

ETHNIC PENETRATION OF THE ELITE
STRUCTURE OF DETROIT,
1900-1950

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
MARTIN MARGER
1973



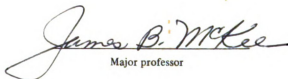
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1900-1950**

presented by

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has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in Social Science


Major professor

Date March 9, 1973



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ABSTRACT

ETHNIC PENETRATION OF THE ELITE STRUCTURE OF DETROIT, 1900-1950

By

Martin Marger

The chief objective of this study was to measure the extent and rate of movement of individuals of various ethnic origins into positions of highest functional power and prestige in Detroit during the first fifty years of the twentieth century. The general questions to which the analysis was directed were: (1) which particular ethnic groups displayed most extensive elite penetration; (2) into what institutional areas was penetration made; and (3) what structural factors induced such patterns. Degree of elite entrance was interpreted as an index of both ethnic mobility and structural assimilation.

Data were ordered within a descriptive model which posited the elite structure of the modern industrial community as a multi-dimensional unit, consisting of the uppermost strata of the economic, political, labor (together, "strategic"), and prestige class systems. As

well as confining social elite penetration, ethnicity was suggested as an intervening factor serving to monitor entrance into purely strategic elites in spite of the predominance of functional needs and achieved criteria of selection.

The highest functional officers of a variety of the largest economic enterprises as well as the city's top elective political officials and labor leaders were analyzed at ten-year intervals. Ethnicity was employed in an identificational as well as a cultural sense so as to include Jews and Blacks in addition to national groups. Ethnic origins of elite members were determined by a thorough investigation of biographical materials rather than through a simple name analysis.

The general hypothesis that those ethnic groups closest in social distance to the core Anglo-Saxon group would display greater degrees of penetration into all elite sectors was confirmed. However, more specifically within the strategic elite dimension, non-Anglo-Saxons were found to enter political and labor sectors to a much greater extent than the economic. Within the latter, penetration over the entire fifty-year period was narrowly limited to Irish, Germans, and other northwest Europeans among the non-Anglo-Saxons. Jews also penetrated but their path of entrance was mainly through the expansion of family-organized firms rather than through bureaucratic

promotion. Southern and eastern Europeans and Blacks were totally unrepresented within the highest echelons of industrial and financial leadership.

Entrance into the city's highest elective political offices and labor leadership positions was more frequent and diffuse by those of minority ethnic status. German and Anglo-Saxon political dominance at the century's outset was supplanted after 1932 by Irish and Polish ascendance. Within the labor elite sector, ethnicity as a factor in penetration was less noticeable than in any other element of Detroit's functional power structure. When broken down into specific sub-sectors, each of the three strategic elites exhibited more precise differences in ethnic representation.

Through an investigation of social registers and metropolitan club rosters it was determined that interaction between strategic and social elite dimensions was limited to those of the city's business and industrial leadership. Social elite entrance was found accessible to northwest European Catholics but a parallel status elite was detected for Jews of the economic elite.

Significant economic, political, and social developments within the community during these fifty years produced substantial effects on the ethnic composition of the political and labor elite sectors but had relatively slight impact upon economic and prestige

elites. Periods of socioeconomic expansion or contraction did not seem to create those conditions which fostered the recruitment of individuals of varied ethnic backgrounds into positions of industrial and financial leadership but did seem to lay the necessary groundwork for their entrance into political and labor power positions.

**ETHNIC PENETRATION OF THE ELITE
STRUCTURE OF DETROIT,
1900-1950**

By

Martin Marger

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

College of Social Science

1973

652810

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It would be difficult to fully acknowledge all those who contributed in some way, large or small, to the completion of this study. Needless to say, without their aid the project would have been considerably encumbered. Certain individuals and groups, however, should not go unmentioned.

The cooperation and assistance provided by the staffs of those research facilities at which most of the study's data were gathered is particularly appreciated. These included the Burton Historical Collection, the Municipal Reference Library, and the Automotive History Collection, all of the Detroit Public Library; the Research Library of the United Automobile Workers International Headquarters in Detroit; and the State of Michigan Library in Lansing. Especial thanks are due Roberta McBride of the Labor History Archives of Wayne State University for her generous help in securing information on Detroit labor leaders of the 1940s.

The members of my guidance committee, Professors McKee, Salvo, Abramson, and Rout must also be acknowledged

for their support and helpful suggestions. Professor McKee's direction of the study was such as to permit a great deal of latitude and flexibility in its initial and ongoing formulation, making its completion less a task and more a gratifying scholarly experience. This was perfectly complemented by Professor Salvo's provision of much theoretical insight and many hours of constructive discussion.

Finally, to my wife, Joette, I am deeply grateful not only for her invaluable research assistance, but more importantly for her patience and understanding.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the sociological literature of the past four decades the subject of community stratification in American society has been afforded prodigious consideration. The plethora of studies which followed the pioneering works of the Lynds indicated that this was an area of investigation recognized in the discipline as highly significant as well as amenable to empirical effort.¹ In addition to the Middletown studies, the works of Warner and Hollingshead together represent a base from which most later endeavors drew methodological and theoretical inspiration.²

¹Robert S. and Helen M. Lynd, Middletown (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1929); idem, Middletown in Transition (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1937).

²W. Lloyd Warner and Paul S. Lunt, The Social Life of a Modern Community (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941); idem, The Status System of a Modern Community (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942); W. Lloyd Warner et al., Democracy in Jonesville (New York: Harper & Bros., 1949); August B. Hollingshead, Elmtown's Youth (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1949).

Studies of Hunter, Dahl, and Mills during the 1950s and early 1960s can be seen as representative of an evident trend toward description of the uppermost strata of the class, prestige, and power hierarchies of American communities.³ The focus of investigation thus turned from the community as a whole to a small, albeit disproportionately significant, segment of it. Community power, its composition and locus, now became a foremost topic of analysis about which several contrasting theoretical schools emerged.

At the same time that community stratification studies were experiencing these shifts in foci, ethnic studies in American sociology underwent a general decline so that by the late 1960s a reconsideration of the ethnic factor in American social development could only be called a resurgence.⁴ It is important to note that, although all

³Floyd Hunter, Community Power Structure (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953); Robert A. Dahl, Who Governs? (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961); and C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

⁴See, for example, Andrew M. Greeley, "American Sociology and the Study of Ethnic Immigrant Groups," International Migration Digest 1 (1964): 107-13. Shils notes the original dominant place of ethnic studies in the discipline: "The study of the life of immigrants was indeed one of the original justifications for the existence of American sociology; it was in part because no other social scientists dealt with the problem created by immigration that sociologists were able to legitimate their emergence as a separate academic department." Edward A. Shils, The Present State of American Sociology (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1948), p. 25.

dealt with it to some degree or another, in few cases did the earlier community studies attempt to treat ethnicity as more than another aspect of the general system of stratification. Anderson's study of Bridgeport and Warner's in-depth analysis of the ethnic groups of Yankee City (Newburyport) are notable exceptions.⁵ Both of these works can be seen as attempts to concentrate upon ethnicity as a key variable in the shape and makeup of the community's class, power, and prestige systems. The present study is to be viewed similarly. Most basically it is an attempt to link ethnicity with one particular aspect of stratification in an American city, specifically the elite structure at the apex of its social hierarchy.

An Interdisciplinary Orientation

The analytical scheme to be employed in the present study as well as its method of investigation are to be fashioned in such a way as to combine both historical and sociological perspectives. It is necessary to emphasize this point at the outset not only to make clear our intended mode of operation but to properly place the study within bounds which do not necessarily display Precise lines of demarcation. The study is, in short,

⁵ Elin L. Anderson, We Americans: A Study of Cleavage in an American City (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937); W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole, The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945).

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sociohistorical, combining synchronic and diachronic elements.

The generally ahistorical nature of past community studies can be interpreted at least in part as an attempt to explain social phenomena exclusively with synchronic measures; to do otherwise has often been viewed as not properly within the realm of sociological inquiry. Reiss explains this apparent neglect of the time dimension as a tendency for sociological investigation to substitute the comparative analysis of communities in time for the historical analysis of communities through time.⁶ There has been, in other words, an evident lack of intensive analysis of social forms and processes in changing community contexts. The resultant findings of studies which have adopted such an ahistorical perspective are often of limited value and in some cases their validity is seriously jeopardized. Thernstrom has pointed out that to measure empirically the shape of a community's stratification structure at a single point while abandoning the historical dimension is to yield only a single "snapshot" in which changes over time can only be conjectured.⁷

⁶Albert J. Reiss, Jr., "Some Logical and Methodological Problems in Community Research," Social Forces 33 (1954): 56.

⁷Stephan Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 235.

The present study is an attempt to construct not a single picture of one aspect of a community's stratification system but rather a series of pictures in which comparisons may be made within a temporal dimension. If its conclusions are thus largely diachronic, on that basis alone it is not to be considered necessarily more historical than sociological. As Schermerhorn has well noted:

to seek for regularities at the sociohistorical level is to look for broad tendencies, trends, and recurrent sequences of events in such a way that they have a verifiable relationship to "times when and places where."⁸

Hence it is to be expected that future investigations of cities experiencing socioeconomic conditions similar to those of twentieth century Detroit will find its conclusions relevant and comparable. It can, in other words, serve as a contribution to what Nisbet has called the study of "uniformities in time."⁹

Furthermore, the distinction between the sociological and historical perspectives may not be as irreconcilable as is frequently assumed. Sociological analysis often implicitly adopts a static bias in which the constant flux of social systems is denied. Such a

⁸R. A. Schermerhorn, Comparative Ethnic Relations: A Framework for Theory and Research (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 190.

⁹Robert A. Nisbet, Tradition and Revolt: Historical and Sociological Essays (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 99-104.

perspective is not unlike what one philosopher of history has called "substantialism," in which it is assumed that only that which is unchanging is knowable by man; such a theory of knowledge at once negates an historical perspective.¹⁰ Yet, such a "timeless" sociology appears a delusion. Horowitz explains that if sociology is in fact timeless and society operates in a sequence of events called the passage of time, "then either social man is in a state of permanent equilibrium or the sociologist is living in a minus-one dimension."¹¹ Neither a synchronic-diachronic nor a nomothetic-idiographic dichotomy is an entirely accurate description of the conceptual differences in time and scope of the two disciplines. Just as historians may often seek to uncover the repetitive and the patterned, so too may sociologists utilize, if only implicitly, the historical data of the social units they are analyzing. Riesman's observation in this regard seems appropriate:

. . . it hardly needs argument . . . that we cannot assay the weight of any prevailing pattern of attitudes and institutions without appreciating their historical development, and that if we do not study

¹⁰R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 42.

¹¹Irving Louis Horowitz, ed., The New Sociology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 24.

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permanence and change in a time dimension we might as well surrender altogether the effort to understand society.¹²

Statement of the Problem

Basically this study will deal with the extent of ethnic penetration of the elite structure of the city of Detroit, Michigan during the period 1900 through 1950. Analysis will generally revolve around an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. to what extent have non-Anglo-Saxons penetrated the elite structure of the city;
2. which particular ethnic groups have displayed most noticeable success in entering the elite structure and which have been most saliently absent;

¹²David Riesman, Individualism Reconsidered (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1954), p. 470. From a perusal of the literature dealing with the contemporary relationship between sociology and history it is immediately apparent that the exchange between them has been less than equitable. The appeals from historians that their discipline become more sociological surely have been louder and stronger than those emanating from sociologists calling for the adoption of a more historical approach. Among those who have recognized the legitimacy of complementary perspectives are Barrington Moore, Political Power and Social Theory (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958); Kai T. Erikson, "Sociology and the Historical Perspective," American Sociologist 5 (1970): 331-38; C. Wright Mills, The Sociological Imagination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959); H. Stuart Hughes, "The Historian and the Social Scientist," American Historical Review 66 (1960): 20-46; and Robert Bierstedt, "Toynbee and Sociology," British Journal of Sociology 10 (1959): 95-104.

3. what particular segments of the Detroit elite structure have been most accessible to non-Anglo-Saxons;
4. what typological similarities have been exhibited in the career paths of those non-Anglo-Saxons who have attained elite status;
5. what structural and cultural factors may explain the above patterns.

Studies of elites in communities have generally focused either on the question of which group or groups of leaders occupy pre-eminent power positions or on how crucial decisions are made and by whom. Neither of these themes is our ultimate concern. Rather than the dynamics of power distribution our focus is on the social characteristics, specifically the ethnicity, of those in elite positions. It is to be understood that the study's primary aim is therefore not to present a complete analysis of the city's elite structure during this period. In short, we will examine the degree to which members of Detroit's non-Anglo-Saxon ethnic groups were able to reach positions of power and prestige during the first half of the twentieth century. The immediate objective is thus to provide data concerning the ethnic origins of elite members and to investigate those factors which may explain the resultant patterns.

A direct bearing on the study of ethnic assimilation is also incumbent on the study's findings. Elite membership of non-Anglo-Saxons is therefore to be treated as an index of structural assimilation as well as an indicator of social mobility. If structural assimilation is thought of as entrance into all social organizations at all institutional levels and the allocation of roles within them on other than an ethnic basis, then the observation of movement of members of various ethnic groups into elite positions may serve as an indicator of the relative presence or absence of such a phenomenon.

Gans has suggested that any study of ethnic groups must consciously pose the problem: "is what happens to migrants ultimately more or less a function of their characteristics and culture than of the economic and political opportunities which are open to them when they arrived and subsequently."¹³ In the final analysis it is the pursuit of a partial answer to this question in one community that is the prevailing concern of this study.

Organization of the Study

The utilization of a structured theoretical frame of reference is perhaps the chief mechanism by which

¹³ Herbert J. Gans, "Some Comments on the History of Italian Migration and on the Nature of Historical Research," International Migration Review 1 (Summer 1967): 8.

historical analysis may be transformed from simple description to social interpretation. The use of a conceptual model defines the exact dimensions of the historical problem, guides its explanations, and makes explicit its underlying assumptions. By relating gathered data to a body of theory, conclusions reached are no longer ad hoc but may be subjected to the scrutiny of both past and future investigation.¹⁴ Chapters I and II will attempt to deal with this first requisite task by establishing a general theoretical framework upon which the analysis will be constructed. Through a brief review of several relevant conceptual schemes, a model appropriate to the particular time and community under investigation may subsequently take form.

The purpose of Chapter III will be to explicate the methodological procedures employed and to clarify the peculiar requirements of the study which led to their adoption. Given the researcher's inability to directly confront his subject matter, the analysis of social processes over an extended time period necessitates particular data gathering procedures. In contrast with the sociologist employing techniques of survey research, controlled experimentation, or participant-observation,

¹⁴For a lucid example and explanation of the application of a theoretical model to historical analysis, see Neil J. Smelser, "Sociological History: The Industrial Revolution and the British Working-Class Family," Journal of Social History 1 (1964): 17-35.

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the goal of the historical sociologist is a reconstruction of a once-living reality, based upon what evidence is presently available to him. There exist, as a result, certain methodological perplexities which must, in some way, be worked around.¹⁵

A final preliminary necessity consists of the establishment of a working nomenclature which will provide the study with clarity and consistency.¹⁶ Terminological problems are seemingly endemic to the social sciences and the concepts of "elite," "ethnicity," and "assimilation" are not exceptional to the ambiguity which often surrounds many of the descriptive instruments of sociology. Within the contexts of the discussions of theory and method in Chapters I, II and III, more concise definitions of key concepts to be employed will be formulated.

Chapter IV will place the study within its proper historical milieu. A detailed social history of Detroit in the twentieth century is, of course, beyond the scope

¹⁵ Riesman fittingly remarks that "there is one problem which no amount of improvement in research methods will ever permit us to overcome, namely the limitation of our knowledge of the past imposed by the unfortunate fact that we cannot interview or test the dead." Riesman, Individualism Reconsidered, p. 469.

¹⁶ Zetterberg has noted that explicit definitions of terms, to the annoyance of many critics, are what "set sociological writings apart from historical and biographical writings." Hans L. Zetterberg, On Theory and Verification in Sociology, 3rd ed. (Totowa, N.J.: Bedminster Press, 1965), p. 30.

of the study and in any case would not be appropriate to its purpose. Those aspects of the city's socioeconomic development will be highlighted, therefore, which are felt to be particularly germane to an explanation of the makeup of its elite structure and the movement of ethnics into these positions.

An additional purpose of this chapter will be to explain the choice of Detroit in the twentieth century as the locus of investigation. Comparison with other cities of this period may reveal a developmental course that marks this community as an almost ideal social setting in which to trace the historical patterns of adjustment and mobility of ethnic groups. Similarly, the time period involved represents the most dynamic in this city's history both from an economic and political as well as a social standpoint and is therefore likely to reveal a greater differentiation in elite recruitment patterns than other eras.

The main body of data to be subsequently introduced and analyzed will consist of a breakdown of the community's elite structure by ethnicity, placed within historical epochs which are distinguishable in terms of Detroit's socioeconomic development. This will comprise the following four chapters. A final chapter will be devoted to a general summary of conclusions, an evaluation of suggested hypotheses, and a re-examination of the developed model.

CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

The Concept of Elite

As is the case with so many concepts of social science, the notion of elite is at once subject to a large and often confusing variety of interpretations. If the term becomes an essential unit of the sociological lexicon following the expositions of Pareto and Mosca in the late nineteenth century, the ideas underlying it are surely to be traced to the genesis of social thought itself.¹ Given its well-founded place in the contemporary disciplines of social science as well as its common usage among the lay public, the diversity of its conceptualization and the frequent inconsistency of its application should not be unexpected. To agree with Nadel's assertion that "whatever else we may mean by elite, we obviously mean a body of persons enjoying a position of pre-eminence over all

¹Vilfredo Pareto, The Mind and Society, ed. Arthur Livingston (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1935); Gaetano Mosca, The Ruling Class, trans. Hannah D. Kahn (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939).

others," is to leave the arbitrariness of definition still unresolved.² What is "pre-eminent," of course, becomes most critical and this will necessarily vary with different descriptive criteria. Since clear-cut boundaries of such social categories do not make themselves salient, definitions are often tautological at best.

The concept of elites adopted in this study is one that recognizes such categories as integral units of a society's stratification system, as creations of that system, and not subject to analysis apart from it. Following Weber's classic tripartite model, elites are comprised of those individuals who occupy the uppermost stratum of each of a society's class, status, and party hierarchies.

Elite Formation and Stratification Theory

To define a concept is only a first step in its explication. Attached to any explanatory tool of social science is a set of theoretical assumptions regarding its structural or behavioral origins which must be made clear before it is more generally applicable. In the case of elites, the issues surrounding the concept appear to reflect the controversies of stratification theory in general, notably the function, inevitability, and allocation

²S. F. Nadel, "The Concept of Social Elites," International Social Science Bulletin 8 (1956): 415.

of ranked social positions. An explanation of elites thus suggests the perspective of either of the two extant models of stratification.

In a very general sense, what has been labeled the "functionalist" approach consists essentially of the notion that positions on the social hierarchy are filled on the basis of a society's needs rather than from the needs or desires of individuals. "Conflict" theorists, on the other hand, view the allocation of positions and the subsequent inequality in the social hierarchy as arising from the struggle for scarce values.³ For elites specifically, then, the former model closely suggests the inevitable and functional view of such groups while the latter explains their emergence as the result of individuals and groups seeking to attain or consolidate positions of power.

Theories relating specifically to elites antedate the contemporary stratification debate but center upon similar questions. The inevitability of elite formation, for example, is most clearly postulated by Michels' thesis that social organization necessarily breeds oligarchy, in

³The controversy has not lacked for accommodation in the literature. The most primary statements of the two positions, however, are probably Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore, "Some Principles of Stratification," American Sociological Review 10 (1945): 242-49; and Melvin M. Tumin, "Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis," American Sociological Review 18 (1953): 387-94.

contrast to the Marxian notion of the emergence of a classless society.⁴ Allocation of elite positions is likewise dichotomized into Marxian and non-Marxian positions, the idea of "elite circulation," expressed by Pareto and later modified by Mosca, standing in contradistinction to the idea of continual control of the social structure by a ruling class whose power is essentially a result of economic dominance.⁵

The debate over these two basic perspectives continues though most agree that a synthesis is the more realistic theoretical position.⁶ To the extent that it represents a meaningful attempt at such a union, the present study has adopted Lenski's approach, the essence of

⁴Robert Michels, Political Parties (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1949).

⁵Indeed it has been pointed out that elite theories which seemed to surface most profusely in the late nineteenth century were largely intended as refutations of the Marxian model. See, for example, H. Stuart Hughes, Consciousness and Society (New York: Random House, 1958); and James H. Meisel, The Myth of the Ruling Class: Gaetano Mosca and the Elite (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958).

⁶For a concise summary of the two, see Ralf Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), pp. 157-65. Though he obviously leans toward one side of the controversy, Dahrendorf notes that "they constitute complementary, rather than alternative, aspects of the structure of total societies as well as of every element of their structures."

which lies in the explanation of a society's distributive system, based upon the dual principles of need and power.

Building upon the assumption that all human organizations are imperfect systems in which the actions of the parts are never completely subordinated to the needs of the whole, Lenski asserts that we should expect to find both cooperation and conflict as continuous and normal features of all societies. Assuming also that individuals are self-seeking units, they will utilize the various resources with which they are endowed by nature and society to attain their goals, the most primary of which is survival itself. Societal goals are not so easily defined but to the degree that they are also self-seeking units, Lenski concludes that the goals of a given society are "those ends toward which the more or less coordinated efforts of the whole are directed--without regard to the harm they may do to many individual members, even the majority."⁷ Thus in a society in which a dominant class has the power to determine the direction of the coordinated efforts of the society, "the goals of the society are the goals of this class."⁸

⁷Gerhard E. Lenski, Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 41.

⁸Ibid.

Although self-interest guides the actions of both individuals and societies, power alone cannot govern the distribution of rewards since most of these essentially selfish interests can be satisfied only by the establishment of cooperative relations. Thus Lenski postulates that "men will share the product of their labors to the extent required to insure the survival and continued productivity of those others whose actions are necessary or beneficial to themselves."⁹

This first principle, however, makes no account of how productive surplus, i.e., that which exceeds what is needed for survival, will be distributed. It is here that "power will determine the distribution of nearly all of the surplus possessed by a society."¹⁰ Given the existence of a surplus, the distribution of rewards becomes a function of the distribution of power rather than of system needs. Thus technology becomes the key variable which determines the nature of the society's distributive system. In technologically primitive societies with little or no productive surplus, goods and services will be distributed wholly, or largely, on the basis of need. As productivity increases, however, an ever-greater proportion of the goods and services available will be distributed on the basis of power.

⁹Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁰Ibid.

Applying this model specifically to elites, such units may be seen to emerge initially on a purely functional basis, given a society's need for their valued resources, be they skills, wealth, or other distinctive characteristics; movement into such groups, however, may subsequently become dependent upon power resources which, as Lenski explains, are generally antecedent to both privilege and prestige.¹¹ Since elites have been defined as those uppermost strata of a society's class, status, and party hierarchies, it follows, then, that the incumbents of such positions occupy them as the result of the possession of predominant economic or political power resources or, in the case of status elites, predominant social honor.

The emphasis upon power as the key determinant in elite formation should not lead, however, to a disregard of status¹² or prestige as either a determinant

¹¹By viewing a society synchronically, system "needs" are assumed, i.e. that which is necessary to maintain that system. A diachronic approach, however, makes a view of "system" needs as easily one of "elite" needs which change through time.

¹²Except as it may be used to describe a position on a particular hierarchy, throughout this study "status" is to be employed in the Weberian sense, denoting social esteem or prestige: "In contrast to the purely economically determined 'class situation' we wish to designate as 'status situation' every typical component of the life fate of men that is determined by a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of honor." Max Weber, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford, 1946), pp. 186-87.

of, or, in itself, the basis for the establishment of such units. Lenski's model diminishes the significance of this factor. He states that "while not denying that there is a certain element of feedback, the major causal flow has been assumed to move from power and privilege to prestige."¹³ Thus we see a linear flow of the acquisition of social advantage, with power the point of origin. Only slight consideration is given to the possibility of a more circular flow in which power may be preceded by prestige and may even be its resultant product.¹⁴

Those who place particular emphasis upon the functional characteristics of elites display a similar tendency to overlook the status factor. Keller, with the notion of strategic elites, is perhaps typical in this regard:

¹³Lenski, Power and Privilege, p. 430.

¹⁴Most theorists of power who have considered the role of prestige at all seem to take a position parallel to Lenski's. Bierstedt, for example, states that "prestige is frequently unaccompanied by power and when the two occur together power is usually the basis and ground of prestige rather than the reverse. Prestige would seem to be a consequence of power rather than a determinant of it or a necessary component of it." See "An Analysis of Social Power," American Sociological Review 15 (1950): 734. On the other hand, Weber's explanation of status groups appears to at least suggest the possibility of the reverse: "Every definite appropriation of political powers and the corresponding economic opportunities tends to result in the rise of status groups, and vice-versa." Economy and Society, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), p. 306.

Strategic elites, in our view, consist of the minority of individuals responsible for keeping the organized system, society, in working order, functioning so as to meet and surpass the perennial collective crises that occur. . . . strategic elites do exist and persist because of and to the extent that they perform certain crucial social functions.¹⁵

Keller further posits that the proliferation of such elites is due primarily to the accentuation of the social processes of population growth, occupational specialization, bureaucratic organization, and moral diversity.¹⁶ Elite formation is thus seen as not only a functionally necessary development, but an unavoidable product of an increasingly complex social system. If elites are defined in such a manner it is difficult to gainsay their inevitable emergence in advanced industrial societies. Indeed it may be considered axiomatic that functional or strategic elites, as part of a society's occupational hierarchy, will emerge in proportion to the degree of the society's division of labor: the more complex the division of labor, the greater the number and diversity of such elites. However, at the same time we must consider the possibility of increasing centralization of decision-making as acting to diminish the number of such positions.

¹⁵Suzanne Keller, Beyond the Ruling Class: Strategic Elites in Modern Society (New York: Random House, 1963), p. 23.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 65.

What is lacking in this account, however, is an explanation of the origin and persistence of non-strategic elites, more specifically those that may be called social or prestige elites, which display no apparent functional role. Moreover, the significance of such groups as regulators of movement into more purely strategic elites is disregarded. Power as a function of prestige is not considered. Although the reverse is more likely to be manifest in industrial societies, strategic positions may be allocated at times as the result of status position. It will thus be assumed in the present study that the class and status hierarchies of such stratification systems are for the most part mutually dependent; as such, an individual's position and/or mobility within one may be derivative of the other.

Elite Plurality in Industrial Societies

If elites are described as those collectivities which occupy the uppermost positions of a society's occupational, prestige, and political hierarchies, it becomes necessary to more precisely delimit such units. This is an especially critical detail in the analysis of advanced industrial societies in which are seen extremely complex class systems, structured upon intricately prescribed divisions of labor. In those societies with relatively simple social structures, the identification of individuals

or groups with great power resources is facilitated by the largely integrated nature of elites and stratification systems in general. Little or no functional specialization is evident owing to the society's simple division of labor and its lack of clearly defined institutional sectors; thus, economic, political, and normative power will generally be possessed by the same persons.

Given the complexity of industrial societies, however, power resources are no longer found within the realm of a single comprehensive group. Although a plural stratification structure with an elite at the top of each hierarchy is generally recognized for such societies, it is the specific composition of that structure, the relative importance of each elite, and the extent of integration among them which have led to differences in theoretical conceptualization. As a means of more fully developing a working model for the present study, each of these points will subsequently be clarified.

Class Systems

To disencumber the often confusing analysis of multidimensional stratification structures, the notion of "class systems" will be adopted. Lenski explains a class system as "a hierarchy of classes ranked in terms of some single criterion."¹⁷ If one may visualize a social system

¹⁷Lenski, Power and Privilege, p. 80.

as comprised of individuals, classes, class systems, and the distributive system, each representing a different level of organization, they may be seen to telescope in such a manner that individuals are at the basic level and constitute the units within classes, which in turn are the units within class systems. These class systems together make up the distributive system which can be interpreted as essentially the larger socioeconomic structure. In short, a class system represents a level of organization midway between a single class and the total social structure. Thus, several hierarchies of classes--class systems--each established in terms of some single criterion, may be conceptually created.

In the following analysis, three class systems are delineated: an economic class system, subdivided into business and labor sectors, a political class system, and a prestige class system. Position or status within the business and labor sectors may be said to derive from the extent of one's economic resources, within the political class system from the extent of political power, and within the prestige class system from the extent of social honor. Elites then become those collectivities which occupy the highest positions within each of these hierarchies; they are, in short, the highest class of each system.

Strategic and social elites.--The delineation of these four elite units makes imperative a conceptual distinction between economic and political elites, and the prestige elite. As a prestige group, the latter individuals do not necessarily derive their high position from power in the distributive system as do economic and political elites, although as has been suggested, in some cases they might. The basis of their presence in the elite structure is, however, noticeably different from other elite groups.

In contrast to the general tendency to disregard the prestige dimension in elite analysis, Baltzell has developed a conceptual scheme which appears to have more clearly encompassed both power and prestige factors. He denotes two aspects of high class position: an elite, referring to those individuals who maintain positions at the top of a functional class hierarchy, and an upper class, comprised of a group of families whose members are descendants of successful individuals (i.e. elite members) of one or more generations ago. This latter category is seen as a group maintaining a unique style of life and a consciousness of kind, making it clearly distinctive within the general social hierarchy.¹⁸ It is essentially

¹⁸E. Digby Baltzell, Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class (New York: The Free Press, 1958), pp. 6-7.

what Weber denotes as a status group or what we have called a prestige class. If examined in terms of class systems, this scheme may be seen as having combined elites of all functional or power class systems and distinguished them from the elite of the prestige class system.

Baltzell more fully develops this model by suggesting certain interrelationships between the two elements. By virtue of their functional (power) position in combination with upper class (prestige) membership, a third category is now created, labeled by Baltzell an establishment.¹⁹ What has been constructed is essentially a core elite group, consisting of those with both Power and prestige. A dual-level elite structure is thus conceptualized wherein the upper level is confined to those possessing both characteristics. Here prestige is not necessarily a concomitant of power; indeed, the very opposite may obtain in that those at the lower level, by virtue of their lack of requisite status, do not enter the uppermost realm of power.

A similar conceptual scheme is to be employed in the present study. When applied to the modern industrial Community the model may be graphically illustrated as in Figure 1. The three sub-units of the functional or power

¹⁹E. Digby Baltzell, The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 70-72.

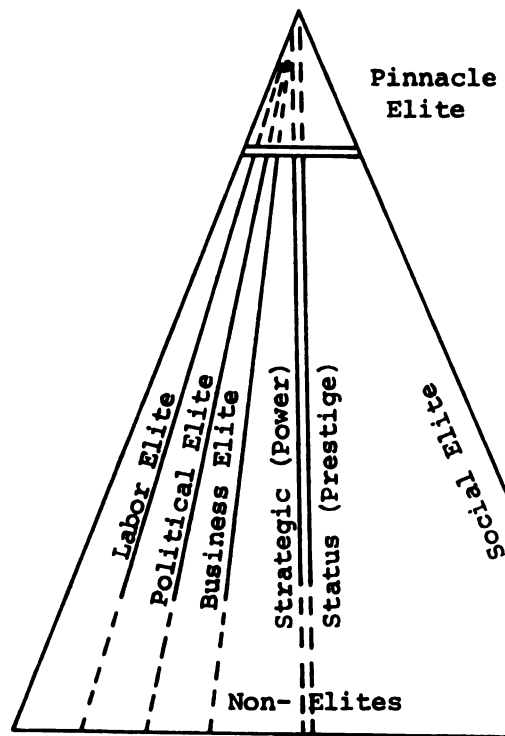


Figure 1.--The structure of elites in the modern industrial community.

dimension have already been denoted as business, labor, and political. In accordance with Keller's terminology, these elites will be referred to as strategic and will be distinguished from the elite of the prestige dimension which will be referred to as the social elite.²⁰ The third unit of the structure, that which combines membership in at least one strategic elite and the social elite, will be labeled the pinnacle elite. The analytic model

²⁰ "Strategic elite" is not essentially different from Baltzell's category of "elite" but Keller's label and general definition seem a bit more incisive. The adoption of "social elite" is similarly made to avoid the confusion which seems to attach to Baltzell's use of the term "upper class." The ambiguity of most applications of stratification terminology are, of course, well recognized in the discipline.

is thus a dual-level structure, both horizontally and vertically.

Individual members of such an elite structure may be seen to occupy one of four quadrants in a simple four-fold table as shown in Figure 2. Those in sector a. comprise the pinnacle elite, ranking high in both functional power and prestige; sectors b. and c. constitute elites which are at the lower vertical level of the structure, maintaining high status on the basis of either functional power or prestige; sector d. consists of the vast majority of the community's populace, those occupying non-elite positions on both functional and prestige hierarchies. It is the essential task of this study to investigate the ethnic composition of these four quadrants in the Detroit community during the first half of the twentieth century and to denote patterns of change in each.

		P O W E R	
		High	Low
P R E S T I G E	High	Pinnacle Elite	Social Elite
	Low	Strategic Elites	Non- Elites

Figure 2.--Elite sectors of the modern industrial community.

Elite Interrelationships

It has been suggested that although the plurality of elite structures in modern industrial societies is generally undisputed, the nature of their interrelationship is often a basis for theoretical controversy. The issues surrounding the correspondence of elites are particularly evident in regard to what have been labeled strategic elites, those to which social power is clearly attached. The number and diversity of elites at the top of a society's functional class hierarchy will vary with the number of classes conceptualized and the selective criterion employed in each case. Thus, occupational elites, elites of wealth, property elites, and so on may all be so conceived.

In addition, scholars have constructed schemes to describe the elite structures of modern societies in terms of various institutional orders, with little evident agreement, however, as to which orders are part of the general social system. Thus, Mannheim, for example, posits the main types of elites as "the political, the organizing, the intellectual, the artistic, the moral, and the religious;"²¹ Porter suggests five functional systems--economic, political, bureaucratic, military,

²¹Karl Mannheim, Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1940), pp. 82-83.

and ideological--each with a distinct elite.²² In short, the variety of schemes may be said to correspond to the number of studies undertaken and the proclivities of each researcher.

The notion of class systems has been suggested as one means of alleviating this confusion. In the present study, business, labor, and political class systems have been chosen for analysis on the assumption that it is in these spheres that the greatest degree of power to shape goals of the modern industrial community is found. Although elites are to be seen at the top of other institutional orders, those within the economic and political realms are deemed most significant. Form and Miller have asserted that in assessing institutional power in the U.S. at mid-twentieth century, both on a national and a community level,

The most powerful institutions are business, government, and labor. Mass communication, military organization, and education are of moderate influence. The weakest institutions in ability to make their values dominant are believed to be church, welfare, recreational, and aesthetic institutions.²³

It is perhaps on the premise that only the political and economic orders are capable of rendering far-reaching

²²John Porter, "Elite Groups: A Scheme for the Study of Power in Canada," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science 21 (1955): 510.

²³William H. Form and Delbert C. Miller, Industry, Labor, and Community (New York: Harper & Bros., 1960), p. 521.

effects upon the society as a whole that elite analysis and the analysis of power in general have concentrated on either or both of these institutional spheres.²⁴ The community power studies in American sociology have been particularly reflective of the idea that effective power resides within either the economic or political domain, although there is a noticeable lack of agreement as to which, if either, is ultimately dominant in particular communities.

Goal-integrating elites.--It must further be considered that within each functional sphere or class system are to be found a number of elite groups, each serving specific purposes. A more exact definition of such units thus seems essential; in a sense, "elites of elites" must be singled out.

In his study of Philadelphia, Baltzell suggests a typology of elites which seems particularly applicable to the analysis of the industrial community. He maintains that functional or what we have called strategic elites may be subdivided into three basic categories: elites which have a goal-integrating function, that is, those who

²⁴ Although business and labor might be considered only vertical sub-units of the same economic hierarchy, we have chosen to distinguish them horizontally on the assumption of their essentially distinct bases of power resources. "Business" is used here to denote the owners and/or managers of industry and finance; labor's power and influence, however, lie outside the framework of industrial and financial ownership or management. Indeed, its very raison d'être appears to lie in its role as a counter force against that sector. Thus a distinct hierarchy emerges within its own ranks.

decide the ends which the given social structure will pursue; technical elites whose function it is to provide the knowledge or means through which those ends are achieved; and those who perform the intellectual function, providing neither means nor ends but rather "ideas." The functional elite structure is thus composed of "organizers, technicians, and intellectuals."²⁵ Baltzell contends that it is the goal-integrating group which is most critical in any society and whose changing composition is therefore most important for elite analysis. It is such elites which are focused upon in the present study.

The notion of goal-integrating elites has been suggested by others who have varied their conceptualizations only slightly from Baltzell's. Davis, distinguishing goal-integrating from technical positions, notes:

the importance of technical knowledge from a societal point of view is never so great as the importance of goal-integration, and goal integration takes place on the religious, political, and economic levels, not on the technological. Since the technological level is concerned solely with means, a purely technical position must ultimately be subordinate to other positions that are religious, political, or economic.²⁶

In a similar manner, Janowitz separates elite "cadres" from elite "nuclei":

The elite cadre is the top membership of a skill group or a large scale organization. It is the group

²⁵Baltzell, Philadelphia Gentleman, p. 32.

²⁶Kingsley Davis, Human Society (New York: Macmillan, 1949), p. 376.

composed of the specialists in the specific and technical ends of the organization; and their position is achieved because of these skills. . . . [The elite nucleus] is the very small group of prime leaders who hold the highest posts in the establishment. They are oriented toward the broadest social issues, including innovation, self-scrutiny, and interrelations with other elites. It is the group in whose hands the development and the decline of their respective organization rests.²⁷

Applying this scheme to the idea of class systems, it may be said that those collectivities which stand at the top of each functional class system, maintaining ultimate power to shape its goals, and collectively the goals of the larger social structure, are goal-integrating elites. In modern industrial societies those positions in which incumbents are able to define organizational goals that have most extensive effects on the society as a whole are primarily limited to the economy and the polity. If Lenski's definition of social goals is recalled, the importance of goal-integrating elites lies in their capacity to establish the direction of the society's collective actions. The dominance of political and economic

²⁷Morris Janowitz, "Social Stratification and the Comparative Study of Elites," Explorations in Entrepreneurial History (1954): 8-9. The elites attached to the four sub-systems of Parsons' model of the social system may be similarly viewed, with those of the "goal-attainment" system corresponding to goal-integrating elites. Parsons sees the polity as predominant in this regard: "the goal of the polity is to maximize the capacity of the society to attain its system goals, i.e., collective goals." See Talcott Parsons and Neil J. Smelser, Economy and Society (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1956), p. 48. For a specific application of the Parsonian model to elite analysis see Amitai Etzioni, Studies in Social Change (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966), chap. i.

institutions in this regard is implied by Lenski when he maintains that the two most basic goals to which a society's members direct their coordinated actions are minimization of the rate of internal political change and maximization of production and the resources on which production depends.²⁸

It should be noted that goal-integrating positions will not necessarily remain so classified given different social structures or different historical periods; an elite categorized as goal-integrating in one may be technical in another, and so on. Moreover, historically, institutional orders other than the polity and economy may have performed essentially goal-integrating roles. The religious order, for example, can be seen to have exerted a highly significant influence on the definition of social goals prior to the emergence of industrialization. Likewise, sectors such as education and communications may play a future role which will largely offset much of the influence of the economic and political orders in the first half of the twentieth century. The key point is that, given structural changes in the society, new goal-integrating units will emerge and established ones will be relegated to the performance of non-goal-integrating functions. The example of labor as a sub-sector of the

²⁸Lenski, Power and Privilege, p. 42.

economy is a case in point. Particularly in industrial communities, during the past several decades an elite of labor leaders may be seen to have emerged with strong capabilities to influence social goals.

Elite Coordination

Although the plurality of strategic elites in advanced industrial societies is readily evident, it is upon the degree of integration--both organizational and behavioral--of these functionally specific units that theoretical dispute centers. Terms such as "power elite" and "veto groups" suggest opposite perspectives of the extent of centralization of the exercise of effective power within the various spheres of social activity.

At one pole the extant view is that elites of power are close-knit, having similar social origins, maintaining similar interests, and thus acting as a relatively unified force in societal decisions. Such a model assumes a single locus of power and minimizes the effects of a division of labor in the decision-making process.²⁹ A simplified description of this position is a pyramidal social hierarchy with a cohesive elite at its peak, usually comprised of economic dominants, maintaining

²⁹ On this point--power consolidation--both Marxian and elitist theorists seem to be in general agreement.

essential socio-political power. Mills perhaps epitomizes this view:

By the power elite, we refer to those political, economic, and military circles which as an intricate set of overlapping cliques share decisions having at least national consequences. In so far as national events are decided, the power elite are those who decide them.³⁰

Mills' analysis is focused upon a national elite structure but at the local level similar perspectives are not lacking in the literature. Baltzell, for example, in describing the power structure of Philadelphia, asserts that "it is possible to state that in the 1930s the economic and cultural life of the city was still dominated by a small nucleus of Philadelphia and Rittenhouse Club members."³¹ The Middletown (Muncie) studies of the Lynds as well as Hunter's analysis of Regional City (Atlanta) draw similar conclusions for different-sized communities.³²

³⁰C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite (New York: Oxford, 1956), p. 18. For critical evaluations of Mills' thesis, see in particular Daniel Bell, "The Power Elite Reconsidered," American Journal of Sociology 64 (1958): 238-50; and Talcott Parsons, "The Distribution of Power in American Society," World Politics 10 (1957): 123-43. Studies of national power which generally concur with Mills' model are Floyd Hunter, Top Leadership, U.S.A. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1959); and G. William Domhoff, The Higher Circles (New York: Random House, 1970).

³¹Baltzell, Philadelphia Gentlemen, p. 365.

³²Robert S. and Helen M. Lynd, Middletown in Transition (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1937); Floyd Hunter, Community Power Structure (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1953). A succinct, though

In marked contrast to this position is the pluralist perspective in which social power is seen to be relatively decentralized with no group able to exert undue power beyond its own institutional realm. With regard to leadership at the national level of American society, the observation of Rose is perhaps typical:

Among the elites are several that have their power through economic controls, several others that have power through political controls, and still others that have power through military, associational, religious and other controls.³³

At the local level, Dahl's study of New Haven well-exemplifies this position.³⁴

Most interpretations of the pluralist view of social power recognize, at least implicitly, the notion of countervailing or, what Wrong calls, "intercursive" power among the various elite sectors:

Intercursive power exists where the power of each party in a relationship is countervailed by that of the other, with procedures for bargaining or joint

clearly tendentious, critique of this perspective of community power is Nelson W. Polsby, Community Power and Political Theory (New Haven: Yale University, 1963).

³³Arnold Rose, The Power Structure (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 6.

³⁴Robert A. Dahl, Who Governs?: Democracy and Power in an American City (New Haven: Yale University, 1961). Dahl's conclusions take particular exception to the notion of political dominance of economic leaders in the community.

decision making governing their relations when matters affecting the goals and interests of both are involved.³⁵

This is in contrast to what Wrong refers to as "integral" power, in which decision and action initiations are effectively controlled by a single power unit, a view clearly attached to the power elite position.

To generalize on the basis of either of these two perspectives is to ignore the economic, political, demographic, and cultural singularity of individual communities. Muncie, Atlanta, New Haven, and even Philadelphia, do not necessarily resemble twentieth century Detroit either socially, economically, or politically; meaningful comparisons are therefore not likely to be made. Moreover, historical analysis compels the use of a flexible approach given the structural changes which may manifest themselves over several epochs.³⁶

This study has adopted what is essentially a pluralist view of power at the lower level of the elite structure. Within the strategic hierarchy at this level, Kellner's statement is appropriate: "No single elite can

³⁵Dennis Wrong, "Some Problems in Defining Social Power," American Journal of Sociology 73 (1968): 674.

³⁶In this regard, Dahl's analysis has clearly considered the historical factor. Several temporal divisions are denoted, each representing a significant change in the composition of New Haven's power structure. See Dahl, Who Governs?, pp. 11-62.

outrank all others because no one elite knows enough about the specialized work of the others."³⁷ It is further assumed that strategic elites at this level tap their power resources from functionally distinct sectors of the community.

At the pinnacle level, however, the extent of coordinated action by elites may increase substantially. Porter has noted that although unity of functional elites is rarely achieved in Western social systems, coordination may become quite noticeable:

The increasing complexity of a society's internal system and the increasing complexity of its relations with other societies bring with them a higher degree of coordination, and thus a greater concentration of power.³⁸

Even if it is assumed that the functional specificity of strategic elites at this uppermost level remains constant, it is the interaction in mutual clubs and associations that provides the framework within which individuals of diverse elites may display organizational and behavioral coordination. Indeed, it is the very coincidence of membership in the strategic and social elites that creates such a pinnacle category in the first place. To the extent that strategic and social elites interact, the

³⁷ Keller, Beyond the Ruling Class, p. 32.

³⁸ John Porter, The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 211.

conditions for reciprocal power arrangements, not present at the lower level of the elite structure, are created.

