class relations as well as the petty bourgeoisie and small employers. This coalition is much more heterogeneous ideologically than either of the other two.

The United States

The ideological class formations constructed on the American class structure are somewhat less ideologically polarized than in Sweden. In particular, the American working-class coalition is clearly less anticapitalist than the Swedish working-class coalition. The unweighted mean of the American working-class coalition is 2.53 compared to 4.24 in Sweden. In contrast, American capitalists and expert managers (the two

locations that are in both the US and Swedish bourgeois coalitions) are only slightly less procapitalist than their Swedish counterpart, −2.40 compared to −2.89. The way to characterize the overall contrast between the ideological spectra in the two countries is thus that the working-class coalition in the US moves significantly towards the center compared to Sweden, while the core of the bourgeois coalitions (capitalists and expert managers) is equally on procapitalist in the two countries. Nevertheless, in spite of this somewhat lower level of polarization, the three ideological-class coalitions all still differ from each other at better than the 0.001 significance level.

The American working-class coalition includes the same three categories as in Sweden. While it is clearly less radical than the Swedish working-class coalition, it is almost as well demarcated from the middle-class coalition. The bourgeois coalition in the United States extends much deeper into the contradictory class locations than in Sweden. All three managerial-class locations as well as expert supervisors are part of the American bourgeois ideological-class formation. Unlike in Sweden, therefore, management is firmly integrated into the bourgeois coalition. The middle-class coalition is somewhat attenuated in the US compared to Sweden reflecting the fact that a much larger part of the contradictory class locations among employees in the US has been integrated ideologically into the bourgeois coalition. The middle-class coalition is also somewhat less sharply demarcated from the bourgeois coalition than it is from the working-class coalition.

Japan

The patterns of ideological class formation in Japan present a sharp contrast to both the United States and Sweden. To begin with, the entire ideological spectrum is much more compressed in Japan than in the other two countries. What is particularly striking is that the capitalist class and expert managers have moved to the center of the anticapitalism scale. These two categories combined are significantly less anticapitalist (at the 0.01 significance level) than the same categories in Sweden and the United States (whereas, as already noted, these categories do not differ between Sweden and the United States). In fact, the values on the anticapitalism scale for the bourgeois coalition in Japan fall entirely within the range for the middle-class coalitions in the other two countries. The Japanese working-class coalition, in contrast, does not differ significantly on the anticapitalism from the American working-class coalition. The conventional image of Japanese society as lacking highly antagonistic class formations is thus broadly supported by these data. While the mean values on the anticapitalism scale for the three ideological coalitions still do differ significantly, the lines of demarcation between these coalitions are much less sharply drawn than in the other two countries.

Not only is the overall degree of ideological polarization of the class structure much less in Japan than in Sweden and the United States, but the pattern of class formation reflected in these ideological cleavages is also quite different. Specifically, in Japan the line of ideological cleavage among employees is much more pronounced between experts and non-experts than it is along the authority dimension. In Sweden and the United States, in contrast, the cleavages along these two dimensions are of roughly comparable magnitude.

The subdued quality of the cleavages along the authority dimension in Japan compared to the other two countries is especially clear among experts and among skilled employees. In Japan, there are no statistically significant differences on the anticapitalism scale across levels of authority for these two categories, whereas in both Sweden and the United States there are sharp and statistically significant differences. For example, consider skilled employees. In Japan, the values on the anticapitalism scale for managers, supervisors and nonmanagers among skilled employees are 2.1, 2.68 and 2.61 respectively. In the United States the corresponding values are −0.68, 1.30 and 2.67, while in Sweden they are 0.6, 2.07 and 4.60. The differences between managers and workers among skilled employees are thus 0.5 in Japan, 3.3 in the US and 4 in Sweden. With the single exception of the contrast between nonskilled supervisors (anticapitalism score, 1.57) and nonskilled workers (anticapitalism score, 3.07), there are no statistically significant differences across authority levels in Japan.

In contrast to these patterns for authority, Japan is less deviant from Sweden and the United States in the ideological differences between experts and skilled employees *within* levels of authority. For example, the difference in anticapitalism between expert managers and skilled managers is 3 points in Sweden, 1.9 points in the US and 1.8 points in Japan.

