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Mills and Veblen: An Institutional Analysis

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Mills and Veblen: An Institutional Analysis

by

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Abstract: This inquiry considers and also seeks to establish theoretical relationships between the thinking and contributions of Thorstein Veblen and C. Wright Mills. Selected writings of Veblen have not only formed new approaches to the discipline of Economics, but also influenced prominent scholars, like Mills. In his contributions, Veblen employs various approaches to social science analysis, such as use of dichotomy (Veblenian Dichotomy), subreption, and cumulative causation in his efforts to describe social change within an evolutionary-institutionalist framework. While not being explicit, some contributions of Mills utilize similar approaches advanced earlier by Veblen. In summary, Mills' contributions to sociology appear to be heavily influenced by Veblen's seminal contributions to institutional thought.

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Introduction and Background

Thorstein Veblen and C. Wright Mills are both considered radical thinkers for their times. Throughout his various works, Thorstein Veblen took on a number of scholarly pursuits. He discussed the relationship between business and industry in *The Theory of Business Enterprise*, examined the changing role and features of higher education in *The Higher Learning in America*, prompted a new field of inquiry in “Why is Economics Not an Evolutionary Science”, and also scrutinized the rich and society in *Absentee Ownership* and *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Thorstein Veblen’s works have not only influenced the discipline of economics, but also a wide range of scholars. Thorstein Veblen’s largest contribution to economics was founding the field of evolutionary-institutional economics. My inquiry will seek to elaborate on how Veblen’s concepts of subreption, cumulative causation, and the Veblenian dichotomy may have influenced Mills’ concepts of labor, business, industry, various classes, and their structure.

One of the purposes of this inquiry is to determine whether Mills incorporates the Veblenian dichotomy into his concepts throughout his discussions in his major works. Subreption is also one of Veblen’s concepts that will be analyzed to see if it appears in Mills works. Finally, cumulative causation is another Veblenian concept that I will be investigating to see if it is also present in Mills’ works. Details and descriptions of each of the concepts will be present in their respective sections. Each of these concepts originally thought through by Veblen remain important to economics and institutional inquiries.

In order to determine whether there is indeed a connection, a little bit of background on Veblen proves necessary for this inquiry. According to Rick Tilman (1984, 61-62), Veblen was

born in 1857 and raised in the Midwest of the United States of America, went to Carleton College, and studied economics for his bachelors. Veblen enrolled later at Johns Hopkins University to study for his doctorate. However, Veblen then transferred to Yale University and acquired a Ph.D. in Philosophy 1884. Later on, Veblen obtained his Ph. D. in Economics. After this, Veblen begins writing his major works and career at different universities. Veblen would died in 1929, but his legacy lives on.

While Veblen's works are significant and numerous, Mills also produces substantial pieces of scholarly work. For the inquiry I will be taking place in, I will be analyzing Mills' three chief works *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders*, *White Collar: The American Middle Class*, and *The Power Elite*. Each of these pieces of scholarly inquiry analyzes social classes in America and the larger effect on the political and economic structure of America from a sociological perspective. Mills writings analyze the labor class and their leaders, the new American middle class, and the upper class that commands a large amount of power. Mills criticized American class structure, how it shifted, and overall criticized the rich. Furthermore, Mills' criticism is similar to Veblen's since both criticized the upper class in a similar fashion. Mills often relies on Veblen's other theories that I am not analyzing when criticizing the rich. Overall, Mills was a critic of America just as much as Veblen was.

A slight bit of information on Mills' background is necessary for this inquiry as well. According to Tilman (1984, 5-9), Waco, Texas is where C. Wright Mills was born in 1916. Mills would later on move from Waco to Dallas and attend Texas A&M in 1934. Apparently, Mills disliked it at Texas A&M so in 1935 Mills transferred to the University of Texas in Austin. Mills studied sociology here and was quite impressive in his studies. Mills would then later on study

philosophy for his M.A. In 1939, Mills began studying sociology again for his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin. Mills would teach at the University of Maryland and Columbia University. Mills had a number of impacts around the world, but would die in 1962.