The changing nature of these interrelations (and thus for the shape of the elite structure as a whole) over extended time periods, however, must be emphasized. Relative integration among elites may be seen to exist in earlier periods while more fractionated relations may obtain in later ones. The entrance of new elements into the structure (a labor sector, for example) may provide the conditions for a rearrangement, or possibly even disappearance, of the pinnacle group.

Elite Recruitment

Different views of the extent of integration of elites in turn suggest divergent patterns of recruitment of personnel for such groups, an issue of more central concern to the present study. The notions of ruling class and, to a lesser degree, power elite carry with them implications that incumbent elites are able to determine their replacements largely on the basis of their currently-held power positions; achieved criteria for the selection of members are thus not critical. Multidimensional models of elite structures, on the other hand, are more likely to see recruitment as resting essentially on achieved criteria, a condition imposed generally by the functional requisites of complex social systems; specialized roles of diverse social institutions

call for individuals with corresponding skills and talents, regardless of social origin.

As was previously noted, a purely functional model of elites tends to discount the effects of status upon elite formation. No account is provided either for the persistence of non-strategic elites or their capacities to furnish pathways to strategic elite membership. More importantly, perhaps, there is no provision for the role of ascribed statuses--ethnicity in particular--in determining the occupants of elite positions, irregardless of their functional qualifications. Hence, as to the recruitment of personnel into such units, explanations resting upon the notion of needed social skills alone are inadequate. While adhering to a functional explanation, Keller seems cognizant of this problem. She notes that even when strategic elites are functionally differentiated with the result that a single group can rarely serve as an adequate source of supply for all elites, nonetheless "some group affiliations are preferable, hence more advantageous, than others, resulting in the informal exclusion of certain groups."³⁹ Yet, in her analysis the effects of such ascribed criteria are minimized; the variable standards which must be maintained for the placement of individuals into strategic elite

³⁹Keller, Beyond the Ruling Class, p. 177.

positions are seen as a means of assuring a wider social base of recruitment.⁴⁰

In the present study, clearly some notion of recruitment must be adopted which complements the dual structure of elites which has been posited, one which provides for social as well as strategic elite selection. Furthermore, since elites have been defined as units of class systems, recruitment or circulation should more properly be conceived of in terms of mobility. On these points, Turner's scheme appears suitable.

Turner has distinguished two ideal-typical norms of movement into elites, contest and sponsored mobility. The former refers to the achievement of elite status in open competition where established elites cannot pre-determine their replacements. Turner explains:

Contest mobility is a system in which elite status is the prize in an open contest and is taken by the aspirants' own efforts. While the "contest" is governed by some rules of fair play, the contestants have wide latitude in the strategies they may employ. Since the "prize" of successful upward mobility is not in the hands of an established elite to give out, the latter can not determine who shall attain it and who shall not.⁴¹

⁴⁰Barnard notes that in formal organizations, informal criteria of selection among executives, including such ascribed characteristics as race, nationality, and sex, may be deemed necessary as a means of assuring compatibility of personnel and thus ease of communication. See Chester I. Barnard, The Functions of the Executive (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 224.

⁴¹Ralph Turner, "Sponsored and Contest Mobility and the School System," American Sociological Review 25 (1960): 856.

Sponsored mobility, on the other hand, involves the recruitment of elite members on the basis of choice by established elites and cannot be attained by individual endeavors:

Under sponsored mobility elite recruits are chosen by the established elite or their agents, and elite status is given on the basis of some criterion of supposed merit and cannot be taken by any amount of effort or strategy. Upward mobility is like entry into a private club where each candidate must be "sponsored" by one or more of the members. Ultimately the members grant or deny upward mobility on the basis of whether they judge the candidate to have those qualities they wish to see in fellow members.⁴²

Turner notes that in societies with multidimensional elite structures contest mobility tends to predominate since no group is able to command control of recruitment and no group maintains a monopoly of elite credentials. Thus, when applied to the above proposed elite structure, movement into strategic elites should be of the contest type with achieved criteria of critical importance. As to the social elite, however, sponsorship more accurately characterizes the procedure of filling positions. Since position in the pinnacle elite is dependent upon a combination of strategic and social elite membership, this unit becomes one in which personnel

⁴²Ibid., p. 856. It is to be understood that both types are what Turner calls "organizing norms" and as such, they "do not correspond perfectly with the objective characteristics of the societies in which they exist, nor are they completely independent of them."

selection displays both contest and sponsored characteristics. In a sense they appear in tandem; strategic position may follow social elite status or the opposite may obtain. In either case, selection on the basis of competitive skills as well as sponsorship are apparent for those who enter this topmost group. Many who are selected for social elite status will not possess the skills necessary for strategic elite membership (sector b. of Figure 2), and in the same manner, many may attain functional elite status while lacking the required social characteristics established by the incumbent prestige elite (sector c. of Figure 2). In both of these cases pinnacle elite status is denied.

The Theoretical Framework Summarized

At this point it seems expedient to clarify in summary form the basic components of the model of elites which has been developed and within which the gathered data will be organized.

1. Elites are defined as classes, that is, those groups at the top of each class system, possessing the greatest amount of power, privilege, or prestige, or some collective combination of the three.

2. Class systems correspond to a society's institutional network, thus providing in modern industrial societies a multidimensional structure of systems with elites at their uppermost levels.
3. To the extent that elites are system decision-makers, it is the goal-integrating elite of each institutional sphere or class system which is responsible for defining its goals; collectively these goals are the society's.
4. In the advanced industrial community the most significant institutional spheres of functional power are business, polity and labor. The goal-integrating elites of these class systems are therefore responsible for establishing goals which have community-wide effect.
5. In such communities, in addition to strategic or functional elites, a social elite is evident, comprised of those at the uppermost level of the status or prestige class system.
6. Membership in strategic elites and the social elite need not correspond, but when it does, such individuals may be said to occupy a point at the pinnacle of the social hierarchy. They possess not only functional power but that which may derive from prestige as well.

7. Strategic elite positions are filled primarily on the basis of contest mobility, social elite positions on the basis of sponsored mobility, and those within the pinnacle group on the basis of a combination of the two processes.
8. As well as denying social elite entrance, status factors may intercede so as to block normal contest routes to strategic elite positions.

CHAPTER II

ETHNICITY AND ELITE STATUS

The intent of this section is to theoretically relate ethnicity to elite status and to suggest several propositions regarding that relation in the modern industrial community. The immediate purpose of a measurement of the extent of elite penetration by members of Detroit's ethnic groups during the twentieth century is to determine how much elite status has historically been a function of ethnicity in this community.¹ In addition to its use in

¹Like "elite," the term "community" carries with it several connotations. Although such a social unit may be conceptualized in geographic and political as well as sociological terms, it becomes increasingly difficult to precisely apply either in highly urbanized areas. During the early years of the period under analysis, the Detroit community may have been said to lie within the political boundaries of the city. With industrial and population expansion, however, a limitation of investigation to the central city became less meaningful. This was an important factor in our decision to terminate the study at 1950. We have limited our focus to the political and statistical unit of the city of Detroit as closely as possible, but to have ignored the basic ecological ties to its contiguous satellite cities--especially in terms of its economic activities--would have made our total analysis largely invalid. On alternative conceptualizations of "community," see Thomas M. Meenagan, "Community Delineation: Alternative Methods and Problems," Sociology and Social Research 56 (1972): 345-55.

this case as a dependent variable, elite status may be seen as serving a further two-fold analytic purpose as (1) an index of ethnic mobility, and (2) an index of structural assimilation.

Ethnicity Defined

In this study ethnicity is to be employed in a broad, inclusive sense, subsuming national, religious, and racial factors. The ethnic group so defined is one made distinguishable on the basis of a unique cultural orientation as well as a mutual identification on the part of individual and larger society.²

By stressing cultural singularity as the foundation of the ethnic group, we are able to so categorize those groups which are frequently defined either in racial or religious terms alone, in addition to the more commonly understood criterion of national origin.³ The emphasis

²Various scholars in this area have appeared to emphasize one of these two factors. See, for example, James W. Vander Zanden, American Minority Relations, 3rd ed. (New York: Ronald Press, 1966), p. 11; Brewton Berry, Race and Ethnic Relations, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 46; Tamotsu Shibutani and Kian W. Kwan, Comparative Ethnic Stratification (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 40; E. K. Francis, "The Nature of the Ethnic Group," American Journal of Sociology 52 (1947): 393-400; and Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: MIT, 1970), pp. 12-14.

³Glazer and Moynihan, speaking of American Blacks, for example, aptly point out that "black" defines within the American social context not so much race as a distinct cultural style. Beyond the Melting Pot, p. xxxix. The idea of the "triple melting pot" similarly rests on the

upon the cultural factor alone, however, makes for an almost limitless sub-categorization of a socially heterogeneous population. If we may speak of classes, for example, as comprising distinct cultural orientations, they too may in this manner be classified as "ethnic" groups. Also, a strictly cultural conception provides little explanation for those who have shed cultural distinctness from the society's dominant group but still remain ethnically perceived. Clearly, in addition to the term's cultural foundation is a necessary identificational element as well. Gordon's conceptualization stresses this aspect. He defines ethnic group so as to include any group which is distinguished by race, religion, or national origin, or some combination of these categories, assuming that there exists among them a common social-psychological core. There is no implication that the three are one, but rather that they each serve to create

assumption that each of the three dominant religions in contemporary American society is more significant as a peculiar cultural form than a theological doctrine. See Will Herberg, Protestant-Catholic-Jew (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1956); and Ruby Jo Reeves Kennedy, "Single or Triple Melting Pot?: Intermarriage Trends in New Haven, 1870-1940," American Journal of Sociology 49 (1944): 331-39. Some have preferred the term "religio-ethnic" as a means of more precisely defining this combination. In the present study, the religious (and racial) aspects are understood in the term "ethnic."

a sense of peoplehood, a fact recognized by the frequent use of the terms in interchangeable fashion.⁴

The ethnic group as minority group is implicit, on the assumption that there exists in the society a core group which is generally recognized as the cultural touchstone. Schermerhorn explains:

When we speak of a "dominant group" we mean that group whose historical language, traditions, customs, and ideology are normative for the society; their pre-eminence is enforced by the folkways or by law, and in time these elements attain the position of cultural presuppositions.⁵

It is this group which can be synonymously labeled "host" or "receiving" society, or what Porter calls "charter group:"

In any society which has to seek members from outside there will be varying judgements about the extensive reservoirs of recruits that exist in the world. In this process of evaluation the first ethnic group to come into previously unpopulated territory, as the effective possessor, has the most say. This group becomes the charter group of the society, and among the many privileges and prerogatives which it retains are decisions about what other groups are to be let in and what they will be permitted to do.⁶

⁴Milton M. Gordon, Assimilation in American Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 23-30. Baltzell's reference to a WASP (white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant) establishment is a clear example of such usage. See Baltzell, Protestant Establishment.

⁵R. A. Schermerhorn, These Our People: Minorities in American Culture (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1949), p. 6.

⁶John Porter, The Vertical Mosaic (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 60. See also Gordon, Assimilation in American Life, p. 72.

The establishment of such a dominant group in American society, primarily white, Protestant, and of British origin, is vividly described by Glazer:

The original Americans became "old" Americans or "old stock," or "white Anglo-Saxon Protestants," or some other identification which indicated they were not immigrants or descendants of recent immigrants. These original Americans already had a frame in their minds, which became a frame in reality, that placed and ordered those who came after them. Those who were like them could easily join them. It was important to be white, of British origin, and Protestant. If one was all three, then even if one was an immigrant, one was really not an immigrant, or not for long.⁷

Other than sex, the combined aspects of ethnicity in American society represent the most significant ascribed criteria of status for the individual in most areas of social interaction. Together with class, they essentially define the social actor's source of subcultural patterns of behavior, his reference point of group identification, and, perhaps most important sociologically, his social area of most primary and many secondary relations.⁸

⁷Glazer and Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot, p. 15.

⁸The most lucid description of the combined effects of class and ethnicity is Gordon's concept of the "ethclass," a social unit comprised of the intersecting area of class and ethnic hierarchies. See Gordon, Assimilation in American Life, chap. ii, as well as his earlier treatments of this idea in "The Concept of the Sub-Culture and Its Application," Social Forces 26 (1947): 40-42; and "Social Structure and Goals in Group Relations," in Freedom and Control in Modern Society, ed. Morroe Berger, Theodore Abel, and Charles H. Page (New York: Van Nostrand, 1954). The notion of such a social category is at least implied by Hollingshead in "Trends in Social Stratification: A Case Study," American Sociological Review 17 (1952): 685.

Elite Status and Ethnic Mobility

In ethnically diverse societies, ideally one would expect to find a random dispersion of ethnic representatives along the class and status hierarchies. In fact, however, rarely is such a pattern manifest. What is often more apparent is a clustering of specific ethnic groups at various points of these hierarchies.

As to the extent of significance of class as a function of ethnicity, there is little general agreement, particularly with regard to the American social structure. Some argue that ethnic differences in social rank are essentially reflections of class differences while the opposite seems equally, and in many cases more, plausible.⁹ By investigating the rate and extent of movement of ethnics

⁹This appears particularly so for those groups of highly salient ethnic identity. Recent commentaries on the structural position of American Blacks, however, reflect both views. O'Kane, for example, argues that social class "assumes a primary position in defining and explaining the relationship between upward mobility and the behavior of specific ethnic groups, while racial stigmatization can be considered as relatively secondary in importance. Class differentials, not racial differentials, explain the presence and persistence of poverty in the ranks of the urban Negro." See "Ethnic Mobility and the Lower-Income Negro: A Socio-Historical Perspective," Social Problems 16 (1969): 310-11. The Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, on the other hand, subscribes to the view that racial (ethnic) differentials are fundamental: "European immigrants too, suffered from discrimination, but never was it so pervasive as the prejudice against color in America, which has formed a bar to advancement, unlike any other." (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), pp. 278-79.

into the uppermost strata of the various functional and prestige class hierarchies in one American city, some determination of this structural relationship may be afforded.

Limitations and advantages of elite analysis.--One of the fundamental problems of examining the relative mobility of ethnic groups as whole units is their fluid nature; they are different social categories when seen at different points in historical development. Furthermore, the very boundaries of these groups are far from clear even at their initial entrance into the receiving society. More important to the researcher, perhaps, is the generally poor quality of available data that can be utilized in tracing their social movement. One of the more prolific historians of ethnic mobility asserts that:

The uncertainty of registration data, the inability to trace individuals from census to census and a complex of factors related to the migration of the population make it impossible reliably to trace either the career lines of large groups of individuals or significant intergenerational changes.¹⁰

In short, it is an uncertain task to trace the careers of obscure individuals--surely the great majority of immigrants and their offspring--and to evaluate the extent of their economic and social progress in sufficient

¹⁰Oscar Handlin, "A Note on Social Mobility and the Recruitment of Entrepreneurs in the United States," Explorations in Entrepreneurial History 7 (1954): 2.

numbers to establish a measurable pattern of their collective mobility in a given period. Moreover, the temporal and financial resources required for such a research project seem equally prohibitive.

It is here that a study of elites can, to some extent, overcome such impediments. If adequate biographical data is not available for such large numbers, it is available, albeit not necessarily in systematic form, for those who make their mark on the social history of their communities. An analysis of ethnic representatives at the upper levels of the social hierarchy can thus serve as a second-best alternative to the seemingly unfeasible course of tracing the progress of entire groups through several generations with entirely inadequate research materials.

A caveat must be advanced, however, against interpreting elite penetration as a general index of ethnic mobility. The extent of movement at sub-elite levels cannot necessarily be extrapolated from the findings at elite levels. In the final analysis the only question that can be safely answered from such an inquiry is, to what degree does ethnicity serve as a factor in the allocation of positions of power and prestige. It by no means follows that if positions at the top are seen to be limited to non-ethnics that this pattern is unavoidably similar at lower points of the social hierarchy. It can,

however, with some certainty indicate the limits of upward movement during certain historical periods.

Elites and ethnic mobility: myth and reality.--

If the value of an open class system has historically pervaded the ethos of American society it has not failed to reach beyond sub-elite levels. Indeed, it is particularly at the elite level that democratic ideology appears to insist most strongly upon open processes of recruitment. Lasswell, Lerner, and Rothwell, for example, proclaim that:

Democracy differs from oligarchy not in the presence or absence of an elite who wield most influence, but in the closed or open, representative or unrepresentative, responsible or irresponsible character of the elite.¹¹

In a like manner, Porter explains that the ethical ideals which are dominant in Western democracies are not only that there is popular participation in decision-making, but also that the class system is open, "that recruitment to positions of power is a result of personal achievement in a competitive society."¹²

In short, as elite theory has seemingly gained in acceptance, an effort has been made to reconcile it with the tenets of social democracy. Thus, although its

¹¹Harold D. Lasswell, Daniel Lerner and C. Easton Rothwell, The Comparative Study of Elites (Stanford: Stanford University, 1952), preface. (*Italics mine.*)

¹²Porter, "Elite Groups," p. 498.

basic axioms are not altered in any significant way, they are explained within a context which implies the preservation of democratic social structures so long as elite entrance is not circumscribed by rules established by self-preserving groups or individuals, and that the elite is not so classified on the basis of inherent qualities.¹³

The question then becomes, to what degree does ethnicity impede mobility into elite positions. Ultimately, only insofar as the core cultural group in the society is willing to share its power and prestige may an open class system be said to exist.

The prevalent image of ethnic mobility in American society has traditionally complemented the dominant notion of an open process of elite recruitment. The idea of a common entrance status at the bottom of the social hierarchy and a subsequent rise over a period of indeterminate time has seemed to characterize popular, and to some extent scholarly, beliefs in this regard.¹⁴ Such a

¹³For a rejoinder to this view, see Peter Bachrach, The Theory of Democratic Elitism: A Critique (Boston: Little, Brown), 1967.

¹⁴Metzger claims that sociologists, by and large, have accepted the traditional liberal image of American society in which eventual assimilation of ethnic groups naturally follows from the provision of adequate mobility opportunities: "Although they have repeatedly documented the discrepancy between social reality and cultural myth in America, they have also taken the view that the incorporation of America's ethnic and racial groups into the mainstream culture is virtually inevitable." L. Paul Metzger, "American Sociology and Black Assimilation: Conflicting Perspectives," American Journal of Sociology 76 (1971): 628.

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model is well illustrated, for example, by Warner and Srole's study of Yankee City. Here the researchers conclude that an essential similarity exists between the paths of movement upward in the class hierarchy for each arriving ethnic group. Although they point to the presence of modifying factors such as group size, order of appearance, family structure, and religion, it is basically posited that to a considerable degree, each new group repeats the occupational and status history of the preceding ones.¹⁵

Especially at the elite level, however, prevailing values tend to strengthen selection patterns and, as a result, over a period of several generations there may be displayed little conformity to the ideology of widespread accessibility to positions throughout the social structure. In spite of rational procedures of recruitment, particularly in filling strategic elite posts, those individuals with certain social backgrounds may come to be preferred for reasons other than their necessary skills. It is at this point that the functional model of role allocation breaks down. It is perhaps noteworthy that even Warner and Srole must point out that entrance into the upper-most level of their conceptualized class

¹⁵W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole, The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945), p. 63.

hierarchy was not attained by any of Yankee City's ethnic groups.¹⁶

At best, the divergence between the myth and reality of ethnic mobility in American social development remains problematic. With the increasing bureaucratization of the economic and political spheres during the course of the twentieth century, the paths of movement upward were seriously modified; but the faith in the assurance of an open class system, amenable now to different forms of achieved mobility, remained essentially intact. Although later studies have confirmed the presence of intergenerational mobility of ethnic groups as units, the rate and intensity of such movement has been subject to conflicting interpretations.¹⁷

It is felt that elite analysis can, at the very least, provide with some accuracy a measure of ultimate upward mobility, both its rate and extent. The methodological hindrances to a determination of class position for other than elites of large ethnic populations have

¹⁶Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁷See, for example, Peter Blau and Otis Dudley Duncan, The American Occupational Structure (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967), in contrast with the conclusions of Michael Parenti, "Ethnic Politics and the Persistence of Ethnic Identification," American Political Science Review 61 (1967): 717-26. For an interesting reassessment of Warner's Yankee City findings in this regard, see Stephan Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964).

already been alluded to and may in part explain the lack of agreement among observers. In addition to its methodological convenience, however, elite analysis is to be seen in itself as the chief means by which the degree of equality of status with the charter or core cultural group can be confirmed. Such status is indicated by the extent to which ethnic groups occupy a proportionate share of positions of power and prestige.

Elite Status and Ethnic Assimilation

It has been suggested that as an indicator of group mobility, elite penetration must be cautiously applied; with some surety it is a reliable measure of the extent of upward movement of particular ethnic categories. As an index of the degree of structural assimilation which the ethnic group as a whole has experienced, however, its validity is more clearly evident. It should be understood, of course, that mobility and assimilation are not to be considered mutually exclusive social processes.¹⁸

The notion of structural assimilation.--As a temporal sequence of minority group adjustment, the

¹⁸The closeness of their relationship is well-exemplified by Warner's statement that "our class system functions for a large proportion of ethnics to destroy the ethnic subsystems and to increase assimilation. The mobile ethnic is much more likely to be assimilated than the non-mobile one." Warner, The Social Systems, p. 284.

assimilation process has been described by observers with a noticeable indefiniteness as to its behavioral and identificational determinants.¹⁹ Allowing for a variety of indicators, most theorists assume, however, that the ideal-typical assimilated group is that which has been incorporated into the structure of the receiving society to the point of virtual extinction. Gordon explains that in its ultimate phase, assimilation involves "the disappearance of the ethnic group as a separate entity and the evaporation of its distinctive values."²⁰ Warner similarly notes as a first criterion of assimilation "the time taken for an entire group to disappear."²¹

Undue concern with the loss of identity of the group, however, appears to lead to a neglect of the more realistic situation in which the ethnic group and receiving society are mutually transformed through continual interaction. Vallee, Schwartz, and Darknell emphasize this possibility, particularly in societies which display an abundant plurality of ethnic groups:

Assimilation is seen not in terms of immigrant groups' or individuals' taking on the ways of a supposed dominant group, but rather as a process

¹⁹For a concise summary of the conflicting usages of "assimilation," see Gordon, Assimilation in American Life, chap. iii.

²⁰Gordon, Assimilation in American Life, p. 81.

²¹Warner, The Social Systems, p. 284.

in which a number of ethnic groups become increasingly similar to one another in particular respects. Balanced against it is differentiation, the process by which ethnic groups become less similar.²²

Although this is perhaps more accurately the case, we may nonetheless safely premise that there has been, and still persists, in American social development, a dominant subsociety or core cultural group that provides the standard by which other groups measure their relative degree of adjustment. This reference point, as was suggested, is most commonly regarded as comprised of Anglo-Saxon and Protestant characteristics.²³

²²Frank G. Vallee, Mildred Schwartz, and Frank Darknell, "Ethnic Assimilation and Differentiation in Canada," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science 23 (1957): 541. A useful compendium of the dominant theoretical perspectives of the assimilation process is found in Charles A. Price, "The Study of Assimilation," in Migration, ed. John A. Jackson (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1969), pp. 181-237.

²³This is not to mean, of course, that the sole objective of either the ethnic group or the receiving society is necessarily "total assimilation." Gordon discusses what he refers to as the three "central ideological tendencies" of ethnic assimilation in American social development: Anglo-conformity, consisting of the adoption of behavior and values of the Anglo-Saxon core group while renouncing the ethnic culture; the melting pot, envisioned as a socio-biological blending of the various groups; and cultural pluralism, involving the preservation of many of the structural and cultural aspects of the ethnic community within a common framework. Gordon notes, however, that "It is quite likely that 'Anglo-conformity' in its more moderate forms has been, however explicit its formulation, the most prevalent ideology of assimilation in America throughout the nation's history." Assimilation in American Life, p. 89.

Reference in this study to a dominant or core group is to imply such a category.

Although the sociological dimensions of the assimilation process are clear in terms of structural and cultural variables, many of the more frequently cited sequential models have tended to concentrate upon the psychological aspects of the problem. Eisenstadt's scheme is essentially social-psychological, centering upon individual rather than group adjustment to the new society.²⁴ Park's race relations cycle too, though obviously concerned with the effects of group interaction, tends toward a social-psychological orientation, given the emphasis upon such notions as the "marginal man."²⁵

Gordon's Model

Our point of reference is the group and, as such, considerations of individual behavior are to be seen more in terms of their group effects and implications; more importance is therefore attached to the individual as a group representative than as a unique social actor. Gordon's conceptual model is one which more clearly focuses upon the sociological parameters of the

²⁴S. N. Eisenstadt, The Absorption of Immigrants (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1954).

²⁵Robert E. Park, Race and Culture (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1950).

assimilation process. Here are outlined seven stages which occur more or less in progression, ranging from initial behavioral or cultural assimilation (acculturation) to a final civic assimilation involving the absence of value and power conflict between group and receiving society. Presumably in this ultimate stage the ethnic group as such is no longer distinguishable.²⁶

The key phase of Gordon's sequential model, however, is the second or structural assimilation stage. As he explains, "once structural assimilation has occurred, either simultaneously with or subsequent to acculturation, all of the other types of assimilation will naturally follow."²⁷ This point in the assimilation progression, the catalyst for all other stages, is reached upon entrance into the host society's (i.e., the value-defining core cultural group's) institutional network on a primary group basis. The initial stage, acculturation, need not lead to structural assimilation but may remain for an indefinite period the extent of movement along the progression. Once structural assimilation has occurred, however, the others naturally follow in rapid succession.

Gordon's distinction between acculturation and structural assimilation is an important one for it clearly defines the external, behavioral aspects of ethnic

²⁶Gordon, Assimilation in American Life, p. 71.

²⁷Ibid., p. 81.

group adjustment from the structural or social interactional. Indeed, as Gordon himself points out, the often synonymous usage of acculturation and assimilation has led to much conceptual confusion.²⁸ Moreover, it is the difference between cultural behavior and social participation which is critical to an understanding of the assimilation process as it has been manifest in American social history.

If structural assimilation is taken to mean full entrance into the societal network of the core cultural group at all social levels of behavioral interaction and at all levels of the class hierarchy, an analysis of the extent to which this has occurred for particular groups at elite levels is essential to an evaluation of their movement along the assimilation scale. As with ethnic mobility, much movement may occur at lower levels of the

²⁸ Consider the following description of Irish-Catholics by one observer of the ethnic community: "As a nationality group, and an early arrival at that, they are already assimilated; as a religious group, they are acculturated, but not socially integrated into the dominant group." Judith R. Kramer, The American Minority Community (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1970), p. 121. In this case, "integration" as still a third distinct process of ethnic adjustment is introduced. Vander Zanden defines integration as "the fusion of groups in the sense that social interaction is no longer predicated upon one's racial or ethnic identity." American Minority Relations, p. 300. The assumption here is that the group's ethnic identity remains intact. It is difficult to discern a significant difference between this meaning and that which Gordon has attached to structural assimilation since the latter does not imply the disappearance of the ethnic group's identity. Although it is an eventuality, it does not precede other necessary steps in the assimilation process.

class and status hierarchies, but until interaction is evident at the uppermost levels, for the group as a whole, assimilation is incomplete.

Elites as primary groups.--In terms of Gordon's model, elites provide a potential locus of primary relations. A prevalent conception of elites in modern societies is that they constitute more than simply statistical categories, but are discrete, socially homogeneous bodies. This view is premised not necessarily on the basis of hereditary transmission of position, but on the fact that members of such groups are compelled by functional necessity to interact on a personal basis, regardless of their social origins. Regarding such functional exigency, Baltzell describes Fiorello La Guardia's political career as an example:

Part of the tragedy of [his] life was that, though he had led a rich and convivial social life among his artistic and professional friends of Italian and Jewish extraction while he was a rising young lawyer in Greenwich Village, when he went to Washington, and later when he became Mayor of New York, he was forced by his functional position of leadership either to lead a social life within the elite or to have no social life at all.²⁹

Baltzell explains the need for close interaction among elite members as extending into other primary areas of social life, including residential patterns. For

²⁹E. Digby Baltzell, The Protestant Establishment (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 64.

ethnics, presumably the higher one's functional class position, the greater is the tendency to reside apart from the ethnic community.³⁰

In short, if not in all cases primary groups themselves, elites provide the social setting for generating many primary relations. To that extent, in terms of Gordon's definition, elite membership may be seen as an index of structural assimilation.

Inter-elite behavior.--Not only may we see primary social interaction within each elite group, but such behavior may be displayed laterally across elite boundaries. Porter expresses this idea:

Because their decisions are taken either in cooperation or in conflict with each other they enter into a scheme of social relationships, and thus acquire a degree of social homogeneity which the masses do not have. . . . Common educational backgrounds, kinship links, present and former partnerships, common membership in clubs, trade associations, positions on advisory bodies and philanthropic groups, all help to produce a social homogeneity of men in positions of power.³¹

Vidich and Bensman similarly describe "the interinstitution clique," in which membership is drawn from a multiplicity of organizations. The members' clique

³⁰ Although his analysis does not include those of the upper strata, Gans indicates a similar tendency among ethnics moving in class position from lower to middle levels. Age and class become more significant, ethnicity less so for primary group formation. See Herbert J. Gans, The Levittowners (New York: Pantheon, 1967).

³¹ Porter, Vertical Mosaic, p. 230.

loyalties arise outside the framework of institutional participation, resting instead on personal and extra-institutional considerations. The functional perquisites of such clique memberships are clear:

On the basis of one's institutional position each individual is in a position to offer institutional rewards to members of his clique who are not members of his institution. And conversely, to the extent that he is identified by other clique members, he is in a position to make a claim on these others for the institutional opportunities they can offer him.³²

Given the above model, such inter-elite behavior should be particularly evident at the pinnacle level. Social interaction will presumably be more personal, informal, and intimate here than at the lower levels of the elite structure due to a common social elite status in addition to variant strategic elite positions. If cross-membership in each sphere of the strategic dimension is not evident, such colleagueship is more easily seen within the sphere of the social elite where individuals interact within private clubs and associations. For those at the pinnacle level, the intimacy established here may carry over into their activities which are more clearly functional in nature.

Indeed, it is at this level that the club becomes an important mechanism for consolidating and conserving

³²Arthur Vidich and Joseph Bensman, "Power Cliques in Bureaucratic Society," Social Research 29 (1962): 471.

both power and prestige. Baltzell states that "at the upper-class level in America . . . the club (a private voluntary association) lies at the very core of the social organization of the accesses to power and authority."³³ He more specifically distinguishes between metropolitan and suburban clubs, the former of far greater significance in terms of their power-consolidating functions:

The circulation of elites in America and the assimilation of new men of power and influence into the upper class takes place primarily through the medium of urban clubdom.³⁴

The metropolitan clubs thus serve a dual function: they are at once monitors of entrance into the uppermost stratum of power and prestige as well as informal loci of important community decision-making. McWilliams' observation clearly reflects these functions:

In most American cities it will be found that the reins of social control can be traced to a particular "prestige" club or similar institution. Not that the club, as such, holds the reins of power; but rather that the forces represented by its membership are the dominant forces in the community. The membership of such a club is a mirror which accurately reflects the identity and relationships of power groupings in the community. In fact, social institutions of this type are a favorite mechanism by which power relationships are established and

³³Baltzell, Protestant Establishment, p. 354.

³⁴Ibid., p. 340.

maintained. It is precisely for this reason that membership is invested with a premium value and is regarded as important and desirable.³⁵

If, as Gordon posits, large-scale entrance into the dominant group's "cliques, clubs and institutions" marks structural assimilation, then to the extent that parallel status hierarchies exist corresponding to the various non-Anglo-Saxon ethnic groups, structural assimilation is stymied. It is hardly sufficient to explain the perpetuation of such parallel structures as the result of the continued existence of the ethnic community. This is, in effect, to diminish the significance of the core cultural group in enforcing exclusion. As McWilliams notes:

Institutions of this character are not based on the innate congeniality of like-minded persons, but rather on the strategical consideration of consolidating a power relationship. Social power is organized by exclusion. The larger the number of groups that can be excluded, the less will power have to be shared.³⁶

That the American metropolitan club structure has been thoroughly dominated by Anglo-Saxon Protestants is a conclusion reached by the few studies which have

³⁵Carey McWilliams, A Mask for Privilege: Anti-Semitism in America (Boston: Little, Brown, 1948), p. 115. For a descriptive account of the juxtaposition of significant corporate power groupings within one such metropolitan club, the Duquesne of Pittsburgh, see Osborn Elliott, Men at the Top (New York: Harper & Bros., 1959), pp. 159-71.

³⁶McWilliams, A Mask for Privilege, p. 116.

considered this aspect of community power and prestige.³⁷ Such dominance, to the point of purposeful exclusion of minority group personnel, is largely a twentieth century development, explained in part as a reaction to the massive influx of southern and eastern European immigrants during the century's first two decades.³⁸

An Auxiliary Conception of Structural Assimilation

Gordon's conceptualization of structural assimilation posits the entrance of ethnics into the institutional network of the core cultural group at the primary group level. To the extent that strategic or social elites are the bases of formation of primary groups or are primary groups themselves, ethnic penetration may be seen as an empirical indicator of structural assimilation. However,

³⁷See Baltzell, Philadelphia Gentlemen, and Protestant Establishment; Mills, The Power Elite; W. Lloyd Warner and Paul S. Lunt, The Social Life of a Modern Community (New Haven: Yale University, 1941); and W. Lloyd Warner, Democracy in Jonesville (New York: Harper & Bros., 1949). It is important to note that Warner's studies deal with the networks of clubs and associations of cities that are hardly comparable in size to twentieth century Detroit or Philadelphia.

³⁸Baltzell explains, for example, that a Jewish upper class in Philadelphia did not develop until after the large immigration of Russian and Polish Jews after 1880. Prior to that time, Philadelphia Jews, largely of German origin, were assimilated into the gentile upper class structure, often through marriage but also through membership in exclusive clubs and associations. See Philadelphia Gentlemen, pp. 262-91 and Protestant Establishment, pp. 53-62.

if structural assimilation is taken to mean large-scale entrance into important occupational or functional positions, significant ethnic penetration of strategic elites may in itself denote the presence of this phenomenon, whether or not primary relations emerge. It is in this manner that Porter has applied the concept:

Structural assimilation means the process by which ethnic groups have become distributed in the institutional structure of the receiving society, and in particular have assumed roles in general civic life.³⁹

Here structural assimilation is represented by equality of occupational status rather than the status attached to groups at the primary social organizational level. As such, this conceptualization appears less qualifying than Gordon's and enables us to measure such movement by observing the ethnic distribution of occupations where they are arranged in some rank order, more specifically those at the uppermost echelons of the community's institutional hierarchies. Through an examination of ethnic penetration at such levels we may, as Porter notes, determine "the extent to which the charter groups had accepted other cultural groups as equals, and which groups had achieved positions of power and which had not."⁴⁰ Presumably the greater the ethnic representation

³⁹Porter, Vertical Mosaic, p. 72.

⁴⁰Porter's analysis is directed at the Canadian social structure and thus his reference to charter groups, British and French. It is perhaps the existence of two such core cultural groups which has made "cultural pluralism" a more acceptable social assumption throughout

at the highest levels of functional status, the greater the degree of structural assimilation.

Vallee, Schwartz and Darknell, in their analysis of the role of ethnicity in Canadian society, adopt a similar approach:

The unit of reference in speaking of structural assimilation is the social system and its elements--position, status, role, reference group, and so on. Seen in this light, structural assimilation exists when ethnic origin is not a relevant attribute in the allocation of roles, rights, facilities, and so on. Where ethnic origin is a relevant attribute in such allocation, we speak of structural differentiation.⁴¹

Thus, when the allocation of top roles as well as lesser ones in the social structure is made on the basis of other than ethnic criteria, structural assimilation has occurred. Ideally at this point for all ethnic groups in the community, the class hierarchy will exhibit a random distribution of ethnic representatives at its various points.

Although it is more specifically applicable to first generation immigrant groups, Eisenstadt's notion of institutional dispersion may also be seen as a similarly conceived indicator of structural assimilation. Referring

most of Canadian history in contrast to its general unacceptability in the United States until quite recently. See, for example, M. C. McKenna, "The Melting Pot: Comparative Observations in the U.S. and Canada," Sociology and Social Research 53 (1969): 433-45.

⁴¹Vallee et al., "Ethnic Assimilation," p. 544.

to the extent to which immigrants have been allocated roles within the various areas of the social system, Eisenstadt posits that their total institutional dispersion within an absorbing (receiving) society implies that: they are allotted all "universal" roles, those which are incumbent on all members of the society; they are absorbed in more or less equal proportions by the various special particularistic groups; and all "alternative" roles, i.e., those offering a choice to all members of the society, are open to them.⁴² The latter two requirements are particularly germane to an analysis of elite penetration.

An Application of the Two Models

By adopting aspects of both models, one specifying the importance of primary group relations, the other the acquisition of important functional positions, we are enabled to employ penetration of either dimension of the elite structure as an indicator of structural assimilation. To simplify the analysis we may label the two types of structural assimilation formal and informal.

⁴²Eisenstadt, The Absorption of Immigrants, p. 17. Eisenstadt does allow, however, for the importance of primary groups by noting that full absorption (assimilation) can only be indicated by dispersion within informal groups and cliques as well as the formal institutional spheres.

Although it is true that strategic elites may provide for primary group relations, the social elite, through the club structure in particular, may be expected to more commonly produce such patterns of interpersonal behavior. Thus, Gordon's model is clearly applicable to the status or prestige dimension of the elite structure. Ethnic penetration of a community's social elite is, then, a measure of informal structural assimilation.

The entrance of ethnics into a community's important strategic positions, specifically those positions of functional power within the political, business, and labor spheres, constitutes a form of structural assimilation which may or may not engender primary group relations with members of the core cultural group. In this case we refer to formal structural assimilation, implying only the fulfillment of a particular strategic elite role. Should both formal and informal aspects of structural assimilation have been attained we may expect to see ethnic penetration of the pinnacle elite.

With increased ethnic participation at the top of a community's stratification structure, several alternative patterns may take form. First, through the acquisition of an increasing number of strategic elite positions, more rapid formal structural assimilation of the ethnic group as a whole may be actuated. In a sense, social power may force assimilation.

Informal structural assimilation may also be abetted by strategic elite penetration, however, in that sufficient pressure from this dimension may impel access to the social elite and its primary group affiliations. On the other hand, the acquisition of an increasing number of strategic elite positions may have little effect upon penetration of the status dimension; in this way the exclusionary norms of the urban club structure remain a significant check upon informal structural assimilation.

In the latter case penetration of the pinnacle elite and thus of ultimate community power is seemingly impeded. Yet it does not follow that the limits of power need necessarily be circumscribed as a result of such social exclusion. Although non-Anglo-Saxons may indeed be unable to identify with prestige associations and thereby to enjoy access to the potential power resources they provide (it is here that the flow of power is from prestige rather than to it), power in the community may accrue through paths other than status mobility. As was suggested, should the social elite diminish as a monitor of power in the community with the entrance of new power elements into the elite structure, the virtual abolition of the pinnacle group--combining highest power with highest prestige--is implicit. In such a case the entire elite structure is reshaped; ultimate power may be

attained while by-passing the dominant social elite.⁴³ Thus minority groups may come to share proportionate power with the dominant group while maintaining distinct prestige classes. In this sense, McKee's conclusion that "in some ways, power may be more significant than assimilation in changing the distribution of life-chances in the industrial community" seems applicable.⁴⁴

Finally we must consider that the acquisition of community power in the form of a substantial number of strategic elite positions may have the effect of furthering structural pluralism by providing ethnic groups with the resources to retain and possibly enhance their cultural identities and structural organizations. In such cases, parallel social elites may persist not necessarily on the basis of exclusion by the dominant group but as a result of self-imposed exclusion. Such a path might be chosen, for example, by what Wirth has called a "pluralistic minority," whose aim is achieved "when it has succeeded in wresting from the dominant group the

⁴³In describing the alternative forms of the future American elite structure at the national level, Baltzell suggests one possibility as the WASP establishment developing into "a closed caste, protecting its way of life and privileges while generally abdicating from its position of leadership." Protestant Establishment, p. 75.

⁴⁴James B. McKee, "Status and Power in the Industrial Community: A Comment on Drucker's Thesis," American Journal of Sociology 58 (1953): 369.

fullest measure of equality in all things economic and political and the right to be left alone in all things cultural."⁴⁵

Summary

The process of ethnic assimilation is a complex phenomenon, the measurement of which involves cultural and psychological variables as well as structural ones. Most ethnic studies have seemed to opt for an emphasis on one of the first two, that is, either a cultural approach consisting of in-group analysis, or a psychological approach focusing upon identity and personality adjustment of the ethnic individual. Neither of these approaches centers upon the multiplicity of ethnic groups and their positions in the social structure of a heterogeneous community.

In a study which is to concentrate upon what are essentially structural variables, some empirical indicators must be devised with which to locate social structural positions of the various ethnic groups. Moreover, if the study is sociohistorical in nature such indicators must be consistent over extended time periods. It is felt that the analysis of elite penetration represents one such means of approach in attempting to determine how far

⁴⁵Louis Wirth, "The Problem of Minority Groups," in The Science of Man in the World Crisis, ed. Ralph Linton (New York: Columbia University, 1945), p. 363.

particular ethnic groups have moved up the stratification hierarchy and to what extent they have been accepted into the larger community's institutional nexus, both at the primary and secondary group level.

Prerequisite to an examination of such elite penetration, however, is a consideration of how powerful and prestigious positions in the community are to be decided upon for analytic purposes. It is to this task that the study now turns.

CHAPTER III

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The chief purpose of this study has been defined as a discernment of the scope, rate, and direction of movement of individuals of varied ethnic backgrounds into the elite structure of Detroit during the first half of the twentieth century. The identification of a power structure is a necessary prerequisite to such an analysis but it is clearly secondary in our focus of attention. With this caveat, we shall proceed to an explanation of how persons were selected as elite representatives. The purpose of this chapter is thus to more precisely define the historical universe upon which observations were made and by what measures the data were collected and ordered.

It is the purpose of a research design to systematically delineate and explain those empirical phenomena which are to serve as indicators of the concepts developed in a suggested model. Thus, the logical starting point for the present study is to identify those collectivities in the first half of the twentieth century in Detroit

which controlled the most significant units at the top of each of the three designated strategic class systems, as well as those groups which may be said to have constituted the status or prestige elite.

Methodological Alternatives

The determination of community power holders in general or those within designated institutional orders has given rise during the past two decades to several alternative methods and has, in the process, instigated a weighty controversy regarding the relative validity of each. Three general approaches to the study of community power may be denoted: the positional, reputational, and decision-making. Although each has claimed a school of partisans, the discordance which is apparent between them is perhaps as much the result of discrepant concepts of power as the methods for determining who has power.

The reputational approach, largely initiated by Hunter's work in 1953, is distinguished primarily by its reliance upon the responses elicited by reputable and knowledgeable informants in the community as to who actually wields power and influence. There is an implicit assumption that there are in fact distinguishable groups or individuals within the community who control enough power resources to effectively determine public policy and the objective is to determine who they are. This

method operationally involves compiling lists of those most frequently nominated as influentials by the panel of informants.¹

The decision-making approach, perhaps exemplified best by Dahl's study of New Haven, has critically responded to reputational analysis on several grounds and has offered in its place a method by which community power holders are determined without a dependence upon informants. Indeed, such dependence, it is pointed out, is at the crux of the controversy between the two approaches. Wolfinger explains:

There are two major causes of ambiguity inherent in asking respondents to name in rank order the most powerful members of their community: the variability of power from one type of issue to another; and the difficulty of making sure that researcher and respondent share the same definition of power.²

Exponents of this approach have further maintained that there is apt to be a clear discrepancy between those

¹Floyd Hunter, Community Power Structure (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953). Reputational analysis has been favored by those who adhere to a ruling elite model of community power, in which key decisions are seen to be made by a relatively cohesive and homogeneous group, deriving their initial power from economic dominance. A pyramidal class structure is implicit with power inhering in those positions at the pinnacle of the structure. Economic class and its correlates are thus the chief determinants of extent of community power. Although methodologically not the same, both Warner's and Lynd's studies pre-dated Hunter's but reached similar conclusions regarding community power.

²Raymond Wolfinger, "Reputation and Reality in the Study of Community Power," American Sociological Review 25 (1960): 638.

who are reputedly powerful and those who in fact participate in power acts. In order to determine such power actors, the decision-making approach involves focusing upon key issues in the community and subsequently determining who or what groups influence more strongly the ultimate decisions that are made in their regard.³

The positional approach, though perhaps least methodologically sophisticated of the three, is of primary significance in studies of a sociohistorical nature. The basic assumption underlying this approach is that the incumbents of important formal positions in the community's social, economic, and political institutions are in fact the possessor's of effective community power. It is further assumed that control over important community resources in the various institutional spheres is tantamount to the exercise of influence on community policies. The basic technique employed consists of identifying those important community institutions and compiling lists of top positions of each.⁴

³A pluralistic community power structure has been the predominant view of those who have adopted this approach, in contrast to the generally monolithic structural model which the reputationalists seem to favor. Factions and coalitions are seen to form around community issues and are subject to frequent change given a variety of issues. Heterogeneity and lack of cohesion characterize a multiplicity of power centers with economic dominants only one of several.