These differences in patterns of ideological cleavage generate very different patterns of class formation in Japan. First, consider the bourgeois coalition. In Japan, experts at all levels of the authority hierarchy are part of the bourgeois ideological coalition, whereas skilled and

nonskilled managers are not. This contrasts sharply with the United States in which managers of all skill levels are part of the bourgeois coalition, and Sweden in which only expert managers were part of that coalition.

The working-class coalition in Japan, as measured by our procedures, has a rather odd shape, consisting of skilled and nonskilled workers, and skilled supervisors, but *not* nonskilled supervisors. These results are puzzling, since within the conceptual framework of contradictory class locations one would normally think that in comparison with skilled supervisors, unskilled supervisors would have interests more like those of workers and thus would have a stronger tendency to be part of the working-class ideological coalition. This is certainly the case for Sweden and the United States. I cannot offer a plausible explanation for these specific results. They may reflect some significant measurement problems in operationalizing the distinction between skilled and nonskilled for Japan. But it is also possible that these results reflect some complicated interaction of class location with such things as variations in employment situation, sector of employment, age or some other factor. Unfortunately, because the number of cases in these categories is so small, we cannot empirically explore possible explanations for this apparent anomaly. In any case, as already noted, the difference between skilled and nonskilled supervisors in Japan is not statistically significant even at the 0.10 level.

One final contrast between Japan and the other two countries concerns the petty bourgeoisie. In Japan, the petty bourgeoisie is just as anticapitalist as is the working-class and is firmly part of the working-class ideological coalition. In both Sweden and the United States, the petty bourgeoisie is part of the middle-class coalition and has an anticapitalist score that is significantly lower than that of the working class. In these terms, the Japanese pattern looks rather like the populism of several generations ago in the United States in which labor–farm coalitions were politically organized against capitalists. Japan continues to have a relatively large petty bourgeoisie and it appears to have an ideological profile that ties it relatively closely to the working class.

Summary of the comparisons of the three countries

Taking all of these results for the macro-analysis of class formation together, three contrasts among the countries we have examined stand out:

1 The degree of ideological polarization across class formations differs significantly in the three cases: Sweden is the most polarized, Japan the least, and the United States is in between. These variations in the degree of polarization do not come from a symmetrical decline in the range of ideological variation across classes. Compared to Sweden, in the United States the working-class coalition is significantly less anticapitalist, but there is little difference between the two countries in the procapitalist attitudes of the core of the capitalist coalition. In Japan, in contrast, both the capitalist-class coalition and the working-class coalition are ideologically less extreme than their Swedish counterparts.

2 While expert managers can be considered the core coalition partner of the capitalist class in all three countries, the overall shape of the bourgeois coalitions varies sharply in the three cases. In Sweden, the bourgeois coalition is confined to this core. In both Japan and the United States the coalition extends fairly deeply into contradictory class locations among employees, but in quite different ways. In Japan contradictory class locations are integrated into the bourgeois-class formation more systematically through credentials than through authority, whereas the reverse is true in the United States. Authority hierarchy thus plays a more central role in processes of bourgeois class formation in the United States than in either other country, and credentials a more central role in Japan.

3 Overall, Sweden and the United States are much more like each other than they are like Japan. The shape of the working-class formation is identical in the US and Sweden and is clearly differentiated ideologically from the middle-class coalition, and even though the bourgeois coalition penetrates more deeply into employee locations in the United States, it does so in a way that is entirely consistent with the underlying patterns in Sweden. Japan, in these terms, is quite different. The working-class formation has a more populist character because of the presence of the petty bourgeoisie and is much less differentiated ideologically from the middle class. The middle-class coalition also looks entirely different from that in the other two countries. Furthermore, whereas in Sweden and the United States, both the skill and authority dimensions among employees are sources of systematic ideological cleavage, in Japan only the contrast between credentialed experts and nonexperts constitutes a consistent source of cleavage among employees.

11.5 Explaining the differences in class formations

It is beyond the capacity of the data in this project to test systematically alternative explanations of the cross-national patterns of class formation we have been mapping out. Ultimately this would require constructing an account of the historical trajectory in each country of class struggles and institution building, especially of unions, parties and states. But we can get some suggestive ideas about explanations by looking at some of the proximate institutional factors that might underpin the ideological configurations that we have been examining. We will first focus on the contrast between the US and Sweden and then turn to the problem of Japan.

