In the analysis of social stratification, 'images of society' assumes importance in explaining the problems posed by ideas about workers' class consciousness or the absence of it, which have dominated sociology in recent years. If a worker accepts an interpretation of a situation in class terms, he is expected to act in a specific manner towards given goals. Thus if the workers see themselves as proletariat, they will redouble their efforts in collective action. Do all the workers think in class terms in all the situations they encounter?

Ossowski (1963:7) views differing conceptions and imagery of the class structure as not merely expressing different propensities, but arising from different class interests and experiences.

People's conceptions or images of the social structure in part are reports upon it and in part determine it in that they act upon these images. What is the sociologist's role in analysing the multiple conceptions of social structure? Rex (quoted in Coxon and Jones 1978:23) says: "What the sociologist does is to construct his own ideal types (a) of an actor's perception of the world of social relations which surround him and through this (b) of the pattern of mutual expectancies involved in these social relations".
CONSTRUCTIONS OF SOCIAL REALITY

A person interprets the social situations he lives in in his own way, influenced by his upbringing, education, experience, own intellectual efforts, and by external influences such as his peers and the ideologies directed towards him. He acts in the light of such interpretations. He reacts to any class or status situation as he perceives it, of course, within the constraints of the circumstances. Awareness, percepts, images, social meanings and so on, concerned with the structural phenomena and issues, certainly reflect objective reality to some extent.

Class constructs are used not only by scholarly observers but also by the members of the observed society. As different researchers are engaged in arguments over social classes with their own models, others have questioned the validity of these models and their meaning to the concerned persons (those who form the class). Some even argue that the class position of a person is simply what he believes it to be, however ignorant or deluded that person is. The notion of 'images of social stratification', thus, assumes importance because verbalized interpretations of social inequality can be used as the
orientation and justification of social action as well as
the basis for action on the part of organized groups,
especially political parties. Nevertheless, the possible
incongruence between the subjective interpretations and
the objective reality has raised doubts about the value
of verbalized stratification schemes obtained from members
of the observed society. If people are often unaware of
the structural forces on their thinking and behaviour,
how can they account for their ideas and actions? In
addition, verbalized interpretations of stratification and
class may have little to do with the class awareness and
action manifested in a critical situation. Doubts such as
these have led some researchers to hold that conceptions of
class and stratification are of limited use. Conversely,
others regard such conceptions of people as being important
in shaping or reflecting their outlook and behaviour.
Hence, studying such conceptions is of importance to the
social scientists. As Kelsall and Kelsall (1974:102-103)
say, ".....we have in the past paid too much attention to
the reality of social stratification as perceived by
theorists on the one hand, and those conducting field
surveys on the other, and far too little regard to how
reality is perceived by different groups of people who come
into neither of these very restricted categories. As yet we know very little about their conceptions of social class and social inequality, and more knowledge of this would be invaluable in understanding what is happening or is likely to happen. Thus, if people believe in and act upon their information, then it is necessary to have knowledge of their subjective reality and to relate it to what is known as the objective reality.

The term 'images of society' has had currency in sociology for more than two decades. The preoccupation of sociologists with the problematic of class consciousness has earned the subject the status of a subdiscipline. However, as Davis (1979:9) feels, few researchers have succeeded in elaborating the concept, 'images of society', to give it sound theoretical base and make it more rigorous empirically. He goes on to say that renewed interest in the concept has conspicuously failed to give it greater strength or clarity. This feeling is shared by Morawska (1985:364) when she says, "three decades of debate have rendered the topic somewhat tired, although it is by no means exhausted."
'Working class images of society' became popular among the western sociologists largely through the work of Lockwood (1966). It refers to a complex of ideas held by workers about their social world and representations of it. 'Images of society' as a concept is to "provide a concrete definition of classes from the inside, from the consciousness which is explicitly and implicitly expressed in the replies of an aggregate of individuals placed in a variety of social situations", as stated by its originator Willener (quoted in Davis 1979:14).

This subject/object dichotomy involved in explaining social class is not a new one. The debate involved in studying working class images of society, like many other debates, is centred around the Marxian notion of class consciousness. The fundamental question is whether the contemporary working class is class conscious and ready to pursue class struggle to overthrow capitalism, as envisaged by Marx.

THE MARXIAN NOTION OF CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

For Marx, class is to be analysed in relation to the ownership of capital and the means of production.
He divides the population into two classes: the bourgeoisie or the capitalists who own and control the means of production and the proletariat or the workers who live on selling their labour and do not own the means of production, thus occupying the subordinate position in the social relations of production. Marx recognized the existence of groups which did not fit into this framework such as peasants and small proprietors, but suggested that these were hangovers of the pre-capitalist society which would vanish with the maturation of the capitalist society. Modern Marxists attempt to tackle somehow the problem of placing these and other modern categories such as management and professions which do not belong to either of the two classes (see for example, Wright 1980 and 1982).