⁴Among the earlier community studies, the Lynds in Middletown and Warner in Jonesville recognized the

The positional technique appears to lend itself more readily than either of the others to historical analyses of community leadership. Those who have applied both reputational and decision-making approaches have most often described power structures of various communities synchronically, giving only limited attention to historical antecedents or to the dynamics of structural change occurring over an extended period.⁵ In the case of the reputational approach, the lack of feasibility of its employment in any but contemporary investigations is self-evident; the researcher simply does not have access to informants beyond a very limited time range. The decision-making technique likewise has little practical applicability given the task of recreating the resolution of key community issues without the presence of key social actors.

community's leaders as those who occupied important positions in its institutional matrix. See Lynd and Lynd, Middletown, and W. Lloyd Warner, Democracy in Jonesville (New York: Harper & Row, 1949). Porter's extensive study of power in Canada also utilized a basically positional approach. See John Porter, The Vertical Mosaic (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965). It should be noted that efforts have been made to combine the positional with either of the other two methods. See, for example, Robert O. Schulze and Leonard U. Blumberg, "The Determination of Local Power Elites," American Journal of Sociology 63 (1957): 290-96.

⁵Two exceptions are Donald S. Bradley and Mayer L. Zald, "From Commercial Elite to Political Administrator: The Recruitment of the Mayors of Chicago," American Journal of Sociology 71 (1965): 153-67; and Robert O. Schulze, "The Bifurcation of Power in a Satellite City," in Community Political Systems, ed. Morris Janowitz (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1961), pp. 19-80.

A basically positional approach, however, facilitates the compilation of systematic and researchable sociohistorical data. Formal position at the top of a major institutional order is easily observed over long periods of time and dynamic patterns and trends are more likely to become apparent when consistent criteria can be applied.⁶

In addition to the temporal aspects of the present study which seemed to make imperative some form of a basically positional technique with which to identify strategic elite personnel, it was felt that the study's prime focus would less likely be diverted to considerations of power using this method. We were not so much interested in community power per se as in delineating a group of powerful individuals with goal integrating functions

⁶Moreover the relative simplicity of a positional methodology does not necessarily detract from its capacity to accurately define possessors of effective community influence. Even if the impediments to their historical application were not present, neither reputational nor decision-making approaches would necessarily measure community power precisely. If power is measured by the degree of valued resources an individual or group possesses or has access to, neither of these methods alone may suffice. Spinrad aptly points out that: "those who are powerful in specific crucial institutional areas of community life may neither possess the appropriate reputations nor participate in many significant community-relevant decisions. Their power comes from the functions of their institutions. The decisions they make within their apparently limited sphere may be so consequential for the rest of the community or society that they are inherently 'powerful,' as long as the position of their groups are maintained." See William Spinrad, "Power in Local Communities," Social Problems 12 (1965): 344.

at the top of each of the community's chief institutional spheres.

Elite Boundaries

Having established those institutional orders of prime strategic importance in the industrial community as business, polity, and labor, it is necessary to create inventories of positions within each sector to be regarded as those of the elite. It should be noted at the outset that, like those separating other strata, the demarcating lines of elites at the top of class systems are not discrete; such imprecision will therefore necessarily reflect a degree of arbitrariness.

In establishing elite boundaries several points must be borne in mind. First, from a practical standpoint alone, the limitations of the elite structure must be sufficiently confined so as to avoid an unmanageable number of individuals to be considered. Not only is an overly inflated elite structure more difficult to analyze given the limiting factors of time and financial resources of the researcher, but as its size expands, the structure's behavioral significance at its lower levels tends to diminish as well. Thus there seems no apparent advantage to the inclusion of an excessive number of persons and, indeed, the disadvantages are clearly evident. At the same time, however, the boundaries must be carefully drawn so as to include representation from the most important

power and prestige organizations in the community. Finally, positions must be selected for which fairly systematic data can be gathered.

The economic elite.--A first step in selecting an elite of corporate and financial leaders is to determine the dominant economic enterprises in the community. The selection of such units is perhaps prone to more subjective judgments than the selection of political offices due to the variety of criteria which may be used to indicate power resources of economic units and in the lack of a common basis for comparing them over several contiguous historical periods. For non-financial establishments, an indicator of potential community power which seems to avoid these problems is the number of individuals employed by each firm. Moreover, power over jobs has unquestionable community-wide effects, especially where single firms employ great segments of a city's labor force.

We chose to analyze the highest ranking Detroit-based officials of all non-financial firms which employed more than 1000 for the years 1910 through 1950 and, given the less expansive nature of the Detroit economy in 1900, those employing more than 500 in that year. Our procedure for determining these firms was an investigation of the reports of the State of Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics; Moody's Manuals of Industrials

and Public Utilities; the Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory; and the Directory of Michigan Manufacturers for the years under analysis.

As for banking firms, the only practical index of power appears to be total assets and we developed a list on that basis. We chose officials from banks which exceeded the median in total assets among all the city's banks for each year of the analysis. As an example, in 1900 there were twenty-two banks operating in Detroit, the median of their total assets being \$3.15 million; we thus selected the eleven firms which exceeded that figure. These determinations were made through an investigation of the annual reports of the Banking Commissioner of the State of Michigan.

We then proceeded to select the two highest ranking officials from each of these firms, in most cases the president and senior vice president, or for banks, most frequently president and chairman. Although there are rarely formal standards to define the topmost positions in business firms, it was felt that the two highest ranking executives would provide an unquestionable sample of functional power. In almost all cases, these two top functional officers were also board members.⁷ In

⁷On the imprecision and difficulty of ascertaining power in corporate structures, one observer notes that high offices such as president, chairman of the board, etc. are rarely defined by statute or charter so

very few cases were such positions not easily distinguishable. The offices of president or chairman were obvious, but many of the larger firms designated several vice presidents, in which cases we selected the "first vice president" or "senior vice president" or, if they were not so designated, that vice president who concurrently maintained a second high office such as "vice president and treasurer." If neither of these two criteria were applicable, we selected the vice president who had served longest in that position during the previous ten years. It was necessary to resort to this latter criterion in very few cases.

The political elite.--The selection of a political elite is more direct due to the greater clarity of high formal places. We limited our choice to the topmost elective offices in the city. It was felt necessary to discount appointive officials not only because of their lesser positions on the governmental hierarchy but also because the nature of recruitment was essentially different. The selected positions were thus: mayor and councilmen, city clerk and treasurer, president of the board of education, and judges of the recorder's court,

that their governing powers "are left to implication from their titles." See Richard Eels, The Government of Corporations (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1962), p. 60. See also Robert A. Dahl, "Business and Politics: A Critical Appraisal of Political Science," American Political Science Review 53 (1959): 1-34.

the highest criminal judicial body in the city. In addition we included the state senate and house delegations from Detroit as well as its U.S. congressional representatives. An analysis of these offices provided consistency over the fifty-year period and presented political figures who were, in most cases, amenable to biographical research.⁸

For the sake of analytic consistency we chose to present our findings for political officials at each ten-year interval as we did with the economic elite. However, since we used high elective office as the chief criterion for inclusion in the political elite, it was necessary that we be assured that the particular sample years selected for analysis were not highly unusual ones in terms of the main political trends of these fifty years. Through a less intensive analysis of top political leaders for all years of the half century we were able to observe ethnic and party trends over the entire period, and were satisfied on that basis that the dates chosen were not atypical.⁹

⁸Descriptions of the incumbent powers of these offices are contained in the annual Municipal Manuals of the City of Detroit. See also J. David Greenstone, A Report on the Politics of Detroit (Cambridge, Mass.: Joint Center for Urban Studies of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, 1961).

⁹The election of 1946 in Detroit is an example of such an anomaly. In that year the solidly Democratic

The labor elite.--In his study of power and class in Canada, Porter noted the difficulty of selecting positions to comprise a labor elite due to the extraordinary complexity of the trade union system in that country. In addition, because of their generally lower social status, labor leaders were not publically known to the extent that corporate and political figures were, making the availability of information regarding their social origins and careers very limited.¹⁰ Similar obstacles to their recognition and subsequent determination of their ethnicity were found in Detroit. The usual biographical sources were almost totally inadequate and it was here that we necessarily turned to informants who had been active in the labor movement in the city during the late 1930s and 1940s.

We have suggested that labor leaders in Detroit did not constitute an integral part of the city's elite structure until after the first three decades of the century. This is not to imply that a labor movement was not present earlier or that its leaders were indistinguishable. As a potent, goal-integrating force in the community, however, unions did not emerge until that

state house and senate delegations from the city were replaced by Republican majorities; in the following election (1948) almost all the displaced Democrats were returned to office.

¹⁰Porter, Vertical Mosaic, p. 337.

time. Indeed, it will be seen that the appearance of a significant labor movement represents a key factor in the social, economic, and political transformation of the city, bringing with it a definite restructuring of the elite order. Thus we have included in our analysis a labor elite only for the years 1940 and 1950.

The identification of important labor leaders after the 1930s in Detroit was facilitated somewhat by the concentration of union membership in the United Automobile Workers (UAW), to the extent that other labor organizations played only a secondary role in labor-community affairs. Thus, though other labor groups were included, our analysis purposely emphasized the leadership of this union. It was felt that the identification of powerful labor positions should follow a similar procedure as that used to establish an economic elite, that is, high officials selected from those organizations which displayed clear numerical dominance in the city. Since the UAW was overwhelmingly representative of the labor movement in Detroit in 1940 and 1950, concentration was focused upon this organization. The importance of this union in Detroit cannot be minimized for the decade 1940-1950. Unlike other industrial labor unions, the UAW was firmly tied to the city of Detroit during this time, being founded and headquartered there. Regions 1 and 1A of the union which comprised the Detroit community were by far the

largest in terms of membership. Detroit's dominance was reflected by the fact that in 1947, these two regions contained 37 percent of the total UAW membership.¹¹ For these reasons it was difficult to distinguish the international leadership of the union from the local; in many cases personnel were the same.

Basically our labor elite consisted of the top international officers of the UAW as well as the Detroit regional co-directors and the presidents of those locals with membership of more than 10,000.¹² In order to provide a more complete picture of organized labor's leadership we also included the top two officers of each of the city's labor councils representing the bulk of non-UAW membership.¹³ This yielded a labor elite considerably

¹¹Jack Stieber, Governing the UAW (New York: John Wiley, 1962), p. 155. Membership in Michigan as a whole was 54 percent.

¹²In 1940 there were three with more than 10,000 and in 1950, six. The power of such large locals should not be underestimated when we consider that the international's top leadership seemed to invariably come from these few. In 1950, the largest, Local 600 (encompassing the Ford Rouge Plant), had a membership of over 60,000. Its president's power within the UAW was significant enough to win concessions relating only to that particular local. (Information obtained from Biographical File, "Carl Stellato," Labor History Archives, Wayne State University.)

¹³These included the Detroit Federation of Labor, the Detroit and Wayne County CIO, the Michigan State CIO,

smaller than either the economic or political for reasons further explained in the chapter dealing with this group.

The social elite.--It is in the definition of a social elite that the dependence upon a positional approach alone appears to present a serious methodological problem. If power positions may be easily distinguished, the same cannot always be said for positions of prestige. Our historical analysis, however, all but precluded the direct use of community informants for the early periods of the study so that secondary sources had to be relied upon.

Baltzell, in his study of Philadelphia, depended exclusively upon the Social Register of that city as an index of upper class (social elite) status, maintaining that, although some individuals would undoubtedly be listed who were not truly qualified and vice versa, it was nonetheless the best available (and surely the most operable) index. He suggests that "insight into the structure and values of the American upper classes may be obtained by a perusal of the family listings in any

the Building Trades, and the Teamsters. There seemed general agreement among our labor informants that these councils not only encompassed the non-UAW labor movement but were most politically influential as well. In his study of Detroit politics, Greenstone also specifically noted the influence of these particular labor groups. See Greenstone, A Report.

contemporary volume of the Social Register.¹⁴ In the present study, a combination of Baltzell's approach as well as a modified reputational technique was employed. The Detroit Social Register, its predecessor, Dau's Blue Book, and its later replacement, the Social Secretary, were utilized as primary indicators of social elite status. In addition, however, the judgments of social historians were consulted as a means of yielding evidence of clubs and organizations which were recognized in the city as most prestigious during the period under investigation. Ultimately three organizations were selected for analysis, based on a rank order of exclusivity.

Ethnic Classifications

In placing individuals of the elite into ethnic categories we have followed as closely as possible our understanding of "ethnicity" as both a cultural and a social identificational phenomenon. Thus we have not limited ethnicity to national origins alone but have included Jewish, Black, and southern White as distinct ethnic classifications. Our other categories conform to national groups though our use of "Anglo-Saxon" is such

¹⁴Baltzell, Philadelphia Gentlemen, p. 27. Domhoff in his study of upper class power also relied heavily on this indicator. See G. William Domhoff, The Higher Circles (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 9-32. See also C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 57.

as to include those whose derivation is English, Scotch, Welsh, or Protestant Irish. We are not unaware of distinct national differences which are combined into this single category nor of the variable usages of "Anglo-Saxon." However, we felt that national and cultural differences were by 1900 too indistinct to warrant separate categories. Furthermore it was felt this term best described the core or charter ethnic group in the society.¹⁵ We had considered using the term "British" to denote such individuals, but given the frequent inclusion of Irish Catholics within this group, especially in early census data, it was deemed less suitable. With this one exception, "Anglo-Saxon" and "British" are for our purposes essentially synonymous.

Also in keeping with our cultural and identificational rather than national understanding of ethnicity, we chose to treat Canadians in the same manner as native Americans, that is, on the basis of original ethnic derivation rather than as "Canadian." This is particularly significant for Detroit in the twentieth century given the presence of a comparatively large group of those whose "official" origins are Canadian but who are in fact of varied European ethnic derivations.

¹⁵For a discussion of the historical origins of the term see Charles H. Anderson, White Protestant Americans: From National Origins to Religious Group (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970), pp. 13-14.

In presenting our findings we have tried to show the ratio between an ethnic group's representation in the elite and its actual percentage of the city's total population. A necessary dependence on census data, however, prevented more than a very rough approximation for most groups in any year. This was due primarily to the inherent bias in the U.S. decennial census which does not recognize ethnicity (more specifically, "national origins") beyond the second generation. Thus an accurate estimate of the size of "old" immigrant groups in the city such as Anglo-Saxon, German, and Irish, was not possible. Since census data only account for the origin of those who are foreign-born or the children of the foreign-born, such groups in our comparisons appear underrepresented. Those of the "new" immigration, for the most part southern and eastern Europeans, were more correctly represented as a percentage of the city's population since a much smaller number in these groups, even through 1950, were beyond the second generation. Blacks were accurately accounted for but since religion is also not included in census figures, we turned to studies which had estimated the size of the Jewish group in Detroit for the years of our study.¹⁶

¹⁶For the years 1900 through 1940 figures were adapted from Henry J. Meyer, "A Study of Detroit Jewry, 1935," in Jewish Population Studies, ed. Sophia M. Robison (New York: Conference on Jewish Relations, 1943),

The place of Canadians in the census data also presented something of a problem in that this category was consistently large for Detroit during this time. Although we chose to treat the Canadians in our elites on the basis of original ethnic derivation, there was no way of dividing the Canadian "foreign stock" of the general population into various other ethnic categories. Undoubtedly they were largely Anglo-Saxon and Irish during the century's earlier years but increasingly diverse in later years. Our comparisons between the ethnic percentages of the elites and of the city as a whole were thus further distorted.

There are other difficulties which must be considered in utilizing the U.S. decennial censuses for an analysis of a population's ethnic composition. Each census varies in extent and content of data presented and, perhaps most importantly, such data are based on country of birth rather than ethnicity. This becomes particularly problematic when dealing with central and eastern European groups, given the nature of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its fragmentation following World War One. Many individuals listed as Austrian natives, for example, were ethnically Polish, having been born in Austrian Poland prior to the war. If such political

pp. 109-30. The 1950 estimate is from American Jewish Yearbook, vol. 52 (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1951), p. 18.

realignments are not problem enough, one must also consider that more than a single ethnic group may inhabit the same political entity. The cases of Germans in Russia and Poland are only two more obvious ones. With such difficulties in mind we must accept the census data as providing in any case only a very general estimate of the relative size of each group.

Our generational categories followed those conventionally subscribed to by census reports. "First generation" comprised the foreign-born, while "second generation" consisted of individuals of at least one foreign-born parent. The U.S. Census classifies a combination of these two generations as the "foreign-stock" and our references to such a category followed this procedure.

Determination of Ethnicity

Rather than depend upon a simple name analysis as a means of determining ethnicity, the relatively compact size of our designated elites enabled us to more intensively research their ethnic origins and other meaningful social characteristics. It is of note that a dependence upon surname alone as a method of ascertaining ethnicity was found to be generally reliable in only the

most obvious cases.¹⁷ Name anglicization as well as the frequent lack of conformity to apparent national origins necessitated additional indicators such as religion, place of birth or parent's place of birth, fraternal and other club memberships, and other more subjective data when ethnicity was not specifically noted. Our sources of information were varied. The usual biographical reference works were consulted but, more often, important data relating to our analysis were secured from Detroit and Michigan histories, newspapers of the time, and in particular, public, corporation, and union biographical files.¹⁸

¹⁷ Some noteworthy studies which have utilized name analysis as a means of identifying ethnics in a population are Jerome K. Meyers, "Assimilation in the Political Community," Sociology and Social Research 35 (1951): 175-82; Francis A. J. Ianni, "Residential and Occupational Mobility as Indices of the Acculturation of an Ethnic Group," Social Forces 36 (1957): 65-72; and Nathaniel Weyl, The Creative Elite in America (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1966). For a discussion of the limitations of this method vis-a-vis Jewish names, see Erich Rosenthal, The Jewish Population of Chicago, Illinois (Chicago: The College of Jewish Studies, 1952), chap. i.

¹⁸ The bulk of our data were collected from the biographical files of the Burton Historical Collection, the Automotive History Collection, and the Municipal Reference Division, all of the Detroit Public Library. Also utilized were the Labor History Archives of Wayne State University, the Research Library of the International Headquarters of the United Automobile Workers, and to a lesser extent the biographical files of the State of Michigan Library in Lansing. Volumes which most basically complemented these sources are included in the study's bibliography. It should be noted that the conventional who's who directories, especially those of national scope, proved generally of minimal value since the individuals described therein were usually adequately covered by other more basic sources.

It should be noted that the biographical researcher is largely dependent upon what information his subject chooses to make public. Moreover, the information provided must, in many cases, be accepted with some caution. When a state representative, for example, lists his occupation as "banking," such an occupational title might encompass any position from clerk to president. Thus the most complete information for each case was garnered from a variety of sources rather than a single one.

Approximately 8 percent of those who comprised our elite lists were discarded from the final analysis for lack of any more certain means of identifying their ethnic derivation than surname. We felt it inconsistent with the general procedures of our data gathering to categorize these cases on such a basis alone. However, there appeared no "obvious" ethnic names among them and thus, if any group was underrepresented because of these individuals' exclusion it was likely only the Anglo-Saxon. Since it is the extent of non-Anglo-Saxon penetration that we were most concerned with, the validity of our findings was not jeopardized to any serious degree.

Finally we should point out that our findings must be considered with some caution since we are dealing with small numbers. At the same time, elite analysis--by definition--can consider only a limited number of cases. It is in this sense that the findings are more certainly

indicative of the ethnic characteristics of those at the very zenith of the city's class hierarchies.

CHAPTER IV

THE HISTORICAL SETTING

Now that we have spelled out the theoretical assumptions underlying our analysis and have indicated a descriptive model within which the data will be organized, we must presently give attention to the study's historical milieu. Before proceeding to our findings it seems desirable to at least highlight those aspects of Detroit's social and economic development in the first half of the century which may place the data into a meaningful temporal and locational context.¹ The key variables that

¹The standard works which were found most complete in recording the social and economic developments of the city during this period included Clarence M. Burton, The City of Detroit, Michigan: 1701-1922, 5 vols. (Detroit: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1922). Burton, History of Wayne County and the City of Detroit, 5 vols. (Detroit: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1930); and Paul Leake, History of Detroit, 3 vols. (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1912). Three more succinct works but valuable for the period 1930-50 were Frank B. and Arthur M. Woodford, All Our Yesterdays: A Brief History of Detroit (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969); Sidney Glazer, Detroit: A Study in Urban Development (New York: Bookman, 1965); and B. J. Widick, Detroit: City of Race and Class Violence (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1972). In addition, works describing specific institutions and individuals of this

relate to the ethnic penetration of its elite structure revolve around the city's industrialization and the ethnic influx which accompanied that process. We shall thus place particular emphasis upon these factors.

The Choice of Detroit

In addition to its relative convenience to the present writer there were at least two important reasons for having chosen Detroit in the first half of the twentieth century as an historical case study of elite penetration by ethnics. In the first place the socioeconomic evolution of this city during this time represents a developmental pattern unique in American urban history. Never before had a city expanded to such vast dimensions in so brief a period of time, the result almost entirely of the introduction of a single industry. Other cities had displayed extremely rapid growth both before and after Detroit's twentieth century surge, but none were so uniquely indebted to a solitary economic phenomenon.

Second, as a locale of ethnic heterogeneity, Detroit from 1900 through 1950 was perhaps exceeded only by New York City. The infusion of a great variety of

period were useful, in particular Nevins' definitive history of the Ford Motor Company in three volumes, Allan Nevins, Ford: The Times, The Man, The Company (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954); Nevins and Frank Ernest Hill, Ford: Expansion and Challenge, 1915-1933 (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1957); and Nevins and Hill, Ford: Decline and Rebirth: 1933-1962 (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1962).

immigrant groups, both foreign and domestic, which accompanied the post-1900 economic explosion was made even more significant by the fact that they continued to arrive in substantial numbers throughout most of these fifty years.

Nineteen fifty appeared to be a logical terminal point of analysis for much the same reason that 1900 represented a valid starting point: a combination of fundamental economic, demographic, and ethnic patterns of change began to clearly emerge. As 1900 marked the genesis of the automotive industry and the beginning of prodigious population growth, so 1950 appeared as an approximate date at which both of these phenomena had reached their apex. In short, the period from 1900 to 1950 seemed the most dynamic in the city's history both from an economic and political as well as a social standpoint; it would, therefore, likely reveal greater differentiations in elite recruitment patterns than other eras. Although our analysis covered only a fifty-year period, it nonetheless provided for several turnovers in elite personnel. In addition, at least two generations of each representative ethnic group were covered by this time span.

Significant events rarely lend themselves precisely to the conveniently arranged temporal categories of the social researcher; yet, some systematic arrangement is necessary as a means of ordering collected data. We

chose to subdivide Detroit's history in the first half of the century into ten year epochs. In addition to corresponding with the decennial censuses of population, such an arrangement appeared to draw bench marks at intervals which coincided quite closely with real epochal points in the city's social and economic developmental course. Since our data will be presented in such a decimal scheme, with an observation of the extent of ethnic penetration at 1900 and five points thereafter, we will forthwith present a brief description of the economic, demographic, and ethnic trends which were manifest during each decade. Finally we will attempt to evaluate their subsequent effects upon the class, and more specifically, the elite structure of the city. From this discussion we may be able to extract more specific hypotheses which will integrate our theoretical design with the unique Detroit setting.

Industrial Transformation, 1900-1910

Without question the most significant economic phenomenon of the half century for Detroit was the advent and maturity of the automotive industry. This, more than any, stands out as that clearly dominant factor which defined the community's industrial structure and as a result rendered consequent effects on all its institutional spheres. The "single industry" nature of the

Detroit economy was firmly established during the second decade of the century and did not change basically from that point forward.

Though the first decade of the century was a period in which automotive production was still in its infancy, undergoing basic formulation, Detroit had nonetheless established itself by this time as an industrial city of no small importance, experiencing steady, if not spectacular, economic growth. These first ten years represent, therefore, something of a transitional phase in which basic alterations were made industrially, giving rise to new positions of power and prestige. In addition, population growth was substantial, now including large numbers of immigrants from national states not previously represented in the Detroit populace.

At the century's outset Detroit's chief industries were centered primarily in the manufacture of stoves (of which the city was clearly the leading center), railway freight cars, tobacco products, and pharmaceuticals. It was in these industries that the greatest financial assets were concentrated and the largest numbers of workers found. Of the twenty factories employing 500 or more in 1900, four were stove manufacturers with a variety of industries comprising the rest, ranging from steel bridge works to the manufacture of women's corsets. Five firms employed more than 1,000, two of which were stove

manufacturers, one a plumbing manufacturer, another the great Parke-Davis pharmaceutical firm, while the American Car and Foundry Company, manufacturing railroad cars, was the leading employer in the city with almost 5,000 workers.² Automobile makers were noticeably absent, a surprising fact when one considers that but ten years hence they would already be dominating the industrial output of the city.

With a variety of industries well established, Detroit in 1900 was an attractive community not only for the swelling number of foreign immigrants beginning to arrive from southern and eastern European societies, but for an increasingly mobile domestic populace as well. The city's total population at this time was 285,000, a figure comparing most closely with other North Central cities such as Milwaukee and Cleveland. The rapidity of its ensuing growth is made even more apparent by the fact that it was at this time only the thirteenth largest city in the U.S., in no way comparable to such metropolises as Chicago or Philadelphia, each with over a million, nor even with Boston, Baltimore, and St. Louis, each with over half a million inhabitants.³

²Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Seventeenth Report (1901).

³Twelfth U.S. Census, 1900, Abstract, Table 81.

As to its ethnic composition prior to the century's outset, Detroit had followed a developmental pattern not unlike those of other comparably-sized cities of the East and Midwest with two notable exceptions. First, a large Canadian element continued to flow across the easily accessible border throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century so that by 1900 this group comprised over one-fourth the entire foreign-born population of the city. Only Boston, also in geographic proximity to the Canadian border, displayed such a similarly large Canadian group (also approximately one-fourth its foreign-born). Although the majority were likely of British and Irish origin at this time, the influx of Canadians served, especially in the later years of the period under analysis, as an additional source of individuals with varied European origins. In short, it added considerably to Detroit's ethnic character and made it an important indirect port of entry.⁴

A second distinction in Detroit's pre-twentieth century pattern of ethnic development is the presence early in its history of a substantial French element, marking it with not only a unique ethos among American

⁴See Leon E. Truesdell, The Canadian Born in the United States (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943); and Marcus Lee Hansen, The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples, vol. I (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940).

cities, but perhaps more importantly establishing a Roman Catholic influence even prior to the arrival of the Irish during the mid-1800s. This is of no small significance when we consider that Detroit never experienced as sizeable an influx of Irish immigrants as did other major nineteenth century American cities. Even by 1900 this group represented but 6.7 percent of the city's foreign-born.⁵

Comparing Detroit with others among the fourteen largest cities in the U.S. in 1900, it is apparent that in terms of its foreign-born element it was by this date already among the highest percentage-wise (Table 1). By the turn of the century, with almost 34 percent of its populace foreign-born and fully 77 percent foreign stock, Detroit could easily be categorized as an "ethnic" city.

Although its foreign-born were a substantial element, ethnic heterogeneity was not yet vast. Not unexpectedly Germans constituted the largest ethnic group in Detroit at the outset of the century, as they did in almost every other city with substantial non-Anglo-Saxon communities. In fact, of the fourteen largest cities,

⁵Twelfth U.S. Census, 1900, Population, Part I,
Table 38.

TABLE 1.--Foreign-born in the fourteen largest U.S. cities, 1900.

City	Rank in population	Total population	Total foreign-born	% foreign-born
New York	1	3,437,202	1,270,080	37.0
Chicago	2	1,698,575	587,112	34.6
Philadelphia	3	1,293,697	295,340	22.8
St. Louis	4	575,238	111,356	19.4
Boston	5	560,892	197,129	35.2
Baltimore	6	508,957	68,600	13.5
Cleveland	7	381,768	124,631	32.7
Buffalo	8	352,387	104,252	29.6
San Francisco	9	342,782	116,885	34.1
Cincinnati	10	325,902	57,961	17.8
Pittsburgh	11	321,616	84,878	26.4
New Orleans	12	287,104	30,325	10.6
Detroit	13	285,704	96,503	33.8
Milwaukee	14	285,315	88,991	31.2

Source: Twelfth U.S. Census, 1900, Abstract, Table 81.

only Boston and Philadelphia contained ethnic communities larger than their German ones.⁶

When we consider them in total, Detroit's industrial, demographic, and ethnic patterns closely resembled those of geographically common cities as Cleveland, Buffalo, and Milwaukee. In fact it is not unlikely that without the advent of the automotive industry Detroit would have followed developmental patterns similar to these cities throughout the remainder of the early 1900s. Although it had displayed substantial growth, both industrially and population-wise, until the initial ascent of the automobile, Detroit had merely kept pace with other North Central cities.

Industrial and Population Expansion, 1910-1920

If the first decade of the century was a period of basic industrial transformation in Detroit, the second decade was one of expansion. By 1910 the automobile had been fixed as the nucleus of the city's economy and the industry's concentration here was now an accepted fact. Rae notes that once Detroit's primacy was recognized, "the city exercised a gravitational pull on whatever might

⁶In both cases the Irish were the dominant ethnic group. In Philadelphia, Germans constituted the second largest group while in Boston, the German community was comparatively small ranking no higher than sixth among that city's ethnic groups.

contribute to the manufacture of automobiles--capital, managerial and technical talent, labor skills."⁷

More than a managerial and skilled labor force, however, it was the influx of a relatively unskilled laboring class that was so prominent, especially during this decade's later years. The methods of mass production which now took hold in the industry acted as a catalytic force in reshaping the city's class structure. With the Ford Motor Company's announcement in 1914 of a five dollar workday, what had been a steady stream of relatively skilled workers seeking the more lucrative opportunities of an upstart industry, now became a veritable flood of unskilled. To whatever extent it was valid, Detroit now bore the reputation of an attractive wage city as other manufacturers quickly, if perhaps begrudgingly, followed Ford's lead.

The effects of productive expansion on the growth of population in general can be seen by comparing Detroit with three cities it closely resembled in 1900 and 1910. As is seen in Table 2, its population now exceeded Milwaukee's and Buffalo's by a wide margin and had surpassed Cleveland's even though it had trailed this city by almost 100,000 in 1910.

⁷ John B. Rae, American Automobile Manufacturers: The First Forty Years (Philadelphia: Chilton, 1959), p. 60.

TABLE 2.--Population growth of selected cities, 1900-1920.

City	1900	1910	1920	% increase 1900-1920
Buffalo	352,387	423,715	506,775	43.8
Cleveland	361,768	560,663	796,841	120.3
Detroit	285,704	465,766	993,678	247.8
Milwaukee	285,315	373,857	457,147	60.2

Source: Fourteenth U.S. Census, 1920, Abstract, "Population," Table 10.

Although it was aided by a steady rural-urban movement of farmers and lumbermen, the primary elements of this population increase were the foreign-born and their children. Though the ethnic factor had already been significantly present by the beginning of the century, Detroit now became a city of great appeal for a broad variety of immigrant groups. What had been a population with an especially strong German influence at the turn of the century had by 1920 become truly cosmopolitan in composition with representation in substantial numbers of the entire spectrum of European ethnic bodies. Groups which had previously been present not at all in the city now began to establish themselves in coherent and distinct communities.⁸ While in 1900 only the Germans could be said to have constituted a large and forceful

⁸Lois Rankin, "Detroit Nationality Groups," Michigan History 23 (1939): 129-84.

non-Anglo-Saxon sub-community, by 1920 this preeminence was threatened by southern and eastern European groups, Poles in particular. With the addition of large numbers of Hungarians, Russians (primarily Jews), and Italians, southern and eastern European groups were approaching numerical equivalence with those of northwestern Europe (Tables 3 and 4).

Continued Expansion, 1920-1930

The national significance of the automobile industry and its Detroit focus were firmly established in the 1910-20 decade. During the following ten years, however, the industry would reach maturity, becoming the nation's largest manufacturing enterprise. The 1920 output of over 2.2 million motor vehicles would by 1929 increase by nearly two and one-half times.⁹ The tremendous expansion of this period is evidenced by the production of the Ford Motor Company, the dominant employer in the community during these years. With a productive output of little more than a half million vehicles in 1920, the company had reached a yearly production figure three years later of well over two million.¹⁰

⁹Automobile Facts and Figures, 1954 ed. (Detroit: Automobile Manufacturers Association, 1954), p. 4.

¹⁰Nevins, Ford: Decline and Rebirth, p. 478.

TABLE 3.--Foreign-born as percentage of total city population, 1900-1950.^a

Ethnicity	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950
Anglo-Saxon	3.1	2.7	2.5	3.6	2.5	1.7
Irish	2.2	1.2	.7	.4	.3	.3
German & Austrian	11.6	8.3	4.1	2.5	2.0	1.2
Other northwest European	1.9	1.9	2.2	1.8	1.8	1.0
Polish	4.8	7.1	5.7	4.2	3.2	2.4
Italian	.3	1.2	1.6	2.0	1.6	1.3
Other southern and eastern European	.6	1.4	6.5	4.3	3.9	2.7
Non-French Canadian	8.9	8.3	5.6	5.3	4.0	3.1

Sources: U.S. Census of Population, 1900-1950; Albert Mayer, A Study of the Foreign-Born Population of Detroit, 1870-1950 (Detroit: Wayne University, 1951).

^aPercentages calculated by the present writer.

TABLE 4.--Foreign stock as percentage of total city population, 1900-1950.^a

Ethnicity	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950
Anglo-Saxon	8.6	5.8	5.8	6.8	5.2	3.8
Irish	8.3	4.4	3.3	1.5	1.2	1.2
German & Austrian	32.8	29.2	17.8	9.1	7.3	5.5
Other northwest European	4.1	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.2	4.0
Polish	10.6	9.2	8.9	11.0	9.8	8.0
Italian	.6	1.8	2.9	4.0	4.2	3.7
Other southern and eastern European	1.1	4.4	12.4	9.0	8.2	7.0
Non-French Canadian	9.8	14.4	9.0	9.4	8.2	6.9
Jewish ^b	3.6	4.0	5.2	5.4	5.0	4.8
Black ^c	1.4	1.2	4.1	7.6	9.2	16.3

Sources: U.S. Census of Population, 1900-1950; Albert Mayer, A Study of the Foreign-Born Population of Detroit, 1870-1950 (Detroit: Wayne University, 1951); Sophia M. Robison, ed. Jewish Population Studies (New York: Conference on Jewish Relations, 1943); American Jewish Yearbook, vol. 52 (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1951), p. 18.

^aPercentages calculated by the present writer.

^bTotal Jewish population of city.

^cTotal Black population of city.

That the Detroit economy was clearly dominated by this single industry after 1920 is revealed by the fact that 27 of the 43 industrial firms employing more than 1,000 in that year were either automobile manufacturers or parts producers acting as suppliers to the industry.¹¹ The largest non-automotive firm at this time was the Burroughs Adding Machine Company, employing 6,000. Pharmaceuticals, metal-working industries, shipbuilding, and electric and telephone utilities were other important industrial enterprises in the city, but none approached the significance of automobile production. Ford, as the community's paramount firm, employed ten times the staff of Burroughs. By the decade's end, little had changed. A scattered variety of non-automotive producers were in evidence, in particular Burroughs, Parke-Davis, and a growing downriver steel industry. But shipbuilding and stove manufacture, a decade earlier still important enterprises, were now reduced to marginal significance.

The techniques of assembly line production were now perfected to their maximum feasibility allowing the auto producers to continue to recruit a largely unskilled labor force. The consequent demographic effects were predictable. Thus, while population growth in general and the amplification of ethnic sub-communities in

¹¹Michigan, Department of Labor, Thirty-Seventh Report (1920).

particular seemed to level off in most large cities, during the late 1920s Detroit's continued to expand. A population which had doubled from 1910 to 1920 reached a million and a half by 1930, making it the nation's fourth largest city. Among major urban units only Los Angeles had exceeded its rate of growth during this time.¹²

Most important to our focus, the diverse ethnic composition of this growing population may be said to have reached a maximum during this decade. Ethnically, three important trends were now evident: a continued influx of the foreign-born and their children, in particular southern and eastern Europeans, despite the curtailment of national immigration during the latter part of the decade; a significant infusion of rural southern Blacks; and a large inflow of rural Whites, most from southern and border states but also a great many diverted from Michigan's waning lumbering and agricultural industries.

The increase in European ethnics, both foreign-born and second generation, was unique during this time among major American industrial cities. Table 5 clearly shows Detroit's singularity in this regard. While almost all experienced net decreases in percentage of foreign-born and only minimal increases in foreign stock,

¹²Fifteenth U.S. Census, 1930, Abstract, "Population," Table 13.

Table 5.--Percentage European ethnic increase for selected cities, 1920-1930.

City	% Increase in foreign-born	% Increase in foreign stock
Detroit	38.3	44.2
New York	15.2	21.1
Chicago	4.7	16.8
Milwaukee	- 0.6	13.0
Buffalo	- 2.6	5.8
Boston	- 4.0	6.3
Cleveland	- 4.2	14.4
Philadelphia	- 7.3	4.7
Pittsburgh	- 9.3	9.2
St. Louis	-21.9	-13.3

Source: Fifteenth U.S. Census, 1930, Population, Vol. III,
pt. 1, Tables 58 and 59.

Detroit's population in both categories expanded considerably.¹³ Of the almost 400,000 foreign-born in Detroit in the year 1930, over 36 percent had arrived after 1920 and 15 percent had arrived after 1925.¹⁴ Two factors may explain this large net increase. First, the presence of an expanding job market along with the relatively high wages of the automobile industry continued to act as a lure for thousands who had previously settled in other cities. This likely accounts for the great majority. Secondly, the steady infusion of Canadians undoubtedly contributed not only to the number of foreign-born in general, but also aided in the augmentation of the city's non-Anglo-Saxon ethnic communities. The number of non-British immigrants entering Canada during this decade grew considerably and many no doubt entered Detroit in this roundabout manner.¹⁵

¹³ Although Los Angeles' percent increase in both categories was over twice Detroit's, its absolute numbers were not as large. Furthermore the circumstances surrounding Los Angeles' general growth in population during this time were so divergent from Detroit's as to make their comparison largely invalid.

¹⁴ Fifteenth U.S. Census, 1930, Abstract, "Population," Table 96.

¹⁵ Hansen notes that after 1920, having reduced the flow of European labor, the U.S. "began to act like a suction pump on the sections of Canada near her great cities and industrial regions." A longer lasting post-war depression in Canada also spurred outmigration. Hansen explains that, paradoxically, with more Europeans now flooding Canada, Canadian natives, not covered by

As is seen in Table 4, the Black community by 1930 had become sizeable, now constituting 7.6 percent of the city's total population. Although they had been present in Detroit throughout the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth, during the 1920s Blacks began to arrive for the first time in numbers which were substantial (Table 6). Again the lucrative job market created by the expanding automotive industry seems the most salient explanatory factor. In addition, the curtailment of European immigration now created further places for Blacks, as was the case in other northern industrial cities. Detroit's Black community, however, displayed a growth during this decade which exceeded that of any comparably sized city.¹⁶ Although in absolute numbers its Black populace did not yet approach that of Chicago, New York, or Philadelphia, the rapid surge during this decade would prove a harbinger of future movement into the city.

Also of important dimensions at this time was the concurrent movement into the city of rural Whites,

immigrant quotas, were more prone to look to the U.S. as they were dislodged by the new immigrants. The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples, vol. 1, p. 253.

¹⁶Fifteenth U.S. Census, 1930, Abstract, "Population," Table 45. In comparison with Detroit's almost 200 percent increase, Chicago's was 114 percent, Philadelphia's was 64 percent and Baltimore's was 31 percent.

TABLE 6.--Black population of Detroit, 1900-1950.

Year	Total numbers	% Increase	% Total population
1900	4,111	-	1.4
1910	5,741	39.6	1.2
1920	40,838	611.3	4.1
1930	120,066	194.0	7.6
1940	149,119	24.2	9.2
1950	300,506	101.5	16.3

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1900-1950.

particularly those from southern and border states.¹⁷

The confrontation of large numbers of southern Blacks and Whites contributed to a climate of racial tension which would remain an integral characteristic of Detroit's social ethos. Such tension, however, was not limited to these particular groups but was created by the simple juxtaposition of many divergent cultures--and classes--within an expanding urban environment. Widick describes Detroit in the 1920s as a melting pot, but one "seething with ethnic, racial, and class tensions and hatreds: a

¹⁷The infusion of southern-born Whites also rendered an effect upon the general composition of the city's ethnic structure in that it substantially increased the number of native-born Anglo-Saxon Protestants of third generation and beyond. However, since this added element bore little cultural resemblance to either the old stock Anglo-Saxons or the British foreign stock of the city, as we have defined ethnicity, it does not seem unreasonable to categorize this group as a new ethnic community in Detroit.

social and political jungle with little to recommend it but the opportunities it offered--to some--for economic gain."¹⁸

Industrial Contraction and Demographic Stabilization, 1930-1940

Due to the specific nature of its industrial produce Detroit experienced the disastrous economic effects of the depression more quickly and more seriously than did most cities of similar size. Statistics cannot describe the social despair which pervaded the city but they can give an indication of how abruptly the great expansion of the previous twenty years was brought to a convulsive halt. Again using the Ford Motor Company as an economic barometer, in 1929 this firm was employing 128,000 workers in the Detroit area, still the community's leading employer. By December of that year 28,000 had been laid off; by April of 1931, 84,000 were still employed at Ford but half of these were working only three days a week. In August, 1931 the Ford payroll stood at 37,000.¹⁹ Essentially the same situation prevailed among other firms. In November of 1931 a total of 223,000 in the city were unemployed and by early 1933 the number had risen to

¹⁸Widick, Detroit, p. 23.

¹⁹Irving Bernstein, The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker: 1920-1933 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), p. 255.

350,000 out of approximately 689,000 potential wage earners. Many of those still employed were retained only on a part-time basis.²⁰

The impairment of the Detroit economy produced a consequent leveling off of population. That its expanding economy from 1910 to 1930 had been the chief factor in accounting for the city's rapid growth in population during these two decades is evidenced by the fact that from 1910 to 1920, in-migrants had accounted for 78 percent of the increase and 70 percent from 1920 to 1930. By contrast, the decade of the 1930s resulted in a net out-migration of 78,000 and only an excess of 133,000 births over deaths during these ten years produced a slight numerical increase in total population.²¹

The years 1930-1940 may thus be said to have been characterized by industrial contraction and demographic stabilization. As a result of the latter, Detroit's ethnic sub-communities which had undergone the processes of formation and expansion in previous decades now appeared to have reached a point of equilibrium. While both the foreign-born and their children continued to

²⁰ Lester V. Chandler, America's Greatest Depression: 1929-1941 (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 44.

²¹ City Plan Commission, Master Plan Reports, The People of Detroit (Detroit, 1946), p. 6.

decline in percentage and absolute numbers during the period, by 1940 almost 20 percent of the city's total population was still foreign-born while just over one-half were foreign stock. As is indicated in Table 4, changes in the distribution of the various European ethnic groups from 1930 were only slight. The Polish community continued to rank as the largest, Germans continued to decline and Italians became slightly more significant.²² A relatively large number of first and second generation individuals of British origin was also noticeable at this time.²³ What is most striking in the 1940 ethnic breakdown, however, is the fact that the Black community had now risen to second place among the city's ethnic groups, fast approaching the total number of first and second generation Poles. When the third generation is considered, of course, the percentages would not likely

²²If the enclave of Hamtramck is included in the general population of the city of Detroit the percentage of Polish first and second generation would be increased by approximately 2.7 percent. Highland Park, the other Detroit enclave, displayed a more balanced ethnic breakdown during these years and, given its population of 50,000, would not have significantly affected the percentages.

²³Detroit's comparatively large British group is unique vis-a-vis other multi-ethnic cities. In 1940, Chicago, for example, had a foreign-born population of 672,000, over twice Detroit's. Yet Detroit's British foreign-born was 39,000 while Chicago's was 30,000. In fact, Detroit's British group was greater in size than that of any city but New York. The inflow from Canada is probably an important factor here.

appear as close; in this sense Blacks may have even ranked below non-French Canadians and Germans. However, it is clear that Blacks continued to migrate into the city in substantial numbers during the depression years and their eventual dominance of its ethnic structure was, even by this time, imminent.