The overall differences in patterns of class formation between Sweden and the United States can be summarized in terms of two contrasts: first, the bourgeois-class formation penetrates the middle class to a much greater extent in the United States than in Sweden, and second, the working-class formation is ideologically more polarized with the capitalist class formation in Sweden than in the United States.

In the conceptual framework for the analysis of class formation laid out in chapter 10, class formations were seen as the result of two clusters of causal factors, one linked to the effects of class structure on class formation and the other of class struggle on class formation. Class structure was seen as shaping class formations via the ways in which it influenced the material interests, identities and resources of people; class struggle was seen as shaping class formations by affecting the organizations of collective action. Different patterns of class formation would therefore be expected in cases where the linkage between class location and material interests was quite different or situations in which the linkage between class location and organizational capacities was quite different. We will explore two specific mechanisms reflecting these factors: state employment and unionization.

State employment

State employment might be expected to be particularly important for insulating the middle class from the bourgeois coalition. Within the capitalist corporation, through mechanisms of career ladders, vertical promotions, job security and, in the case of higher-level managers, stock bonuses of various sorts, the material interests of managers and experts tend to be closely tied to the profitability of the corporation itself, and

thus the general class interests of the middle-class employed in private corporations tend to be closely tied to those of the bourgeoisie. Within the state, however, this link between middle class interests and bourgeois interests is much less direct. While, in the long run, the salaries of state employees depend upon state revenues, and state revenues depend upon a healthy capitalist economy and thus upon profits, there is in general no direct dependency of the material interests of state employees on the interests of any particular capitalist. State employment, therefore, could potentially constitute a material basis for the middle class to develop a sense of its own class interests relatively differentiated from those of the capitalist class. All things being equal, in a society with a large state sector, therefore, it would be expected that the middle class would be more autonomous ideologically from the bourgeoisie than in a society with a relatively small state sector.

In the United States, the material fate of the middle class is much more directly tied to the fortunes of corporate capitalism than in Sweden. In the United States, only about 18% of the labor force as a whole is employed by the state, and, while the figures are generally higher for those middle-class locations which are not in the working-class coalition (about 23% are employed in the state), it is still the case that most middle-class jobs are in the private sector. In Sweden, in contrast, 38% of the entire labor force, and nearly 50% of the middle-class contradictory locations are directly employed by the state. This makes middle-class interests in Sweden less immediately tied to those of the capitalist class, and thus creates greater possibilities for the formation of a distinctive middle-class ideological coalition.

Some evidence in support of this interpretation is presented in Table 11.1. In the United States, "middle-class" employees (i.e. those that are outside of the working-class ideological coalition) in the state sector have, on average, a significantly less procapitalist ideological orientation than middle-class wage earners in the private sector. This contrast is especially sharp among expert managers, the contradictory class location most closely allied with the capitalist class. Expert managers in the state have a value on the anticapitalism scale of -0.04, whereas those in the private sector have a value of -3.59 (difference significant at the $p < 0.05$ level). Furthermore, US middle-class employees in the state sector do not differ significantly from Swedish middle-class state employees on the anticapitalism scale (1.37 compared to 1.56). The significantly more conservative profile of the middle class in the United States, therefore, is largely concentrated in the private sector of the US economy. In Sweden,

Table 11.1. *Values on the anticapitalism scale for class categories: comparisons of state and private sectors and of union and nonunion members*

	United States		Sweden		Japan	
	State	Private	State	Private	State	Private
Working-class coalition[a]	2.89	2.53	4.16	4.77	4.31	2.74
(N)	(179)	(724)	(300)	(434)	(21)	(283)
Significance level of difference between state and private sectors	p <.15		p <.07		p <.04	
Middle class employees[b]	1.37	−0.23	1.56	0.76	1.92	1.44
(N)	(80)	(271)	(115)	(121)	(9)	(106)
Significance level of difference between state and private sectors	p <.01		p <.20		ns	
	United States		Sweden		Japan	
	Union member	Nonunion member	Union member	Nonunion member	Union member	Nonunion member
Working-class coalition[a]	3.72	2.24	4.97	2.41	2.85	2.84
(N)	(222)	(681)	(606)	(128)	(108)	(196)
Significance level of difference between union and non union members	p <.001		p <.001		ns	
Middle class employees[b]	3.65	−0.27	1.89	−2.72	2.21	1.23
(N)	(36)	(315)	(198)	(38)	(29)	(86)
Significance level of difference between union and nonunion members	p <.001		p <.001		ns	

a. Working-class coalition = nonskilled workers, skilled workers and nonskilled supervisors.
b. Middle-class employees = all employees not in the working-class coalition (i.e. employees in either the bourgeois- or middle-class coalition).