Class, for Marx, is more than just a way of describing the economic position of different groups. Classes are tangible collectivities and real social forces with the capacity to change society. The incessant drive of the capitalists to make profit leads to the exploitation of the proletariat in work and to the latter's increasing misery— not only in the 'physical' conditions but also in the 'spiritual' conditions. Under these circumstances, the
working class would develop class consciousness and grow from being a class 'in itself', that is a structurally defined category with no self-realization, to become a class 'for itself', that is the working class becoming aware of its objective class position and of its historic role in the transformation of capitalism into socialism.

Class consciousness, referring to the subjective dimension of class, is inseparable from the recognition of class interests based on the objective social position of the different classes in the established structure of society. Thus, "It is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment considers as its aim. It is a question of what the proletariat is, and what, in accordance with this being, it will historically be compelled to do" (Marx quoted in Meszaros 1971:85). It follows that class interests when rightly realized form the basis for class consciousness. Here comes Marx's famous distinction between 'true' and 'false consciousness'. It is also reflected in a similar way by Lukacs (1971) in his distinction between 'ascribed' or 'imputed' class consciousness and 'psychological' consciousness. True or ascribed consciousness necessitates the realization of class interests, and this realization
should lead to class action to establish a classless society.

Thus, class consciousness in the Marxian sense does not allow for any loose treatment such as to include any feelings of self-awareness or common identity among members of a social class. Mann (1973), among others (Hobsbawm 1971, Miliband 1971, Meszaros 1971, Ollman 1972 and Giddens 1973), has given class consciousness greater precision. He identifies four elements: (1) class identity- the perception of oneself belonging to the working class with shared interests; (2) class opposition- the perception of these interests being in opposition to those of the capitalists; (3) class totality- the realization that the two previous elements define one's own social situation and the whole of the society; (4) an alternative society- the conception of an alternative society to be reached through class action. These elements represent the stages through which a developing class consciousness moves.

THE ENBOURGEOISEMENT THESIS

The question whether the working class in modern capitalist society is moving in the direction of class consciousness has been widely argued. Dahrendorf (1959) believes that during the twentieth century there has been
a 'decomposition of labour', a disintegration of the manual working class. The working class has become increasingly heterogeneous and divided into three distinct levels: unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled. Differences in economic and prestige rewards are linked to this hierarchy of skill and their interests often diverge. Such changes in the working class have been observed by many sociologists and given way for notions like 'embourgeoisement', 'convergence', 'end of ideology' and 'incorporation'.

What is argued is that because of important changes in the nature of capitalism, democratic participation of the working class in politics and the growth of welfare, the working class political and economic activities have been channeled into existing institutions, rather than allowing it to remain on the outside where it poses a threat to the established order. This process involved a change in the working class culture from radical oppositional values based on class consciousness to an acceptance of the socially dominant values in society. Increasing affluence causes workers to adopt middle class values and life-styles.

It is claimed that a process of embourgeoisement is occurring whereby increasing numbers of manual workers are
entering the middle stratum and becoming middle class. The workers are becoming affluent and poverty is disappearing. This has led some authors like Cole (see Goldthorpe and Lockwood 1963:133) to the belief that the shape of the stratification system is being transformed. It is argued that the stratification system is changing from the triangle or the pyramid shape of the nineteenth century, with a large and impoverished working class at the bottom and a small wealthy group at the top, to a diamond or pentagon shape, with an increasing proportion of the population falling into the middle range. In this middle mass society, the mass of the population is middle rather than working class.

This embourgeoisement thesis has been widely criticised. Class theorists like Westergaard (1972), Wright (1980 and 1982), Poulantzas (1982) and Szymanski (1983) have made extensive works in the analysis of the structural aspects of class. Their works rather point to the polarization of the classes rather than convergence. In their famous Affluent Worker Study, Goldthorpe et al (1968a, 1968b and 1969) have tested the embourgeoisement thesis and criticised it on many grounds. They distinguish traditional proletarian and affluent workers. Traditional
proletarians live in closed and isolated working class communities in single-industry areas, form gregarious social communities of workmates, kin and neighbours, and have a conflictual power-based class imagery. Work forms central life interest and more than just a means to earn money. Traditional workers are found in older industries and long-established industrial areas. The affluent workers are mostly migrants. They are privatised in the sense of being family centred and not participating in community life. They do not see work as a central life interest or as anything more than a means of satisfying their instrumental needs for money and security, displaying none of the 'social needs' assumed by Human Relations. They have a non-conflictual money image of class. These differences between the traditional and affluent workers do not indicate (in their study) that they were becoming more middle class, because the money class image is not similar to the middle class prestige model. They support trade unionism, but their tendencies toward collectivism are of instrumental nature.

THE LOCKWOODIAN TYPOLOGY

Lockwood, one among the Affluent Worker Study group, published a very influential article in 1966 on the
working class images of society. Deriving largely from the work of Bott (1957), it provoked an extended debate in the literature of class theory. For him working class images are spontaneously generated through work experiences and the values held by the local communities. The conceptions of the larger society are the outcome of generalizations from inequalities or deprivations they experience directly in their own lives. On this assumption, he distinguishes three kinds of workers. Firstly, the traditional proletarian, typified by miners, dockers and shipyard workers. Secondly, the traditional deferentialist, whose defining characteristic is that he is likely to work in rural or craft-based industry and has face-to-face relationship with a paternalistic employer. Thirdly, the privatised worker who is to be found in modern large scale industries and urban centres where the older types of community relations have been largely destroyed. These structurally different environments produce different experiences which influence the attitudes and views which workers hold about the class system.