Renewed Expansion, 1940-1950

The decade of the 1940s may be seen as a period of culmination for the city of Detroit--both industrially and demographically. As it had for the nation as a whole, the conversion to war production in the decade's early years yielded remedial economic effects and once again the city entered an expansionary phase. In addition to converted automobile and parts factories, new weapons plants, many of massive proportions, were constructed in and around the city.²⁴ Following the war, the automobile returned as the key to Detroit's economy. The City Plan Commission's analysis of the economic structure in 1944 put it simply: "Whatever it may produce in the future, its growth since 1900 has been based upon manufacture of automobiles, motors, bodies and parts so that today the

²⁴perhaps the most ambitious of these was the giant Willow Run bomber plant built by the Ford Motor Co. in Ypsilanti. At its peak in 1943 it employed over 42,000, most of whom commuted from Detroit. See Nevins, Ford: Decline and Rebirth, chaps. 7 and 8; and Lowell J. Carr and James E. Stermer, Willow Run: A Study of Industrialization and Cultural Inadequacy (New York: Harper & Bros., 1952).

city is largely dependent upon automobile production for its very existence."²⁵ Of the sixty-seven firms in the city employing more than 1,000 in 1950, half were primarily automotive-related and many of the remaining ones were at least partially or indirectly related.²⁶

The nature of the work force reflected that dependence. In 1940 the automobile industry--directly or indirectly--was the source of 80 percent of all employment in the Detroit industrial area.²⁷ As a city with an unusually large industrial laboring class, engaged in primary industry, Detroit continued to rank higher than other cities of comparable size.²⁸

The push-pull effects of economic fluctuation upon migratory movements once again leaned toward the "pull" cycle but in-migration was now confined primarily

²⁵City Plan Commission, Master Plan Reports, Economic Base of Detroit (Detroit, 1944), p. 5.

²⁶Figures computed from The Directory of Michigan Manufacturers, 1950 ed. (Detroit: Michigan Manufacturer and Financial Record, 1950).

²⁷City Plan Commission, Economic Base of Detroit, p. 7. This figure was for the Detroit industrial area which included the counties of Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb. The 80 percent is a somewhat misleading figure in that it included not only the automotive industries per se, but other industries, trades, and services supplying automotive workers with secondary goods and services.

²⁸Ibid., p. 31. The percent of Detroit's labor force engaged in manufacturing in 1940 was 51. This compared with Chicago's 38, Philadelphia's 40, and Los Angeles' 24.

to domestic groups rather than first and second generation immigrants. As might be expected, the total foreign stock, with its increased age, declined to less than half the city's population for the first time in the century. With the increasing size of the third (and for some groups even the fourth) generation, the use of the foreign stock as an indicator of the relative size of the various ethnic groups in the city in 1950 was less valid than in previous years. This was especially so for those groups which had been present in substantial numbers prior to 1900--Germans, British, and Irish in particular, and even Poles to some extent. However, this was still a fairly accurate indicator of the relative strength of certain major ethnic communities, those in which the foreign stock still constituted the vast majority, such as the Italian, Slavic, and Jewish groups.

It is also important to consider the very profound ecological changes which by 1950 had already begun to effect the ethnic composition of Detroit. Although a net increase in population as a whole was evident for the decade 1940-50, the post-World War Two suburban exodus made 1950 something of a watershed year for the city, with future decennial censuses indicating net losses. This second period of growth in the twentieth century thus represented as much growth outside the city of Detroit and its enclaves as it did within, especially in the

post-1945 years of the decade. In addition to the usual forces of suburban expansion, the prior establishment of war industry plants outside the city had already exerted a pull in this direction.

Given the changing spatial patterns of the city after 1950, it became increasingly difficult to analytically distinguish Detroit from the metropolitan region--either socially or geographically. With regard to the present study, analysis of the city's ethnic units became more difficult and the delineation of a community power structure likewise impeded. Thus, although European ethnic groups were still distinguishable in the city after this time, the general outward movement to the surrounding metropolitan area made an analysis limited only to the city less meaningful. Similarly, to distinguish leaders of the city was not necessarily to identify a power elite of the Detroit community. In short, when one spoke of Detroit after 1950, a less precise and clearly delimited unit was implied.

The ethnic redefinition of the city of Detroit after 1950 was most basically the increasing dominance of its Black populace. As is shown in Table 4, by 1950 this group was already the largest among the city's ethnic units.²⁹ Between 1940 and 1950 an increase of 100 percent

²⁹ Even if third generation Poles were included in this breakdown it is unlikely that the Polish group would have comprised more than 16 percent of the city's total population.

was evident by Blacks in Detroit, thus comprising a substantial portion of the general increase in population within the city during these years. Although white ethnic groups maintained their presence in Detroit after 1950, it is clear that their numbers were no longer concentrated solely within the city.³⁰

The Detroit Setting and the Study's Theoretical Design

A concise picture of its major patterns of industrialization and population movement during the first half of the twentieth century thus reveals Detroit as a unique American city. The advent of a revolutionary industry reaching truly gigantic proportions after the century's outset brought with it a concomitant expansion of population. Thus, as a city of the twentieth century, Detroit reached industrial and demographic maturity at a time when others had already begun to either stabilize or decline.³¹ Consequently it also reached a high point of

³⁰For an ethnic breakdown of the metropolitan area for 1950, in addition to the U.S. Census for that year see Nationality Groups of Metropolitan Detroit (Detroit: United Community Services of Metropolitan Detroit, 1955).

³¹Los Angeles, though equally a twentieth century urban phenomenon, is in many ways difficult to compare with Detroit due primarily to the two cities' basically different economic bases. The rapid growth of population in Los Angeles and other cities of the South and Southwest beginning in the second decade of the century was not due in the main to industrial expansion as Detroit's had been. Detroit's unique industrial growth during this

ethnic development, both in terms of number and heterogeneity, later than most. We must consider for a moment the effects of these economic, general population, and ethnic patterns upon the system of stratification in Detroit and more specifically upon the development of a structure of elites at its apex. Given the uniqueness of this city's socioeconomic development, similarly atypical patterns of stratification at this level may be expected.

First, given the critical dependence upon a single industry for its economic survival, we are more likely to identify a cohesive economic elite in Detroit than in more industrially diversified cities. With the clear dominance of the automotive industry, networks of power will emanate largely from this sub-sector of the city's business and industrial leadership. Common business, civic, and status organizational ties are more likely to be evident thus leading to greater intra-elite communication and the maintenance of common values among members. Regulation of elite recruitment is therefore likely to be aided.

The time of Detroit's industrial maturity must also be considered as a factor in shaping the top of its economic class structure. A more fluid elite, at least

time is reflected in the fact that while nationally the volume of manufacturing employment declined by over 13 percent from 1919 to 1939, Detroit's increased. Economic Base of Detroit, p. 6.

at its outset, may have been provided by the relative newness of the automotive industry. Thus during its early years of development greater opportunities for upward movement into elite positions for newer groups in the community might be expected. Since this industry was an actualization of the twentieth century rather than one already established at the century's beginning, Detroit was in direct contrast to most eastern cities whose economic elites were largely products of the earlier trade and finance decades of the nineteenth century. One historian of the industry has suggested that Detroit had never really been tied to a single dominating resource until the advent of the automobile, giving it therefore an ideal ecological climate in contrast to other more industrially committed cities which might as easily have developed into the center of automobile production. Detroit, in short, "had yet to acquire a big investment in the past that had to be protected."³² The power of an ensconced elite was thus not necessarily as serious an impediment to the reshaping of the city's structure of power and prestige.

The formation of a new economic elite with few roots in the past also may have rendered a similar effect

³²C. B. Glasscock, Motor History of America (Los Angeles: Floyd Clyner Publishers, 1937), p. 74.

upon the status sector of the elite structure, that which we have designated the "social elite." Baltzell specifically denotes Detroit and Los Angeles as cities lacking "coherent" upper classes, due to their twentieth century growth and domination by relatively new industries.³³

A community's political elite will be shaped not only by economic and demographic forces but by the nature of the political process itself. A rapid expansion of population may provide the leverage for new groups to forge more accessible paths to political elite status, but changes in the political structure may alter such paths and serve to consolidate the power of incumbent groups. The political reform of 1918 in Detroit seemed to mark the latter circumstance. We must also consider the relationship between economic and political elite sectors. During these fifty years were economic elites also political elites or were the two sectors by 1900 already bifurcated?³⁴ The cohesiveness of the economic

³³E. Digby Baltzell, Philadelphia Gentlemen (New York: Free Press, 1958), p. 29.

³⁴"Bifurcation" is Schulze's term. His study of Cibola, a medium-sized Midwestern city, is one of the few historically-oriented analyses of the changing structure of community power. Its relevance to Detroit in the twentieth century, however, is limited due to the fundamental differences in size and complexity of the two cities. See Robert O. Schulze, "Economic Dominance and Public Leadership: A Study of the Structure and Process of Power in an Urban Community" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1956); also "The Role of Economic Dominants in Community Power Structure," American Sociological Review 23 (1958): 3-9.

elite in Detroit may have rendered a more effective extension of its power into clearly political areas; on the other hand, the more specialized functions of elites in the economic realm, especially in the later years of the period under consideration, may have precluded such dual power arrangements.

Finally, as a city characterized throughout these fifty years by a particularly large industrial laboring class, how successful was this class in creating a leadership cadre as an effective counterforce to the business and financial elite? The overwhelming concentration of labor in a single industry may have initially aided the latter in effectively controlling power bids, but with the national rise of industrial unions in the late 1930s, customary power arrangements may have no longer been valid. Also we must consider the relationship between labor and political elites. As a potential mobilizing force, organized labor may have utilized the conventional political process to more expeditiously effect its entrance into the community's power structure. This being the case we are apt to find political and labor notables, particularly after 1940, acting in concert and indeed, even maintaining dual leadership roles.³⁵

³⁵For a discussion of the modifying effects of organized labor's entrance into one community's power and status structures, see James B. McKee, "Status and Power in the Industrial Community: A Comment on Drucker's Thesis," American Journal of Sociology 58 (1953): 364-70.

Research hypotheses.--As to the movement of ethnics into positions of power and prestige, what general patterns may we expect? Since we have at least partially subscribed to the notion that, as industrialization and urbanization progress, new elite positions are created, ideally we would find an increasing number of ethnics occupying such positions in proportion to their increasing representation in the general population of the city.³⁶ In other words, a perfect ratio would exist between the size of a particular ethnic group in the city and the size of its elite representation. At the century's outset, for example, Germans would have occupied the largest share of elite posts with Anglo-Saxons, Poles, and Irish holding a lesser number and other ethnic groups displaying only minimal representation. As southern and eastern European groups increasingly became greater proportions of the city's total population in the succeeding decades, we would expect a parallel rise in their numbers appearing in elite positions.

This is, of course, our ideal expectation and assumes the equal accessibility of elite positions to all segments of the total community; it makes no consideration of class and status variables, particularly ethnicity.

³⁶We have also noted the possibility of a contraction of elite positions due to an increasing centralization of decision-making.

McKee notes that in highly industrialized communities ethnicity is an especially critical status determinant. Thus, ethnic groups tend to cluster around certain functional positions and not others: "ethnicity, religion, and race take on cultural definitions in the community that reflect their access to or monopoly over levels of functional positions."³⁷ The status of the ethnic group itself therefore becomes a key variable in measuring the extent of its members' penetration into elite positions. Hence, as the population size of an ethnic group increases it does not necessarily follow that the proportion of elite membership representative of that group will increase correspondingly. We may therefore hypothesize that highly evaluated ethnic groups, i.e., those closest in social distance to the core Anglo-Saxon group, will in general exhibit a disproportionately large percentage of elite positions and those with low ethnic status will display a disproportionately low percentage, regardless of their size as percent of the city's total population.

What is likely to emerge from a closer investigation of the community's elite structure is the presence of variant degrees of openness among the several discrete strategic hierarchies, and thus differences in the extent of ethnic penetration. The constraints of sponsorship are

³⁷ McKee, "Status and Power," p. 366.

more likely to manifest themselves within the economic elite sector than either the political or labor due to less overt processes of selection. Ascriptive criteria--ethnicity in particular--will remain a continuing factor in the allocation of positions, for as Lenski notes, at the higher status levels of industry "impersonal bureaucratic standards are more difficult to apply."³⁸ Family inheritance is also important in this elite sector as a means of acquiring high functional position thereby increasing the tendency toward sponsorship. We may hypothesize, then, that those farthest in social distance from the core Anglo-Saxon group will exhibit greater degree of elite penetration in political and labor sectors where recruitment is less subject to ascribed criteria.

As to the social elite, since sponsorship is its chief mode of recruitment, strategic elite penetration will not necessarily assure entrance. Extrapolating his findings in Philadelphia to the society as a whole, Baltzell concludes that the American class system has remained open to the extent of producing a more or less ethnically representative (functional) elite; the status system, however, has failed to develop in a similar manner:

³⁸ Gerhard Lenski, Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 399.

The WASP establishment has been forced to share its power while at the same time continuing to hoard its social privileges. In a very important sense, we now have in America, at the elite level of leadership, a caste-ridden, open-class society.³⁹

The result has been the emergence of parallel upper class or social elite structures among non-Anglo-Saxon groups. There exists at the highest social levels what Kramer refers to as the "minority community," constituting "a resolution of the disparity between class and status created by the continued negative evaluation of ethnic birth even for those who achieve economic mobility."⁴⁰ Philadelphia and cities with similar social histories, however, have displayed cohesive social elites with long-established foundations. Given Detroit's significantly different economic, demographic, and temporal circumstances, divergent patterns of ethnic exclusion may obtain. The possibility of newer groups in the community gaining access to high status organizations following the attainment of strategic elite position may be enhanced. Thus,

³⁹ E. Digby Baltzell, The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 75. Although Baltzell does not explain the basis for such an extension of his findings, it is likely found in his assertion that in Philadelphia, as in all other metropolitan cities, the upper class maintains "a common cultural tradition, consciousness of kind, and 'we' feeling of solidarity which tends to be national in scope." In this sense there are many middle and lower classes, but only a single upper class. See Baltzell, Philadelphia Gentlemen, p. 389.

⁴⁰ Judith R. Kramer, The American Minority Community (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1970), p. 113.

as a general hypothesis we may state that regardless of the nature of movement into strategic elites, negative ethnic status will serve to impede social elite penetration. However, given the relatively late maturation of Detroit's industrial and social structure and thus of its status system as well, non-Anglo-Saxon ethnic penetration may be more fluid than in cities with highly developed and longer-established social elites.

Finally, the capacity for incumbent elites in all sectors to solidify their positions and to regulate recruitment may necessitate changes of a basic structural nature within the community before new groups may penetrate the elite stratum of its class or status systems. Important economic or political events may act as catalysts for such changes. The advent of the automotive industry is, of course, a most basic alteration of this kind but the depression of the 1930s, the empowerment of the Democratic party, and the emergence of a strong organized labor movement are, for Detroit in the first half of the century, equally valid examples. Presumably such developments will have had greater effect upon the social composition of elites than either the general mode of selection (i.e., contest or sponsorship) or the power of incumbent elites to establish such criteria. Longevity would seem to create both elite stability and homogeneity, while rapid and profound changes in the

community's socioeconomic structure would appear to create those conditions under which the power of incumbent elites might be effectively challenged.⁴¹ The more frequent the rate of such change, the less capable should ensconced elites be of solidifying and transmitting their positions through sponsorship. We may formally hypothesize, therefore, that during periods of rapid and significant social, economic, and political flux, the power of incumbent elites will be more successfully challenged, thus providing increased opportunities for penetration by individuals of varied social--and therefore ethnic--backgrounds.

In sum, what we shall be looking for in the ensuing analysis is deviation from the ideal pattern in which the size of each of the various ethnic groups in the city corresponds to its elite representation. In presenting our findings of where and to what extent each group does make penetration, we shall attempt to explain such movement primarily in terms of the changing or continuing nature of power in the community.

⁴¹For a statement of this position, see Frederic Cople Jaher, "Nineteenth Century Elites in Boston and New York," Journal of Social History 6 (Fall, 1972): 60.

CHAPTER V

THE ECONOMIC ELITE

In early 1950, the Detroit Free Press reported in the following manner the death of a former president of one of the city's larger corporate firms:

William R. Angell, 72, retired industrialist, died in Grace Hospital early Wednesday of injuries suffered when he was struck by a DSR bus. . . . The driver, Edward J. Rychlinski, . . . was released after making a statement to the prosecutor.¹

This item, apparently lacking in sociological insight, in fact reflects almost perfectly the class-ethnic inter-relationship of the stratification structure of Detroit as it was shaped and maintained during the first half of the twentieth century. The ethnic origins of the two described social actors are by no means atypical of those who maintained similar occupational positions. Though its work force was heavily comprised of ethnic minorities throughout the period under study, the economic leadership of the city remained solidly in the possession of those

¹Detroit Free Press, January 26, 1950.

whose ethnicity represented the society's charter group, or origins closest to them.

If there is a single overriding theme in our findings it is the almost total dominance of those of north-west European derivation. With the exception of several Jews (and they were for the most part German rather than eastern European Jews), we see no representation of southern and eastern Europeans, who by the century's third decade, comprised particularly large ethnic communities in Detroit. Nor do we see any Blacks (or other racial minorities) despite the fact that by the terminating date of our study, this group was the largest single ethnic bloc in the city.

What we are dealing with then, is an elite which over the entire fifty-year period was comprised most heavily of individuals of Anglo-Saxon and secondarily of German and Irish descent. In Table 7 we see the fifty-year pattern for the entire elite, including all of its various sub-sectors. What it reveals in total perspective is a striking degree of consistency. Only one group exhibits more than a 10 percent net difference in its representation from 1900 to 1950. Though the elite did increase in size from decade to decade, its ethnic composition, with few exceptions, underwent little basic change.

TABLE 7.--Ethnic composition of the economic elite, 1900-1950.

Ethnicity	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	Net difference 1900-1950
Anglo-Saxon	70.7%	77.1%	79.3%	73.1%	64.6%	60.7%	-10.0%
Irish	12.0	13.2	6.5	10.8	7.1	8.1	- 3.9
German	3.4	2.4	8.7	10.8	18.2	18.5	+15.1
Other northwest European ^a	8.6	3.6	3.3	5.4	5.0	6.7	- 1.9
Jewish	3.5	4.6	2.2	-	5.0	5.9	+ 2.4
Total (N)	(58)	(83)	(92)	(93)	(99)	(135)	

^aFrench, Dutch, Belgian, Swiss, Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish.

In spite of the relative consistency in its ethnic composition and the limited variety of groups involved, the entrance into the elite of non-Anglo-Saxons is apparent in all decades. In the following analysis, therefore, we shall attempt to show, through a more specific breakdown, how and under what conditions these individuals made penetration. In particular we shall consider how they differed from or resembled the Anglo-Saxon majority. Two independent variables stand out as especially critical to our sociohistorical examination: time of entrance and nature of economic enterprise. Although these are emphasized, we shall note other less apparent factors which may also serve to explain our findings.

The Elite at the Century's Outset

At the outset of the twentieth century the economic elite of Detroit was still representative of the pre-automobile economy. The men who occupied top leadership positions in industry and finance were the inheritors, and in many cases the founders, of firms established during the latter half of the nineteenth century. As a group they were the remaining part of what could be called the city's industrial and financial pioneers.

As can be seen in Table 8, although the city at this time was heavily populated by those of foreign stock, the elite was better than 50 percent third generation or beyond. More precisely, most of the elite who fell into

TABLE 8.--Ethnic composition of the economic elite by generation, 1900.

Ethnicity	Foreign stock & city population (77.1)	Foreign-born		Second generation		Third generation & beyond		Generation uncertain		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anglo-Saxon	8.6	5	8.6	6	10.3	27	46.5	3	5.2	41	70.7
Irish	8.3	1	1.7	6	10.3	-	-	-	-	7	12.1
German	32.2	1	1.7	-	-	1	1.7	-	-	2	3.4
Other northwest European	1.3	-	-	-	-	6	10.3	-	-	6	10.3
Jewish	3.6 ^a	2	3.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3.4
Totals		9	15.5	12	20.6	33	58.6	3	5.2	58	99.9

^aWe have considered the Jewish community through 1950 as primarily foreign stock.

this latter category were of colonial descent, with 24 of the 33 tracing their lineage to pre-nineteenth century American origins. The Anglo-Saxons of colonial ancestry were, if not of long-established Detroit families, of New England or New York State origin.

The other northwest Europeans in this year (French, Dutch, and Belgian) were all colonials and all of old and distinguished Detroit families, in most cases the sons and grandsons of nineteenth century commercial giants. At least two of the three of French origin in the elite at this time were the remaining scions of some of the first settlers of the city in the eighteenth century. These included Frederick Ducharme and Alexander Chapoton, the latter tracing his family to the founding of Fort Pontchartrain by Cadillac in 1701.² The Belgian in the 1900 group, Francis Palms, represented a family whose American founder had come from Belgium with royal credentials and who was later to become the largest landholder in Michigan. Charles Flowers, like Palms, an important figure in the expanding public utilities sector of the economy, was of a colonial Dutch family. Even the single German in the third generation category, Theodore Buhl, was representative of an important early industrial family of the

²Clarence M. Burton, ed., The City of Detroit, Michigan 1701-1922, 5 vols., (Detroit: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1922), vol. 1, p. 97.

city.³ Thus, almost all of those beyond the second generation in the elite at this time were of old-line American families, if not among the pioneer families of Detroit.

It is important to note the presence of those of colonial ancestry to distinguish them from first and second generation Anglo-Saxons who began their career paths with a similar length of residence in the community as those of most of the city's non-Anglo-Saxon population.⁴ As to the advantages of long-term American family origins, the Anglo-Saxon and non-Anglo-Saxon foreign stock of the city began on an equal basis. Yet the dominance of Anglo-Saxons among the foreign stock of the elite is quite clear. Of the 21 individuals either foreign-born or of foreign-born parents, better than half (11) were of English, Scotch, or Welsh origin.

Though the economic leadership of the city at this time was clearly dominated by those of either old American ancestry or Anglo-Saxon origin, we do find the presence of several non-Anglo-Saxon, non-colonial figures (10 of the 58)

³Biographical File, "Theodore Buhl," Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

⁴By 1900, only the German and Irish ethnic communities, in addition to the British, in Detroit contained substantial numbers of individuals beyond the second generation. Even within these groups, however, the numbers were not likely more than a small percentage since the city's total population was over 77 percent foreign stock.

who must be accounted for. The largest number of this group, the Irish, were all either foreign-born or the sons of foreign-born parents. As is seen in Table 9, they were particularly active in the banking and public utilities sub-sectors of the economy. Our investigation of the lesser officers and directors of the banks to which these Irish notables were attached indicates that they were not necessarily Irish-dominated institutions though other Irish names were evident.⁵ They were not, in other words, banks catering to the ethnic community.

TABLE 9.--Ethnic composition of the economic elite by enterprise, 1900.

Ethnicity	Auto mfr.	Auto parts	Non-auto mfr.	Retail mchds.	Public util.	Banking
Anglo-Saxon	-	-	73%	75%	50%	73%
Irish	-	-	6	25	25	14
German	-	-	6	-	-	9
Other northwest European	-	-	9	-	25	5
Jewish	-	-	6	-	-	-
Total N ^a	-	-	(33)	(4)	(8)	(22)

^aIncludes all positions rather than individuals.

⁵For the less intensive investigation of such lesser officials we utilized a name analysis method, the limitations of which have already been discussed.

A few Irish personalities bear special mention whose business careers were varied. Perhaps the most important in this group was Michael O'Brien, who occupied positions in public utilities as well as banking. Born in County Kerry in 1834, he came to the United States in 1852, settling first in New York City, later moving to Chicago and finally to Detroit in 1869. Like many other commercial magnates in Michigan prior to the advent of the automobile industry, O'Brien was a successful lumber merchant. His Detroit financial interests were massive, having founded two savings banks (including in 1900 the third largest in the city), organizing the Detroit Clearing House Association, and maintaining the offices of president and treasurer of the city's two largest insurance companies. Later he became instrumental in introducing natural gas into the city and became a director and treasurer of the Detroit City Gas Company, predecessor of Michigan Consolidated Gas Company.⁶

A second commercial giant among the early century Irish of Detroit was Jeremiah Dwyer. Following a typical migratory pattern which included New York City as an intermediary point between Ireland and Detroit, Dwyer's father came to the city in 1838 where he subsequently established a successful business. His son (our subject) succeeded as

⁶Burton, City of Detroit, vol. 3, pp. 300-303.

one of the founders of the stove industry, by 1900 one of the largest and most important in the city. The elite credentials of both Dwyer and his brother, James, were impressive at the century's outset, serving as top officials not only of the stove industry but of important banking and insurance firms as well.⁷

Edward J. Hickey, in 1900 vice president and general manager of the J. L. Hudson Company, largest retailers in the city at the time, represents a case of more extensive occupational mobility. Born in Detroit's Corktown, Hickey rose through the Hudson organization after having been initially employed in a menial position when the firm was in its infancy.⁸ Thus, unlike the former two Irish notables, his rapid success was due not so much to previously acquired personal or family wealth as to upward movement through the organizational ranks of an expanding business enterprise.

In short, though the Irish were overshadowed by the Anglo-Saxon majority in the elite, their place was not inconspicuous. They remained, in fact, the only non-Anglo-Saxon group to pervade the city's economic leadership, with positions in all sub-sectors, throughout the decade preceding the automobile.

⁷Ibid., vol. 5, pp. 312-15.

⁸Ibid., vol. 3, p. 917.

The Jews who were present in the elite at this time made their entrance as a result of the relatively diffuse economy of Detroit in 1900. As co-proprietors of the American Lady Corset Company, Jacob and Abraham Siegel, both German-born, joined other large clothing manufacturers as Hamilton Carharrrt and William Finck as representatives of a type of light industry which would in the next two decades be relegated to a minor place in the city's commercial picture.⁹

At the beginning of the century, the economic elite was thus a group composed in largest part of members of old American families whose antecedents had pioneered the establishments which they now headed or who had founded the firms themselves. The few whose origins were foreign or were only a generation removed from the foreign-born exhibited similar career paths. This pattern typified not only those in manufacturing areas of the economy but banking, retail merchandising, and, to some extent, even public utilities as well. First and second generation Irish played a numerically secondary role but one which was not significantly different from the position of the Irish community in the city as a whole. This contrasts most sharply with the Germans who were by far the most

⁹It is of note that, as in New York and other clothing manufacturing cities of the East, Detroit's large clothing manufacturing firms became a principal employer of immigrant women.

underrepresented ethnic bloc in the city's economic leadership. While almost one-third of Detroit's population in 1900 was either German-born or the children of German-born parents, their economic elite representation was by comparison almost totally lacking.

The Entrance of the Automotive Element

The year 1910 is an important benchmark in our analysis in that it signifies the approximate emergent point of the automobile industry in Detroit. The group of industrialists who comprised the 1900 elite consisted of non-automobile manufacturers and represented the well-established industries of the city. During the ten years following the century's commencement, however, the productive basis of Detroit's economy was realigned to accommodate the automobile. With new vistas of wealth and power created we should expect to find the introduction of unfamiliar personalities into the economic elite with possibly diverse class and ethnic backgrounds.

The elite underwent a significant expansion during this decade at least partially due to a small but important nucleus of automobile producers. This early automobile leadership cadre was in fact a somewhat disparate group, combining financiers and industrialists with no mechanical backgrounds such as Henry Joy and Philip McMillan, with those who were of exclusively mechanical occupational

origins including Henry Ford, Henry Leland, and the Dodge brothers. Their class origins were similarly diverse in terms of wealth, though all were products of at least middle class families. A few, such as Joy, represented considerable wealth.

The ethnic origins of the automobile industry's leadership at this time were characteristically Anglo-Saxon, with most of colonial ancestry. We find none of foreign birth though Ford and Chalmers were second generation. The ethnicity of the industry's leadership, though a potentially significant factor in future recruitment patterns, did not seem overly meaningful at this early point. Much of the industry, though new, still reflected the old Detroit economy and thus much of its elite personnel. Despite the fact that reinvestment of profits accounted for a great deal of their capital requirements, most of the larger companies were financially assisted by local individuals, many of whom were already well-established in the commercial leadership of the city.¹⁰ As a result, we find several such individuals in the industry's top offices at this time.

As for the parallel auto parts industry which developed alongside the actual producers, Anglo-Saxon dominance seemed even more clearly a result of the ethnic

¹⁰ Lawrence H. Seltzer, A Financial History of the American Automobile Industry (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1928), p. 19.

nature of the pre-automobile manufacturing leadership of the previous decade. Few established industries of the city outside of those engaged in light manufacturing (cigars, clothing, and drugs in particular) were not participants in the automobile revolution. Producers at this time were essentially no more than assemblers who acquired the component parts for their automobiles from a variety of parts makers.¹¹ Thus, already-operating wood and metal-working shops, carriage makers, rubber goods manufacturers and electrical equipment producers now flourished along with the auto makers. These industries had been characteristically Anglo-Saxon.

The Jews who were part of the 1910 elite are a case in point. None of the three were representative of industries which attached themselves even indirectly to the burgeoning auto production. Two were top executives of the American Lady Corset Company, still one of the larger clothing manufacturers, and the third was president and founder of the San Telmo Cigar Company. The manufacture of cigars continued at this time to be a prominent industry in Detroit but its significance in the total economic picture had clearly peaked. San Telmo was the only firm in this year employing more than 1,000 workers. A similar culminating point had already been reached in clothing manufacture. Thus all three

¹¹Ibid., p. 20.

individuals represented industries which by this time were waning but were not capable of linking themselves with the community's new economic forces. It is significant that Jewish representation in the elite declined after this point until 1940 when their participation, though still relatively slight, was apparent in several economic sub-sectors including automobiles and automobile parts.

Table 10 indicates that, with the exception of the introduction of the automobile leaders, little change had taken place in the ethnic composition of the economic elite. The Irish, continuing to play a noticeable if secondary role in comparison with the Anglo-Saxon majority, remained most highly concentrated in banking. In fact their position in this area actually increased in percentage. Although their total numbers were comparatively

TABLE 10.--Ethnic composition of the economic elite by enterprise, 1910.

Ethnicity	Auto mfr.	Auto parts	Non-auto mfr.	Retail mchds.	Public util.	Banking
Anglo-Saxon	100%	100%	73%	67%	87%	74%
Irish	-	-	11	33	13	21
German	-	-	2	-	-	5
Other northwest European	-	-	7	-	-	-
Jewish	-	-	7	-	-	-
Total N	(9)	(6)	(44)	(6)	(8)	(19)

small, once again they were represented in all non-automotive sub-sectors of the elite. As in 1900, this was meaningful if only in contrast with the relative position of the Germans who were still noticeably underrepresented.

Between 1900 and 1910, Detroit experienced a heavy influx of foreign-born immigrants, but the economic elite in no way reflected that demographic trend. As can be seen in Table 11, the second generation element of the elite was still quite large but the foreign-born had noticeably decreased. Anglo-Saxons and Irish were again most numerous among the total foreign stock.

In terms of our theoretical framework, perhaps the most interesting single individual encountered in the 1910 elite is Antonio Pessano. His case warrants mention in that it well exemplifies what we have referred to as formal and informal structural assimilation. His ethnic derivation was clearly Italian though by 1910 such origins were apparent only by his name. From what can be pieced together of Pessano's biography, he appeared to have fully entered the organizational structure of the community at both primary and secondary levels. A native of Philadelphia, he came to Detroit in 1902 at the age of forty-five to take charge as president and general manager of the Great Lakes Engineering Works, one of the important ship building firms on the Great Lakes at the time. So thorough were Pessano's Anglo-Saxon credentials that he could only

TABLE 11.--Ethnic composition of the economic elite by generation, 1910.

Ethnicity	Foreign stock & city population (74.0)	Foreign- born		Second generation		Third generation & beyond		Generation uncertain		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anglo-Saxon	5.8	3	3.6	10	12.0	42	50.6	9	10.8	64	77.1
Irish	4.4	1	1.2	8	9.6	-	-	2	2.4	11	13.2
German	26.7	1	1.2	1	1.2	-	-	2	-	2	2.4
Other northwest European ^a	3.3	-	-	-	-	3	3.6	-	-	3	3.6
Jewish	4.0	3	3.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3.6
Totals		8	9.6	19	22.9	45	54.2	11	13.2	83	100.0

^aFrench, Dutch and Norwegian.

be ethnically categorized in that way. One journalist of the day felt it necessary to offer the assurance that "Pessano's Italian name is his inheritance. He is an American charged with progressive ideas."¹² A Presbyterian, he married into an Anglo-Saxon family as his father had previously done, thus accounting in large measure for his lack of Italian community ties or cultural characteristics. He maintained social elite status, having been listed in the Social Secretary as well as holding membership in the most exclusive social clubs of the city. He was additionally prominent in the city's important commercial organizations including the influential Employers Association of Detroit.¹³

Although we cannot be certain if the pattern of inter-ethnic marriage began with Pessano's father or if it extended back perhaps another generation, it is clear that at this point there were few if any non-Anglo-Saxon features of either his primary or secondary group memberships. If we may make such a judgement on the basis of surname alone, Pessano's three children (that is, those of at least the third generation) appeared to have continued this

¹²Detroit Free Press, November 12, 1905.

¹³Detroit Free Press, December 6, 1923; The Book of Detroiters, 1908, ed. Albert N. Marquis (Chicago: A. N. Marquis & Co., 1908), p. 362.

pattern by marrying into Anglo-Saxon families. Pessano's case is by no means typical but it does demonstrate what was a most accessible path to ethnic penetration of the elite structure, both strategic and social sectors. We encounter several similar cases of intermarriage between non-Anglo-Saxon ethnics and those of old-line American families in the elites of succeeding decades.

Automotive Dominance: The
Elite Transformed

During the decade 1910-1920, the automobile clearly began to take precedence over all of Detroit's industrial produce. By 1920, half of the individuals in the economic elite were top executives of either automobile production firms or companies which relied primarily upon supplying parts to them. As to the nature of enterprises which were represented, the elite did not change in any basic way after this date. Although it increased in absolute size, its essential shape remained very much the same.

A second important trend which is apparent at this time is the decline of family-owned and operated firms in favor of more impersonal, bureaucratically-organized corporate forms of enterprise. As a result we should expect to find greater recruitment of elite personnel

based on functional criteria and therefore perhaps a socially more diverse group.

As evidence of a more specialized elite, there was now only one individual among the total of 92 who maintained more than a single top executive position. This contrasts with the previous two dates in which considerably more intra-elite movement was evident. Those who were top banking officials, for example, were frequently proprietors or top officers of large manufacturing establishments as well. In 1900, six members of the elite's total of 58 held more than one top leadership position. Four of them maintained two posts, one maintained three, and one held four positions.¹⁴ In 1910, eight of the total of 83 maintained two or more positions in the elite, a lesser percentage than in 1900 but still considerably greater than that which we find by 1920.¹⁵ Especially in the

¹⁴The latter individual, Dexter Ferry, was perhaps the most eminent single member of the elite. In that year he was president and general manager of the D. M. Ferry Co., one of the world's largest seed houses, president of the First National Bank as well as the Union Trust Co., both large banks, and vice president of the Wayne County Savings Bank, largest in the city. He also served in various high ranking capacities with the two largest insurance companies in the city and several other industrial firms. His real estate holdings in Detroit were also of vast dimensions. See Burton, City of Detroit, vol. 3, pp. 8-12, as well as Biographical File of the Burton Historical Collection.

¹⁵Only one non-Anglo-Saxon was among this "elite of the elite" in 1900 and 1910, in both years the aforementioned Michael O'Brien.

automotive sub-sector do we now begin to find functional skills replacing family position or wealth as the essential key to elite status. The older generation of pioneer car builders and their financiers increasingly appeared to give way to younger engineers and skilled toolmakers.

How was the ethnic composition of the elite affected? As can be seen in Table 12, both automobile manufacturing and automobile parts sub-sectors, the two now comprising the greatest segment of the elite, were no longer totally Anglo-Saxon-led enterprises but had been entered into by several Germans and a scattering of others, including one Jew, in top leadership positions.

TABLE 12.--Ethnic composition of the economic elite by enterprise, 1920.

Ethnicity	Auto mfr.	Auto parts	Non-auto mfr.	Retail mchds.	Public util.	Banking
Anglo-Saxon	83%	78%	89%	80%	67%	74%
Irish	-	4	-	20	17	16
German	11	11	6	-	17	5
Other northwest European	-	7	-	-	-	5
Jewish	6	-	6	-	-	-
Total N	(18)	(27)	(18)	(5)	(6)	(19)

The German penetration of the auto industry is accounted for by such figures as Max Wollering of

Studebaker and Frank Klingensmith of Ford. The latter, son of a Bavarian farmer who came to the United States in 1853, rose from a subordinate position to the highest and most important post (vice president and treasurer) ever filled in the company outside of the Ford family to that date.¹⁶ The leading personnel of the Fisher Body Corporation were also primarily German at this time. The Fisher brothers, third generation German Catholics, typified the movement of skilled mechanics to Detroit, lured by the enormous potential of the automotive industry. Few, however, reached greater financial success than this family.¹⁷

Louis Mendelssohn, at this time chairman of the board and treasurer of Fisher Body, is another case who, like Pessano in 1910, exemplifies the process of full structural assimilation through intermarriage and subsequent anglicization. German-born, Mendelssohn came to Detroit with his parents in childhood, later achieved success as an architect, and married into a first generation English family. Following the death of his first wife, he was wed to a representative of an old-line Detroit family. Mendelssohn's Jewish origins are not revealed in

¹⁶Burton, City of Detroit, vol. 5, pp. 22-25.

¹⁷Biographical File, "Frederick J. Fisher, Lawrence P. Fisher, Wm. A. Fisher," Burton Historical Collection; Who's Who in Commerce and Industry, 1938 (New York: Institute for Research in Biography, Inc., 1938), pp. 297-98.

his 1920 Who's Who sketch and we are led to conclude, through his club and philanthropic associations, that he had totally rejected them. His children in turn married into long-established Detroit families, at least two of whom were confirmed Episcopalians. Mendelssohn was afforded a listing in the Social Secretary and, like most others in the elite, resided in Grosse Pointe. His club affiliations, however, provide something of an enigma. Though quite extensive both in Detroit and in other cities, his memberships did not include any among those at the pinnacle of the Detroit metropolitan club hierarchy.¹⁸

In contrast with Mendelssohn is Meyer Prensky, in 1920 a top official of the Northway Motor and Manufacturing Company. Though not a firm which was actually assembling automobiles (but still employing over 1,000), we included Prensky in the automobile manufacturing sub-sector primarily because of his concurrent ties to the General Motors Corporation. Prensky, his name later anglicized to Prentis, was one of only two Jews encountered in the automobile industry's top leadership throughout the entire fifty years under study. Born in Lithuania in 1886, he grew up in St. Louis and came to Detroit in 1911 as General

¹⁸Who's Who in America, 1920 (Chicago: A. N. Marquis Co., 1920); Burton, City of Detroit, vol. 4, p. 719; Men Who Have Made Michigan (Detroit: Pipp's Magazine, 1927), p. 32; Detroit News, September 24, 1933; Detroit News, September 30, 1933; Detroit Free Press, September 24, 1933.

Motors' chief accountant and auditor. He became controller in 1916 and treasurer in 1919, thereby establishing himself as one of the financial architects of the corporation. In the latter position, in which he served until 1951, Prensky acted as the principal representative to the several hundred banks at which the corporation retained accounts. As treasurer of General Motors, however, Prensky apparently still remained a notch below the very top of the firm's leadership; in his forty-two years at that post he never served on the board of directors. Nor did he join other top auto executives in social elite participation, limiting much of his club and philanthropic interests to the Jewish community.¹⁹ Prensky's case is quite clearly one of structural assimilation halted at the formal level.

The other Jew who was present in the 1920 economic elite was again attached to the cigar industry as he was in 1910. It is of note that a considerable number of small producers of cigars were still evident in Detroit even at this relatively late date, the majority of whom were either Jews or southern and eastern Europeans. Very few, however, were of any real economic significance.²⁰

¹⁹ Detroit Free Press, September 11, 1960; Detroit News, July 15, 1970; New York Times, July 16, 1970; Who's Who in World Jewry, Harry Schneiderman et al., eds. (New York: David McKay, 1965), pp. 749-50.

²⁰ The extensive Jewish influence in the cigar industry of Detroit appears to have begun as early as the 1860s when production was initiated. See John Andrew

The remainder of the ethnic breakdown of the economic elite in 1920 appeared to have changed only slightly from that of 1900 and 1910. The Irish, in what few positions they held, were still most active in banking. Germans, though still in relatively small numbers, were now represented in almost all sub-sectors of the elite. As is seen in Table 13, however, they were still largely under-represented by comparison with the size of the German community in the city. That underrepresentation was by this year probably even greater than is indicated due to the increasingly large numbers of third generation Germans who did not appear in the census' ethnic figures. Similarly the Irish were undoubtedly much greater in number than is indicated. There were no persons of French origin in the elite at this date thus marking the demise of what colonial French influence remained in the city's economic leadership at the beginning of the century. The few French cases encountered in later decades did not represent any of the old-line French families of Detroit.

As in previous years, the Anglo-Saxon foreign-born and sons of the foreign-born were a substantial percentage of the elite's total foreign stock (Table 13). When we consider the sixteen Anglo-Saxons for whom generational information was lacking (we are certain, however, that

Russell, The Germanic Influence in the Making of Michigan (Detroit: University of Detroit Press, 1927), pp. 328-29.

TABLE 13.--Ethnic composition of the economic elite by generation, 1920.

Ethnicity	Foreign stock & city population (64.2)	Foreign- born		Second generation		Third generation & beyond		Generation uncertain		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anglo-Saxon	5.8	3	3.3	8	8.7	46	50.0	16	17.4	73	79.3
Irish	3.3	-	-	4	4.3	-	-	2	2.2	6	6.5
German	15.0	1	1.1	5	5.4	1	1.1	1	1.1	8	8.7
Other northwest European ^a	1.0	1	1.1	2	2.2	-	-	-	-	3	3.3
Jewish	5.2	1	1.1	1	1.1	-	-	-	-	2	2.2
Totals		6	6.5	20	21.7	47	51.1	19	20.7	92	100.0

^aDanish and Dutch.

they were not foreign-born), the second generation among this group may have actually been larger. The increasing number of Germans in the elite were almost all foreign stock as were the Irish. This is somewhat surprising in that we would expect to find more third generation German and Irish among their elite representation given the increasing size of the third generation among these ethnic groups.

Numerical Constancy; Limited
Ethnic Penetration

Although the 1920s was a period of great industrial expansion in Detroit, particularly within the automotive sectors, we find a high degree of stabilization of the economic elite. This is due primarily to the fact that such expansion was highly concentrated and limited to firms which had already been established or had merged with each other. We do not see the kind of elite expansion that was evident during the 1900-1910 decade where new firms provided opportunities for the entrance of new personnel. In terms of our theoretical model, then, centralization rather than the creation of new positions was the result.²¹ Although we find little numerical

²¹The lack of numerical expansion is perhaps due in some part to our methodology. Nineteen thirty was a year in which neither the report of the Michigan Department of Labor and Industrial Statistics nor the Directory of Michigan Manufacturers was published. As a

increase in the elite we do find a substantial change in personnel, especially among the non-Anglo-Saxons.

In spite of consolidation, several made penetration through individual company growth. As an example, the department store of Ernst and Otto Kern, German-born brothers, had been part of the retail picture of Detroit since its founding by their father in 1883. Only by 1930, however, had it reached such proportions as to place it among the other leading retailers of the city. Among other ethnics who entered the elite for the first time in this manner were Charles H. Widman, whose father had been instrumental in founding the Murray Corporation, one of the leading automobile body manufacturers, and Peter Markey, one of the organizers of Bohn Aluminum and Brass Company and part of one of the oldest Irish Catholic families in Detroit.²² Such individuals were thus not newcomers to Detroit commerce but their firms experienced their greatest expansion during the 1920s.

result we relied exclusively upon Moody's Industrials to locate the largest Detroit industrial firms. A few may have been omitted, therefore, if not registered in that year. By comparing our 1930 list with those of 1920 and 1940, however, we concluded that it was essentially accurate. The banking and public utilities sub-sectors were not affected since the sources of information for these firms remained the same.

²²Burton, City of Detroit, vol. 3, p. 619; Biographical File, "Peter Markey," Burton Historical Collection; Who's Who in Commerce and Industry, 1940-41 (Chicago: A. N. Marquis, 1940), p. 484.

As is seen in Table 14, the most noticeable ethnic change in the elite from that of 1920 is the quite substantial decline of Anglo-Saxons in the automobile manufacturing sub-sector. It is here that an increasingly large number of top officers attained their positions through bureaucratic organizational routes, especially among the non-Anglo-Saxon ethnics. Corresponding with the Anglo-Saxon decline is an evident penetration by Irish and northwest Europeans for the first time. Although the total number in this sub-sector was not basically different from what it was in 1920, its ethnic composition was far more heterogeneous.²³

TABLE 14.--Ethnic composition of the economic elite by enterprise, 1930.

Ethnicity	Auto mfr.	Auto parts	Non-auto mfr.	Retail mchds.	Public util.	Banking
Anglo-Saxon	47%	76%	90%	62%	80%	78%
Irish	11	12	5	12	20	13
German	21	6	5	25	-	9
Other northwest European	22	6	-	-	-	-
Jewish	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total N	(19)	(17)	(21)	(8)	(5)	(23)

²³As was indicated, mergers and combinations of firms largely account for this relatively stable number.