the difference between state and private sector middle-class employees is in the same direction as in the United States, but is not statistically significant. This suggests, perhaps, that under conditions of a large state sector, the middle class as a whole has greater ideological autonomy from the bourgeoisie, not simply those middle class actually employed in the state. The much greater role of state employment in the Swedish class structure, therefore may be one of the reasons why the Swedish bourgeois coalition is restricted to expert managers within the middle class, whereas the American bourgeois coalition penetrates much deeper into managerial class locations (for a much more extended discussion of these issues, see Wright 1997: ch. 15).

Unionization

A second proximate mechanism for consolidating the boundaries of a class formation is collective organization, of which unionization is probably the most important for working-class formation. Where unions are broad-based and organizationally autonomous from the capitalist class, it would be expected that the working-class coalition would be more ideologically polarized with the capitalist-class coalition than in cases where unions were weak and lacked real autonomy.

Sweden and the United States offer clear contrasts in the nature of their respective union movements. While in both countries unions are relatively autonomous organizationally from the capitalist class – company unions are not significant features in either country – the Swedish labor movement has a much broader base than its American counterpart. In the American working-class coalition, 24.4% are union members compared to 82.6% in Sweden. What is even more striking, perhaps, is that in Sweden there is a high rate of unionization among middle-class contradictory class locations as well: 83.9% of the people in middle-class contradictory locations outside of the working-class coalition belong to unions in Sweden compared to only 10.3% in the United States. The low American figures partially reflect the overall weakness of the American labor movement, but more significantly they reflect legal barriers to unionization among people who are formally part of "management." This is reflected in the minuscule unionization rates among people in managerial-class locations (expert managers, skilled managers and nonskilled managers): in the US, out of 92 people in such positions in our sample there were only 2 union members for a rate of 2.2%, whereas, in Sweden, out of 53 people in managerial-class locations, 60.4% belonged to unions.

To what extent, then, does this higher level of unionization in Sweden help to explain the greater ideological polarization between working-class and the bourgeois-class formations in Sweden than in the United States? Table 11.1 indicates that in both the United States and Sweden there are sharp ideological differences between union members and nonmembers within all class locations. What is particularly relevant in these results is that within the working-class coalitions in Sweden and the United States, *non*union members in the two countries do not differ significantly on the anticapitalism scale. The mean value for the non-union segment of the working-class coalition in the United States is 2.24, while in Sweden it is 2.41. The mean values for the unionized segments, on the other hand, do differ significantly ($p < 0.001$): 4.97 in Sweden and 3.72 in the United States.

The overall greater anticapitalism of the Swedish working-class coalition is thus partially due to the fact that Swedish union members are more anticapitalist than American union members, and partially to the fact that the Swedish working-class coalition has a much higher rate of unionization. We can estimate the rough magnitudes of these components by playing a kind of counterfactual game in which we ask two questions:

1 What would the mean value on the anticapitalism scale be for the US working-class coalition if (a) it had the unionization *rate* of the Swedish working-class coalition but (b) union members and nonmembers in the United States working-class coalition still had the same *values* on the scale that they currently have?

2 What would the mean value on the anticapitalism scale be for the US working-class coalition if (a) it had the unionization rate that it actually has, but (b) union members and nonmembers in the United States working-class coalition each had the values on the scale of their Swedish counterparts?

The first question imputes a mean value on the scale to the US working-class coalition under the assumption that all that changes is the unionization rate in the United States; the second question assumes that all that changes is ideology.

On the basis of these two questions we can decompose the total difference in values on the anticapitalism scale between the working-class coalitions in the two countries into three components: a component reflecting the differences in unionization rates, a component reflecting the differences in ideologies, and a residual interaction component. (For detailed results, see Wright 1997: 438.)

In this counterfactual game, just under 45% of the total difference in the anticapitalism scale between the American and Swedish working-class coalitions is attributable to the higher rate of unionization in Sweden, about 20% is attributable to the fact that Swedish union members are more radical than their American counterparts, and about 35% is attributable to the interaction between these two effects. The sheer fact of higher levels of unionization, therefore, probably contributes substantially to the greater ideological polarization between the Swedish working-class formation and bourgeois formation.

