

CHAPTER VII

THE CAUSES FOR THE SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

THE HYPOTHESIS

The comparative analysis of Arvin and Dinuba, communities of large and small farms, was predicated under the following hypothesis: Within the framework of American tradition, what effect does scale of farm operations have upon the character of the rural community?

Essentially the technique has been to establish the area of similarity and difference between the two towns, assuming that the qualitative differences in social life rest upon fundamental causes in the economy of the communities. Had there been no other differences in the economy, history, or cultural origin of the people of the two towns, then we could simply assert that social differences were a function of scale of operations. Since, however, other possible explanatory causes for the social differentiation between Arvin and Dinuba exist, it is necessary to examine alternative possibilities with care to determine the area of influence that each exerts over the community. Recognition that other factors may be contributory causes does not relieve us from the need to evaluate importance of the various causative forces. This can be done first by determining the degree to which other factors are differentiated between Arvin and Dinuba, second by calling forth other relevant data from neighboring communities, and finally by setting up an explanatory hypothesis which will account for all known difference without either calling upon mystic and undefined causes or doing violence to accepted understanding of human social behavior.

ESSENTIAL CULTURAL SIMILARITIES

The differences between Arvin and Dinuba are differences within a broader framework of similarities. The necessary emphasis upon divergent social characteristics should not obscure this fundamental fact. Both communities belong to a common cultural heritage, so that, strictly speaking, the conclusions can have validity only in terms of that common tradition. They are, as a matter of fact, not so much differences in culture as they are differences in quality. The social conditions which have particularly attracted our attention are between good living conditions and bad, relative degrees of social equality, relative amounts of social homogeneity and participation, relative amounts of social services and of economic opportunity. These are differences on a scale of values, and acceptance of their significance implicitly recognizes that physical comfort, material possessions, social democracy, and economic opportunities are all desirable qualities in a community. Nobody imbued with American culture can cavil with such a scale of values.