The Germans among the leading auto personnel at this time included the Fisher brothers, now vice presidents and directors of the General Motors Corporation which had absorbed their body-making firm, and Kaufman T. Keller, vice president and general manager of Chrysler. The other northwest Europeans among this group were William S. Knudsen, Danish-born vice president of General Motors; George W. Mason, a second-generation Norwegian and president and chairman of Nash-Kelvinator; and Peter Martin, French-Canadian vice president of Ford. Knudsen, an immigrant to the United States at age 20, represents one of the few stories of extremely rapid first generation ethnic mobility at this time. A mechanic by training, he worked initially on the New York ship yards and later the shops of the Erie Railroad upon his arrival. When the firm at which he had become manager was acquired by the Ford Motor Company, Knudsen went to Detroit where he became Ford's general manager. Later moving to

With the consolidation of the Chrysler Corporation in 1925, three giant manufacturers by 1930 were producing over 80 percent of all passenger cars. Rae notes that "the period of the First World War marked the point at which the entry of a completely new, independent firm into automobile manufacturing became for practical purposes impossible." (Rae, American Automobile Manufacturers, p. 133). Although entrance into the production market had from the outset been easy and frequent, failures were similarly frequent, making the dominance of only a few firms generally characteristic of the industry. Seltzer reports that between 1902 and 1927, 181 enterprises reached the production stage but of these, only 44 were still in existence by the latter year. (Seltzer, A Financial History, p. 64).

General Motors, he reached the automotive executive pinnacle in 1937 with his appointment to that firm's presidency.²⁴

The non-automotive industries of the city at this time were primarily refrigeration and heating, primary metals and allied industries, drugs, chemicals, and business machines.²⁵ All were virtually absent of non-Anglo-Saxons in their top leadership. It is difficult to discern any meaning to this pattern, however, given the variety of types of enterprises represented. One characteristic does stand out which contrasts these executives with those of the automobile industry. A majority of them were native Detroiters who were attached to firms which at this time had been long-established in the city. By comparison, the pioneers of the automobile industry had by 1930 been replaced by a second generation of leadership whose geographical and, by contrast, ethnic origins were diverse.

²⁴Norman S. Beasley, Knudsen: A Biography (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1947).

²⁵Our category "non-automotive industry" is somewhat misleading in that after 1920 it was difficult to find many industries in the city which did not attach themselves if only indirectly to the auto producers. Even if they were not exclusively or even primarily manufacturers of auto supplies, most engaged at least to some extent in such activity. Even some which were clearly non-automotive--appliance manufacturers, for example--were corporately tied to the auto manufacturers. Only the drug, chemical, and business machine industries at this time could be safely categorized as non-automotive related.

As is seen in Table 15, the generational composition of the elite stayed essentially what it had been in 1920. The foreign-born in this year constituted only 6 of the 93 total elite while the second generation numbered 15. The foreign stock was thus a lesser percentage of the elite than at any point since 1900. Anglo-Saxon dominance of top economic leadership positions had declined in total from 1920 but even at this relatively late date they were the leading group among the foreign stock. Both of the foreign-born Anglo-Saxons in this year were Scotch, one emigrating to Detroit in 1891 from Canada, the other coming in 1882 directly from Scotland. The latter, Alex Dow, president of the Detroit Edison Company, was perhaps the most venerable single member of the economic elite during the entire fifty-year period. Starting as an electrical engineer in 1893, he was Detroit Edison's first general manager and remained as president or chairman through 1940.²⁶

One noticeable change in this year is that for the first time since the initial point of our analysis there were no Jews in the elite. Two factors account for this. First, we did not include Meyer Prensky in this year even though his position with General Motors was a high ranking

²⁶On Dow, see in particular Raymond C. Miller, Kilowatts at Work: A History of the Detroit Edison Company (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1957).

TABLE 15.--Ethnic composition of the economic elite by generation, 1930.

Ethnicity	Foreign stock & city population (57.5)	Foreign-born		Second generation		Third generation & beyond		Generation uncertain		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anglo-Saxon	6.8	2	2.1	7	7.5	46	49.5	13	14.0	68	73.1
Irish	1.5	1	1.1	3	3.2	1	1.1	5	5.4	10	10.8
German	8.1	2	2.1	2	2.1	6	6.4	-	-	10	10.8
Other northwest European ^a	3.3	1	1.1	3	3.2	1	1.1	-	-	5	5.4
Jewish	5.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals		6	6.5	15	16.1	54	58.1	18	19.3	93	100.0

^aFrench, Dutch, Danish and Norwegian.

one. His absence was the result of having included only the very top Detroit-based officers which in General Motors' case were no lower in rank than vice president. Though we emphasized his connection with General Motors, his entrance into the 1920 elite was on the basis of his position with another large firm.

Second, with two exceptions, the automobile manufacturing firms--those displaying the greatest expansion in the 1920s--were not enterprises in which Jewish penetration was evident at any time in the fifty-year period. Banking and public utilities were others. Those Jews who appeared in the 1900, 1910, and 1920 elites were virtually all in light industries, specifically clothing manufacture and cigars. By 1930, the automobile had made both of these industries insignificant in the Detroit economy.

Although they did not appear in the retail sub-sector of the elite, we should point out that Jews were particularly active throughout the first few decades of the century in Detroit's retail merchandising trade. They did not appear in the elite until 1940 since in terms of size, their firms did not compare with the city's giant retailers. As an example, in 1915, B. Siegel, the largest Jewish merchant in the city, employed a staff of 300 while the three largest retailing firms in the city, Newcomb-Endicott, J. L. Hudson, and Crowley-Milner, respectively

employed 1200, 1000, and 765.²⁷ Five years later, Siegel's staff was half the size of Newcomb-Endicott's while Hudson's and Crowley's had grown several times larger. However, of the twelve largest retail merchandisers (including clothing and dry goods) in that year, four were Jewish firms. All had been organized prior to the turn of the century and, not surprisingly, were founded by German Jews.²⁸

Minimal Compositional Effects of the Depression

As a period of severe economic depression, the 1930s in Detroit was a decade of social unrest and rearrangement. We should expect under such circumstances to find the most serious changes in the social composition of the economic elite since the initial decade of the century and, as a result, penetration by new personnel, possibly of variegated ethnic origins.

There is some indication of this though it is by no means as acute as that which was experienced in the political elite during this decade. Within the economic elite as a whole, Anglo-Saxons by 1940 had dropped to

²⁷Michigan, Department of Labor, Report, 1915.

²⁸Heavy German-Jewish activity in the dry goods and clothing sector of the Detroit economy was not dissimilar from patterns in other cities. For New York in this regard see Moses Rischin, The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870-1914 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 51-54.

below 70 percent for the first time (Table 16). Taking up most of this decline were Germans, who had now risen to over 18 percent. This was by far the largest German representation in the elite to this time and the most significant decennial increase, representing almost a doubling of their total numbers. We also now see the reentrance of several Jews.

Table 16 reveals a comparatively large number of foreign-born in the elite of 1940. In fact, these ten individuals constituted a greater percentage of the top economic leadership than at any point other than 1900. The total foreign stock, however, continued to decline, though only slightly from 1930. Perhaps most significant is the fact that for the first time among the first and second generation categories, Anglo-Saxons did not comprise the greatest numbers, but were now equaled in those categories by Germans.

How did the various economic sub-sectors change during this period? In the top leadership positions of the automobile industry, Anglo-Saxon representation declined a bit further from 1930 though it was still quite large. Germans, however, now comprised almost one-third of these high executive offices. Names such as Weckler, Keller, Zeder, Sauerbrey, Fisher, and Dreystadt complemented Hutchinson, McCauley, Mitchell, Skinner, Wilson, Gilman, and Perkins among the top auto officials. With

TABLE 16.--Ethnic composition of the economic elite by generation, 1940.

Ethnicity	Foreign stock & city population (50.2)	Foreign-born		Second generation		Third generation & beyond		Generation uncertain		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anglo-Saxon	5.2	2	2.0	4	4.0	45	45.4	13	13.1	64	64.6
Irish	1.2	-	-	3	3.0	2	2.0	2	2.0	7	7.1
German	6.0	4	4.0	2	2.0	10	10.1	2	2.0	18	18.2
Other northwest European ^a	2.5	2	2.0	1	1.0	2	2.0	-	-	5	5.0
Jewish	5.0	2	2.0	2	2.0	-	-	1	1.0	5	5.0
Totals		10	10.2	12	12.2	59	59.6	18	18.2	99	100.0

^aFrench, Danish, Norwegian and Swiss.

Danish-born Sorensen and Knudsen, and an Irish representation of Coyle, O'Neil and Fields, the automobile producers' top leadership at this time was ethnically more varied than any other sub-sector of the city's economy except retail merchandising, where far fewer absolute numbers were involved.

The entrance of a second Jew into the automobile industry's top leadership at this time is particularly noteworthy. As president and general manager of the Hudson Motor Car Company in 1940 and 1950, A. Edward Barit represented what was probably the most important position attained by a Jew in the fifty-year period. Unlike other Jews who entered the elite, both before and after, Barit's penetration was not the result of family inheritance or of his own firm's expansion. At the age of 20, Barit joined the Hudson organization in 1910, six months after the company began production. A biographical sketch issued by Hudson described his business history as "virtually the history of the company."²⁹ Starting as secretary to the purchasing agent, Barit successively filled higher positions, finally succeeding Roy Chapin as president and general manager in 1936. Whatever his ties to the Jewish community might have been they were not revealed in any

²⁹ Biographical Sketch of A. E. Barit, Hudson Motor Car Co., Detroit, October 17, 1946.

of his biographical sketches. His entries in Who's Who in America from 1936 through 1952 never contained more than his executive posts and his business address. In all ways he remained amazingly obscure considering the magnitude of his position in the city.³⁰ Moreover, Barit was not a participant in the social elite of Detroit.

TABLE 17.--Ethnic composition of the economic elite by enterprise, 1940.

Ethnicity	Auto mfr.	Auto parts	Non-auto mfr.	Retail mchds.	Public util.	Banking
Anglo-Saxon	44%	71%	79%	44%	83%	73%
Irish	12	4	4	11	17	-
German	28	13	13	22	-	27
Other northwest European	12	4	4	-	-	-
Jewish	4	8	-	22	-	-
Total N	(25)	(24)	(24)	(9)	(6)	(11)

In contrast to the relatively heterogeneous automobile producers' leadership was the still-heavily Anglo-Saxon dominated auto parts sub-sector. We do find, however, the entrance of a Jewish representative here for the first time. Allen Industries presents an interesting case

³⁰ Mahoney refers to Barit as a "shy, reserved man," far different from Chapin. Tom Mahoney, The Story of George Romney (New York: Harper & Bros., 1960), p. 177.

in that it was the sole large Jewish firm primarily attached to the automotive industry which we encountered during the fifty years. It is also an excellent example of a company's rapid transition of production in response to the city's changing economic base. Joseph W. Allen came to Detroit in 1915 from Syracuse, New York and founded the Detroit Bedding Company. After succeeding his father at the firm's helm, his son, Sidney, switched its productive line from bedding to automotive insulation, cotton batts, and seat covers. As a major supplier to the city's auto producers, the company's success was greatly increased, and it eventually became the industry's largest manufacturer of auto insulation and rug cushions.³¹ Due largely to the nature of their product, it was such a productive changeover which the larger Jewish firms of earlier decades were incapable of effecting.

The retail sub-sector of the economic elite, like the automobile leadership, was at this time quite diverse ethnically, though far smaller in total numbers. Prior to 1940 this sub-sector had been dominated by Anglo-Saxon firms with some Irish participation. Now, Anglo-Saxon, Irish, German, and Jewish firms were among the city's

³¹John Moranz, Leaders of Wartime Michigan (Milwaukee: John Moranz, 1945), p. 92; Detroit News, April 9, 1959; Business Executives of America, 2nd ed. (New York: Institute for Research in Biography, 1950), p. 12.

largest. It should be noted that of all the economic areas, this one displayed the most consistent dominance of family-organized and operated firms. Even as late as 1940, companies founded at or even prior to the turn of the century were still largely family-controlled organizations. Only the S. S. Kresge Corporation among the largest exhibited a non-family turnover of top personnel from decade to decade and this firm did not represent an exclusively Detroit-based marketing operation as did the others. Elite entrance via this sector for all ethnic groups was thus largely possible only through family inheritance or the growth of one's own firm.

The latter method was displayed by the Jewish entrants into this sub-sector in 1940. As was noted, Jewish activity in retailing had throughout the century been significant but never quite at the level of the very top companies. In 1914, well after the important retailing firms had been founded, three Russian-Jewish immigrant brothers, Israel, Louis, and Saul Davidson, established a downtown department store of moderate size. In 1929 the firm began to expand to sub-centers of the city and, maintaining this branch style of operation, by 1940 had become the second largest retailer in the city, exceeded only by J. L. Hudson.³²

³²Detroit Free Press, February 18, 1964; Detroit News, February 18, 1964.

The total number of top banking officials during the 1930s fell by over one-half due primarily to the large number of banks which did not survive the depression. In 1930 there were 25 banks in the city, with median assets of \$19.6 million. By 1940 only 13 were still in operation and median assets had fallen to \$18 million.³³ At this date three banks clearly dominated the city's financial structure. The ethnic composition of the banking elite remained solidly Anglo-Saxon but the Irish, who had consistently been present since the century's outset, were now gone. Assuming their positions were an increased number of Germans, establishing a pattern which would hold steady through 1950.

Numerical Expansion;
Ethnic Stabilization

The 1940s was a decade of great economic expansion in Detroit, very much like the growth of the early decades of the century. While in 1940, 35 firms in the city employed 1,000 or more, by 1950 the number was 63, and 29 of those employed at least 2,000.³⁴ The size of the economic elite reflected that growth in both automotive and non-automotive manufacturing areas. Its

³³Michigan, Commissioner of Banking, Report, 1930; 1940.

³⁴Figures computed from The Directory of Michigan Manufacturers, 1950 (Detroit: Michigan Manufacturer and Financial Record, 1950).

ethnic composition, however, with few exceptions retained the pattern established in 1940.

As might be expected, the foreign-born by this time were now but a very small percentage of the total elite. At the other extreme, however, only 13 were of colonial ancestry, thus comprising an equally small fraction of the total group.³⁵ What we see in Table 18, then, is an elite which was now almost completely second generation or beyond, but also one that did not comprise members of extremely old American families. As to its ethnic breakdown, Anglo-Saxons had now dropped to just over 60 percent, by far their lowest point in the fifty-year period. This was still, however, most clearly dominant. Germans continued to maintain a little less than 20 percent, comparable to their 1940 position. Together, Anglo-Saxons and Germans thus occupied 80 percent of all economic elite positions. It must be pointed out that it was by this time increasingly difficult to distinguish Germans from Anglo-Saxons in many cases, due to an evident increase in intermarriage. Through an investigation of mothers' maiden names it became apparent that this

³⁵For this year it was not possible to accurately assess the size of the Anglo-Saxon, Irish, or German second and third generations due to the large numbers in each of these categories for whom we were unable to determine parents' or grandparents' place of birth. Based on their own places of birth, however, we do know that they were all at least second generation. The foreign-born therefore are accurately accounted for.

TABLE 18.--Ethnic composition of the economic elite by generation, 1950.

Ethnicity	Foreign stock & city population (41.3%)	Foreign-born		Second generation		Third generation & beyond		Generation uncertain		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anglo-Saxon	3.8	-	-	6	4.4	51	37.8	25	18.5	82	60.7
Irish	1.2	-	-	1	.7	2	1.5	8	5.9	11	8.1
German	4.4	2	1.5	6	4.4	9	6.7	8	5.9	25	18.5
Other northwest European ^a	2.2	1	.7	4	3.0	3	2.2	1	.7	9	6.7
Jewish	4.8	2	1.5	4	3.0	1	.7	1	.7	8	5.9
Totals		5	3.7	21	15.6	66	48.9	43	31.8	135	100.0

^aFrench, Dutch, Swedish and Norwegian.

process was far more frequent than in the century's earlier decades. Equally apparent, however, is that such inter-ethnic movement was characteristically Protestant, and more specifically Presbyterian and Episcopalian. Moreover, in 1950, the entire German group was overwhelmingly Protestant (21 of 25). The position of the Irish was essentially what it had been in the previous three decades. Other northwest Europeans likewise did not show a significant change in relative position. Jews, however, now comprised almost 6 percent of the elite, their most sizeable representation of the half century.

In the specific economic sub-sectors the ethnic breakdown continued to show patterns which had been established in 1940, with minor exceptions (Table 19). Although there was approximately the same Anglo-Saxon

TABLE 19.--Ethnic composition of the economic elite by enterprise, 1950.

Ethnicity	Auto mfr.	Auto parts	Non-auto mfr.	Retail mchds.	Public util.	Banking
Anglo-Saxon	42%	75%	59%	33%	83%	78%
Irish	23	5	2	22	-	-
German	23	10	22	22	17	22
Other northwest European	8	5	11	-	-	-
Jewish	4	5	6	22	-	-
Total N	(26)	(40)	(46)	(9)	(6)	(9)

percentage dominance in the automobile producing sub-sector, there was also now a more equitable German and Irish representation. In fact, the Irish were more active here than in any other area of economic leadership. A continued dominance by Anglo-Saxons of the auto parts sub-sector was offset by a rather sharp decline in non-automotive manufacturing with a corresponding German rise. Retail merchandising, like automobile manufacturing, appeared as a more ethnically-variegated sub-sector while the ethnic percentages in public utilities and banking remained basically what they had been in 1940.

Summary and Analysis

Let us briefly summarize the major patterns of the economic elite's ethnic composition over the century's first half. First, and perhaps of most significance, the elite was limited in its ethnic heterogeneity. With the exception of the Jews, and to some extent the Irish, who entered during the fifty-year period, there was no representation from ethnic groups which, in terms of social distance, were not close to the Anglo-Saxon core group. What is apparent is that the economic elite was most essentially Protestant if not necessarily Anglo-Saxon. When we break down the 1950 group by religion, we find that Protestants maintained 105 positions (78.4%), Catholics 22 (16.4%), and Jews 7 (5.2%). This was not basically

different from the religious breakdown of the 1900 group in which 44 of the total of 58 were Protestant (75.8%), 12 Catholic (20.6%), and 2 Jewish (3.5%). Thus, although Anglo-Saxons displayed a net decrease of 10 percent over the fifty-year period, the Protestant majority actually increased slightly. This is accounted for by the net loss among the French and Irish and their subsequent replacement by German Protestants.

From an analytic standpoint, the absence of southern and eastern Europeans from the elite takes on added significance when we consider that Jews, though representing a much smaller percentage of the city's population and more socially distant from the Anglo-Saxon charter group, did make penetration. Although their route to elite entrance seemed to parallel that of others during the century's earlier decades, it differed in later years. Thus, the growth of family-owned or organized firms remained their chief means of penetration despite the more bureaucratic paths for others. With the exception of Meyer Prentis and A. Edward Barit, no Jews of the economic elite displayed career paths typified by promotion upward through the bureaucratic structures of the large corporations.³⁶ Instead they are seen entering the

³⁶Even Prentis, rather than climbing through the bureaucratic ranks, appeared to have been recruited as an already recognized financial talent when General Motors was in its infancy. See Detroit Free Press, September 11, 1960.

elite through family-based firms, organized either by themselves or their fathers. Rather than the provision of needed organizational or technical skills to an expanding industrial system, the entrance of Jews into the elite signified for the most part the growth or emergence of significant Jewish firms. This pattern did not hold true for Anglo-Saxons or even for other non-Anglo-Saxons. The comparatively sizeable Irish representation even in the earlier decades, for example, was broadly based in non-Irish as well as Irish-founded enterprises. By the later decades, of course, it was increasingly through the bureaucratic ranks that the other non-Anglo-Saxons made penetration.

What the Jewish pattern of success seemed to indicate was the necessary assistance either of a fellow ethnic who had "made it," or, even more preferably, a member of one's own family. With no economically eminent cases to serve as models for upward mobility, lower class aspirations among southern and eastern European ethnic groups were rarely transcended. In a sense, exclusion thus seemed to become a self-perpetuating phenomenon. Although by the beginning of the century's third decade, leadership of many of the family-owned and controlled enterprises had already begun to disperse into filially-unbounded bureaucratic organizations, the pattern of

exclusion for these groups had by then been firmly established and was not effectively altered.

It might also be argued that southern and eastern Europeans (and Blacks), having arrived in large numbers at later dates, simply had yet to pass beyond the primary stages of the chronological cycle which would eventually assure elite penetration. We find such an explanation lacking for two reasons. First, when the elite was broken down by generation as well as ethnicity, it was at once apparent that top leadership positions were occupied by relatively sizeable percentages of first and second generation Anglo-Saxons in the earlier decades and even to some extent in the 1940 and 1950 groups. Had length of residence in the community been particularly crucial to the chances of gaining elite status we should have found such British-born and sons of British-born parents in the same relative position as first and second generation Poles or Italians. Moreover, the non-Anglo-Saxons who did penetrate were also from "old" immigrant groups, but in the first three decades of the century they too were for the most part foreign-born or second generation.³⁷

³⁷ Although our data here are lacking for a portion of the elite, especially in the later years, there are enough first and second generation cases to substantiate this point even if all of the "uncertain" cases were in fact third generation or beyond.

Even if we were to accept a chronological explanation of only a slight movement into elite positions of individuals from ethnic groups experiencing the first stages of community absorption, their total absence is surprising.³⁸ What is most striking is that by the mid-twentieth century southern and eastern Europeans still did not appear among the top business, financial, and industrial leadership of Detroit, in spite of the fact that two and in some cases even three generations had passed.

A second major pattern which emerges from our findings is the relative consistency of the degree of representation of the ethnic groups who were part of the economic elite. In total representation only the Germans and Anglo-Saxons showed fairly substantial changes over the fifty-year period, and as we have noted, by 1950 much intermarriage among these two categories was evident. The Irish did not improve their position over the fifty-year span but neither did they drop off sharply. Much the same may be said for the non-German Europeans, though the French position at the turn of the century was more important, due to a still noticeable influence of old French families in the city's commerce. Jews showed a slight increase though perhaps not enough to lend significance to this observation.

³⁸See W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole, The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945).

When we look more closely at the various sub-sectors of the economic leadership of Detroit, however, we find patterns in several which do not display the degree of consistency that was found in the elite as a single unit. Although it is immediately apparent that Anglo-Saxons dominated all without exception, the extent of that dominance varied from sub-sector to sub-sector.

In the city's most important economic area, automobile manufacturing, Anglo-Saxon dominance by mid-century was lesser than in any other but retailing where comparatively few total personnel were involved. More than any other in Detroit, the automobile industry did exemplify the functional model of elite recruitment. A young industry, requiring skills of a specific nature, became attractive to a relatively variegated group both class-wise and ethnically. Yet, it must be remembered that even here, ethnic penetration was still narrowly limited, if not to Anglo-Saxons alone, to non-southern and eastern Europeans, non-Blacks, and, to some extent, non-Jews.

By 1950, the least variegated sub-sectors were banking and public utilities, though only a comparatively few individuals comprised the latter. Though we find Irish participation in banking through 1930 and in public utilities through 1940, by the half-century mark only Anglo-Saxons and Germans were represented. In neither of

these sub-sectors did we find a single Jew throughout the period under analysis.³⁹ A few important Jewish commercial figures in the city were directors of several banks, some among the city's larger ones, but they did not serve in any high functional capacity.⁴⁰ One noteworthy case in regard to the lack of Jewish participation in Detroit banking is that of the Kanter family, represented in the 1940 and 1950 elites by Charles A. Kanter, a top official of the city's third largest bank. A cursory inspection of Kanter's basic biographical data is deceptive in that his partial Jewish origins are not revealed. Upon closer investigation we find another clear case of full structural assimilation at both formal and informal levels, the process extending back through two generations of

³⁹ A study conducted by Fortune in the mid-1930s indicated that Jews played a very minor role in banking, even in New York City where they constituted a quarter of the total population. Of the 420 listed directors of the nineteen members of the New York Clearing House in 1933, only thirty were Jews and about one-half of these were in two banks. The study concluded that in New York "there are practically no Jewish employees of any kind in the largest commercial banks." See "Jews in America," Fortune 13 (February 1936). A similar study conducted by the American Jewish Committee indicated that by the 1960s little had changed at the highest executive levels of New York's mutual savings banks. Less than 2.5% of the more than 400 officers and less than 3.5% of the approximately 750 trustees of these banks were found to be Jews. See "The Mutual Savings Banks of New York City: A Survey of the Exclusion of Jews at Top Management and Policy Making Levels," New York, American Jewish Committee, 1965.

⁴⁰ Our check was made on a similar basis as our selections of the elite, that is, at ten-year intervals.

intermarriage. His grandfather, Edward Kanter, was a German-Jewish immigrant who came to Detroit in 1844 at the age of 20. An important commercial figure in the city, he was to become one of the organizers of the German-American Bank, an institution with a definite ethnic flavor though never one of the city's largest. Kanter married into an Anglo-Saxon family of colonial origins and his children also also married outside of the Jewish faith. By the third generation (our immediate subject), we find a total absence of any Jewish social or cultural ties. Charles A. Kanter was in 1940 an active Presbyterian layman and chairman of the Protestant Children's Home of Grosse Pointe. He was a member of the prestigious Detroit and Grosse Pointe Clubs and was listed in the Social Secretary. Perhaps most significant, he held membership in the Sons of the American Revolution, in obvious recognition of his grandmother's family.⁴¹

Though our analysis included only those top leaders of the largest half of the city's banking structure, we made a cursory examination of the remaining banks to determine if significant differences might have existed within less important firms. We were able to delineate only one bank, relatively small in terms of assets, which

⁴¹Detroit Jewish News, May 13, 1966; Biographical File, "Charles A. Kanter," Burton Historical Collection; Jacob R. Marcus, The Beth El Story (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1955), pp. 54-55.

was comprised of Polish leadership. So complete was its Polish influence, in fact, that we are led to conclude that it was an "ethnic" bank, catering to the Polish community. Established in 1916, it did not survive the first few years of the depression.⁴² This observation lends more support to the contention that economic success for those groups farthest in social distance from the Anglo-Saxon core group was limited to that within the ethnic community.

Might our findings be substantially different if we were to lower the qualifying criteria for elite status? We made a check of names for all high-ranking officers, not only the two highest, as well as directors of the firms--both industrial and banking--which we included in our analysis. Our findings for those a notch lower in functional position are essentially the same as for the very top leadership. We still see a virtual absence of southern and eastern Europeans and only a very slight presence of Jews over the fifty-year period.⁴³ The

⁴²In 1920 and 1930, the leadership of Michigan State Bank in Detroit consisted of four top functional officers and eight directors. Of these twelve, at least seven in 1920 and eight in 1930 were unquestionably Polish by name. See Michigan, Commissioner of Banking, Report, 1920, p. 163; and Ibid., 1930, p. 99. We should point out that three of the four banks of Hamtramck in 1930 and two of the three in both 1940 and 1950 appeared to have had Polish top officers.

⁴³Using such a method it is not possible to determine whether Blacks were present at these lower executive levels but it seems safe to assume that they

overwhelming majority were Anglo-Saxon with a fairly significant number of Germans and a lesser number of Irish. On this admittedly tenuous basis we are led to conclude that the ethnic patterns found at the very top of the economic leadership structure of Detroit extended down to include all high-ranking officials.

In an attempt to evaluate Detroit's uniqueness with regard to the ethnic composition of its economic elite, it might be profitable to make a comparison of the conclusions drawn here with the findings of Keller's analysis of three generations of business leaders. This study seems especially relevant in that the elite boundaries chosen were essentially the same as those established here, a group comprising the two top functional officials of a variety of the largest industrial and financial enterprises for the years 1870, 1900, and 1950.⁴⁴ This was a national elite, not limited to any particular geographical area and so may serve to further define the idiosyncracies of the Detroit elite. We shall limit our comparison to the study's 1900 and 1950 findings.

were not. The hazards of utilizing such a method to determine ethnicity have been noted. We felt its use to be of some value, however, in determining a very general picture for a much larger group than our elite.

⁴⁴ Suzanne Keller, "The Social Origins and Career Lines of Three Generations of American Business Leaders" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1953).

As is seen in Table 20, a comparison of the generational composition of the two 1950 groups is not entirely valid due to the large number of uncertain cases in the Detroit elite. However, if we assume that the bulk of these cases were in fact third generation or beyond, the comparison for that year yields much similarity.⁴⁵ A comparison for 1900 is more valid in that our generational data for that year are almost complete. What we notice here is a considerably more substantial participation in the Detroit elite by the foreign stock in 1900.

TABLE 20.--Generational composition of national (Keller) and Detroit elites, 1900 and 1950.

Generation	National (Keller)		Detroit	
	1900	1950	1900	1950
Foreign-born	9%	6%	15%	4%
Native-born of foreign-born parents	10	18	21	16
Native-born of native-born parents	81	76	57	49
Uncertain	-	-	7	31
Total N	(187)	(403)	(58)	(135)

⁴⁵This is by no means an unreasonable assumption. In our research we generally found explicit mention of a subject's parents' place of birth if they were not native-born Americans. Furthermore, on the basis of their own places of birth we are certain that they were all at least second generation.

By comparing the specific national origins of the elite (Table 21), we see that the greater number of foreign-born and second generation ethnics in the Detroit group in 1900 was due primarily to the more significant role of the Irish at that time. In general, however, Keller's findings here more closely parallel our own.⁴⁶ What is perhaps most significant in the comparison is the noticeable absence of southern and eastern Europeans in both elites in the year 1900 and only a slight presence of members of these ethnic groups in the 1950 national elite. Moreover, the difference even here may not be so

TABLE 21.--Ethnic origins of national (Keller) and Detroit elites, 1900 and 1950.

Ethnicity	National (Keller)		Detroit	
	1900	1950	1900	1950
British	77%	65%	71%	61%
Irish	3	8	12	8
German	12	12	3	19
Other northwest European	8	12	9	7
Southeast European	-	4	-	-
Total N	(155)	(320)	(58)	(135)

⁴⁶Keller's findings are based on those individuals for which ethnic data were found and are therefore not complete for her entire elite of business leaders.

apparent when we consider that Keller did not separate Jews from national ethnic groups as we did. Thus it may be that the majority of the southern and eastern Europeans in her 1950 elite were in fact Jews.

As for religion, we find a more sizeable Catholic percentage of the Detroit elite in both 1900 and 1950 (Table 22). In spite of its clearly Protestant character, the Detroit elite appeared more amenable to Catholic penetration than the national sample elite. Although Catholics were always a very definite minority, it is well to point out that throughout the fifty-year period Catholicism alone did not appear to play a significant limiting role for economic elite entrance by individuals of any national group. As well as Irish, French, Dutch, Belgian, and German Catholics, even a few Anglo-Saxon Catholics

TABLE 22.--Religious composition of national (Keller) and Detroit elites, 1900 and 1950.

Religion	National (Keller)		Detroit	
	1900	1950	1900	1950
Protestant	89%	85%	76%	78%
Catholic	7	7	21	16
Jewish	3	5	3	6
Other	1	3	-	-
Total N	(176)	(355)	(58)	(135)

were noticeable in the elites of later decades. Moreover, as will be seen, Catholic entrance into the social elite in Detroit was consistently evident throughout the half century.

In conclusion, our findings of an Anglo-Saxon predominance in the city's economic leadership for these fifty years is in itself not surprising; indeed, other studies have shown much the same pattern.⁴⁷ What is particularly arresting, however, is the extent of that domination and its durability over the entire period we have considered. Entrance for those of minority status was slight and did not reflect the ethnic makeup of the city. Economic and demographic forces appeared to have had only minimal effects on that trend. We have suggested that the capacity for incumbents to monitor recruits at the highest levels of economic leadership is greater than in other elite sectors. Our findings in Detroit in the first half of the twentieth century point to ethnicity as a key factor in that selection process. The extent of its role, however, is in the end difficult to accurately assess, primarily because of the virtual absence of representatives of most of the community's more salient ethnic groups. As

⁴⁷In addition to Keller, see Weyl, The Creative Elite in America; Glazer and Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot; William Miller, "The Recruitment of the American Business Elite," Quarterly Journal of Economics 64 (1950): 329-37; and Samuel Koenig, "Ethnic Factors in the Economic Life of Urban Connecticut," American Sociological Review 8 (1943): 193-97.

Lenski has noted, "As long as members of subordinate status groups are concentrated in the working and nonpropertied classes, it is difficult to determine to what extent their struggles are economic class struggles and to what extent they are status-group struggles."⁴⁸ It is only after individuals of such groups begin to rise in the class hierarchies that the effects of status membership become more clear. It is with this thought in mind that we turn to the political elite where entrance is afforded on other bases. Here we may expect to find patterns of ethnic penetration which do not necessarily resemble those of the economic elite.

⁴⁸Gerhard Lenski, Power and Privilege (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), pp. 423-24.

CHAPTER VI

THE POLITICAL ELITE

Unlike the economic elite, the ethnic composition of the political leadership of Detroit underwent fundamental change during the half century under examination. If the highest echelons of business and industrial leadership were largely impervious to those of minority ethnic status from 1900 to 1950, the political class system did provide an avenue of upward mobility for many. Little ethnic consistency was seen as in the economic sector of the elite structure nor was there such relative homogeneity. Entrance and exit by several ethnic blocs was noticeable throughout the period and, despite vast differences in the size of their representation, by 1950, members of almost all the major ethnic communities of the city had made their appearance.

To a great extent the explanation of ethnic participation in the political elite may be found in the changing structure of politics in the city as it was shaped by emergent economic and demographic forces. Clearly the social composition of the political elite was affected far

more acutely by such forces than was the economic. Basically Detroit politics in the first half of the twentieth century may be divided into three fairly well-defined epochs: first, the pre-non-partisan years in which party politics not only determined state legislative seats but city offices as well, a period that paralleled the maturation of the modern Detroit economic structure; second, the twelve years between the charter reform of 1918 and the emergence of a more powerful Democratic party in 1932, during which time a booming automotive industry was suddenly curtailed by economic depression; and finally, the post-1932 years in which Democratic strength was effectively aided by the rise of organized labor in the city.

Ethnic patterns of change in the elite coincide quite closely with these thresholds. The decades 1910-20 and 1930-40 in our analysis appear to be the crucial historical points at which basic trends were either commenced or terminated. What had been a more ethnically balanced political elite at the century's outset was by 1920 more solidly Anglo-Saxon. By 1940, however, the demise of Anglo-Saxon dominance in Detroit politics was clear with a more heterogeneous elite again emergent. In our subsequent analysis we shall show the form and extent of ethnic penetration of the political elite chiefly in terms of which particular positions were acquired by the various ethnic representatives and at what time

penetration was made. We will introduce our findings by concentrating upon two key factors: political office and party affiliation. As will be seen, ethnicity appears to correlate quite strongly with these two variables. In addition we shall also pay particular attention to the class composition of the elite.

The Pre-Reform Elite

With the exception of a somewhat inflated Anglo-Saxon category, the 1900 and 1910 political elites were fairly equitably apportioned in terms of the ethnic composition of Detroit in these years. This relative ethnic balance was due in the main to the nature of the city's governmental structure, providing for a body of aldermen, elected on a partisan basis, two from each of twenty-one wards.¹ The Common Council thus made up over one-half the entire political elite and most importantly was comprised of individuals elected by district rather than from the city at-large. This latter point is particularly critical to an explanation of the rather strong non-Anglo-Saxon influence when we consider the composition of the state house and senate delegations from Detroit, each elected

¹Forty-two members was the size of the Common Council in 1918, the final year of its functioning under the aldermanic system. At the two dates we have analyzed, 1900 and 1910, the body consisted of thirty-four and thirty-six members respectively.

on an at-large basis.² Although Detroit's ethnic composition in 1900 and 1910 was heavily German, the city's representatives in the legislature were mostly Anglo-Saxon.³ In the council, however, we find more ethnic parity, though Anglo-Saxons still were an obvious majority (Tables 23 and 24).

The other sizeable ethnic community in Detroit during these early years of the century, the Polish, was represented in 1900 in the council by a single member; by 1910, however, three aldermen were Poles. The Irish, considering their approximate percentage of the city's populace, were well represented in the council and in both 1900 and 1910 occupied the two Recorder's Court seats. Their representation was broad throughout the

²Prior to 1952 all of Detroit's state legislative representatives were combined into a single district comprising the city as a whole. They were, in other words, elected at-large.

³The following observation reflects the substantial German presence in Detroit in the late nineteenth century: "So many German people were unable to read English that they urged that the common council proceedings be published in their own newspapers and when the petition was denied they asked that the council proceedings be published in both German and English in the official organ of the city, which was also denied." George B. Catlin, "Adventures in Journalism: Detroit Newspapers Since 1850," Michigan History 29 (1945): 345.

TABLE 23.--Distribution of political offices by ethnicity, 1900.

Ethnicity	U.S. Congress	State Senator	State Rep.	Mayor	Common Council	City Clerk, Treas.	Pres. Bd. Ed.	Rec. Court
Anglo-Saxon	100%	50%	64%	100%	35%	-	-	-
Irish	-	25	-	-	6	50%	-	100%
German	-	25	18	-	52	50	100%	-
French	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Polish	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Jewish	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-
Black	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-
Total N	(1)	(4)	(11)	(1)	(31)	(2)	(1)	(2)

TABLE 24.--Distribution of political offices by ethnicity, 1910.

Ethnicity	U.S. Congress	State Senator	State Rep.	Mayor	Common Council	City Clerk, Treas.	Pres. Bd. Ed.	Rec. Court
Anglo-Saxon	100%	40%	67%	-	36%	50%	-	-
Irish	-	-	8	-	9	-	-	100%
German	-	60	8	100%	36	50	100%	-
Other northwest European ^a	-	-	17	-	3	-	-	-
Polish	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	-
Jewish	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-
Total N	(2)	(5)	(12)	(1)	(33)	(2)	(1)	(2)

^aFrench, Dutch.

elite though still small in comparison with the Anglo-Saxons and Germans.⁴

The ethnic division along party lines at these two dates is quite evident. More specifically what we find is a clear split between Catholic Democrats and Republican Protestants. The Germans in the elite are perhaps the best example of this division. Of the sixteen Germans in 1900 for whom we were able to confirm religion, all eleven Protestants were Republican and three of the four Catholics were Democrats. In 1910, of the twelve for whom religion was determined, all nine Protestants were Republican and two of the three Catholics were Democrats (Table 25). Although the Irish were all

TABLE 25.--Party breakdown of the political elite, by religion, 1900 and 1910.

Religion	Democrat		Republican	
	1900	1910	1900	1910
Protestant	35%	-	93%	85%
Catholic	65	100	3	10
Jewish	-	-	3	5
Total N	(17)	(9)	(30)	(41)

⁴It should be noted that in 1900, Mayor William Maybury, though falling into our Anglo-Saxon category, was in fact Irish Protestant.

Democrats in 1900, we see a split in 1910 with half of this group now Republican. Most simply this reflected the almost complete dominance of the Republican party in all elective offices at this time with the exception of the two Recorder's Court seats and a few council posts.

As to the generational breakdown, the political elite was over 50 percent foreign stock for both dates, even if we do not consider those individuals for whom we were unable to make a determination. As is seen in Tables 26 and 27, those who were third generation or beyond were for the most part Anglo-Saxon. The contrast with the non-Anglo-Saxons of the elite is most striking here. Four of the Anglo-Saxons in 1900 and six in 1910 were of colonial descent while none of the non-Anglo-Saxons were of origins that extended back more than one generation. From the data available on other Germans in the elite, it seems reasonably safe to assume that the four Germans in the "uncertain" category in 1900 were in fact no more than second generation.

In addition to being either foreign-born or sons of foreign-born parents, the non-Anglo-Saxons in 1900 and 1910 displayed class characteristics somewhat at variance with those of the Anglo-Saxons. There was a broad enough ethnic representation during these years to warrant some comparison. In the first place, we find the Anglo-Saxons to be in the main either small or medium-sized business

TABLE 26.--Ethnic composition of the political elite by generation, 1900.

Ethnicity	Foreign stock & city population (77.1)	Foreign-born		Second generation		Third generation & beyond		Generation uncertain		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anglo-Saxon	8.6	2	3.8	2	3.8	8	15.1	10	18.9	22	41.5
Irish	8.3	1	1.9	4	7.5	1	1.9	-	-	6	11.3
German	32.2	4	7.5	12	22.6	1	1.9	4	7.5	21	39.6
French	3.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.9	1	1.9
Polish	10.6	1	1.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.9
Jewish	3.6	-	-	1	1.9	-	-	-	-	1	1.9
Black	1.4 ^a	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.9	1	1.9
Totals		8	15.1	19	35.8	10	18.9	16	30.2	53	100.0

^aTotal Black populace.

TABLE 27.--Ethnic composition of the political elite by generation, 1910.

Ethnicity	Foreign stock & city population (74.0)	Foreign-born		Second generation		Third generation & beyond		Generation uncertain		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anglo-Saxon	5.8	4	6.9	5	8.6	9	15.5	7	12.1	25	43.1
Irish	4.4	-	-	4	6.9	-	-	2	3.4	6	10.3
German	26.7	9	15.5	9	15.5	1	1.7	-	-	19	32.8
Other northwest European ^a	3.0	-	-	-	-	1	1.7	2	3.4	3	5.2
Polish	9.2	3	5.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	5.2
Jewish	4.0	-	-	2	3.4	-	-	-	-	2	3.4
Totals	.	16	27.6	20	34.4	11	19.0	11	19.0	58	100.0

^aFrench, Dutch.

owners and manufacturers, or lawyers. Five of twenty-two in 1900 and eleven of twenty-five in 1910 were practicing attorneys. A few among them might be categorized as industrialists and/or bankers as, for example, Alderman Richard P. Joy, a member of one of the city's most commercially influential families. Joy was included in the economic elite in 1900 as well, one of the few individuals to have maintained simultaneous positions in both political and economic elite sectors.⁵ Charles Flowers, a state representative in 1910, likewise appeared in the economic elite for 1900. Such cases, however, were not typical, even among the Anglo-Saxons.

In contrast, the non-Anglo-Saxons in these years were most frequently small businessmen or skilled laborers; only four of all non-Anglo-Saxons in each of the two years were attorneys. The Polish members of the council were perhaps typical. Basil Lemke, serving in 1900, had been a manager of one of the smaller banks in the city (it was in fact, in terms of assets, the smallest); Stephan S. Skrzycki, Martin J. Ostrowski, and Xavier B. Konkel, all serving in 1910, were respectively saloon proprietor, cabinet maker, and funeral director.⁶ The Germans were

⁵Burton, City of Detroit, vol. 4, pp. 852-55; Burton, History of Wayne County, vol. 3, p. 61.

⁶Burton Scrapbook, vol. 58, p. 61, Burton Historical Collection; Burton, City of Detroit, vol. 5, p. 1006.

similarly concentrated in small business and skilled tradesmen categories. It should be noted that the anti-saloon controversy raged heatedly in city politics throughout this period, giving much impetus to the final public approval of the 1918 charter reform. The saloons were most frequently owned by Germans, and thus we find several on the council in both 1900 and 1910. One historian of the early Detroit Polish community also notes that "Poles, like the Germans, were never in sympathy with the anti-saloon leagues."⁷

The two Jews who we find in the political elite in 1900 and 1910, both Republicans, exhibit particularly contrasting class origins. The first, David E. Heineman, state legislator in 1900 and alderman in 1910, must be considered among the most formidable figures of modern Detroit history. As a second generation German-Jew, Heineman was born in Detroit in 1865, the son of Emil S. Heineman, one of the city's prominent wholesale dry goods merchants. After attending Detroit public and high schools he matriculated at the University of Michigan where he was graduated from the law school in 1889. As a Detroit attorney his distinction was equaled by few, having compiled and revised the ordinances of the city while serving as chief assistant city attorney. Governor Pingree

⁷ Mary Remigia Napolska, The Polish Immigrant in Detroit to 1914 (Chicago: Annals of the Polish Roman Catholic Union Archives and Museum, 1946), p. 58.

persuaded him to run for the state legislature in 1898 and in that election (the seat for which we included him in the 1900 elite) he received the highest vote of any of the ten legislative candidates on the Wayne County Republican ticket. He subsequently served in other high civic capacities including city controller and alderman (included in the 1910 elite), and was president of both the League of Michigan Municipalities (the largest civic organization in the state at that time) and the League of American Municipalities. As an important social as well as legal figure, Heineman was one of the few Jews to have participated in several of Detroit's most exclusive clubs.⁸ Heineman's career was clearly atypical among those of the political elite at this time and his case more closely resembles those few old-line Anglo-Saxon economic and social notables who maintained political elite status as well.