This analysis, of course, is entirely static in character. The counterfactual is completely unrealistic as a dynamic proposition since the degree of ideological polarization enters into the explanation of changes in the rate of unionization. In the dynamic micro–macro model elaborated in the previous chapter, class struggles transform class formations, but those class struggles are themselves constituted by the class practices of individuals with specific forms of consciousness. The greater ideological anticapitalism of union members in the working-class coalition in Sweden compared to the United States is thus both a consequence of the strength of the Swedish labor movement (and of the associated social democratic political party) and part of the historical explanation for the strength of that movement. In the present research, there is no way of sorting out these two sides of the dynamic process.

Japan

Two features of the Japanese case which differentiate it from both the United States and Sweden need to be explained: first, the much lower degree of overall ideological polarization compared to the other two countries, and, second, the absence of significant forms of ideological cleavage along the managerial dimension of the class structure.

The conventional image of Japan is of a society in which firms are organized on a relatively cooperative basis, with high levels of loyalty on the part of most workers, not just managers, and low levels of conflict. Managers in many firms spend significant time on the shop floor doing the work of ordinary workers prior to assuming their managerial responsibilities, which further mutes the sense of vertical antagonism. The pay-off, many observers have argued, is that Japanese firms are able

to achieve large productivity gains because relatively little human energy is wasted in destructive conflict.

As numerous commentators have noted, this popular image of Japan is misleading in several important respects. While it is true that general labor-management relations are relatively harmonious by international standards, these high levels of cooperation and loyalty mainly apply to workers in the core of the corporate economy with life-time employment security; the large number of part-time and temporary workers in the core firms, and the workers in the numerous small firms reap few of the benefits of this system (Tsuda 1973; Gordon 1985; Chalmers 1989). Furthermore, as various critical observers of the Japanese factory have stressed, these apparently harmonious relations are combined with intense competition among workers and pervasive surveillance and social control of work performance (Dohse, Jurgens and Malsch 1985; Kamata 1982).

The results for ideological differences between union members and nonmembers in Table 11.1 give us some clue about the underlying processes at work in the Japanese case. The most striking feature of the Japanese data is the virtual absence of ideological differences between union members and nonmembers, especially within the working-class coalition. Whereas in Sweden and the United States union members in the working-class coalition were between 1.5 and 2 points more anti-capitalist than nonmembers, in Japan these groups are virtually identical. The contrast is equally striking for the middle class: in Sweden and the United States union members in the middle-class coalition were roughly 4 points more anticapitalist than nonmembers, whereas in Japan the figure is only about 0.8 points.

These results indicate that in Japan unions are not an organizational basis for formulating and representing distinctive class interests. As critics often note, Japanese unions function basically like company unions, being oriented towards serving corporate interests rather than defending the interests of workers. Without an autonomous organizational basis for the articulation of class interests, class formations become ideologically fuzzy, with diffuse boundaries and weak antagonisms. The result is a pattern of class formation with low levels of polarization that is especially muted along the authority dimension of class relations.

As in the explanation of the differences between Sweden and the United States, this is a purely static explanation: given the existence of company unions and the absence of any autonomous organizational basis for a working-class formation, class formations in Japan will be relatively nonpolarized and poorly demarcated. Dynamically, of course, these ideological configurations themselves contribute to the absence of autonomous working-class organizations and act as obstacles to any strategies for transforming Japanese class formations. In these terms it is worth noting that Japanese class formations were not always so non-antagonistic and unpolarized. The early 1950s were a period of intense labor conflicts and mobilization, with militant unions and periodic widespread strikes. It was really only after the defeat and repression of these movements that the current pattern of quasi-company unions was consolidated and integrated with the current forms of "cooperative" labor–management relations.

11.5 The micro-analysis of class consciousness

So far we have focused on macro-patterns of class formation, using ideology as a criterion for mapping the boundaries of class formations. Of course, the process by which individuals acquire their consciousness was implicated in this analysis, both because our measures were all based on responses by individuals to questionnaire items and because it is impossible to talk about the differences between groups without alluding to the differences in the interests and experiences of the individuals that make up those groups. Nevertheless, in the discussion so far we have not been interested in explaining variation across individuals as such. It is to this issue that we now turn.