In the proletarian image, there is a sense of division between 'us' (the workers) and 'them' (bosses and managers). This division is experienced as one of antagonism and of power.
Society is divided into dominant and oppressed classes. While the proletarian worker has an image of society in terms of a dichotomy of power, the deferential worker views the social order as a prestige hierarchy where there are many gradations, the relations between which are not perceived as antagonistic. The deferential worker gives legitimacy to the existing social order and accepts his low position. Lockwood prefers to call both the deferential and proletarian workers as 'traditional' workers. The 'modern' workers are the privatised workers. Unlike the traditional workers, the privatised workers do not think of society as divided up into either a hierarchy of status groups or an opposition of classes. Socially isolated in both occupational and community structures, they view relationships and divisions in society essentially in terms of income and material possessions. Their home-centred, materialistic and private goals lead them to have an instrumental view of working class organizations. Obviously, these three images, deference, proletarianism and privatisation are based on the notions of status, power and money.
ROLE OF IDEOLOGY

While Lockwood would stress the primacy of immediate work and community relationships in shaping the working class images of society, Parkin (1967 and 1971) would stress the ideological and national meaning systems. Parkin (1971:81) claims that "although there is a factual and material basis for class inequality, there is more than one way in which it can be interpreted. Facts alone do not provide meanings and the way a person makes sense of his social world will be influenced by the nature of the meaning-systems he draws upon". These meaning-systems, according to Parkin, are a function of the influence exercised by different groups in society. Primarily images of society do not refer to spontaneously generated ideologies, but to national ideologies imposed by some means or other and to which different sections of the working class give allegiance.

Parkin (1971) suggests that we can distinguish three major meaning-systems each of which derives from a different social source and promotes a different moral interpretation of class inequality. First, there is the 'dominant value system', the source of which is the country's institutional orders. This value system endorses and legitimises existing class inequality. Those in the subordinate class who
internalise this value system define the reward structure in deferential or aspirational terms. Secondly, there is the 'subordinate value system' whose social source is the local working class community. This promotes accommodative responses to class inequality. There is neither endorsement of, nor opposition to, the class structure. Rather there are various modes of adaptation in which a strong emphasis is given to social division as embodied in the 'us' and 'them' categories and to local solidarity. According to Parkin, the subordinate value system represents what could be called a 'negotiated version' of the dominant value system. That is to say, dominant values are not so much rejected or opposed. They are modified by the subordinate class as a result of their circumstances and restricted opportunities. Thirdly, there is the 'radical value system', the social source of which is the mass political party based on the working class at a national level. It links the fate of individuals to wider social forces and promotes an oppositional interpretation of class inequality. This value system provides not only a different moral interpretation of class inequality, but also affirms the worth of labour of the common people whose contributions to society are not well regarded by the dominant class.
As Parkin (1971:82-83) says, "The concept of a dominant value system derives from Marx's celebrated statement that 'the ideas of the ruling class are, in every age, the ruling ideas'. This proposition rests on the plausible assumption that those groups in society which occupy positions of the greatest power and privilege will also tend to have the greatest access to the means of legitimation. That is to say, the social and political definitions of those in dominant positions tend to become objectified and enshrined in the major institutional orders, so providing the moral framework of the entire social system". These means of legitimation are particularly important for the dominant class. According to Gramsci (See Hall et al 1977), in the organization of hegemony in capitalist society, the ruling bloc mobilises the organs both of civil society, the ruling bloc mobilises the organs both of civil society and of the state. Gramsci draws attention to the aspects of class rule that are non-coercive. He speaks of the 'positive educative' influence of the schools and the 'repressive and negative educative' influence of the courts. Very much in the same way, Althusser (see McLennan et al 1977) makes a distinction of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) from Repressive State Apparatuses (RSA). These state apparatuses are the means by which the domination of the ruling class is secured (see also Poulantzas 1982).
The above notions on ideology point to the vital relation between the state and civil society, that is to what extent the ruling bloc can keep civil society under its rule. Obviously, in capitalist societies the state is run by political parties which have in their programmes an articulation of numerous and diverse interests. They have to win mass support to become ruling parties. Marxist influences have stimulated in the working class of some countries, especially in the third world including India, a subculture in fundamental conflict with the dominant political culture. There are communist parties which participate in the elections of representative democracies. When they come to power there is more opportunity for them to establish their own ideological supremacy with the state apparatuses, of course, within the constitutional framework. Thus, working class images of society may equally be shaped by the communist ideology even in capitalist societies. An investigation into working class images of society in different settings marked by different political traditions can explore the role of ideology in shaping workers' images.