The second Jew, serving as alderman in 1910 from a heavily ethnic ward, was David Rosenthal, a Detroit-born second generation Russian. Rosenthal's pre-political career, in contrast with Heineman's, was not unlike that of a majority of the non-Anglo-Saxons on the council. A shoestring peddler as a boy, he later operated a notion store, engaged in the liquor business and finally dealt in

⁸The most complete account of Heineman's career and that which we based our description largely upon is Paul Leake, History of Detroit, vol. 3 (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1912), p. 1176.

real estate. An unsympathetic Detroit Journal in 1912 described his eventual political success as a product of "personal solicitation among the Jewish and Italian voters of the ward."⁹

The Irish in the elites of these early years displayed a broad class base ranging in 1900 from Edmund Atkinson, son of the first law graduate of the University of Michigan, to Michael McGuire, an Irish-born molder by trade, member of the Knights of Labor and spokesman for organized labor in the council.¹⁰ The two Recorder's Court judges, in origin both products of Detroit's Corktown, present an interesting contrast, demonstrating two levels of structural assimilation. James Phelan represents a clear case of upward mobility through the political class system, but mobility limited in its assimilating effects to the formal structural level. As a former railroad switchman, his legal background was extremely limited but he became one of the great vote getters in the city and might accurately be described as one of Detroit's early political bosses. His power rested largely on his influence with the city's growing ethnic

⁹Detroit Journal, July 27, 1912; Biographical File, "Rosenthal," Burton Historical Collection.

¹⁰Burton Scrapbook, vol. 10, p. 162, Burton Historical Collection; Detroit Saturday Night, June 16, 1923; Biographical File, "Edmund Atkinson," Burton Historical Collection.

populace for, as Bingay describes it, "to them he was the 'judge.' There was none other in Detroit as far as they were concerned."¹¹ If we may assess his social activities by the nature of his club memberships (the Catholic Mutual Benevolent Association and the Ancient Order of Hibernians), he did not venture far from his ethnic roots.¹²

The case of Alfred J. Murphy, on the other hand, demonstrates structural assimilation not only at the formal level but at the informal as well. While Phelan remained part of the Irish community throughout his judicial career, Murphy purposefully removed himself from it. Elected to the bench as a Democrat, he switched to the Republican party in 1922. More important, perhaps, he also renounced Catholicism following his legal success, turning to the Presbyterian Church. Again, much in contrast with Phelan, he was listed in the Social Secretary, retained membership in the most prestigious and exclusive clubs of the city, and easily qualified as a social notable.¹³

¹¹Malcolm W. Bingay, Detroit Is My Own Hometown (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1946), p. 335.

¹²Burton Scrapbook, vol. 61, p. 112, Burton Historical Collection; Men of Progress (Detroit: Evening News Association, 1900), p. 513; Detroit: The City of the Straits (Detroit: Headlight Engraving Co., 189-?), p. 46.

¹³Burton, History of Wayne County, vol. 3, p. 20; Burton Scrapbook, vol. 10, Burton Historical Collection; E. G. Pipp, Men Who Have Made Michigan (Detroit: Pipp's

Perhaps the most singular case that we find in these first two historical points is the Black state representative in 1900. His position in the political elite is peculiar for two reasons: first, the Black populace of Detroit in 1900 was but 1.4 percent of the city's total and second, we see no further Black representation in any high elective office until 1931. In his study of Detroit's Black community in the nineteenth century, Katzman points out that Black political involvement prior to 1920 did not represent the Black community as a whole but only a very small upper-class segment of it.¹⁴ Given the very small size of the Black element as part of the city's total population, this does not seem an unsound judgement. Although several wards contained substantial numbers of Blacks, in none prior to 1920 were they a majority. Moreover, state representatives were at this time elected from the city at-large rather than from districts. Katzman notes that the convention system which predated the electoral primary, however, enabled a few Blacks to obtain places on the Republican ticket. Joseph H. Dickinson's

Magazine, 1927), p. 24; Bench and Bar of Michigan, George I. Reed, ed. (Chicago: Century, 1897), pp. 507-508.

¹⁴David M. Katzman, "Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century," (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1969), pp. 246-80.

presence in the political elite must therefore not be interpreted as more than slate balancing by the Republican party in the city. Thus, another Black, James W. Ames, succeeded Dickinson in 1901 for one term. Not until Charles A. Roxborough's election to the state senate in 1931, however, do we again find a Black in a high elective office in Detroit.¹⁵

Finally, the French among the political elite at this time should not be mistaken for representatives of old-line Detroit families, similar to those of French origin found in the economic elite during these early years of the century. Louis Tossy and Darwin Z. Curtiss were respectively carpenter and newspaperman.¹⁶

¹⁵On Ames, see The National Cyclopedica of the Colored Race, Clement Richardson, ed. (Montgomery, Ala.: National Publishing Co., Inc., 1919), p. 474; and Michigan Manual, 1901, p. 622. Roxborough, though not included in our 1930 elite since he served in the following year's session, presents an equally singular case. Like Ames and Dickinson, he appears to have been a Black with few ties to the Black community. An attorney, Roxborough settled in a Polish area on Chene Street, spoke fluent Polish and catered primarily to Poles in his practice. He served in the state senate from District 3, comprising Hamtramck and the near East Side. See Katzman, p. 95 and Michigan Manual, 1931, p. 653.

¹⁶The Government of the City of Detroit and Wayne County, 1701-1907 (Detroit: Mannausa & Wieber, 1907), p. 27; Biographical File, "Curtiss," Burton Historical Collection. By means of a name analysis of early city government officials, one social historian tentatively concluded that although French participation had been noticeable during the first half of the nineteenth century when the population of Detroit was still largely French in character, at no time was it in proportion to their numbers in the population as a whole. See Leigh G.

What we find prior to 1918, then, is a political elite which was quite ethnically heterogeneous. Though certain groups did tend to predominate, a modest degree of equity vis-a-vis the various ethnic groups of the city characterized the elite's composition. The overrepresentation of Anglo-Saxons in the state legislative delegation was offset to some extent by the more balanced Common Council. Most important, non-Anglo-Saxon ethnics with varied social and occupational backgrounds did make strategic elite penetration through the political class system.

Post-Reform: Maximum Anglo-Saxon Predominance

Whatever its shortcomings with regard to the management of city government, there can be little doubt that the aldermanic system afforded the expanding ethnic communities of Detroit a kind of political representation which could not be attained through city-wide elections. The extreme differences in the ethnic makeup of state legislative and city council delegations is adequate testimony to that point. With the final public approval of electoral reform in 1918, the Common Council ceased to be an ethnic balancing force. The council was now changed

Cooper, "Influence of the French Inhabitants of Detroit Upon Its Early Political Life," Michigan History 4 (1920): 299-304.

from a forty-two man body, elected on a partisan basis from twenty-one wards, to a nine man unit, elected non-partisanly from the city at-large.

The changed aldermanic system appears to have had three key effects so far as the ethnic composition of the political elite is concerned. First, it aided Anglo-Saxon dominance now not only of the state house and senate delegations, but of the council seats as well. Tables 28 and 29 indicate that 1920 and 1930 were peak years of Anglo-Saxon presence in the elite, the two points at which they achieved over 50 percent of all positions. Second, it decreased the size of the elite so drastically that not until 1950 did it again almost equal its size in 1910.¹⁷ Thus, instead of opening more positions to potential recruits, the political elite contracted and abruptly established serious obstacles to further ethnic penetration, especially among the increasingly large southern and eastern European and Black groups in the city. Finally, it appears to have created the conditions through which the Irish, though not one of Detroit's numerically greater ethnic groups, were enabled to more firmly establish their position in the elite. As a group which was best situated to serve as a bridge between the various Catholic ethnic communities and the Anglo-Saxon

¹⁷ This is so even when we include those few cases that were discarded from our analysis for lack of adequate biographical information.

dominated financial and industrial interest groups of the city, the Irish, in spite of new structural hindrances, continued to increase their representation, ultimately to dominate the elite by 1940.

The reform movement which culminated in 1918 must be understood as the key to the non-Anglo-Saxon decline during the period 1918-1932. It might easily be interpreted as a deliberate effort in that direction. The movement was spearheaded by the Detroit Citizens League, an organization led and financed heavily by the city's automotive industrialists. Particularly active in the league and one of its founders, was Henry M. Leland, organizer of the Cadillac Motor Company. Leland, with Pliny Marsh, the league's director for eight years and later Recorder's Court judge, were able to invest this organization in moral tones, establishing it with a strong Protestant sectarian basis. Lovett describes both men as "ardent, representative churchmen of the Puritan type."¹⁸ Both were staunch Republicans and pronounced enemies of the saloons.¹⁹

¹⁸William P. Lovett, Detroit Rules Itself (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1930), p. 73. Lovett's study is the most intensive of the league's formation and its reform activities. His perspective, however, is unwaveringly favorable to the league. This is not surprising when we consider that he had succeeded Marsh as its executive secretary in 1920.

¹⁹Their anti-saloon predilections were likely not unrelated to their view of the city's growing ethnic

Their concern for "decent" government might easily be translated into "Protestant" government. In 1912 the league began with a set of resolutions drawn up by Leland and Marsh and signed by members of the Brotherhood of Westminster Presbyterian Church. Lovett explains that they subsequently agreed "to invite the brotherhoods and men's clubs of all other Protestant churches in Detroit to join in organization 'for moral and civic betterment in general, including politics where and when necessary.'"²⁰ Representation in the league was arranged in such a way as to assure total dominance by Protestants, more specifically Protestant churchmen of the city.²¹ Although it was eventually recognized that denominational representation had been a mistake, the league's standards were not easily altered. It had acquired a clearly sectarian character and was viewed by non-Protestants in

flavor. One noticeably partial biography of Leland, in regard to his activities in the reform movement, notes that "Detroit had too many citizens of Old World background where a drink of beer or wine was deemed no sin but a daily necessity. An attack on the saloon left these citizens cold and unsympathetic toward all reformers." Mrs. Wilfred C. Leland and Minnie Dubbs Millbrook, Master of Precision: Henry M. Leland (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966), p. 156.

²⁰ Lovett, Detroit Rules Itself, p. 76. (Italics mine.)

²¹ An early application for membership in the league specifically requested the applicant's church affiliation. See Detroit Civil Uplift League, Miscellaneous Material, Burton Historical Collection.

that manner. Its selection of candidate endorsements was, in all likelihood, influenced accordingly.²² It does not seem only incidental that these most active years of the league and the reform movement in general coincided with the greatest influx of non-Anglo-Saxon, non-Protestant ethnics yet experienced by Detroit. The ulterior objectives of the league become more obvious when we consider Marsh's statement upon his election as its secretary in 1912: "Let us remember, ours is a fight for God, and Home, and Native Land!"²³ Nativist activities were, of course, generally prevalent during these years in cities which were experiencing similar large infusions of southern and eastern European elements into their populations and not infrequently early civic reform was tinged with anti-immigrant ingredients.²⁴

Given the new type of elections which were now introduced--at-large and non-partisan--campaigns of a much

²²Although this was probably true in its early years, we cannot be certain of how much its Protestant origins influenced its selections after Leland and Marsh stepped aside. Our own investigation of the Citizen's League files for candidates after 1920 indicates that no specific information was requested on religion or national origin, other than place of birth.

²³Quoted in Lovett, Detroit Rules Itself, p. 86.

²⁴See John Higham, Strangers In the Land (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1955), and Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965).

larger scale were in order, thus necessitating larger funds. Moreover, in place of parties or localized political organizations most accessible to the ethnic communities, campaigns were now individualized efforts. As a result, the city's newspapers, the Citizen's League endorsements, and the city's industrial and financial interests became far more influential than they had previously been in local politics. The Polish press, largest among those of the non-Protestant ethnic groups, had recognized the imminent loss of several Polish-controlled wards and strongly opposed at-large elections from the outset.²⁵ The effect upon the ethnic composition of the city's political leadership was profound and immediate.

In Tables 28 and 29, we see not only a decrease in the percentage of non-Anglo-Saxons occupying top political positions but a decrease in the total foreign stock as well. The 1900 and 1910 elites were each comprised of better than 50 percent foreign stock, the 1910 group in fact being 62.5 percent. The foreign-born alone in 1910 constituted over 27 percent. The 1920 and 1930 elites displayed a drop-off in both categories, the latter year being the only point in the entire fifty years that the foreign stock numbered below 50 percent. By 1930 the foreign-born were only 10 percent of the elite, not

²⁵Napolska, The Polish Immigrant, p. 58.

TABLE 28.--Ethnic composition of the political elite by generation, 1920.

Ethnicity	Foreign stock & city population (64.2)	Foreign-born		Second generation		Third generation & beyond		Generation uncertain		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anglo-Saxon	5.8	2	5.0	6	15.0	13	32.5	2	5.0	23	57.5
Irish	3.3	1	2.5	2	5.0	3	7.5	1	2.5	7	17.5
German	15.0	-	-	5	12.5	-	-	1	2.5	6	15.0
Polish	8.9	-	-	1	2.5	-	-	-	-	1	2.5
Jewish	5.2	2	5.0	1	2.5	-	-	-	-	3	7.5
Totals		5	12.5	15	37.5	16	40.0	4	10.0	40	100.0

TABLE 29.--Ethnic composition of the political elite by generation, 1930.

Ethnicity	Foreign stock & city population (57.5)	Foreign-born		Second generation		Third generation & beyond		Generation uncertain		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anglo-Saxon	6.8	2	4.0	6	12.0	9	18.0	9	18.0	26	52.0
Irish	1.5	-	-	6	12.0	3	6.0	3	6.0	12	24.0
German	8.1	1	2.0	3	6.0	-	-	-	-	4	8.0
Other northwest European ^a	2.5	-	-	2	4.0	1	2.0	-	-	3	6.0
Polish	11.0	2	4.0	2	4.0	-	-	-	-	4	8.0
Italian	4.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 ^b	2.0	1	2.0
Totals		5	10.0	19	38.0	13	26.0	13	26.0	50	100.0

^aFrench, Dutch.^bProtestant.

substantially greater than what was found in the economic elite in that year.

Germans, in the preceding two decades the second largest ethnic bloc in the elite, had now been displaced by the Irish in that position. German Catholics, in fact, were totally absent by 1930. Polish representation, not substantial even in 1910, decreased even further in 1920. Though we see an increase by 1930, the Polish community, largest among the city's ethnic groups, was still underrepresented.

The distribution of positions for these years is seen in Tables 30 and 31. As in the previous two decades, the state legislative delegations were still heavily Anglo-Saxon though the Irish had made their most sizeable inroads here. The effect of the 1918 reform is evident in the council, now reduced to less than a quarter of its previous size. Four of the ten in 1920 and four of the nine in 1930 were Anglo-Saxons.²⁶ In 1900 and 1910, Anglo-Saxons averaged approximately one-third of its membership.

Though elected on a non-partisan basis, it is clear that Republicans in fact maintained most of the

²⁶The tenth member of the council in 1920 is accounted for by the death of Charles F. Bielman in mid-year. We included both he and his replacement, Richard Watson.

TABLE 30.--Distribution of political offices by ethnicity, 1920.

Ethnicity	U.S. Congress	State Senator	State Rep.	Mayor	Common Council	City Clerk, Treas.	Pres. Bd. Ed.	Rec. Court
Anglo-Saxon	100%	80%	46%	100%	40%	100%	100%	50%
Irish	-	20	31	-	10	-	-	17
German	-	-	15	-	30	-	-	17
Other northwest European	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Polish	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	-
Jewish	-	-	8	-	10	-	-	17
Total N	(2)	(5)	(13)	(1)	(10)	(2)	(1)	(6)

TABLE 31.--Distribution of political offices by ethnicity, 1930.

Ethnicity	U.S. Congress	State Senator	State Rep.	Mayor	Common Council	City Clerk, Treas.	Pres. Bd. Ed.	Rec. Court
Anglo-Saxon	33%	60%	55%	-	45%	100%	100%	45%
Irish	33	-	30	100%	11	-	-	33
German	-	-	5	-	22	-	-	11
Other northwest European ^a	33	-	-	-	11	-	-	11
Polish	-	40	5	-	11	-	-	-
Italian	-	-	5 ^b	-	-	-	-	-
Total N	(3)	(5)	(20)	(1)	(9)	(2)	(1)	(9)

^aDutch (1 Roman Catholic, 1 Prot.), and French.^bProtestant.

council seats.²⁷ Of the seven councilmen in 1920 for whom we could determine party preference, six were Republicans. Indeed, Republican dominance of the entire elite was almost complete in both 1920 and 1930. Even the Irish in the legislative delegation were Republicans as were the two Polish state senators in 1930. Republican preponderance in Detroit politics, at times extending even into the Catholic ethnic communities, was not surprising at this time given the nature of Michigan politics. So complete was Republican control that as late as the 1930s many seats in the legislature were simply not contested by the Democrats.²⁸ In 1930, Albert M. Bielawski, the state representative from District 3 which included Hamtramck, was one of only two Democrats in the 100-member State House of Representatives. During that same session, the entire Senate (32 members) was Republican. Despite its encroachment into the ethnic communities, Republican dominance undoubtedly contributed to the non-Anglo-Saxon decline. Robert Clancey's

²⁷ Lovett claims that Detroit Democrats, generally declining in power from 1908 on, looked favorably upon non-partisanship in local affairs, seeing it as an opportunity to reassert their strength. Our findings, however, seem to indicate that if any change was apparent it was an even further decline in their relative position in the years immediately following the reform.

²⁸ Joseph LaPalombara, Guide to Michigan Politics (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1960), p. 23.

congressional career perhaps reflected the frustration of the Democratic party in the city during these years. One of the first non-Anglo-Saxons to represent Detroit in the U.S. Congress, he was elected in 1922 as a Democrat but was unsuccessful in his bid for reelection in 1924. After switching to the Republican party in 1926, however, he was again elected to the House where he served through 1932.²⁹

During these two decades law became increasingly predominant as the occupational background of the elite, particularly among the Anglo-Saxons and Irish. Eighteen of the total of forty in 1920 and twenty-three of fifty in 1930 were practicing attorneys. The remainder were comprised of small or medium-sized business owners, white collar workers and skilled laborers. A few such as James Couzens, mayor in 1920, were economic notables. It is perhaps significant that the precipitous German decline as part of the total elite from 1910 to 1920 coincided with the rising prominence of lawyers in top elective offices. In both 1900 and 1910, the heavy German representation in the elite consisted chiefly of aldermen and most of these individuals were either small businessmen or skilled workers. None of the twenty-one Germans in the 1900 elite and only two of nineteen in 1910 were

²⁹Michigan Manual, 1923-24, p. 709; Ibid, 1927-28, p. 611; Ibid, 1931, p. 644.

attorneys. The Germans in the 1920 and 1930 elites displayed a similar tendency toward other than legal careers with only one of six in 1920 and one of four in 1930 being attorneys.

Despite overwhelming Republican strength and a resurgence of Anglo-Saxon dominance in the elite during these two decades, in 1930 an Irish Democrat emerged as Detroit's mayor. The mayorship of Frank Murphy is pivotal in our analysis in that it signifies the imminent transformation of the city's political structure and as a result a serious realignment of the elite, both ethnically and class-wise. Elected in 1930 following a recall of then-Mayor Charles Bowles, Murphy represents a transition between Republican-dominated politics and the emergence of a strong Democratic party in Detroit. Though not representative of the laboring class of the city, Murphy nonetheless appeared as an important sympathetic force in organized labor's ultimate acquisition of social and political power. Moreover, as a non-Detroit native and a third generation Irish-American, Murphy was not a product of the Corktown brand of politics which typified many of those among Detroit's Irish Democrats of the century's first two decades; yet, his strong appeal among the city's ethnic communities was undeniable. In short, as a Democrat, as labor-sympathetic, and as a non-Anglo-Saxon

ethnic, Murphy represented the dominant characteristics of Detroit's political elite in the 1930s and 1940s.³⁰

Democratic Ascendancy;
Ethnic Infusion

Our expectations of an alteration of the economic elite during the depression years of the 1930s was not actualized to a significant degree. In the political realm, however, this decade of social unrest witnessed an almost complete transfiguration of elite personnel. The ethnic composition of Detroit's political leadership after 1932 attained a heterogeneity which by 1940 could clearly be seen to contrast with its makeup in the previous two decades. Although in 1920 and 1930 representatives from a variety of non-Anglo-Saxon ethnic groups in the city were

³⁰On Murphy's family origins, see Charles Moore, History of Michigan, 5 vols. (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1915), vol. 2, pp. 985-86, 1116-17. The best account of Murphy's political career we found to be J. Woodford Howard, Mr. Justice Murphy: A Political Biography (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968). See also Richard D. Lunt, The High Ministry of Government: The Political Career of Frank Murphy (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965). Many of the histories of the labor movement in Detroit in the 1930s also contain sketches of Murphy and his political role at that time. See especially Sidney Fine, Sit Down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-37 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969). Fine notes that "although Murphy identified strongly with the unfortunate and with organized labor, he delighted at the same time in the company of the well-to-do, and some of his closest friends were among the social and economic elite of Detroit and Michigan." (p. 155). Howard similarly relates that "politically Murphy may have championed the poor, but socially he always gravitated toward the rich." (p. 22).

in fact present, their actual numbers, with the exception of the Irish, were largely insignificant. By 1940, however, Anglo-Saxons had made a precipitant decline in a single decade from 52 percent to 21 percent of the elite. What is more, for the first time in our analysis they did not constitute the elite's largest ethnic representation. They had, in fact, by this time been passed by two groups, the Irish and the Polish, the former with almost 31 percent and the latter just over 23 percent of all top elective offices. The pattern established in 1940 was not basically changed through the following decade though by 1950 the elite's ethnic flavor was even more sundry with the introduction of two non-Polish Slavs and an Italian Catholic.

The generational breakdown for the years 1940 and 1950 reveals even more sharply the heavy ethnic penetration of the years following 1932 (Tables 32 and 33). The declining percentage of foreign stock elite members during the previous two decades was now reversed and by 1950 over 57 percent were foreign-born or sons of foreign-born parents. In both 1940 and 1950, every southern and eastern European in the elite was in either of these two generational categories. Thus, unlike the economic elite where the first and second generation generally declined throughout the fifty years, the political elite now displayed a reversal of this trend with the increased ethnic

TABLE 32.--Ethnic composition of the political elite by generation, 1940.

Ethnicity	Foreign stock & city population (50.2)	Foreign-born		Second generation		Third generation & beyond		Generation uncertain		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anglo-Saxon	5.2	-	-	3	5.8	7	13.5	1	1.9	11	21.1
Irish	1.2	1	1.9	4	7.7	3	5.8	8	15.4	16	30.8
German	6.0	1	1.9	4	7.7	1	1.9	-	-	6	11.5
Other northwest European ^a	2.7	-	-	1	1.9	4	7.7	-	-	5	9.6
Polish	9.8	2	3.8	9	17.3	-	-	1	1.9	12	23.1
Italian	4.2	-	-	1	1.9 ^b	-	-	-	-	1	1.9
Black	9.2	-	-	-	-	1	1.9	-	-	1	1.9
Totals		4	7.7	22	42.3	16	30.8	10	19.2	52	100.0

^aFrench, Dutch, and Belgian.^bProtestant.

TABLE 33.--Ethnic composition of the political elite by generation, 1950.

Ethnicity	Foreign stock & city population (41.3)	Foreign-born		Second generation		Third generation & beyond		Generation uncertain		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anglo-Saxon	3.8	1	1.8	1	1.8	9	15.8	2	3.5	13	22.8
Irish	1.2	2	3.5	9	15.8	2	3.5	6	10.5	19	33.3
German	4.4	-	-	2	3.5	1	1.8	-	-	3	5.3
Other northwest European ^a	2.0	-	-	-	-	2	3.5	1	1.8	3	5.3
Polish	8.0	1	1.8	12	21.0	-	-	-	-	13	22.8
Other Slavic	4.0	-	-	2	3.5	-	-	-	-	2	3.5
Italian	3.7	-	-	2	3.5 ^b	-	-	-	-	2	3.5
Jewish	4.8	-	-	1	1.8	-	-	-	-	1	1.8
Black	16.3	-	-	-	-	1	1.8	-	-	1	1.8
Totals		4	7.0	29	50.9	15	26.3	9	15.8	57	100.0

^aFrench, Belgian, and Dutch.^bOne Protestant, one Catholic.

penetration. It is important to note that the penetrating non-Anglo-Saxons were for the most part new faces in Detroit politics whose political elite status was accomplished within a single generation. Even the Irish in 1950 were predominantly first and second generation.

As to the specific positional elements of the elite, the Anglo-Saxon decline was most apparent in partisan offices, particularly state representative. While in 1930 Anglo-Saxons had been 55 percent of Detroit's state house delegation, by 1940 they were only 6 percent (Table 34). Also for the first time no Anglo-Saxons were in the U.S. Congress from Detroit despite the fact that two new congressional seats had been created during the ten years. Poles most heavily filled the positions of displaced Anglo-Saxons in all offices. In the state house, for example, Polish representation increased between 1930 and 1940 from 5 percent to almost 40 percent, coinciding closely with the percentage drop of the Anglo-Saxons. The Polish bloc was, in fact, clearly that which showed the greatest overall penetration, increasing its representation in the total elite from 8 percent in 1930 to over 23 percent by 1940. By 1950 Poles for the first time were represented in all high elective offices with the exception of mayor.

Of all the sub-sectors of the political elite, the U.S. Congressional delegation in both 1940 and 1950 was perhaps the most peculiar in ethnic composition. We find

TABLE 34.--Distribution of political offices by ethnicity, 1940.

Ethnicity	U.S. Congress	State Senator	State Rep.	Mayor	Common Council	City Clerk, Treas.	Pres. Bd. Ed.	Rec. Court
Anglo-Saxon	-	25%	6%	100%	50%	-	100%	22%
Irish	-	25	44	-	12	-	-	56
German	-	12	11	-	-	100%	-	11
Other northwest European ^a	20%	-	-	-	37	-	-	11
Polish	60	25	39	-	-	-	-	-
Italian	20 ^b	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Black	-	12	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total N	(5)	(8)	(18)	(1)	(8)	(2)	(1)	(9)

^aBelgian, Dutch, and French.^bProtestant.

TABLE 35.--Distribution of political offices by ethnicity, 1950.

Ethnicity	U.S. Congress	State Senator	State Rep.	Mayor	Common Council	City Clerk, Treas.	Pres. Bd. Ed.	Rec. Court
Anglo-Saxon	-	-	14%	-	33%	100%	100%	45%
Irish	17%	57%	45	-	11	-	-	33
German	-	-	-	100%	11	-	-	11
Other northwest European ^a	17	-	5	-	11	-	-	-
Polish	50	29	27	-	11	-	-	11
Other Slavic	-	-	5	-	11	-	-	-
Italian	17 ^b	-	-	-	11	-	-	-
Jewish	-	14	-	-	-	-	-	-
Black	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-
Total N	(6)	(7)	(22)	(1)	(9)	(2)	(1)	(9)

^aBelgian, Dutch, and French.^bProtestant.

no Anglo-Saxons or Germans in either year and only a single Irish representative in 1950. The rearrangement here is significant when we consider that 1930 marked the first date at which any non-Anglo-Saxon had attained this position. All three Poles in 1940 were newcomers as were the Italian and Belgian. From the standpoint of ethnic representation, however, the latter two present divergent cases. The Belgian was Louis C. Rabaut, third generation member of one of Detroit's first Belgian families, dating to the 1850s. Rabaut appeared to have retained very close ties to the city's Belgian Catholic colony.³¹ On the other hand, George A. Dondero, the Italian, apparently had few, if any, associational links with the Italian community in Detroit. As a Protestant, Dondero's ethnic-oriented activities were not evident although the paternal side of his family, marking its Detroit residence from 1867, was one of the city's first of Italian origin. Dondero's father, a northern Italian immigrant at age fifteen, married a German-born Protestant and the son's Methodism is likely traced to this source. Moreover, his congressional district, encompassing the city's northwest

³¹Philemon D. Sabbe and Leon Buyse, Belgians in America (Tielt, Belgium: Lannoo, 1960), pp. 177-79, 199-201; Burton, City of Detroit, vol. 4, p. 917.

side in addition to several Oakland County suburbs, did not contain large numbers of Italians.³²

In contrast with Dondero was Louis C. Miriani, councilman in 1950 and the first Italian Catholic to appear in high elective office in the city. A Detroit-born son of an auto worker who had emigrated from Italy in 1885, Miriani remained close to the city's Italian community.³³ As an attorney, he served as Chief Counsel for the Detroit Legal Aid Bureau and was a Detroit Street Railway Commissioner for ten years prior to his election.

The class composition of the political elite, complementing the ethnic penetration, by 1950 had changed very basically from that of 1920 and 1930. There was, in a way, a return to the occupational nature of the elite of the century's first two decades when the aldermanic system permitted the entrance of considerable numbers of skilled workers and small businessmen. By 1940, though lawyers continued to predominate, the elite contained an

³²Biographical File, "Dondero," Burton Historical Collection; Congressional Directory, 74th Congress, 1st Sess., 1935, p. 53. Our decision to categorize Dondero as Italian was based on the fact that his father was recognized as one of the pioneers of Italian descent in the city. See John C. Vismara, "Coming of the Italians to Detroit," Michigan History 2 (1918): 110-24.

³³Directory, Italian-American Chamber of Commerce, 1960-61 (Detroit, 1960), p. 10; David Greenstone, A Report on the Politics of Detroit (Cambridge, Mass.: Joint Center for Urban Studies of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, 1961), p. II-12.

increasing number of skilled manual workers or white collar workers, the latter primarily minor civil servants. By 1950 these categories had risen to over 30 percent with most being in the skilled laborer category. The most significant factor contributing to the increase in the number of laboring class individuals in the elite was the rise of organized labor and its subsequent political empowerment. This was particularly evident in 1950. In that year, fifteen individuals of the elite were at the time of their election either union members or union officials, several of the latter of high rank. Thus, at this time, ties to the now important labor elite sector by a substantial number of political notables were manifest.

Within the Irish group especially, the class differences between the 1920 and 1930 elites and those of 1940 and 1950 were obvious. In the former years the top Irish elected officials were primarily lawyers (five of eight in 1920, six of eleven in 1930); only two in each of these years could be categorized as a skilled laborer. By 1950, six of nineteen were lawyers, but eight were now skilled or semi-skilled workers, most of them active unionists. The Poles in the elite showed a similar increasing tendency by 1950 to attain high political office through union activity. In that year, four of the thirteen Poles in the elite were active union personnel. The Black in the 1950 elite was also a union official at the

time of his election. This contrasts noticeably with the occupational origins of the Anglo-Saxons who were mostly lawyers in both 1940 and 1950. In fact we find a great degree of continuity over the entire fifty-year period as regards the occupations of the Anglo-Saxons of the elite; at every date from 1910 forward, lawyers predominated among them.

If the emergence of a strong organized labor movement in Detroit contributed heavily to the penetration of non-Anglo-Saxons into the political elite during the late 1930s and 1940s, the vehicle through which entrance was achieved was the Democratic party. Indeed, it may very well be argued that ethnic penetration would have been as great without the union impetus, only that the class characteristics of the personnel would have differed.³⁴ What typified almost all of the newly recruited ethnics, both labor and non-labor affiliated, was their Democratic party preference.

³⁴The national movement of urban ethnic groups to their solidly Democratic position even by 1928 is well described by Samuel Lubell, The Future of American Politics, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1956), pp. 29-54. Litchfield's study of Detroit documents the shift of the foreign-born, particularly in heavily Polish precincts to the Democratic party in the 1930s. See Edward H. Litchfield, Voting Behavior in a Metropolitan Area (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1941). The Democratic-Republican schism among the "old" and "new" immigrant groups in the city is also confirmed by Eldersveld in his 1951-52 study. See Samuel Eldersveld, Political Affiliation in Metropolitan Detroit (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957), pp. 62-63.

The depth of the realignment of party politics in Detroit can only be seen in proper perspective when one considers the durability of the Republican party in the city prior to 1932. Its strength was not confined only to local politics but was apparent in national elections as well. In 1920, for example, Detroit's (Wayne County) Democratic presidential vote of 17.6 percent was lower than that of any major American city regardless of region. Even by 1928, its 36.8 percent Democratic presidential vote was the lowest among major cities of the Northeast and Midwest.³⁵ By that time most other large cities were approaching Democratic majorities. Detroit thus appeared a last major urban stronghold of the Republican party. The election of 1932, however, marked the significant threshold. While Roosevelt carried the city in that year with almost 60 percent of the vote, the effect upon local and legislative offices was even more profound. John Lesinski's election to the U.S. Congress was indicative of the sweeping nature of political change. A second generation Pole who had never before been a candidate for political office, he was elected as a Democrat from a district

³⁵ Richard M. Scammon, ed., America At the Polls: A Handbook of American Presidential Election Statistics 1920-1964 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1965).

of Detroit normally 85 percent Republican.³⁶ While Republicans continued to dominate state politics until the late 1940s, their one-sided majorities were overcome. Most important, in Detroit the Republican party never recovered its previous strength.

The party-ethnicity correlation becomes clear when we consider the makeup of the 1940 elite. By that year the only Republicans left were two state senators, a state representative, and a U.S. Congressman. All were Anglo-Saxons except the latter, George Dondero, who, as previously described, was an Italian Protestant. In Table 34 we find that only in the non-partisan offices were Anglo-Saxons able to retain their strength from 1930. They still maintained in that year two of nine Recorder's Court seats and were the largest ethnic bloc on the council, a position that had remained constant from 1920. During the decade of the 1940s these proportions were virtually unchanged so that by 1950, Anglo-Saxons continued to maintain strength only in non-partisan city offices (Table 35).

The religion-party correlation, evident in 1900 and 1910 but erased in 1920 and 1930 by the almost total Republican dominance, was in 1940 again apparent. In Table 36 we have included in addition to those holding

³⁶Michigan Manual, 1933, p. 639.

partisan offices, individuals with non-partisan offices for whom party preference was determinable. What we find is a clear split between the Protestant northwest European Republicans and the Catholic southern and eastern European Democrats. The ethnic split is even more distinct when we consider that one of the Protestant Democrats in both 1940 and 1950 was a Black.

TABLE 36.--Party breakdown of the political elite by religion, 1940 and 1950.

Religion	Democrat		Republican	
	1940	1950	1940	1950
Protestant	10%	8%	88%	86%
Catholic	90	89	12	14
Jewish	-	3	-	-
Total N	(29)	(35)	(8)	(7)

Summary and Analysis

In summary let us look at the overall trends in the ethnic composition of the political elite over the entire fifty-year period. The most apparent losses were among the Anglo-Saxons and Germans, those groups which so thoroughly dominated the city's political offices at the century's commencement. As is seen in Table 37, Anglo-Saxons declined from over 40 percent of the elite to less

TABLE 37.--Ethnic composition of the political elite, 1900-1950.

Ethnicity	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1900-1950 net difference
Anglo-Saxon	41.5	43.1	57.5	52.0	21.1	22.8	-18.7
Irish	11.3	10.3	17.5	24.0	30.8	33.3	+22.0
German	39.6	32.7	15.0	8.0	11.5 ^a	5.3	-34.3
Other northwest European	1.9	5.2	-	6.0	9.6	5.3	+ 3.4
Polish	1.9	5.2	2.5	8.0	23.1	22.8	+20.9
Other Slavic	-	-	-	-	-	3.5	+ 3.5
Italian	-	-	-	2.0	1.9	3.5 ^b	+ 3.5
Jewish	1.9	3.5	7.5	-	-	1.7	- 0.2
Black	1.9	-	-	-	1.9	1.7	- 0.2
Total N	(53)	(58)	(40)	(50)	(52)	(57)	

^aIncludes one Swiss-German.^bIncludes one Protestant.

than 23 percent during the half century. Germans, however, exhibited an even more precipitous decline. While they constituted almost the equivalent of the Anglo-Saxons at the turn of the century, by 1950 they had diminished to little more than 5 percent.

The decline of Germans in the political elite is particularly significant when we consider their parallel rise in the economic elite sector at almost the same pace. Just as Germans showed the greatest increase among all represented ethnic groups in the economic elite over the fifty years, so they displayed the most substantial net decrease in the political. They were politically dominant at the century's outset but were far underrepresented in the economic leadership of the city; by the century's midpoint, a diametrically opposite picture was drawn.

The two groups filling the positions vacated by Anglo-Saxons and Germans were for the most part the Irish and Polish. As is seen in Table 37, the Irish increased their relative position in the elite at a very consistent pace from 1910 forward, so that by 1940 they were the leading group percentage-wise. The sharpest increase, however, and one almost as substantial as the Irish, was exhibited by the Poles, particularly between 1930 and 1940. This coincides to some degree with the points at which Anglo-Saxons declined most acutely.

To a great extent we may explain the Polish ascent in the city's political leadership as a mobilization of Polish voting power, aided by the Democratic party in the 1930s. By 1930 the Polish ethnic community was Detroit's largest and would remain so until 1950. Thus, even without the favorable conditions for ethnic recruitment provided by the depression years, it is very likely that Polish representation in the elite would have steadily increased, though not at the very sharp rate which was in fact exhibited. We find at least some evidence of this in their increase from 1920 to 1930.

If political mobilization may explain in large part the sizeable Polish gains, how may we explain Irish predominance in spite of the lack of a correspondingly large Irish community in the city? Lubell has noted that " . . . no minority group can be said to have arrived politically until its members can appeal beyond their own ethnic boundaries, to win a county-wide or city-wide election."³⁷ Indeed, like no other group, the Irish in Detroit by 1940 had "arrived politically." The historical tendency of Irish dominance of the political machines of other major cities is difficult to apply to Detroit given different historical reference points as well as variant political and social structures. Irish predominance in

³⁷Lubell, The Future of American Politics, p. 82.

cities such as New York and Boston was largely a nineteenth century product and occurred where very significant percentages of the population were Irish. In Detroit, although they were comparatively well represented in the political elite even in the early decades of the century, their greatest expansion occurred after 1920. Even at the turn of the century the Irish community of Detroit was not great in comparison with those of the eastern seaboard cities or Chicago. Moreover, after 1918 the necessary political structure for the maintenance of machine politics was mainly undone.

We may account for much of the Irish presence in 1950 by the unionists who occupied eight of the nineteen offices held by those of Irish origin. Five of these eight were attached to the UAW-CIO and were presumably elected primarily through this link. They did not, in other words, assume their positions necessarily as a result of ethnicity as much as their identification with the emergent labor movement. This was not as strongly the case with the Polish in the elite. Yet, even if we eliminate these five, the Irish in 1950 were still on a par with the Poles and Anglo-Saxons, far in excess of their numerical strength in the city.

The most compelling explanation seems to lie in the role of the Irish in Detroit as a balancing political group. In Table 37 we see them by 1950 in just such a

numerical position between Anglo-Saxons, Germans, and other northwest Europeans on the one hand, and Poles and other southern and eastern Europeans on the other. Their earlier success, though not as striking, may be interpreted in much the same way. Bradley and Zald note a similar ethnic phenomenon in Chicago politics:

Both in the city council and in the party hierarchy, the religious similarity between the Irish and the other nationality groups . . . and the fact that in a city which has no one single ethnic group in a clear majority, the Irish upset the community balance least, made the Irish Catholics the most logical and acceptable candidates.³⁸

The religious commonality of the Irish vis-a-vis the large southern and eastern European ethnic communities of the city as well as their relative social proximity to the Anglo-Saxon core group cannot be underestimated as assets for political success. In this regard, at least, Irish political achievement in Detroit resembled that of other major ethnic cities.³⁹

³⁸Donald S. Bradley and Mayer N. Zald, "From Commercial Elite to Political Administrator: The Recruitment of the Mayors of Chicago," American Journal of Sociology 71 (1965): 167.

³⁹Perhaps the most vivid sociohistorical account of Irish political activity in New York is Glazer and Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot, pp. 217-87. For a description of Chicago in this regard, see Edward M. Levine, The Irish and Irish Politicians (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), chap. 6. On Boston's Irish politicians see William V. Shannon, The American Irish (New York: Macmillan, 1963), pp. 182-232.

By 1950 the most politically underrepresented ethnic group in Detroit were Blacks who, despite their almost 17 percent of the city's populace retained only a single high-ranking elected official. Moreover, since this particular individual was also a high-ranking union official, it is difficult to determine how much his presence was the result of a successful ethnic vote or the influence of organized labor.⁴⁰ Ironically the position of Blacks in the political elite was essentially the same in 1950 as it had been in 1900 when Detroit's Black populace numbered no more than 1.4 percent of the city's total.⁴¹

Jews also experienced little percentage change as part of the political elite over the fifty years though their representation was somewhat erratic from decade to decade. The national shift of Jews from the Republican to the Democratic party may in part explain their absence from high elective office in 1930 and 1940. All Jewish

⁴⁰State Representative Edgar Currie was Business Representative for Local 124 of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America but more importantly also served on the board of the Wayne County CIO Council.

⁴¹A Black was first elected to the Board of Education in 1955 and to the Common Council in 1957. Charles Diggs, Jr., a Black, was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1954 from the 13th congressional district which was at the time approximately 50 percent Black. See Greenstone, A Report on the Politics of Detroit, p. V-29.

members of the political elite prior to that time had been Republicans. Thus the period of the 1930s marked something of a transition for the city's Jewish political bloc. The single Jew in the 1950 elite was in fact a Democratic member of the state senate beginning in the 1941-42 session.⁴²

In short, by 1950 the political elite of Detroit was ethnically diverse but in proportions that still did not reflect the numerical size of the city's various ethnic groups. Irish, Anglo-Saxons, and even Poles appeared overrepresented while Blacks, non-Polish eastern Europeans, southern Europeans, and Germans were underrepresented. In the case of the latter group, of course, the extent of intermarriage with Anglo-Saxon Protestants, and to some degree other ethnic groups as well, made it increasingly difficult to distinguish between them. The size of the "German community" or even the very definition of such a sociological unit was therefore uncertain. Moreover, as already noted, the size of any of the various ethnic communities in the city was difficult to determine accurately, given the loss of those beyond the second generation in census figures. Nonetheless these figures do give us a foundation for estimating their actual sizes and thus for making comparisons, if only tentative. We

⁴²On State Senator Charles S. Blondy, see Michigan Jewish History 3 (June 1963): 36-37.

can be fairly certain, for example, that the Irish were highly overrepresented and even more certain that Blacks were well underrepresented.

As to the differences between political and economic elites, they are somewhat difficult to evaluate given the comparatively light ethnic representation in the latter. However, this fact in itself is of utmost significance in that it reflects fundamentally divergent modes of access to elite status. Given such different channels of recruitment, family position, occupational inheritance, and economic innovation were not crucial factors for the attainment of high elective political office. As a result, the political class system may be said to have provided a less obstructive route to elite status and thus a means of extensive formal structural assimilation for a variety of ethnic groups.

CHAPTER VII

THE LABOR ELITE

Labor leaders as an element of a community's elite structure are a special group. Their unique position is well described by Phelps who explains that as a group, labor executives, though having acquired a great deal of functional power, "are denied almost every form of recognition other than their earned rank as union officials."¹ In comparison with business executives of similar organizational rank, or even political officials of similar class and ethnic origins, they often remain noticeably apart from even the middle levels of the community's status hierarchy despite the very substantial strategic power they wield in cities with large industrial labor forces.

The influence of organized labor in Detroit, however, did not emerge until well into the 1930s and perhaps

¹Orme W. Phelps, "Community Recognition of Union Leaders," Industrial and Labor Relations Review 7 (1954): 432.

did not reach its full potency until 1950.² Thus, within the temporal boundaries of our analysis we did not include labor notables in our strategic elite sector until 1940. Even at that point their power was still in the emergent stages but their inclusion was felt necessary as a measure not only of this earlier group of labor leaders but as a point of comparison with those of 1950 as well.

A Note on Labor in Detroit

Several factors contributed to the relatively low position of organized labor in Detroit prior to 1940. In the years preceding the century's outset, craft unions in the city were noticeably active but with the growth of the automobile industry, unions began to wane in their attraction to the expanding work force. In 1906 the American Federation of Labor succeeded the Council of Trades and Labor Unions but was even less successful in gaining membership among the auto workers.³ Wages were

²Prior to that time Detroit's was not a unique case in this regard. Form notes that "It is a commonplace that organized labor has had little influence in community policy in the United States. Prior to the New Deal, community decisions were made largely by business and professional groups." William Form, "Organized Labor's Place in the Community Power Structure," Industrial and Labor Relations Review 12 (1959): 526.

³Allan Nevins and Frank Ernest Hill, Ford: Expansion and Challenge: 1915-1933 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), p. 509. See also Frank X. Martel, "Progress in Detroit," American Federationist 62 (May 1955): 19. As an indication of how futile were the

considerably higher in the automotive sector than in most other industrial areas and the internal divisions within the labor movement itself seriously impeded organizing efforts. Moreover, most employers during the early decades of the century maintained essentially paternalistic relations with their workers, most noticeably the Ford Motor Company, during this time the city's largest. Such paternalism helped thwart union efforts particularly among newly arrived immigrant workers. Ford's sociological department is especially exemplary of an effort to assist the novice workman in his adjustment to factory life and the often overwhelming pressures of the urban milieu.⁴

efforts of labor organizers among the auto workers, the IAM, largest union in the industry prior to the advent of the UAW, claimed less than 1,000 members in Detroit in 1929; it had been significantly larger ten years prior. See Robert W. Dunn, Labor and Automobiles (New York: International, 1929), pp. 184-85.