As discussed in section 11.2, we will engage in two different kinds of analyses of individual class consciousness. In the first, we will merge the data from all three countries into a single dataset and test the relative explanatory power of nationality compared to class. In the second we will investigate the differences in coefficients in more complex multivariate equations estimated separately for each country.

Additive country effects

Table 11.2 presents the results for the merged sample of all three countries. The numbers reported in this table are the standardized coefficients (beta coefficients) for the different clusters of independent variables considered as groups within a multivariate equation predicting values on the anticapitalism scale (for more detailed results, see Wright 1997: 442–443). In these results, a person's country is a less important determinant of individuals' scores on the anticapitalism scale than is

Table 11.2. *Determinants of class consciousness: micro-level analysis of the United States, Sweden and Japan (standardized regression coefficients)*

Variables	Three countries combined	United States	Sweden	Japan
Class location	.18***	.16***	.27***	.13**
Past class experiences	.13***	.11***	.18***	.12**
Class networks	.07**	.05*	.11***	.03
Consumption	.14***	.15***	.09***	.20***
Union member	.22***	.17***	.23***	.07
Demographics	.05**	.12***	.03	.06
Country	.11***			
Adjusted R^2	.18	.16	.24	.08
N	3,168	1,471	1,089	608

Significance levels (one-tailed tests): ***P < .001 **P < .01 *p < .05.

Definitions of variables:

Class location: dummy variables for the 12-category class location matrix.

Past class experiences: dummy variables for: working-class origin, capitalist-class origin; previously self-employed, previously unemployed.

Class networks: capitalist friendship network; working-class friendship network.

Consumption: personal income; unearned income dummy variable; homeowner dummy.

Union member: dummy variable for member of a union.

Demographics: Gender dummy variable; age.

Country: two dummy variables.

their class location. Indeed, the coefficient for country is smaller than any of the class related variables. If we look at the R^2 in an equation containing only the country variable, it is a fifth of the R^2 for an equation with class location alone (2% compared to 10%). At least within this sample of countries, if you want to predict an individual's class consciousness, therefore, it is more important to know what class they are in than to know what country they are from.

Cross-national comparisons of micro-equations

From what we already know about the cross-national variations in class formation, treating country as an additive variable as we have just done

is clearly an unsatisfactory way of modeling the effects of nation on individual consciousness. A more appropriate model involves country interactions in which we estimate the regression equations separately within each national sample and examine cross-national differences in coefficients. The results are also presented in Table 11.2.

There are several striking contrasts in these equations across the three countries. First, the overall predictive power of the equation is strongest in Sweden and, by a considerable margin, weakest in Japan. In Sweden, the regression equation explains 24% of the variance in the anticapitalism scale, which is quite a respectable R^2 for an attitudinal dependent variable. Since a good part of the observed variance in attitude scales is always due to measurement problems and random variation across individuals, the "explainable" variance is much less than the total variance. Accounting for a quarter of the total variance in an attitude variable thus indicates that this dependent variable is quite closely associated with the independent variables in the equation. The 16% R^2 in the American equation is also fairly characteristic of regressions on attitude variables. The 8% explained variance for Japan, however, is rather low, indicating that these variables for Japan do not account for a substantial part of the variance on the anticapitalism scale.

Second, each of the blocks of variables closely linked to class predict consciousness more strongly in Sweden than in the other two countries: the coefficient for the aggregated block of class location dummy variables is 0.27 in Sweden, 0.16 in the US and 0.13 in Japan. Similar differences occur for past class experiences, current class networks and union membership. Class location and class experiences, therefore, seem to shape consciousness most pervasively in Sweden and least pervasively in Japan.

Third, those variables which tap into consumption rather than directly into class – personal income, unearned income and home ownership – are better predictors in the United States and Japan than in Sweden. Taken as a group, the coefficient for the consumption variables is 0.09 in Sweden compared to 0.15 in the US and 0.20 in Japan. This is consistent with the interpretation of the results in chapter 7 concerning the class identities of married women in the labor force in Sweden and the United States: relative to Sweden, class in the US appears to be structured subjectively more around the sphere of consumption than the sphere of production. At least on the basis of the results for the anticapitalism scale, this appears to be even more strongly the case for Japan.