⁴The best account of the Ford sociological department is found in Nevins, Ford: The Times, The Man, The Company (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), pp. 551-63; and Nevins and Hill, Ford: Expansion and Challenge, pp. 332-49. One of its chief initial purposes was to evaluate workers as to their qualifications for the five dollar per day wage announced by Ford in early 1914. As an agency which in this process closely examined the life styles of individual workers, its welfare aspects often became clouded by its controlling effects. In its early years of operation Nevins judges it on the whole "unquestionably beneficial." Ibid., p. 336. With the resignation of Samuel S. Marquis as the department's head in 1921, however, Ford's labor relations entered into an era described as "darker, harsher, more Prussian, more capricious and irrational." Ibid., p. 349. After this time the sociological department never again played a vital role in the company. Marquis himself states that his resignation was prompted by the new attitude of the company's executives which held "that men are more profitable to an

However, perhaps the chief factor in keeping Detroit relatively free of union influence was the aggressive campaigns waged by the automobile manufacturers themselves who by this time had a strong hold on the labor force of the city. This more than anything maintained Detroit's reputation as an open shop city. Nevins describes the nature of union activity in the automobile industry in Detroit during the 1920s as barren ground for union organizers: "If San Francisco was the most highly unionized city of the nation, Detroit was the most refractory."⁵

By 1940, however, the entrance of organized labor, and more specifically the CIO-affiliated United Automobile Workers into the power structure of the city was unquestioned. Economic and political decisions from this point forward were made only after a consideration of the position of organized labor, a situation heretofore not experienced. Although craft unions were previously active, not until the strong entrance of the UAW in the late 1930s

industry when driven than led, that fear is a greater incentive to work than loyalty." Samuel S. Marquis, Henry Ford: An Interpretation (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1923), p. 155. On the Ford sociological department and immigrant workers, see also Jonathan Schwartz, "Henry Ford's Melting Pot," in Otto Feinstein, ed., Ethnic Groups in the City (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1971), pp. 191-98. Schwartz reports that in 1916, of Ford's 41,000 workers, only 16,500 were categorized by the sociological department as "native Americans." Furthermore this category likely included a large percentage of second and third generation ethnics.

⁵ Nevins and Hill, Ford: Expansion and Challenge, p. 509.

were labor leaders an effective force in the community's decision-making bodies. After 1940, however, they appeared to dominate in many ways the political character of Detroit. For the first time a relatively large number of labor leaders were found occupying political elite positions as well as serving in various roles on numerous civic commissions. Furthermore, labor endorsements became increasingly important for elective political offices. Thus we see another important benchmark in the changing power structure of the city.⁶

The dominance of one union in Detroit, the United Automobile Workers, cannot be understated. Woodford aptly asserts that "the story of labor in Detroit since 1936 is practically the story of the UAW."⁷ For this reason we have overbalanced our selection of labor elite personnel with officials of this union. To have presented a more equal representation among the city's various union councils would have disregarded the

⁶Good accounts of the relationship between the UAW and Detroit's political structure are contained in J. David Greenstone, Labor in American Politics (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), pp. 110-40; and Irving Howe and B. J. Widick, The UAW and Walter Reuther (New York: Random House, 1949). For the role of the Political Action Committee of the CIO in Detroit and Michigan Democratic politics during the late 1940s, see Fay Calkins, The CIO and the Democratic Party (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 112-46.

⁷Frank B. and Arthur M. Woodford, All Our Yesterdays: A Brief History of Detroit (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969), p. 328.

realistic distribution of labor power in the city during this time. UAW dominance also accounts for the relatively small number within the labor elite. To have included officials of less significant unions and labor councils would have distorted the importance of the UAW and would additionally have lowered the criteria for inclusion.⁸ Through our incorporation of only the top officials of the highest-ranking labor councils of the city, in addition to the UAW local and national leadership group, we have still essentially covered the entire labor movement in the city.

Class Homogeneity; Ethnic Diversity

Before presenting our findings for the labor sector, we should explain that the very small numbers which we have analyzed make our conclusions extremely tentative at best. Yet, as was explained, to have included lesser officials in greater number would have distorted the actual structure of labor power at its apex in Detroit during this time. Moreover, even if their

⁸As an example of how our elite would have been seriously distorted, in 1950, the Detroit Federation of Labor Council listed 16 vice presidents and trustees and the Detroit and Wayne County CIO Council listed 20. Not only was the effective power of these officials considerably less than that of the very top officers, but by including either group, the labor elite would have contained far more representatives from these councils than from the UAW. Furthermore, in both 1940 and 1950, the Detroit CIO leadership was heavily dominated by UAW personnel.

inclusion would not have seriously biased the composition of the elite, the extreme sparsity of data concerning labor leaders, especially at the local level, simply precluded the analysis of a larger group. The dearth of biographical information on union officials is in itself a comment on their position in the community. Thus, they are rarely found in the usual biographical sources of community notables. Imberman noted in 1950 that labor leaders were rarely afforded the recognition which business and political leaders received primarily because their occupations were not rated at the executive level but rather on a level with the occupations of their union's members.⁹ In 1940 and 1950 this seemed particularly true in Detroit with the emergence of strong industrial rather than craft unions.

⁹A. A. Imberman, "Labor Leaders and Society," Harvard Business Review 28 (1950): 55. Despite their relatively few actual numbers, gathering information on even the very top union officials in the city was extremely laborious. For those whose mark was national as well as local such as Walter Reuther and several of the 1940 and 1950 UAW leadership including George F. Addes, Richard Frankenstein, and Emil Mazey, or those who later entered high political positions such as Patrick McNamara, First Vice President of the Detroit Federation of Labor in 1940 and later U.S. Senator from Michigan, data were quite accessible. But for those whose influence did not extend beyond the Detroit community, there existed only a paucity of meaningful biographical information. As a result, for many cases we were forced to depend on informants who had been active in the labor movement in Detroit during these years. To have attempted to gather such data on lesser officials, who for the most part were no longer living, would have been a task requiring research resources prohibitive to the present writer.

What patterns of ethnic penetration might be anticipated in the labor elite? In the first place, having seen a very clear relationship between class and ethnicity in both economic and political elite sectors, we would expect to find a similar association here. Thus, the more sizeable numbers of non-Anglo-Saxon ethnics of the city's working class populace might be expected to make their most substantial elite penetration in this sector. Presumably we should find not necessarily dominant, but at least greater percentages of southern and eastern Europeans and Blacks. Secondly, by breaking down the labor elite into craft as opposed to industrial union sub-sectors, we may find ethnic differences on this basis. The AF of L-affiliated unions, at once longer established, more politically conservative, and more tightly bound to a sponsorship type of recruitment than the CIO affiliates (including the UAW), would likely display less ethnic heterogeneity and greater dominance by those of "old" immigrant origins.

Looking first at the elite as a total unit, we see that in 1940 the three "old" immigration groups--Anglo-Saxons, Irish, and German--maintained between them 63 percent of the top leadership positions (Table 38). However, their absolute numbers were not great and what appears to be more significant is the fact that there was a very broad variety of ethnic representation. Not only

TABLE 38.--Ethnic breakdown of labor elite by generation, 1940.

Ethnicity	Foreign-born % elite		Second generation % elite		Third generation & beyond % elite		Generation uncertain % elite		Total % elite	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anglo-Saxon	1	5.3	2	10.5	-	-	1	5.3	4	21.0
Southern White	-	-	-	-	1	5.3	-	-	1	5.3
German	-	-	2	10.5	1	5.3	1	5.3	4	21.0
Irish	1	5.3	1	5.3	-	-	2	10.5	4	21.0
French	1	5.3	-	-	1	5.3	-	-	2	10.5
Hungarian	-	-	1	5.3	-	-	-	-	1	5.3
Italian	-	-	1	5.3	-	-	-	-	1	5.3
Lebanese	-	-	1	5.3	-	-	-	-	1	5.3
Black	-	-	-	-	1	5.3	-	-	1	5.3
Totals	3	15.8	8	42.1	4	21.0	4	21.0	19	100.0

were southern and eastern Europeans as well as Blacks present, but for the first time in our analysis we find a southern-born White among the elite. As was previously noted, we felt justified in creating a separate category for such individuals since in terms of our application of "ethnic group" they display clear cultural and identificational differences from those we have considered Anglo-Saxon.

The generational breakdown reveals an elite which was better than half foreign stock, even disregarding the four cases of uncertain generational status. Even among the Anglo-Saxons, Germans, and Irish, the foreign stock constituted a majority.

The 1950 elite displayed a similar high degree of ethnic heterogeneity (Table 39). Almost the full spectrum of the city's ethnic groups were represented. What is particularly striking, however, is the rather substantial numerical dominance of Anglo-Saxons in that year. Even more surprising, perhaps, is the fact that they were almost all British-born, representing seven of the eight total foreign-born in the elite. Generationally the 1950 group was even more solidly foreign stock than that of 1940 with almost 70 percent now either foreign-born or the sons of foreign-born parents. Three of the four individuals in the third generation or beyond category were Black and southern White. Thus the European ethnics for which

TABLE 39.--Ethnic breakdown of labor elite by generation, 1950.

Ethnicity	Foreign-born % elite		Second generation % elite		Third generation & beyond % elite		Generation uncertain % elite		Total % elite	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anglo-Saxon	7	26.9	1	3.8	-	-	1	3.8	9	34.6
Southern White	-	-	-	-	2	7.7	-	-	2	7.7
German	-	-	2	7.7	-	-	1	3.8	3	11.5
Irish	1	3.8	1	3.8	-	-	1	3.8	3	11.5
French	-	-	-	-	1	3.8	1	3.8	2	7.7
Hungarian	-	-	1	3.8	-	-	-	-	1	3.8
Polish	-	-	2	7.7	-	-	-	-	2	7.7
Italian	-	-	2	7.7	-	-	-	-	2	7.7
Jewish	-	-	1	3.8	-	-	-	-	1	3.8
Black	-	-	-	-	1	3.8	-	-	1	3.8
Totals	8	30.8	10	38.5	4	15.4	4	15.4	26	100.0

generational status was determined were almost wholly first or second generation.

When the elite is subdivided into craft and industrial sub-units the ethnic patterns are basically those we expected to encounter (Table 40). The craft union leadership did in fact display less heterogeneity and almost all of those whose origins were of the "new" immigration, as

TABLE 40.--Number of each ethnic origin in labor elite by union affiliation, 1940-1950.

Ethnicity	AFL		CIO	
	1940	1950	1940	1950
Anglo-Saxon	1	4	3	5
Southern White	-	-	1	2
German	1	-	3	3
Irish	1	1	3	2
French	1	1	1	1
Polish	-	-	-	2
Hungarian	-	-	1	1
Italian	1	-	-	2
Lebanese	-	-	1	-
Jewish	-	-	-	1
Black	-	-	1	1
Totals	5	6	14	20

well as the Blacks, were attached to the industrial unions. The UAW represented the largest single bloc within the elite and by itself exhibited the greatest variety of ethnicity in its top leadership positions in both years (Table 41). Given its numerical dominance such variety might logically be expected but the ethnic blend is still

TABLE 41.--Number of each ethnic origin in UAW leadership, 1940-1950.

Ethnicity	1940	1950
Anglo-Saxon	2	3
Southern White	-	2
German	2	2
Irish	2	2
French	1	1
Polish	-	1
Hungarian	1	1
Italian	-	2
Lebanese	1	-
Jewish	-	1
Totals	9	15

striking. As a factor in elite penetration, ethnicity was less noticeable here than in any other single element of Detroit's power structure. The absence of Blacks among the UAW's top leadership, however, is also apparent. Each of the Blacks who served on the CIO Council in 1940 and 1950 were not attached to the UAW. When we consider that Blacks constituted a very substantial proportion of the industry's labor force in the city during the 1940s, their underrepresentation is even more evident.¹⁰ It is

¹⁰ Northrup reports that by 1946, of Chrysler's 71,000 workers, most of whom were located in the city of Detroit, 17 percent were Blacks. In total numbers, though not percentage, Ford exceeded that figure. Much of Chrysler's lead at this time was due to the acquisition of the Briggs Manufacturing Corporation's plants which had already been employing a relatively large percentage of Blacks. See Herbert R. Northrup, The Negro in the Automobile Industry (Philadelphia: Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, University of Pennsylvania, 1968), p. 22.

interesting to note that among our UAW informants, the lack of ethnic consciousness on the part of early leadership as well as rank and file elements was frequently expressed. At least one, however, noted the exception vis-a-vis Blacks.¹¹

What is perhaps the most singular observation of the Detroit labor elite during these years is the substantial dominance of the foreign-born and second generation ethnics. A comparison with Mills and Dinerman's examination of a sample of AF of L and CIO top leadership at national, state, and city levels for 1948 reveals significant differences in this regard. Where we found in Detroit over 15 percent in 1940 and over 30 percent in 1950 foreign-born, their analysis showed that "only one in ten of the labor leaders was not born in the United

See also Northrup, Organized Labor and the Negro (New York: Harper & Bros., 1944), pp. 186-205.

¹¹A Black did not serve on the UAW International Executive Board until 1962 and the first Black to be elected to a UAW regional directorship did not occur until 1968. This was Detroit Region 1A, about 28 percent of which the membership at the time was Black. (This information was secured from the biographical file at the UAW's International Headquarters in Detroit.) It is perhaps noteworthy that Local Union 212 (Briggs) seemed to pioneer efforts to secure equal rights for Blacks within the industry as well as the UAW. A Black was elected to the first board of trustees of this local in 1935 and in 1938 it hired the first Black office worker in Detroit local union offices. See Michigan Chronicle, February 23, 1957.

States."¹² Even more contrasting were our findings for the foreign stock. Whereas Mills and Dinerman found approximately 38 percent whose fathers were born abroad, our Detroit group was 58 percent and 69 percent foreign stock respectively in 1940 and 1950.

The particularly large group of Scotch- and English-born among the elite reflects the union experience and organizing skills which these individuals brought with them. The career lines of almost all the Anglo-Saxon foreign-born were in fact quite similar. Most were veterans of the British coal mines as their fathers had been before them and all had received exposure to union activism through their fathers' and in several cases their own union membership prior to emigrating. Arriving in the United States in the early 1920s, many initially worked the mines of western Pennsylvania or southern Illinois before arriving in Detroit. Having strong union proclivities to begin with, their tendency to reach labor leadership positions in Detroit where unions had been effectively suppressed is thus not entirely surprising. Harry Southwell, a British-born leader in the UAW,

¹²C. Wright Mills and Helen S. Dinerman, "Leaders of the Unions," in J. B. S. Hardman and Maurice F. Neufeld, eds., The House of Labor: Internal Operations of American Unions (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1951), p. 28. Though the authors included national and state officials as well as city, their choice of offices was, like ours, limited to only the very top two or three of each council.

expressed what was perhaps typical concern upon coming to Detroit in 1923 and learning of the lack of union activities in the plants. In his own words, "I had been led to believe through my upbringing that every group of workers aspired to some form of security through a union. This was largely brought about by my background in England where my grandfather, who raised me from childhood, was a very active unionist."¹³

The large percentage of second generation ethnics in the labor elite is no doubt a good reflection of the continued ethnic influx which was maintained throughout the 1920s in Detroit and the position of most of these in-migrants on the occupational hierarchy. While the ethnic influx had leveled off in most cities, especially in the late 1920s, the booming automobile industry continued to attract immigrants and those of the second generation who had been in other U.S. cities or in Canada.¹⁴ Though native-born, their career lines were quite similar to the British and Irish foreign-born. Almost all were the sons of laborers who had been active unionists and not a small percentage of them had

¹³Oral History Interview of Harry Southwell, University of Michigan--Wayne State University Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, April 17, 1963, p. 3.

¹⁴Of the labor elite, one in 1940 and three in 1950 were either Canadian-born or had emigrated to the U.S. through Canada.

experienced work in the coal mines or steel mills as their fathers had before them. In fact the most typical pattern of employment that we found for the industrial union leaders who were second generation ethnics was a movement from the mines and mills of the Allegheny and Ohio Valleys to the automobile plants of Detroit and the surrounding area during the 1920s and early 1930s. In contrast to the economic and political elites, we could find no labor leader who had been born in Detroit and only a few who had spent their childhoods in the city.

Walter Reuther, as president of the UAW International, was perhaps the most important single member of the Detroit labor elite in 1950. Yet his early career displayed a pattern which was not atypical of those of his immediate subordinates. Born in Wheeling, West Virginia of German immigrant parents, he came to Detroit in 1926 at the age of nineteen as a novice tool and die maker after having worked in a Wheeling steel mill for a year. As it did for others, Detroit promised Reuther more lucrative job opportunities in the automobile industry. His unionism, however, had already been firmly implanted by his father who had also worked in the mills and had been a union official and organizer.¹⁵ Though the details

¹⁵Frank Cormier and William J. Eaton, Reuther (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970).

differed, this model was generally repeated for most of the second generation ethnic labor leaders of this period.

The similarity of career paths of those of the labor elite is particularly meaningful when we consider that it transcended ethnic divisions. In the political elite, while the Polish and other southern and eastern Europeans, as well as the Irish to some extent, seemed to display analogous middle or in some cases sub-middle-class occupational origins, those of Anglo-Saxons were generally higher. At the elite level of the labor sector, however, class remained constant despite ethnic differences. In a sense, the place of labor notables on the community's ethnic hierarchy did not in all cases parallel their place on the class hierarchy.

Summary and Analysis

The officials we have analyzed were either the very top executives of district or regional councils or, in the case of several of the UAW leaders, presidents of the city's largest locals. Might the ethnic pattern be different had we dropped to a sub-elite level and included lesser ranking officials? The difficulty of securing accurate data on such persons has been alluded to but, through a name analysis, we investigated the executive boards of the AF of L and CIO Detroit councils for 1940 and 1950. This yielded a picture which was not radically

inconsistent with our findings at the very top of the leadership structure. For both years there was a greater variety of ethnic representation on the CIO board than the AF of L, but there was also a clear Anglo-Saxon dominance of both. The inability to distinguish Blacks or southern Whites in this manner is, of course, a serious shortcoming and their representation may have been greater than at the uppermost echelons of the council hierarchies.

In sum, even with the paucity of our data, it is difficult not to conclude that ethnic penetration of the labor elite was less hindered than in either the economic or political sectors. Despite the somewhat greater representation of Anglo-Saxons in both industrial and craft union top leadership posts, it is most important to consider that almost all of these individuals were of origins that extended back no more than a single generation. In this sense they were not far removed from the non-Anglo-Saxons. Moreover, ethnic heterogeneity was quite obvious, especially among the important UAW leadership. Thus, this most important sub-sector of the elite was, with the exception of Blacks, closely reflective of the ethnic composition of the city's largest work force.

It is difficult to compare labor with economic or political elites since we have only analyzed the former for a single decade. Yet, two factors do stand out as critical to the relative differences in ethnic

penetration during this time. First, the method of recruitment to elite posts was not through selection by the community at-large as in the political sector or through bureaucratic promotion or family inheritance as in the economic. Rather, entrance, particularly in the industrial unions, was more a result of organizing abilities and prior union persuasions. It must be remembered that the officials of the UAW (and the CIO which was heavily dominated by the UAW) who we investigated were at this time pioneer leaders, not those who had advanced through an already established union bureaucracy. In a functional sense, the industrial labor movement attracted those, regardless of ethnicity, who possessed necessary organizational skills. Second, we have already noted the tendency for class consciousness to supercede ethnic divisions. Especially in the UAW, as an emergent labor movement during these years, such efforts to assure class solidarity would seem to have been even more pronounced in its appeal to an ethnically-variegated constituency.

CHAPTER VIII

ETHNICITY AND ELITE INTERRELATIONSHIPS

The structure of elites we have suggested is comprised of two levels, the uppermost stratum (labeled the pinnacle elite) being composed of those who are not only economic, political, and labor notables, but social notables as well. At this point in the structure, strategic and social elites meet. Presumably these individuals have achieved community prestige as well as strategic power and are further able to consolidate and transmit that functional power through whatever perquisites are attached to high social status. Most basically in this chapter we want to determine the relationship between these two horizontal elite elements in Detroit during the first half of the twentieth century and investigate what effects ethnicity had upon that relationship.

It is of importance to know the degree of inter-elite movement in order to first determine the validity of our descriptive model. Was there in fact a pinnacle elite during this time at which point top community decision-makers interrelated at both strategic and social levels or

did the two display little meaningful interaction? Second, and of more importance to our focus, we want to determine the extent of inter-elite movement on the part of those non-Anglo-Saxons who attained strategic elite positions. Did their functional power secure a comparable level of prestige with the Anglo-Saxons of the strategic elites or do we instead find parallel status hierarchies corresponding to ethnicity, and thus several extant social elites?¹ A determination of this may serve as a measure of the degree of informal structural assimilation which occurred for these non-Anglo-Saxons.

With regard to the first question, the actual extent of movement between strategic and social elites in Detroit during these years was quite narrowly limited to the economic elite sector. It is only among the economic notables that we find any prodigious display of social elite membership, whether measured by listing in the various social registers or by exclusive club enrollment. At the century's outset there was a limited degree of participation in high prestige organizations by political notables but it is obvious that these individuals were invariably of higher class origins prior to their elective offices than were their non-social elite colleagues. Moreover many were economic notables as well. By 1950

¹Baltzell refers to "parallel upper class structures." See E. Digby Baltzell, Philadelphia Gentlemen (New York: Free Press, 1958), chap. xi.

social and political elite interaction was marginal at best. As for the labor elite in 1940 and 1950, not unexpectedly we find no movement whatsoever between strategic and social dimensions. In sum, in its structural relationship with the economic, political, and labor elites (i.e., the strategic elite sector), the social elite was above all tied only to the economic elite during these fifty years. Top community prestige was, in the main, clearly limited to the most notable economic personages. It is among these individuals, therefore, that we shall of necessity concentrate our attention in determining patterns of ethnic penetration.

Social Elite--Economic Elite Interaction

We suggested that, given the twentieth century nature of Detroit's social and economic development, a more fluid status hierarchy at the uppermost level might be apparent, enabling representatives from a variety of ethnic groups to experience ultimate status mobility. To a very limited extent there is evidence to support this notion. We must first bear in mind that top social prestige appears to have been monopolized to a great extent by economic notables and thus we would expect the social elite to generally correspond in its ethnic composition with that of the economic elite. The ethnic makeup of the economic elite, however, was seen to be

quite narrow, exhibiting entrance only by Irish, Germans, northwest Europeans, and Jews over the fifty years. Thus, even if the social elite was ethnically a perfect reflection of the economic elite, it would still display only limited heterogeneity.

In Table 42 we see at the outset of the century and for its first two decades an overwhelming relationship between social and economic elites. In 1900 and 1910, almost 88 percent of the economic elite were also listed in Dau's Blue Book and by 1920 the percentage in its replacement, the Social Secretary was still a very sizeable 77. On this basis it seems apparent that in these early years the economic notables of Detroit were almost ipso facto social notables as well. With the exception of the several Jews in the elite there is little difference when we control for ethnicity. In 1900 and 1910 over 90 percent of the Anglo-Saxons of the economic elite were listed as were over 80 percent of the Irish. Among the other groups present, their numbers were small but percentage-wise they were well represented. This is in striking contrast to the few Jews who were economic notables but, with a single exception, conspicuously absent from Dau's and the Social Secretary.

What is perhaps most significant in terms of the ethnic breakdown during these years is the lack of Catholic exclusion. If we analyze the elite by religion

TABLE 42.--Number of economic elite listed in social directories, 1900-1950.

Ethnicity	1900			1910			1920			1930			1940			1950		
	S	E	%	S	E	%	S	E	%	S	E	%	S	E	%	S	E	%
Anglo-Saxon	38	41	92.7	59	64	92.2	59	73	80.8	41	68	60.3	33	64	51.6	36	82	43.9
Irish	6	7	85.7	9	11	81.8	5	6	83.3	4	10	40.0	1	7	14.3	1	11	9.1
German	2	2	100.0	1	2	50.0	6	8	75.0	6	10	60.0	8	18	44.4	7	25	28.0
Other nw Euro.	5	6	83.3	3	3	100.0	1	3	33.3	1	5	20.0	1	5	20.0	1	9	11.1
Jewish	0	2	00.0	1	3	33.3	0	2	00.0	0	0	00.0	0	4	00.0	0	7	00.0
Total	51	58	87.9	73	81	87.9	71	92	77.2	52	93	55.9	43	99	43.4	45	135	33.3

alone we find that the vast majority of Catholics in the economic elite were listed in the social directories as well. In fact, throughout the fifty-year period Catholic percentages of the economic elite as listees closely paralleled those for Protestants. As can be seen in Table 43, although the entire economic elite sector gradually became less equated with the social directories, there was no significant percentage difference between Protestant and Catholic listings among those who remained until 1950.

Catholic access to high social standing can be explained partly by the importance of key Irish figures in the pre-automobile economy (Dwyer and O'Brien, for example) whose influence remained substantial through 1920. After this point we notice a serious diminishment of Irish economic notables listed in the Social Secretary. Secondly the fact that many of the pioneer families of Detroit were French also seems an important factor in the inclusion of Catholics in the social elite. Representatives of most of the leading French commercial families whose significance was still evident through the early years of the twentieth century were noticeably present.

By 1930 the number of economic notables who were listed in the Social Secretary had declined to 56 percent and by 1950 were only one-third of the total economic elite. Initially we might interpret this as a growing

TABLE 43.--Number of economic elite listed in social directories by religion, 1900-1950.

Religion	1900			1910			1920			1930			1940			1950		
	S	E	%	S	E	%	S	E	%	S	E	%	S	E	%	S	E	%
Protes- tant	41	44	93.2	62	68	91.2	63	81	77.8	43	75	57.3	36	78	46.1	40	105	38.1
Catholic	10	12	83.3	10	12	83.3	8	9	88.9	9	18	50.0	7	16	43.7	5	22	22.7
Jewish	0	2	00.0	1	3	33.3	0	2	00.0	0	0	00.0	0	5	00.0	0	8	00.0
Total	51	58	87.9	73	83	87.9	71	92	77.2	52	93	55.9	43	99	43.4	45	135	33.3

bifurcation between social and economic elites. However, using the city's social directory as an index of social elite status may, by this time, be not entirely adequate. We reach such a conclusion on the basis of membership in the city's most exclusive clubs. Many economic notables were found to be listed on these organizations' rosters but, either by their own or others' choosing, did not appear in the Social Secretary. Thus by investigating the membership of certain of these clubs we might acquire a somewhat different picture. Furthermore membership in the city's most exclusive clubs may serve as an even better indicator of the extent of non-Anglo-Saxon penetration since their rosters were considerably smaller than the Social Secretary's.

We chose to investigate three metropolitan clubs in Detroit that appeared to represent a hierarchy of exclusivity. All have been noted by past and recent investigators as falling into the category of uppermost status organizations and two of the three were singled out as early as 1912 as the city's most prominent.²

²Paul Leake, History of Detroit, vol. 1 (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1912), p. 249. Dixon Wecter, in his classic work, specifically noted the Yondotega Club as among those at the very top of Detroit society. See The Saga of American Society: A Record of Social Aspiration, 1607-1937 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), p. 147. More recently, Kavalier favored the Detroit Club as being the city's most exclusive while Baltzell and Domhoff also noted the Detroit as being among the top upper class men's clubs. See Lucy Kavalier, The Private World of High Society (New York: David

The Yondotega Club, founded in 1891, was at the very pinnacle of the Detroit status hierarchy during the period 1900-1950. At its inception the membership did not exceed 100 and through 1950 it maintained an impressive stability in size. At the century's outset the club listed 109 members and by 1953 its roll still contained only 105.³ From a perusal of its membership rosters it is apparent that the attainment of high economic position alone was not the critical factor in acquiring entrance. Many of the most significant economic notables in Detroit either were admitted only late in their careers or did not attain admission at all. Such an imposing figure as Walter O. Briggs, for example, was not admitted until 1941 though his place in the Detroit industrial elite was well established as early as 1920.⁴ From all indications, family sponsorship was crucial since we notice a great frequency of sons replacing fathers throughout the fifty years. Seemingly, potential recruits were obliged to

McKay, 1960), p. 252; Baltzell, Philadelphia Gentlemen, p. 338; G. William Domhoff, The Higher Circles (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 23. See also "Detroit's Most Exclusive Clubs," Detroit Free Press, April 19, 1970; and "The Men Who Really Run Detroit," Detroit Scope Magazine 1 (January 25, 1969): 10-12.

³Book of the Yondotega Club (Detroit, 1900), pp. 6-7; Ibid, 1953, p. 9.

⁴Ibid., p. 27.

await their places, if in fact they were actually forthcoming.

As is seen in Table 44, membership by the economic elite in this organization was not great, but when we consider the absolute size of the club their numbers increase in significance. Even here, at the very top of the city's club hierarchy, we find no Catholic exclusion. Irish, French, and German Catholics were evident though the club's representation from among the city's economic notables remained primarily Anglo-Saxon and Protestant. Throughout the fifty-year period we find no Jews from the elite, nor were we able to locate any Jews at all on the Yondotega's membership rosters.

The second ranked metropolitan club, the Detroit, was considerably larger than the Yondotega but nonetheless relatively small in total numbers. The 1951 by-laws specifically required the total resident membership not to exceed 800.⁵ Although somewhat less stringent in its sponsorship requirements, the Detroit Club retained an exclusiveness which made membership only a slight degree lower in prestige.

In Table 45 we see that better than 50 percent of the economic elite maintained membership in the Detroit until 1950, at which point the percentage was just under

⁵Detroit Club Articles of Association, By-Laws and House Rules (Detroit, 1951).

TABLE 44.--Number and percentage of economic elite as members of Yondotega Club by ethnicity,
1900-1950.

Ethnicity	1900		1910		1920		1930		1940		1950	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anglo-Saxon	12	29.3	12	18.7	11	15.1	10	14.7	9	14.1	14	17.1
German	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4.0
Other northwest European	2	33.3	1	33.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Irish	1	14.3	-	-	1	16.7	1	10.0	-	-	-	-
Total	15	25.9	13	15.7	12	13.0	11	11.8	9	9.1	15	11.1

TABLE 45.---Number and percentage of economic elite as members of Detroit Club by ethnicity, 1900-1950.

Ethnicity	1900		1910		1920		1930		1940		1950	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anglo-Saxon	36	87.8	52	81.2	53	72.6	46	67.5	37	57.8	42	51.2
German	1	50.0	1	50.0	5	62.5	5	50.0	11	61.1	13	52.0
Other northwest European	4	66.7	3	100.0	1	33.3	1	20.0	2	40.0	5	55.6
Irish	6	85.7	8	72.7	5	83.3	5	50.0	3	42.9	3	27.3
Total	47	81.0	64	77.1	64	70.0	57	61.3	53	53.5	63	46.7

one-half. The ethnic pattern which is evident here closely resembles that of the Yondotega. Anglo-Saxons predominated but the entrance of Irish and other Catholics was noticeable throughout the period. Although considerably larger than the Yondotega, we were unable to locate a single Jew from 1900 to 1950 as a member of this organization. Similarly we found no southern or eastern Europeans on the club's rosters.

The final metropolitan club, the Detroit Athletic Club, was far less exclusive than either of the previous two, but perhaps most oriented in purpose to the business and financial elite of the city. This organization experienced two phases in its Detroit history, the first beginning in 1887, and the second in 1913. At the latter date the D.A.C. was reorganized and generally turned from a club whose purpose was to field amateur athletic teams to one which catered more generally to the business executives of the city. It was, more than the previous two clubs, a product of the automobile economy.⁶ By 1921 the membership was over 2500.⁷

Given the lesser degree of exclusivity it is not surprising that we should find this organization by 1920

⁶D.A.C. News--Silver Anniversary Issue (Detroit, April 1940).

⁷Noel C. O'Brien, ed., The Social Secretary, 1921 ed. (Detroit: The Social Secretary Co., 1921), pp. 175-95.

to be the most frequently listed city club by those of the economic elite (Table 46). The ethnic pattern, however, was still very much the same as that displayed by the Yondotega and Detroit clubs. With regard to the exclusion of Jews, an interesting development is seen with the D.A.C.'s reorganization. The earlier D.A.C. listed eight Jews on its roster out of a total membership in 1893 of 767.⁸ Among these were the most prominent Jewish commercial families of that time including the Butzels, Heinrichs, and Heinemans. With the club's reorganization in 1913, however, we find all but David E. Heineman no longer among the membership. In fact by 1920 no Jews at all were found on the club's roster despite the fact that it had increased in size almost four-fold since 1893.

Thus at all three levels of the metropolitan club hierarchy we find a similar ethnic pattern: Anglo-Saxon dominance with a proportionate representation of Irish, German, and other northwest Europeans, both Protestant and Catholic. Jewish exclusion, however, was virtually complete. With this latter exception, it is apparent that both social elite status as measured by the social registers as well as specific metropolitan club memberships strongly reflected the ethnic characteristics of the economic elite in general.

⁸Detroit Athletic Club Articles of Association
(Detroit, 1893).

TABLE 46.--Number and percentage of economic elite as members of Detroit Athletic Club by ethnicity, 1900-1950.

Ethnicity	1900		1910		1920		1930		1940		1950	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anglo-Saxon	25	61.0	37	57.8	61	83.6	57	83.8	56	87.5	58	70.7
German	1	50.0	-	-	7	87.5	10	100.0	16	88.9	20	80.0
Other northwest European	2	33.3	2	66.7	3	100.0	5	100.0	4	80.0	7	77.8
Irish	3	42.9	4	36.4	6	100.0	8	80.0	6	85.7	9	81.8
Total	31	53.4	43	51.8	77	83.7	80	86.0	82	82.8	94	69.6

Political Notables and the
Social Elite

The low degree of interrelationship between political and social elites, as opposed to the patterns seen in the economic elite sector, clearly reflect not only ethnic disparities but class differentials as well. As can be seen in Table 47, throughout the fifty-year period, Anglo-Saxons alone among the various ethnic categories that made up the political elite maintained places in the city's social directories. As already noted, several of these individuals in the early decades of the century were economic notables as well and would likely have acquired highest social prestige on that basis alone. In 1900 Alderman Richard P. Joy as a case in point, represented the second generation of a family whose industrial and financial interests in Detroit could only be described as colossal. Similarly, James Couzens, mayor in 1920, had by that time established himself as one of the city's economic giants having served as vice president and general manager of the Ford Motor Company as well as president of several of the city's banks. State Senator Walter J. Hayes in that same year appeared in the economic elite as president of one of the largest banks. Such individuals were clearly exceptional figures in the political elite. The remaining political notables who also maintained social elite status were for the most part

TABLE 47.--Number and percentage of political elite listed in social directories, by ethnicity, 1900-1950.

Ethnicity	1900			1910			1920			1930			1940			1950		
	S	P	%	S	P	%	S	P	%	S	P	%	S	P	%	S	P	%
Anglo-Saxon	7	22	31.8	8	25	32.0	6	23	26.1	4	26	15.4	2	11	18.2	1	13	7.7
German	-	21	-	3	19	15.8	1	6	16.7	1	4	25.0	-	6	-	-	3	-
Other nw Euro.	-	1	-	1	1	100.0	-	-	-	1	2	50.0	1	4	25.0	-	3	-
Irish	1	6	16.7	1	6	16.7	-	7	-	-	12	-	-	16	-	-	19	-
Jewish	1	1	100.0	1	2	50.0	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Total	9	53	17.0	14	58	24.1	7	40	17.5	6	50	12.0	3	52	5.8	1	57	1.8

attorneys attached to the more prestigious law firms. Names such as Charles W. Burton, John Anhut, Edwin Denby, and Charles Flowers fell into this category.⁹

The Anglo-Saxon dominance of the select group of political notables who were included in the city's social directories is even more prevailing when we consider that the single Irish representative was the previously mentioned Alfred J. Murphy, who by 1910 had left the Catholic Church in favor of Presbyterianism. The one Jew of the political elite who we find listed is David E. Heineman, also previously noted as perhaps the most preeminent single Jewish figure in Detroit's modern history.

As for membership in the leading city clubs, the number of political notables maintaining such associations was never significant. Again, those who were enrolled were generally the same individuals who were listed in the social directories. Only the Detroit Athletic Club among the three previously discussed organizations listed a meaningful number of high elective officials and this figure never exceeded 18 percent of the entire political elite. That high point was reached in 1930, and by 1950

⁹On Joy, see Burton, City of Detroit, vol. 4, pp. 852-55; and Burton, History of Wayne County, vol. 3, p. 61; on Couzens see Harry Barnard, Independent Man: The Life of Senator James Couzens (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958); on Burton and Hayes, see Biographical File, Burton Historical Collection; on Denby, see Burton, City of Detroit, p. 961; on Flowers, see Men of Progress (Detroit: Evening News Association, 1900), p. 518.

the percentage had dwindled to 7.0. This is one more indication of the changed class nature of the political elite after 1932.

The lack of representation in the social elite by non-Anglo-Saxon political notables reflects not only a considerable difference in occupational and income class indices but stronger ties to the various ethnic communities as well. In addition to their memberships in the more middle-class oriented fraternal orders (Masons, Foresters, Maccabees, and so forth), almost all of the non-Anglo-Saxon political notables maintained some association with an exclusively ethnic organization. This is particularly evident after 1940 when we find the heaviest Polish penetration of the elite. Almost every Pole in both 1940 and 1950 maintained membership in several ethnic organizations such as the Polish National Alliance, the Polish Roman Catholic Union, the Polish Falcons, or, if nothing else, the Knights of Columbus. Even the Irish in these last two decades displayed ethnic organizational ties. Increasingly labor-oriented, they quite naturally exhibited union affiliations, but in addition most associated themselves with the Knights of Columbus and a few even were active in the Gaelic League. These noticeable ethnic organizational ties may also reflect the generational composition of the non-Anglo-Saxons in the

political elite. Mostly first and second generation ethnics, the bonds remained well intact.

What is most apparent here is that strategic elite penetration via the political class system did not afford the ethnic individual comparable social prestige. Although an increasingly substantial percentage of non-Anglo-Saxons assumed the highest elective offices in the city by 1950, they did not enter its uppermost status organizations. The line of division between strategic and social elite sectors was most sharply drawn here, in striking contrast with their convergence at the top of the economic class system. There was, in short, no provision of opportunity for informal structural assimilation regardless of strategic position attained. The political elite as a functional unit displayed an ethnic and class heterogeneity that was translated into similar divisions at the primary levels of social organization. Thus club membership reflected those class and ethnic differences unlike the economic elite where relative union was found at both formal and informal levels.

Parallel Social Elites

In 1912, a Detroit historian described the city's social network at that time in the following manner:

With the growth of the city and the introduction of so many foreign elements, society of a necessity, has become split up into factions, or units,

according to the circumstances. Each nation represented in the population has its own social club, and in many instances, clubs at which gather the leading spirits of each nationality.¹⁰

In particular we have seen the manifestation of such parallel status hierarchies corresponding to the community's various ethnic groups among the political notables of the half century. May we thus speak of several "ethnic social elites," each at the pinnacle of such a hierarchy? As was explained, the most substantial ethnic penetration of the strategic elite sector occurred within the political class system rather than the economic. However, these non-Anglo-Saxon political notables did not, for the most part, exhibit comparably high social prestige. Thus it is difficult to confirm through their cases the existence of ethnic status organizations corresponding in rank with those dominated by the city's Anglo-Saxon economic notables. The picture is further clouded by the fact that participation by Irish, Belgian, Dutch, and French Catholics within those top ranked social organizations was consistently noticeable. We can only conjecture what the place of southern and eastern Europeans might have been had they attained economic elite positions. The Jewish representation in the strategic elite sector, however, appears to give evidence of a distinct sociological unit that may be called a parallel

¹⁰Leake, History of Detroit, vol. 1, p. 250.

social elite. Moreover analysis of this particular ethnic category is especially noteworthy since it is the one farthest in social distance from the core Anglo-Saxon group, of which representatives appeared at the top of the economic class system as well as the political.

The most compelling indicator of a Jewish social elite in Detroit during the first half of the twentieth century is the well-defined network of parallel upper class city and country clubs. Although we find a select few leading Jewish merchants and professionals listed in Dau's and the Social Secretary throughout the period, none were members of any of the three leading Anglo-Saxon dominated metropolitan clubs after 1920. Prior to that time only the previously mentioned eight Jews were on the roster of the old Detroit Athletic Club, preceding its reorganization in 1913. All, however, maintained membership in the Phoenix, the most exclusive and important Jewish city club. Franklin notes that this organization had, from its founding in 1872, limited its membership to a very small, select group.¹¹ Until its disappearance in the 1920s, the Phoenix remained at the apex of the Jewish hierarchy. It is of no small significance that Leake in

¹¹Leo Franklin, "Jews in Michigan," Michigan History 23 (1939): 88. See also Allen A. Warsen, Jewish Communal Institutions in Detroit (Detroit, 1952).

1912 included this organization among the five most prominent Detroit clubs.¹²

Not unlike other cities, the Jewish social elite in Detroit appeared to have been established by the earlier German-Jewish community apart from the later arriving eastern European Jews.¹³ Russell notes that such imposing figures in Detroit commerce as Emil Heineman (father of the celebrated David Heineman), Magnus Butzel, and the Rothchild brothers, the latter, founders of the tobacco industry in the city, formed the nucleus of a German-Jewish elite as early as the 1850s.¹⁴ Butzel was perhaps the most active Jew in Detroit commerce during the late 1800s and it is of some significance that throughout the fifty years we have investigated, two of his sons, Leo and Henry, were among the few Jews to have served on the boards of any of the city's banks. Others of this nineteenth century group included department store founders Emil Heyn and Julian Freund, clothing manufacturers

¹²Leake, History of Detroit, vol. 1, p. 249.

¹³Baltzell describes a similar process in Philadelphia as does Rischin in New York. See Philadelphia Gentlemen, pp. 273-91; and The Promised City, pp. 95-111.

¹⁴John Andrew Russell, The Germanic Influence in the Making of Michigan (Detroit: University of Detroit, 1927), pp. 329-32. See also Irving I. Katz, "Detroit's Jewish Community in 1867," Michigan Jewish History 4 (1964): 11-13.

Samuel Heavenrich and Henry Fechheimer, and the founder of the state's first glass factory, Louis Blitz. A later but no less significant addition to this group was the world-famed architect, Albert Kahn, by far the most prolific designer of the modern Detroit landscape.¹⁵

A proclivity to intermarry is particularly noticeable among these early German-Jewish families of Detroit. Although by the second decade of the twentieth century, eastern Europeans constituted the majority of the Jewish community in the city, traces of this select group remained evident. Most names were still to be found in the 1940 Social Secretary and even in 1950, a few remained. None from among the later arriving eastern European Jews, however, were found, even those who were economically or politically at the elite level. Such an economic notable as Meyer Prentis, for example, was not found in the Social Secretary nor was he enrolled in any of the more exclusive men's clubs of the city. He was, however, a member of the Great Lakes Club, a top Jewish metropolitan club, and also the Recess, a club made up primarily of executives of the automobile industry.

¹⁵ Kahn was the chief architect of the Detroit plants of almost every major auto manufacturer including Ford's revolutionary Highland Park plant and the massive River Rouge complex. A few of his more noteworthy projects included the General Motors Building, the Fisher Building, the Free Press and News Buildings, and the Detroit Athletic Club. See Burton, City of Detroit, vol. 3, pp. 881-82.

Prentis of General Motors, along with A. Edward Barit of Hudson, present interesting cases in that they represent part of the economic elite which emerged only after the century's outset. Most of the previously mentioned Jewish families, with Kahn's exception, had established themselves on the Detroit commercial scene well prior to 1910. Prentis and Barit, however, entered with the automotive industry and were not of old-line Detroit Jewish families. Barit's absence from any of the top status organizations of the city is even more striking than Prentis'. As president and general manager of the Hudson Motor Car Company in 1940 and 1950, he was the top executive of Detroit's fifth largest employer and one of the most significant corporations in the American economy. As was noted, Social Secretary listing seemed to decline in significance after 1930 and Barit, of course, may even have been omitted by his own choosing. William Knudsen, president of General Motors at approximately the same time that Barit was chief executive of Hudson, is an example of an economic notable who continually refused to have his or his family's name listed in the Secretary.¹⁶ Nonetheless, he maintained membership in the Detroit Athletic Club and served, in fact, as president of that organization. Barit, however, was conspicuously absent

¹⁶Detroit News, December 14, 1940.

from the rosters of any of the exclusive men's clubs of the city.

Summary and Analysis

We have seen somewhat ambiguous evidence of non-Anglo-Saxon ethnic penetration of the Detroit social elite during these fifty years. On the one hand there was no exclusion at any time on the basis of Catholicism alone. Among the Irish and Catholics of northwest European origin, economic success and one's ultimate place in the commercial circles of the city appear to have been more important requisites to social elite status than ethnic qualifications. The relatively sizeable number of Irish industrial notables of the late nineteenth and very early twentieth century had unhindered access to both social directory listing as well as membership in the city's most exclusive clubs. This pattern was maintained even when those who were not of such pioneer Irish families in Detroit entered into the highest positions of the new corporate bureaucracies. Likewise we found no basis for distinguishing between the degree of entrance afforded German Catholics as opposed to German Protestants. The latter consistently outnumbered the former as part of the economic elite, but Germans as well as a smaller number of French, Dutch, and Belgian Catholics appeared in the social elite throughout the period. We are led to

conclude for these cases that class rather than ethnicity was the critical factor in determining social elite status. We cannot be certain that such a pattern would have held consistent for southern and eastern European Catholics as well but, given their absence from economic notability, conclusions here must remain tentative. The entrance of only Anglo-Saxons of the political elite into social elite status lends some support to the contention that ethnicity was indeed an effective impediment, but there is also ample evidence of significant class differentials between those Anglo-Saxons and the southern and eastern European political notables.

As for Jews, however, a noticeably different picture is apparent. Social elite status, on the basis of Blue Book or Social Secretary listing alone was manifest for a select group of German-Jewish commercial and professional notables. Their club memberships, however, revealed their inability to penetrate the more exclusive social confines of the city's industrial and financial magnates. Though open to Catholics, the social elite, to all intents and purposes, remained gentile. Needless to say, it also remained white, but the absence of any Blacks in the economic elite presents only the possibility of assuming what their place might have been given a more fluid economic class system.

The pinnacle elite group in our suggested model, combining prestige with power, was throughout this period entered into not at all by labor notables and only slightly by the city's highest elective officials; its ethnic composition as a result remained narrow, reflecting that of the economic elite. The significance of this pinnacle category, however, appeared to have diminished in Detroit by 1940 with the emergence of new power forces comprised of organized labor and a restructured political system, the two often acting in concert. Ultimate functional power in the community could thus no longer be considered a holding of the economic elite alone. With these structural changes in the power or strategic elite sector, we are led to further affirm Baltzell's hypothesis regarding the ethnic consequences of such alternations. He notes that in the period which reached its peak somewhere between 1900 and the First World War, the American "establishment" (essentially what we have referred to as the pinnacle elite) was an "associationally exclusive" one, made up of white Anglo-Saxon-Protestants. Baltzell points out that, nonetheless, this WASP establishment was still ethnically representative of the functional elite, if not of the population as a whole. By 1950, however, though a more or less ethnically representative functional elite had been produced, the

status system had not kept pace.¹⁷ In Detroit this national pattern was not basically different. Though it was obviously lacking for certain groups, equity in ethnic representation was beginning to emerge through the combined strategic elite elements. With the exception of northwest European Catholics, however, the social elite remained immune to similar changes.

¹⁷E. Digby Baltzell, The Protestant Establishment (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 75.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

We shall now briefly review the major purposes of the study and summarize our subsequent findings in their regard. An attempt will be made to tie those findings together with our theoretical design and evaluate the more specific hypotheses which were drawn from our discussion of the unique Detroit historical setting. As a study focused upon very specific time and locational units there are certain inherent limitations on its findings; these will be made clear and directions will be suggested for future supportive and complementary studies.

Restatement of the Study's Purpose

The chief objective of our analysis was described as a measurement of the movement of individuals of various ethnic origins into positions of highest power and prestige in Detroit during this city's most expansive historical era, both industrially and socially. The paramount questions to which the study was directed were:

(1) which particular ethnic groups displayed most extensive elite penetration and (2) into what institutional areas was such penetration made. In addition to this simple descriptive account it was felt that elite penetration (or lack of same) could be interpreted as an index of the extent of upward social mobility on the part of the city's various ethnic groups and also as an indicator of degree of structural assimilation.

Our analysis was placed within a descriptive model which posited the elite structure of the modern industrial community as a multi-dimensional unit, consisting of the uppermost strata of the economic, political, labor, and prestige class systems. The elites with which the analysis was concerned were further specified as goal-integrating, i.e., those more precise elite units responsible for establishing the goals of the community's major institutional orders. A pinnacle elite group at the very highest vertical level was denoted as comprising those members of strategic elites who simultaneously maintained social elite membership.

Two fundamental theories of elites were discussed, corresponding to the basic theoretical dichotomy pertaining to the formation, function, and inevitability of social classes themselves. These were essentially defined as a functional approach, positing the social need of specific skills of particular individuals and their

recruitment into high position through a system emphasizing achieved criteria of selection, and a power approach, emphasizing the capacity of incumbent elites to regulate recruitment through a sponsorship system, stressing the role of ascribed selective criteria. Contest mobility was seen as characteristic of strategic elite penetration while sponsorship was noted as that which characterized social elite entrance. The role of ascribed characteristics--ethnicity in particular--was suggested as an intervening factor serving to confine entrance into purely strategic elites in spite of the predominance of functional needs and achieved criteria of selection.

Summary of Findings and Evaluation of Hypotheses

It was generally hypothesized that those ethnic groups more highly evaluated, i.e., closest in social distance to the core Anglo-Saxon group, would display greater degrees of penetration into all elite sectors than would those farther in social distance from the core group. This hypothesis was in fact confirmed by our findings. Looked at in total, the Irish, German, and other northwest European groups exhibited the most substantial overall penetration throughout the fifty-year period. These were the only groups to display representation in all strategic elite sectors as well as the social elite. Among those with lower ethnic status, the

Jewish group demonstrated the greatest extent of overall penetration, having entered all three strategic sectors, though never to the extent of those with relatively high ethnic status. Their percentage of these elite positions, however, was not seriously at variance with their percentage of the city's total population. Blacks entered in least degree and were by 1950 the most underrepresented ethnic group in all sectors of the elite structure vis-a-vis their proportion of the city's populace. Anglo-Saxons as part of the total elite were for all years most over-represented though in proportions which were slightly less distorted in the century's later decades.

More specifically it was hypothesized that entry into elites by ethnics would differ from sector to sector with non-Anglo-Saxons displaying greater penetration of those elites which adhered more closely to contest-type processes of recruitment where ascriptive criteria would play a minimal role in selection. More substantial penetration could thus be expected within political and labor elites. Our findings did substantiate this pattern. Within the economic elite in particular among the three strategic sectors, penetration over the entire fifty-year period was narrowly limited to Irish, Germans, and other northwest Europeans among the non-Anglo-Saxons. Jews were also present but their entrance was for the most part a result of the expansion of family-organized firms rather

than upward movement through corporate bureaucracies. This pattern remained uniform even after the 1920s when family ownership became less pervasive among Detroit's largest industrial firms. Despite their increasing percentages of the city's population throughout the period, southern and eastern Europeans and Blacks were totally unrepresented within the highest echelons of business and financial leadership.

What is perhaps of most overriding significance is the relative stability of this elite sector's ethnic composition. Among the non-Anglo-Saxons only the Germans showed a substantial increase (15 percent) over the fifty years and by mid-century their representation was composed primarily of Protestants. Thus, although Anglo-Saxons declined by 10 percent from 1900 to 1950, the Protestant majority actually increased. As part of the economic elite the percentage of Irish, other northwest Europeans, and Jews changed very slightly during the period.

Entrance into the highest positions of political and labor leadership, however, was more frequent and diffuse by those of minority ethnic status. By 1950 representatives of almost all of Detroit's ethnic groups were part of these elites, albeit not necessarily in proportions which reflected their percentages of the city's total population. The constant and substantial dominance of Anglo-Saxons in the economic elite was never duplicated to

such an extent in the political sector even prior to the 1930s. In the labor sector, if Anglo-Saxons did maintain a comparatively large percentage of elite positions, these individuals were in fact closer generationally and class-wise to their non-Anglo-Saxon cohorts than to the economic dominants of Anglo-Saxon origin.

When each of these elite sectors was divided into specific sub-sectors, more precise differences in ethnic movement were evidenced. To begin with, in the economic elite sector less ethnic closure was apparent among the automobile manufacturing firms than in other industrial or financial enterprises. More than any, this sub-sector appeared to typify a functional model of elite recruitment. Thus, non-family related individuals were seen to be more easily integrated into the leadership elements of this industry which called for highly specific technical skills. Rae explains that the automobile industry in its formative stages was somewhat unique in that a firm's success depended largely upon the solution of technical rather than marketing or financial problems: "The technical man thus occupied a peculiarly strategic position, since he was not only the person most competent to decide what could be produced, but was also just as well qualified as the financier or the salesman to determine

what should be produced."¹ The predominance of mechanics and engineers in executive positions remained characteristic of automotive enterprises until the 1930s. In this industry, therefore, men with relatively diverse social backgrounds were enabled to establish themselves in powerful positions due primarily to the newness of the enterprise and more importantly its unique skill requirements. Yet, if this industry more than any other in the city's economic structure permitted individuals of varied social origins to rapidly rise to the pinnacle of economic power, even here ethnic penetration was quite narrowly limited in scope.

As for the other economic sub-sectors, though increasingly bureaucratized, family ties remained important as a means to the acquisition of high rank. Mills' conclusion that "the best statistical chance of becoming a member of the business elite is to be born into it," was very much corroborated by our findings.² It is also

¹John B. Rae, "The Engineer-Entrepreneur in the American Automobile Industry," Explorations in Entrepreneurial History 8 (1955-56): 2. Our findings indicate that the assumption of managerial and entrepreneurial functions by essentially technically-trained personnel extended as well to the automotive parts industry.

²C. Wright Mills, "The American Business Elite: A Collective Portrait," Journal of Economic History, Supplemental Issue (December 1945): 29. Mills' analysis encompassed those businessmen listed in the Dictionary of American Biography who were born no later than 1879. This would have excluded any individuals from our constructed elite beyond the 1930 group.

noteworthy that the acquisition of executive position in many firms through marriage was not infrequently encountered.

Our findings for the Detroit industrial and financial elite lead us to conclude that Keller's notion of a socially diverse elite becoming increasingly prevalent with growing bureaucratic complexity and functional specialization may be valid in only certain cases. In Detroit in the twentieth century only the most recent and innovative industrial undertaking seemed to provide those conditions. For other enterprises sponsorship appeared to remain the most important route to high strategic position. We must remember, of course, that only those at the very top of the leadership structure have been dealt with and even Keller asserts that "when elites are narrowly defined, the pull of class and ascribed status is obviously very powerful."³ However, our less intensive analysis of those at lower elite levels did not seem to indicate significantly variant patterns.

The more specific breakdown of the political elite sector revealed a strong correlation between ethnicity and party during all periods and some relationship between ethnicity and political office, particularly during the century's earlier decades. Southern and eastern Europeans

³Suzanne Keller, Beyond the Ruling Class (New York: Random House, 1963), p. 319.

were generally tied to the Democratic party and thus made their heaviest inroads after 1930 when Republican dominance in the city was overcome. Anglo-Saxons remained more frequently within the Republican party throughout the fifty years and thus experienced their most substantial decline in this same period. The two groups which dominated Detroit political leadership by 1940, Polish and Irish, experienced their most sizeable increases with the Democratic ascendance though for the latter the increase was not so acute.

During the century's first two decades the chief path of political elite penetration for those of non-Anglo-Saxon ethnic origin was through the ward-elected Common Council with very slight representation in those offices which were elected from the city at-large. During the 1920s after the aldermanic system had been abandoned, Anglo-Saxon strength, already significant, became even greater. After 1930 all partisan elective offices were dominated by non-Anglo-Saxons while Anglo-Saxons continued to maintain their chief strength in those offices which were non-partisan and elected at-large.

The labor elite sector was divided into craft (AF of L) and industrial (CIO) union sub-sectors, in which those of the "old" immigrant groups--Anglo-Saxon, Irish, and German--dominated in the former though not significantly more than in the CIO. A more ethnically

heterogeneous representation was noticeable in the industrial sub-sector, however, due in large part to the highly variegated United Auto Workers. By 1950, with the exception of Blacks, the UAW's top leadership seemed to approach proportionally the ethnic makeup of the city's largest work force. Although Anglo-Saxons were present in greatest number, they were, as explained, closer generationally and class-wise to their non-Anglo-Saxon colleagues than to those Anglo-Saxons in either economic or political elites.

Strategic elites and generation.--When we look at the composition of each of the strategic elites by immigrant generation we find equally vast differences between economic on the one hand and political and labor on the other. The foreign-born and sons of the foreign-born consistently declined throughout the period among the industrial and financial leadership while among the political notables the foreign stock declined from 1910 to 1930 but thereafter displayed a resurgence. By 1950 the political elite was composed of 58 percent first and second generation ethnics, a percentage which closely approximated its composition in 1910. The labor elite, though not considered in the analysis until 1940, was even more heavily made up of the foreign stock with almost 70 percent so categorized in 1950.

The ethnic origins of the foreign stock among the three sectors are also noticeably divergent. In the economic elite during the earlier decades Anglo-Saxons comprised the greatest percentage of the foreign-born and second generation. In fact it was not until 1940 that first and second generation Germans equaled the percentages of Anglo-Saxons in those categories. It is obvious that if closure to those of lower ethnic status was evident in this elite sector, immigrant or second generation immigrant status was never in itself an exclusionary factor. Even among the non-Anglo-Saxons of the economic elite during the first few decades, most were first and second generation ethnics though of "old" immigrant groups. In the political elite the foreign stock during the pre-1940 years was made up of individuals of most of the representative ethnic groups but by 1940 it was almost exclusively non-Anglo-Saxon. In the labor elite, ethnics of the first and second generation were naturally of diverse origin since the elite in total was predominantly foreign stock to begin with. British-born, however, clearly were a majority among the foreign-born of this sector. From these findings it is difficult to conclude that the lack of penetration into the economic elite by those of southern and eastern European origin was a consequence of their shorter length of residence in the community vis-a-vis the core Anglo-Saxon group or those

of the "old" immigration. Rather these data seem to lend support to the notion that the situs dimension of mobility may be determined as much by ethnic group membership as by personal characteristics.

Ethnics and the prestige elite.--Our second general hypothesis concerned the movement of ethnics into highest prestige status. Our basic proposition stated that regardless of the nature of movement into strategic elites, negative ethnic status would serve to impede those minority groups from entrance. As a sub-hypothesis we suggested, however, that non-Anglo-Saxon ethnic penetration would be more fluid into Detroit's social elite given the later maturation of its industrial and social structure and thus of its status system as well. The possibility of newer groups in the community gaining access to high status organizations after the attainment of strategic elite positions was considered more likely under such circumstances.

To begin with it is necessary to consider that the maintenance of social elite status by those holding strategic elite positions was limited primarily to the city's business and industrial leadership throughout the fifty-year period. Elite interaction (i.e., movement between strategic and social elite sectors) extended to the political elite sector only slightly and not at all

to the labor elite sector. Thus, under these conditions social elite penetration by non-Anglo-Saxons of the strategic elites could be displayed to no greater degree than their penetration of the economic elite sector. As was seen, such ethnic penetration was relatively slight and confined to those of the "old" immigrant groups. Since elite penetration by the community's more salient non-Anglo-Saxon ethnics was evident only in the political and labor elites, social elite status was effectively obstructed for these groups.

However, there is some evidence in our findings to confirm at least a slightly more fluid social elite in Detroit during this historical period. Throughout the fifty years, exclusion of Catholics per se was never apparent. As Catholics entered the economic elite, social elite status was not denied either on the basis of social register listing or membership in the most prestigious metropolitan clubs. The percentage of Catholic economic notables who maintained social elite standing was not exceeded to any significant degree by the percentage of Anglo-Saxon or German Protestants. These Catholics were, however, totally Irish, German, or those of other northwest European origin. With lower status Catholic ethnics (Poles, Italians, Slavs) not having achieved elite positions in the business and industrial hierarchy, their exclusion on that basis alone

was predetermined and we can only speculate on what their ultimate prestige status would have been had they acquired such positions.

Jewish exclusion from the social elite, however, provides the best evidence of ethnic blockage in the prestige sphere since Jews did reach elite positions in the economic realm. Although a few select German-Jewish families (most of which were important in Detroit's late nineteenth century retail merchandising trade) retained listings in the social directories, their names were rarely found on the rosters of the highest ranking city clubs prior to 1920 and after that date were found not at all. Indeed the existence of a parallel Jewish metropolitan club structure was apparent. For this group, then, Detroit's social elite did not differ from those of other cities with more mature status systems.⁴ In short, though the city's status system remained open at its top levels to higher

⁴In addition to Baltzell, Philadelphia Gentlemen, see John Slawson and Lawrence Bloomgarden, The Unequal Treatment of Equals: The Social Club . . . Discrimination in Retreat (New York: Institute of Human Relations, American Jewish Committee, November 1965), pp. 20-21; and John Higham, "Social Discrimination Against Jews in America, 1830-1930," Publication of the American Jewish Historical Society 47 (September 1957): 23-26. Higham notes the somewhat unique case of San Francisco as a city in which Jewish exclusion at the highest status levels was never as great as in others.

status Catholic ethnics, it nonetheless remained essentially gentile.⁵

We should note that in terms of our descriptive model of the community's elite structure, an assessment of the role of social elite status as a possible mechanism for conserving or consolidating functional power can only be judged by the frequency with which strategic and social elite positions coincided. Using a positional methodology as we have done does not permit a more insightful evaluation. On the basis of position, however, certain factors do stand out as important considerations. First, high status organizational membership was limited within the functional elites to those of the business and industrial sector; as such, the pinnacle elite, comprising those of highest functional power and prestige, was made up only of economic notables. Second, with the emergence of strong labor unions after 1940, a more truly pluralistic structure of power in the city was evident. With no informal interaction between these elite elements through high status organizations, the latter's significance as loci of community power relations did not appear as great as it might have been in the earlier decades of the century.

⁵We should add that there is sufficient evidence in our findings of very definite patterns of residential concentration at the elite level of those Jews who were part of the community's economic leadership.

Ethnic penetration and historical forces.--Our final general hypothesis stated that significant economic, political, and social developments within the community would have greater effect upon the extent of elite penetration by ethnics than either mode of elite recruitment or the power of incumbent elites. Such forces of change, it was felt, would serve to alter the structure of power and prestige significantly enough so as to make elite entrance more accessible to minority status ethnic personnel. Our findings in this regard do not present a uniform picture. In short, such historical forces appeared to profoundly affect the ethnic composition of the political and labor leadership of the city but did not have similar impact on the economic and prestige elites.

A most basic socioeconomic development serving to alter the structure of power in Detroit was the emergence of the automotive industry in the century's first decade and its continuing evolution through the 1920s. Presumably this would have created new positions and ushered in a group of economic leaders not already well-ensconced. This was realized, however, only in part. To begin with, the assembly line nature of production in the industry created greater numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled occupational positions, those which did not lead to eventual executive leadership. In-migrating ethnic

groups came to constitute the largest part of this labor force while penetration of the very top posts was confined to those with either extremely high and specific skills or those whose families had organized their firms. In all cases these individuals were of "old" immigrant status even if they were of recent immigrant generational origin. Moreover, consolidation of manufacturing enterprises precluded the wholesale creation of new elite positions and instead served to further stabilize the economic leadership despite vast industrial expansion.

Outside of the automobile producing sub-sector, family ties remained of critical importance for the attainment of high functional position and thus ethnic penetration was limited to those whose firms had already achieved a measure of success. Even where bureaucratic organization provided more rationalized paths to upward mobility, however, top posts proved accessible only to those of higher ethnic status.

The depression of the 1930s was the second most fundamental socioeconomic development of the half century which seemingly would have created the necessary conditions for the entrance of personnel from the newer ethnic groups of the city into economic leadership positions. Instead, a striking degree of stability was maintained.

With the industrial expansion of the 1940s when large new firms did emerge in significant enough number

to affect the size of the economic elite, the previously established ethnic pattern remained essentially unchanged. In sum, the forces of industrialization and bureaucratization as well as specific economic cycles seemed to have had minimal effects on the ethnic composition of the city's business and industrial power structure throughout the half century.⁶

As for political and labor elites, however, there is much evidence to support our hypothesis. Changes in the ethnic composition of the political leadership of the city seemed to closely parallel changes in the political system itself, both structurally and party-wise. Thus the key pivotal points during these fifty years were those at which the aldermanic system was abolished and at which the Democratic party emerged with political dominance in the city. Both of these developments were in largest part direct outgrowths of social and economic forces: the first a reaction to the increasing ethnic character of the city and the second stimulated by economic depression. Corresponding to each of these basic realignments of the political system was witnessed either the entrance or expulsion of non-Anglo-Saxon ethnics in significant degree.

⁶It is important to note that this was the case despite considerable turnovers in personnel from one ten-year period to the next. Individuals in the economic elite who repeated from one data point to the next never exceeded 28 percent.

Similarly the social disruption of the 1930s aided the rise of a forceful organized labor movement which introduced a new element into the city's power structure, thereby creating new elite positions. Here, rather than established elites being displaced by representatives of newer groups, the elite itself was evolved and in its formulation more closely reflected the social composition of the city's industrial laboring force. Thus it was clearly the development of new power positions at the top of the labor hierarchy which provided opportunities for the entrance of low status ethnics, unlike the political hierarchy where it was not so much the creation of new elite positions as the acquisition of the means of access to the old which played the greatest role in ethnic penetration.

Simply put, the structure of opportunity created by environmental factors provided access by non-Anglo-Saxon ethnics to political and labor elites while it did so to a far lesser extent to the economic elite. Periods of socioeconomic expansion or contraction did not seem to create those conditions which fostered the recruitment of individuals of varied ethnic backgrounds into positions of economic leadership; on the other hand, they did seem to lay the necessary groundwork for their entrance into the other strategic elites. Though political and labor sectors of the structure of power were

conducive to penetration by non-Anglo-Saxon ethnics of varied economic and occupational class origins, it is important to point out that Blacks constituted a prominent exception. Thus by the century's mid-point, this group, as Detroit's largest single ethnic unit, was easily the most underrepresented in all elite sectors.

As well as those localized developments which shaped Detroit's elite structure, we must also consider the city within the larger context of national patterns and trends. In the economic and prestige elites the constraints of sponsorship in the Detroit community perhaps reflected as much the larger society's patterns during this time as anything which uniquely characterized local stratification systems. Indeed, some have pointed to the approximate period we have investigated as one in which institutional discrimination on the basis of ethnicity reached a national peak, not encountered previously or afterward. Handlin explains:

Down to 1900, few elements of ethnic restriction seem to have applied. . . . In the four decades between 1900 and 1940, that situation changed significantly. The competition for place became more extreme, and a developing pattern of discriminatory practices tended to limit upward social mobility. . . . Significantly, the lines of restriction were not those of the family, but of the ethnic group. A code of extra-legal practices limited access to employment and to professional education. A network of societies and clubs that were the signs of advancing status closed their

membership to outsiders; and there was a notable falling-off in the rate of upward mobility.⁷

Our findings indicate little change, at least locally, in the decade 1940-1950.

It should be pointed out, however, that Handlin, like many social analysts, has implicitly emphasized the economic aspects of social mobility and as a result has not considered the significance of extensive upward movement for ethnics in stratification hierarchies which are apart from the economic or occupational class systems. In Detroit, for example, we found substantial ethnic mobility through the political class system even prior to 1940. Above all, our findings seem to indicate the need for the employment of a multi-dimensional scheme of community stratification in ethnic analyses in which variant rates and degrees of upward movement may be seen to occur in different dimensions for different groups. Our data for Detroit in the first half of the twentieth century suggest that when the social context does not favor the entrance of new groups into economic power positions, other channels may be utilized, affording them power representation in different forms.⁸ In the political and

⁷Oscar Handlin, "Ethnic Factors in Social Mobility," Explorations in Entrepreneurial History 9 (1957): 6-7.

⁸See, for example, Daniel Bell, "Crime as an American Way of Life," in The End of Ideology, rev. ed. (New York: Free Press, 1962), pp. 127-50.

labor spheres the more generally contest-type of recruitment and the slighter dependence upon occupational or economic class position seemed to combine with changes in the structure of power impelled by significant socio-economic forces so as to provide elite access to those of a variety of ethnic backgrounds. If not admitted to the highest echelons of corporate and financial power, ethnics of minority status were enabled to share in community power by mid-century through high elective office or labor leadership.

Ethnic Values: A Contributory
Explanation of Elite Penetration

In our analysis we have placed emphasis upon social structural factors as determinants of the patterns of ethnic penetration which were uncovered. In accounting for different rates of movement into elites by representatives of various ethnic groups as well as the particular institutional areas into which they made penetration we should give mention to certain factors which pertain to the ethnic group itself, in particular its cultural orientation.

Unique subcultural values of ethnic groups have been recognized as variables in the measurement of economic and social achievement as well as determinants of particular occupational preferences. The nucleus of this position is that members of different ethnic groups,

through the internalization of particular values, will experience variant chances for success vis-a-vis the sociocultural system of the host society. Presumably the more compatible the ethnic culture with that of the dominant ethnic group, the greater the possibilities for more rapid and extensive mobility.⁹ In addition, certain essentially social-psychological factors may manifest themselves when various ethnic groups are juxtaposed, revealing a difference in what is referred to as achievement orientation.¹⁰

As a case in point, the presumptions of advantageous Jewish subcultural values in accounting for comparatively rapid rates of social mobility in American society are commonplace. Blalock, for example, asserts that "although there is no question that anti-semitism has proved a handicap, the emphasis within the Jewish subculture given to learning and independent thinking has provided this particular minority with a compensatory

⁹For an excellent statement of this position see William Caudill and George deVos, "Achievement, Culture, and Personality: The Case of Japanese Americans," American Anthropologist 58 (1956): 1102-25.

¹⁰See, for example, Bernard C. Rosen, "Race, Ethnicity, and the Achievement Syndrome," American Sociological Review 24 (1959): 47-60; and Fred Strodtbeck, "Family Interaction, Values, and Achievement," in Talent and Society, ed. David McClelland et al. (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand, 1958), pp. 135-91.

competitive resource."¹¹ In much the same way, lower rates of mobility among ethnic groups with rural sociocultural backgrounds--in particular southern and eastern Europeans and to some extent American Blacks--are often explained as a consequence of the lack of a strongly secularized value system appropriate to the urban milieu. Such values, it is explained, do not necessarily disappear with the immigrant generation but often carry over into the behavioral patterns of several succeeding generations.¹²

Tendencies for ethnic groups to concentrate in certain occupational roles are also frequently explained as partially the result of particular subcultural orientations. Family- and socially-reinforced values presumably equip the ethnic individual with a predisposition to pursue distinct career paths. Thus with regard to the Jewish group, Glazer and Moynihan tentatively explain that "there is something in Jewish experience that combines with

¹¹Hubert M. Blalock, Jr., Toward a Theory of Minority-Group Relations (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967), p. 100. See also Nathan Glazer, "The American Jew and the Attainment of Middle-Class Rank: Some Trends and Explanations," in The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group, ed. Marshall Sklare (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1958), pp. 38-46; and in the same volume, David Goldberg and Harry Sharp, "Some Characteristics of Detroit Area Jewish and non-Jewish Adults," pp. 107-18.

¹²See, for example, Handlin, "Ethnic Factors in Social Mobility," and John J. Kane, "The Social Structure of American Catholics," American Catholic Sociological Review 16 (March 1955): 23-30.

the pattern of opportunity offered by American society to determine in what areas Jews will become prominent."¹³ The inordinate presence of the Irish in American urban politics is also explained as not only the result of a favorable social context but of a unique cultural experience as well. Thus, Levine explains that a political career has been "as laudable and desirable an occupational goal for the Irish as finance, commerce, the professions, or the arts have been for those from other ethnic and social groups."¹⁴

There appears to be at least some circumstantial evidence in our findings to support these notions. First, throughout the fifty-year period Jewish participation was apparent in the economic elite while other low status ethnic groups, far larger proportionally in the community as a whole, were absent. The lack of economic elite penetration by southern and eastern Europeans was particularly noticeable. With regard to the political proclivities of the Irish, again our findings indicate some support for this view. Despite their clear numerical underrepresentation in the city's total population during the half century, the Irish consistently played a considerable role in

¹³Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1963), p. 153.

¹⁴Edward M. Levine, The Irish and Irish Politicians: A Study of Cultural and Social Alienation (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), p. 146.

Detroit's political leadership. In fact by 1940 they were the leading group percentage-wise in the elite. In short, the bases for cultural explanations of patterns of ethnic penetration into strategic elites--at least in part--are not lacking in our data.¹⁵

It is our conclusion, however, that the entrance of ethnics into strategic elites was more forcefully affected by structural and status factors than by occupational preferences or the internalization of variant ethnic values. Just as there are particles of evidence in our findings that lend support to the role of subcultural ethnic factors, there are also conflicting data in this regard. As an example, Glazer and Moynihan note that a combination of Jewish business acumen and a strong family system seems to permit the mobilization of capital, thereby making it "possible to move into new areas with opportunities for great growth and high profits."¹⁶ This being the case, the emergent automobile industry in Detroit would have seemingly been an area conducive to Jewish penetration given its newness and the relatively light capital requirements at its outset. Yet this industry's

¹⁵For a good example of how popular impressions of occupational preferences among ethnic groups are often well-founded, see James Q. Wilson, "Generational and Ethnic Differences Among Career Police Officers," American Journal of Sociology 69 (1964): 522-28.

¹⁶Glazer and Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot, p. 154.

pioneer developers were all Anglo-Saxon and in its second developmental stage was most amenable to German penetration.¹⁷ Also, by emphasizing role proclivities it is difficult to reconcile the entrance and exit of several ethnic groups into political leadership positions in substantial numbers during the fifty years. Among the non-Anglo-Saxon groups, Polish representation in the political elite after 1930, for example, was not significantly less than that of the Irish.

The extreme difference in the extent of ethnic penetration in the economic elite sector on the one hand and the political and labor sectors on the other is perhaps the best indication of the overriding effects of structural variables. Regardless of cultural factors which may encourage achievement or direct the individual along particular career routes, they will remain of little consequence so long as the structure of opportunity does not provide the necessary climate for their implementation.¹⁸

¹⁷The somewhat unique technical skills which were characteristic of these early entrepreneurs and managers may in part explain the minimal appearance of Jews in the industry. It is of some significance that the only two Jews found in the automobile producing sub-sector of the elite in the entire fifty years were non-mechanical in occupational background and were never part of the technical division of the industry. On the other hand, almost all of the substantial number of Germans in elite posts attached to the automotive industry were either highly skilled mechanics or engineers by training.

¹⁸In this regard Porter has well noted that "unless choices are open it is wrong to speak of

In Detroit during the half century, that climate was provided at certain times in the political and labor hierarchies for a variety of ethnic groups but was never created to the same extent in the city's business and industrial sector.¹⁹

Elite Status and Structural
Assimilation: An Assessment

As well as an index of ethnic mobility, we suggested at the outset of the study that elite status could be seen as an indicator of structural assimilation among the city's various ethnic groups. Employing this concept in a way which suggested two degrees of this social process, structural assimilation was defined as either entrance into the core ethnic group's institutional network at all social levels of behavioral interaction--both

occupational preferences." See John Porter, The Vertical Mosaic (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 74. It should be made clear that we have not meant to imply that those who explain differences in ethnic group achievement or economic or occupational class position using cultural variables do so to the exclusion of structural ones. We have perhaps drawn the line between the two positions more acutely than it actually is only to emphasize the different perspectives of ethnic behavior.

¹⁹ Although they are well beyond the bounds of the present study, we must acknowledge that even certain basically psychological variables may affect elite penetration. Indeed, social success to the highest levels is never a realistic objective for more than a few in any social setting, and the psychological factors may be so divergent for such individuals as to negate many of the more essentially structural or cultural ones.

primary and secondary--or simply large-scale entrance into important functional positions. To the extent that strategic or social elites are the bases of formation of primary groups or are primary groups themselves, ethnic penetration was felt to be an empirical indicator of structural assimilation at what was called the informal level. In the case of formal structural assimilation, substantial ethnic penetration of strategic elites alone--whether or not primary relations were engendered--denoted the presence of this process in some degree.

Our findings suggest that such a dual conceptualization of structural assimilation is useful at the level of societal elites. It was seen that the acquisition of high strategic position did not necessarily bring with it concomitant high prestige status. Thus the formal level was the extent to which structural assimilation was fulfilled for non-Anglo-Saxons entering high political or labor positions. For those ethnics entering high economic elite positions, however, informal structural assimilation as well was more easily afforded through metropolitan club memberships. This was true for all except Jews, in which case a very clear parallel status hierarchy was evident.

When the elite structure is looked at in total it is apparent that the degree of formal structural assimilation for the Irish, German, other northwest European, and

Jewish groups was much greater than for others. Only these groups were afforded entrance into high functional position in all institutional spheres, a finding which persisted even when generation was controlled. The number of ethnic groups displaying a high degree of informal structural assimilation was even further reduced by the exclusion of Jews from social elite status. On this basis foreign-born Germans or Irish were more likely to attain high functional position or high prestige status in the community than were second or third generation Poles or Italians. This lends credence to the contention that rate of structural assimilation--formal or informal--is not necessarily dependent on degree of acculturation, but rather on the degree of social acceptance by the community's dominant ethnic group. Gordon's assertion that "the success of the acculturation process has by no means guaranteed entry of each minority into the primary groups and institutions--that is, the subsociety--of the white Protestant group," is well substantiated.²⁰ In addition,

²⁰Milton Gordon, Assimilation in American Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 78. In Gordon's conceptualized sequence, marital assimilation is denoted as following structural assimilation: "entrance of the minority group into the social cliques, clubs, and institutions of the core society at the primary group level inevitably will lead to a substantial amount of intermarriage." (p. 80). Several specific cases that we have noted in our analysis, however, seem to lead to the conclusion that marital assimilation--at least at the elite class level--may just as easily provide a more accessible path to structural assimilation rather than the reverse process. In this regard Price has pointed

however, our findings indicate that even at the community's highest functional class levels alone ethnicity continued to operate as a factor in the allocation of roles. Thus in Vallee, Schwartz and Darknell's terms, for groups other than the Irish, German, other northwest European, and Jewish, higher degrees of structural differentiation than structural assimilation were evident.²¹

Limitations of the Study and Future Research Needs

Since our study has been confined to a particular historical period and location as well as to very specific social strata, it is important to consider the serious limitations which have been imposed on the applicability of its findings to other times, locations, and social groups. Moreover even for the specific case of Detroit in the first half of the twentieth century our conclusions must be viewed as highly tentative and subject to future supplemental studies. In a practical sense they are

out that Gordon's theory as stated "does not explain adequately that changes occurring later in the sequence may react back on matters apparently settled earlier; as when decline of discrimination increases intermarriage still more and this speeds further entry into primary groups." See Charles Price, "The Study of Assimilation," in Migration, ed. John A. Jackson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 221.

²¹Frank G. Vallee, Mildred Schwartz, and Frank Darknell, "Ethnic Assimilation and Differentiation in Canada," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science 23 (1957): 544.

intended to generate further questions, hypotheses, and investigations.

To begin with we must reiterate our preliminary caveat concerning the interpretation of elite penetration as symbolic of ethnic mobility at other class and status levels. We have attempted only to show the extent to which the core Anglo-Saxon group in Detroit had accepted other ethnic groups as equals through a sharing of power and prestige at the very highest levels of stratification. It was felt that a valid indication of the uppermost limits of ethnic mobility as well as the extent of structural assimilation was implicit in these findings. The patterns of ethnic movement at sub-elite levels, however, may have varied considerably during this particular period.

Although such sub-elite patterns are not of prime interest to this or other similar investigations they are nonetheless of obvious importance to a fuller understanding of elite penetration. In the present study, for example, more complete data are needed concerning the relative economic class positions of the city's various ethnic groups--in terms of income, education, and occupation--to determine how extreme the differences were among them during these years. Indeed the lack of penetration of the economic elite by southern and eastern Europeans and Blacks might in large part be attributed to their generally sub-middle-class income and occupational

origins. It should be remembered that the gravitational pull of Detroit in the early 1900s was in the first place a result of the opportunities afforded such class groups. By 1950, however, at least two generations had passed for those who had migrated into the city during the early part of the century and even three or more for those who had migrated prior to 1900. Thus, how great a role class factors might have played in accounting for their continued total absence from the city's business and industrial leadership by mid-century is more difficult to assess. The entrance into the political elite of many college-trained personnel from among these groups seems to indicate that it was not as significant. However it is quite evident that more data are needed to adequately probe this question.

Secondly, since our study has limited its scope of investigation to a single city, the conclusions drawn from the gathered data are in the final analysis applicable only to Detroit. Duplications of the study within the contexts of other urban environments are therefore necessary to draw more conclusive generalizations. Studies conducted in other urban settings may also contribute to a further understanding of the uniqueness of Detroit's case. The procedural difficulties of investigating a large urban community are self-evident, but the

methodology which we have employed would seem to be easily adopted for future studies in other locales.²²

Finally we must consider the fact that we have not only confined our analysis to a specific city but to a specific time period as well, thus limiting our findings even more precisely. Not only may other cities have displayed different patterns of ethnic penetration of elites, but Detroit itself may have exhibited divergent patterns at various points both before 1900 and after 1950. Follow-up studies for Detroit seem especially important for the period 1950-1970 during which time the city's ethnic composition underwent such fundamental revision.

²²At the present time there appears to be a paucity of studies of this nature which have been conducted in other similar-sized communities. One study in particular has come to the attention of the present writer, but its context is not entirely analogous to Detroit's. Kelner's investigation of ethnic penetration of the elites of Toronto, in addition to its non-American locale, was largely synchronic in approach, analyzing only contemporary elites. It is of note, however, that the conclusions reached for that city closely paralleled our own in Detroit. See Merrijoy S. Kelner, "The Elite Structure of Toronto: Ethnic Composition and Patterns of Recruitment" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1969).

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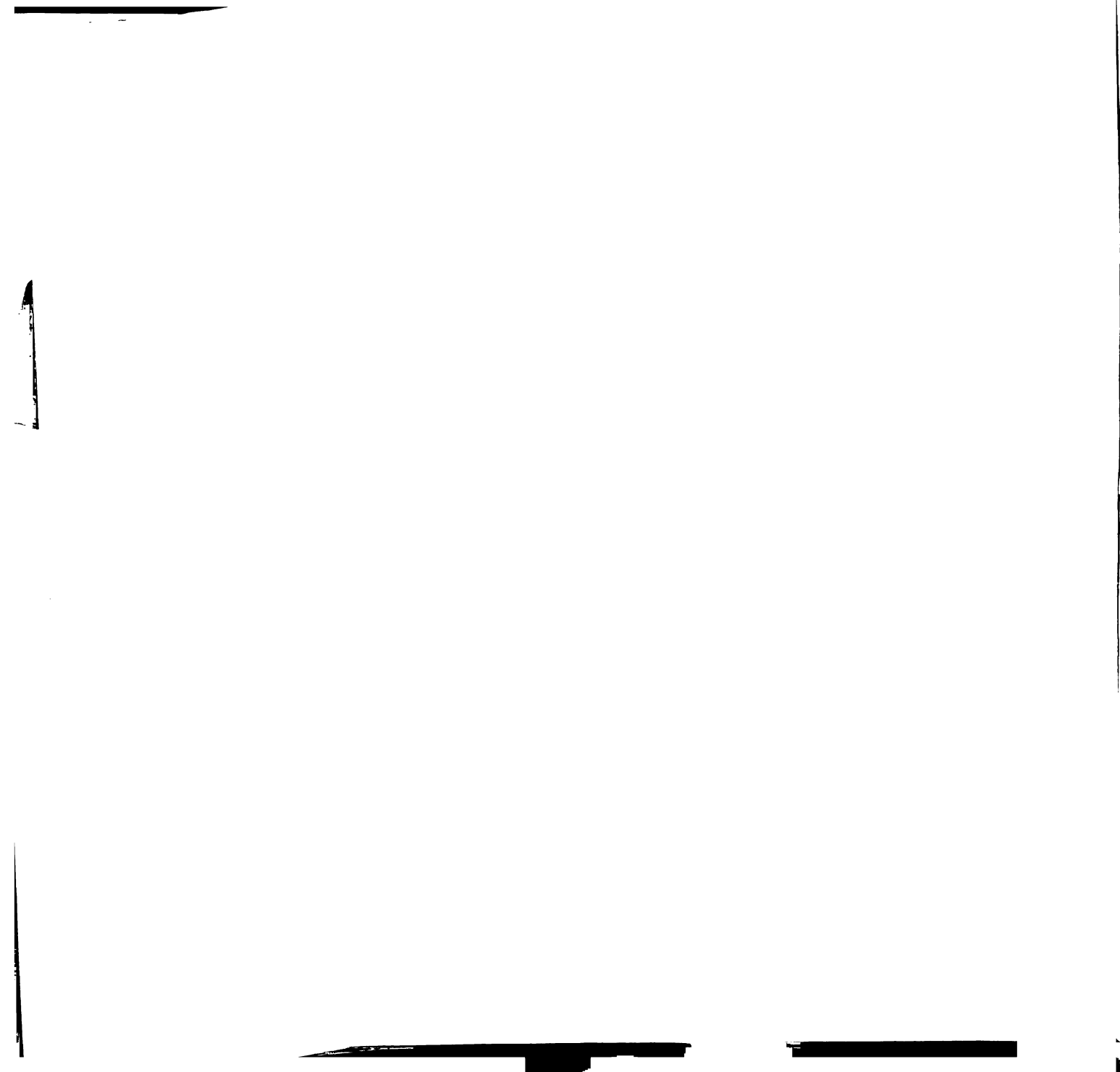
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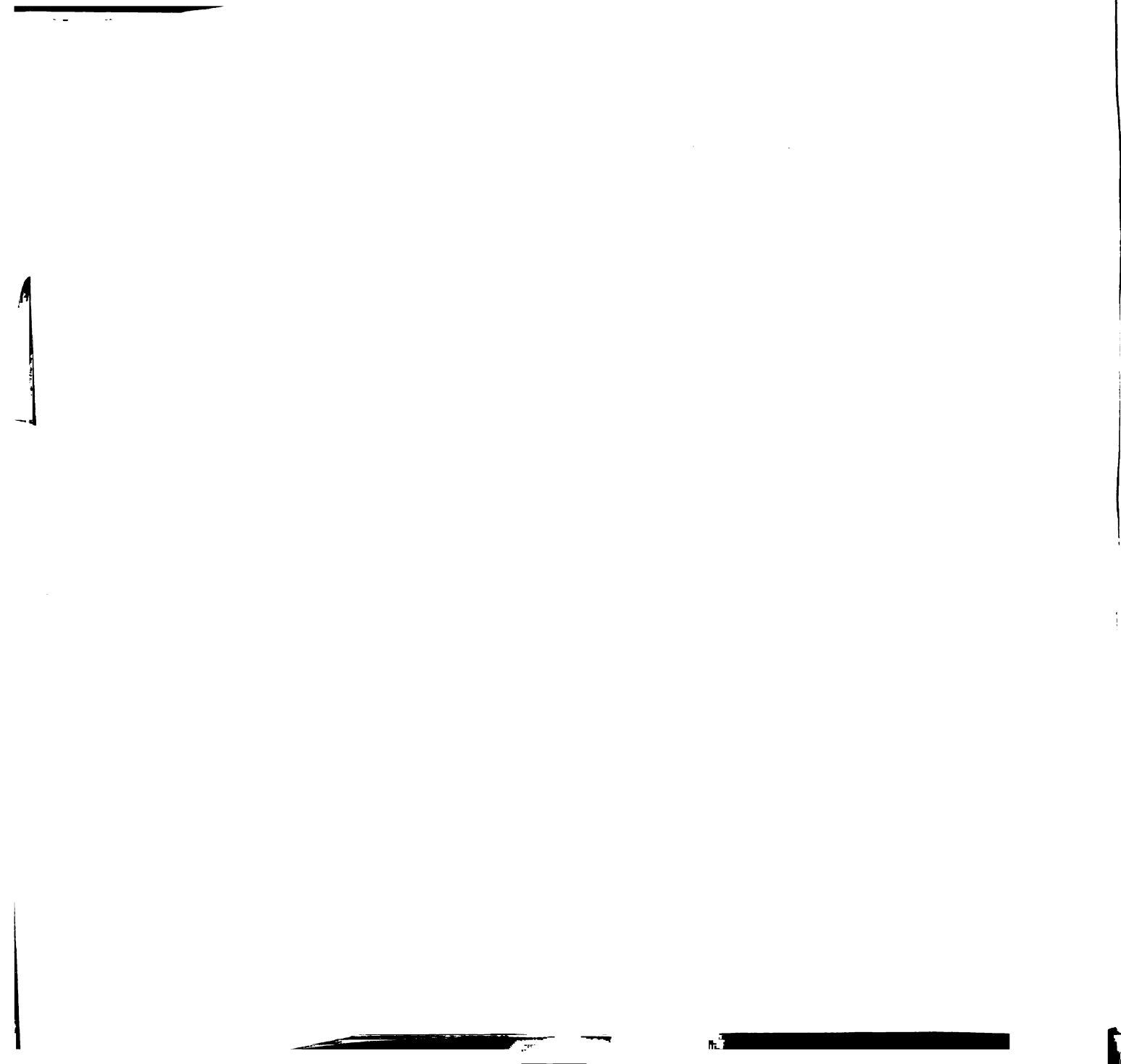
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