Finally, in no country is gender a significant determinant of class

consciousness in the multivariate equation, and only in the United States does age have a significant effect. I do not have a specific interpretation of the age coefficient for the US. Most likely this reflects an effect of historical cohorts in which the younger cohorts of Americans (in 1980), perhaps especially the "60s generation," are more critical of capitalism than older cohorts. If this is the correct interpretation of the age coefficient, then such generational cleavages in ideology appear stronger in the US than in the other two countries, perhaps indicating that the experience of the civil rights and antiwar movements of the 1960s constituted a greater discontinuity in American political life than has occurred in either of the other two countries.

11.6 A brief note on class, race, gender and consciousness

Because of the constraints of sample size, it is impossible with the Comparative Class Analysis Project data to explore systematically the ways class, race and gender interact in the formation of class consciousness. Nevertheless, it is worth briefly looking at the overall pattern of variation in consciousness across race, gender and class categories in the United States since these results are quite suggestive and pose interesting questions for further research.

Figure 11.4 presents the mean values on the anticapitalism scale for black and white males and females in the "extended" working class (nonskilled workers, skilled workers and nonskilled supervisors) and the "middle" class (all types of managers and experts plus skilled supervisors). The most striking feature of these results is that within classes (especially within the working class), racial differences in class consciousness are much greater than gender differences. Within the working class, there are virtually no differences in the values on the anticapitalism scale between white men (2.41) and white women (2.38) or between black men (3.8) and black women (3.5), whereas there are sharp differences between blacks and whites. Indeed, the differences between black and white workers within the US is of the same order of magnitude as the difference between American and Swedish workers.

It is always possible that the explanation of why these racial divisions in consciousness within the working class are greater than gender differences is simply a result of the internal heterogeneity of the class categories. Within the broad category "extended working class" in Figure 11.4, black men and women tend to be concentrated in the most proletarianized and exploited segments. The more anticapitalist value

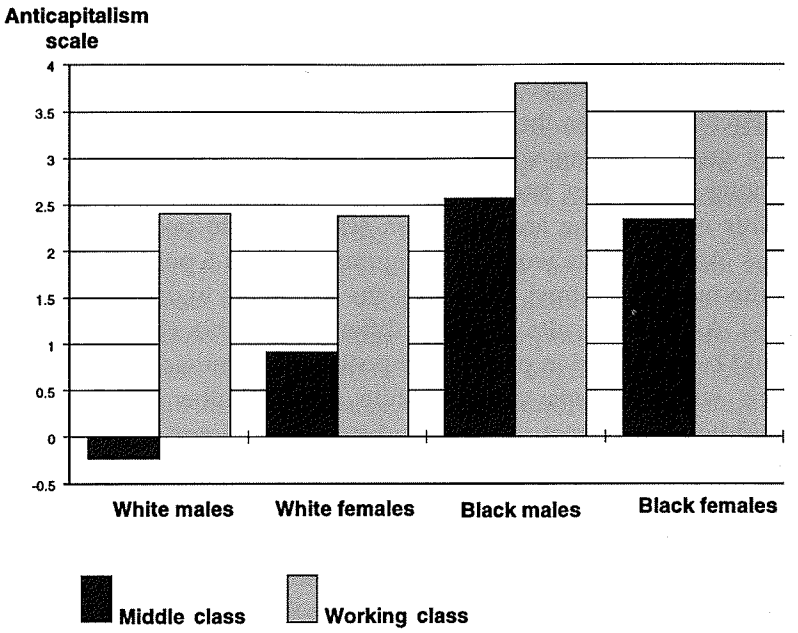

Figure 11.4 *Race and gender differences in class consciousness in the United States.*

for black workers, therefore, could simply be an artifact of the racial differences in composition of this category. These compositional effects would be much more muted between men and women within racial categories because of the effects of household class compositions on class consciousness.

A more interesting explanation centers on the linkage between different forms of oppression in people's lives. A good argument can be made that racial inequality is much more closely linked to class oppression than is gender inequality. In its earliest forms in the United States, racial oppression was virtually equivalent to a specific class relation, slavery. While the race-class linkage has weakened over the past 100 years, it is still the case that the content of the disadvantages racially oppressed groups experience are deeply linked to class. Because of this intimate link to class, racial oppression itself may tend to generate a heightened critical consciousness around issues of class. Gender inequality is less closely linked to class, and thus the experience of gender oppression is less immediately translated into a critical consciousness of class inequality. This may help explain why men and women within the

working class have similar levels of class consciousness, whereas black workers are more anticapitalist than white workers.

One other aspect of the results in Figure 11.4 should be noted: class differences between the working class and the middle class are considerably greater among white men than among white women or blacks. Among black men and women, workers score on average about 1.2 points more on the anticapitalism scale than do people in the middle class. Among white women the figure is about 1.5 points higher. Among white men, in contrast, workers score 2.6 points higher than the middle class. As in the results for racial differences within classes, these results could be generated in part by compositional differences in class distributions within groups: among white men a higher proportion of the "middle class" category consists of expert managers than is the case for any of the other groups, and this could account for the sharper ideological difference between the working class and the aggregated "middle class" among white males. But these results could also suggest that, at least in the United States, the class model which we have been using works better among white men than other categories. When class intersects with other forms of oppression in the lives of people, its effects on consciousness may be confounded by the effects of these other relations. In order to pursue these conjectures, research on much larger samples will be needed.

11.7 Conclusion

The relationship between class structure and class formation at the macro-level of analysis and between class location and class consciousness at the micro-level are at the core of class analysis. The Marxist claim that class has pervasive consequences for social conflict and social change crucially hinges on the ways in which class structures shape class formations and class locations shape class consciousness. In these terms, the most important conclusion from the analysis in this chapter is the high degree of variability in these relationships across highly developed capitalist economies. While in very general terms one can say that there is a certain commonality in the patterns of class formation and in the association of class location to class consciousness in the three countries we have examined, what is equally striking is the extent to which these countries vary.

At one end of the spectrum is Sweden. At the macro-level, Sweden is characterized by a pattern of class formation which is both quite

polarized and in which there are clear demarcations between the three-class coalitions we examined. At the micro-level, class location and class experiences, past and present, appear to strongly shape the attitudes of individuals towards class issues. Class thus appears to powerfully impinge on the lives and subjectivities of people in Swedish society.

At the other extreme is Japan. At the macro-level class formations are neither very polarized ideologically, nor sharply demarcated. At the micro-level, although class remains significantly associated with consciousness, the effects are much weaker and mainly confined to the indirect effects of class via the sphere of consumption. While the class character of Japanese society may be of great importance for understanding the rhythm of its economic development, the constraints on state policies, the nature of political parties and so on, at the micro-level, variation in class location and class experiences does not appear to pervasively shape variations in class consciousness.

The United States falls somewhere between these two cases, probably somewhat closer to Sweden than to Japan. The patterns of class formation are rather like those in Sweden, only more muted, with a broader bourgeois-class coalition and a working-class coalition that is closer to the middle class. At the micro-level, class location and experiences do systematically shape consciousness, but less strongly than in Sweden and with a greater relative impact of the sphere of consumption.

12. Confirmations, surprises and theoretical reconstructions

Class analysis, in the Marxist tradition, stands at the center of a sweeping analysis of the dilemmas of contemporary society and the aspirations for an egalitarian and democratic future for humanity. Class is a normatively charged concept, rooted in ideas of oppression, exploitation and domination. This concept underwrites both an emancipatory vision of a classless society and an explanatory theory of conflicts, institutions and social change rooted in intrinsically antagonistic interests. The ultimate ambition of this kind of class analysis is to link the explanatory theory to the emancipatory vision in such a way as to contribute to the political project of transforming the world in the direction of those ideals. Marxist empirical research of whatever kind – whether ethnographic case studies, historical investigations or statistical analyses of survey data – should further this ambition.

At first glance, it may seem that the empirical studies in this book have little to do with such grand visions. The topics we have explored have revolved around narrowly focused properties of contemporary capitalist societies rather than the epochal contradictions which dynamically shape social change. While I have invoked the themes of transformative struggles, only a pale reflection of "class struggle" has appeared in the actual empirical analyses in the form of attitudes of individuals. And, while the concept of class we have been exploring is conceptualized in terms of exploitation, none of the empirical research directly explores the problem of exploitation as such. In what ways, then, can the coefficients, tables and graphs in this book be said to push forward the central themes and ideas of the Marxist agenda?

Research pushes social theory forward in two basic ways. Where there is a controversy between contending theoretical claims about some problem, research can potentially provide a basis for adjudicating