This inquiry seeks to establish theoretical relationships between the reasoning and works of Thorstein Veblen and C. Wright Mills. Thorstein Veblen's thoughts have developed new approaches in the discipline of economics, but also influenced a number of noteworthy scholars, such as Mills. Veblen utilizes a number of methods of analysis in his contributions to social science, such as the use of dichotomy, or Veblenian Dichotomy, cumulative causation, and subreption. Each of these methods are employed to describe change in society with an institutional framework. While not explicit, Mills and his contributions tend to employ similar approaches put forward by Veblen. Overall, Mills' contributions to sociology appear to be heavily influenced by Veblen's seminal contributions to institutional thought.

The Veblenian Dichotomy

This section of this inquiry seeks to establish Thorstein Veblen's insight into business enterprise and the machine process can be found in C. Wright Mills thinking. In *The Theory of Business Enterprise*, Thorstein Veblen proposed a relationship between business enterprise and the machine process, which translates into a relationship between business and industry. Veblen saw business as a ceremonial and inhibitory institution to society and culture. Veblen also saw industry as progressive for society and culture and a technological characteristic of it. This connection would later be identified as a ceremonial-technological dichotomy and the Veblenian dichotomy. Also, Rick Tilman has put forward a compelling case for the relationship

between Veblen and Mills in terms of the Veblenian dichotomy. While not always directly related to business and industry, C. Wright Mills also proposes similar dichotomies that appear to draw from Veblen's abstractions in his books *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* and *The New Men of Power*. Thus, Thorstein Veblen's understanding of the relationship between business enterprise and the machine process, which would later be posed as the Veblenian dichotomy, appear to have profoundly influenced C. Wright Mills thinking.

Thorstein Veblen, The Machine Process, and Business Enterprise

In order to understand the connection between C. Wright Mills and Thorstein Veblen in terms of the ceremonial-technological dichotomy, or Veblenian dichotomy, it is essential to outline *The Theory of Business Enterprise* [1904], what Veblen meant by the machine process and business enterprise, and to analyze this ceremonial-technological dichotomy between the two. In terms of the machine process, Veblen (2013, 9-10) refers to industry in general, not just the physical machines that create goods. Veblen was discussing the agencies, the materials, the laborers, and claimed that the machine process could be found wherever logical procedure based on knowledge took place along with utilizing insight on forces being employed. On top of this, the machine process was completely standardized, interconnected, required quantitative precision, and mandated constant maintenance in its large interconnection. Since this machine process was all interconnected, standardized, and required maintenance, Veblen (2013, 14-15) states that any tampering or maladjustment of the system hampers the entire process and thus maintaining balance and minimizing interruption of the machine process remains essential. It is also made apparent by Veblen (2013, 109-111) that the machine process is not static, but is

instead dynamic, increasingly efficient, and constantly improving its own processes. The machine processes effects also have larger effects in the viewpoint of Veblen (2013, 145-148) on culture and society by discarding old habits of thought centered on humans. Instead, the machine process relies on cause and effect and being impersonal to progress society.

While Veblen viewed the machine process as progressive and future oriented, Veblen describes business enterprise as past oriented or ceremonial. Describing the motives of business as to gain profit, Veblen (2013, 16) understood that the business enterprise stood in opposition to the machine process. In fact, Veblen (2013, 25-27) describes business as inhibitory to the machine process and its advance. Profits are so significant to business, according to Veblen (2013, 45), that businessmen seek them over the serviceability of the product and the efficiency of the machine process. This focus on profits and disrespect towards the machine process and industry has a number of effects that Veblen explains.

With clear outlines of business enterprise and the machine process, the dichotomy between these two and their ceremonial-technological aspects can be examined. Veblen (2013, 16) makes it apparent that business resides with the mechanical industry and they each exert their own influence on modern culture and society. By pointing out how industry benefits people, Veblen (2013, 19-30) shows how people in society are best served if industry runs smoothly and large amounts of goods are produced. Due to businesses focus on profits, industry and the machine process does not run smoothly. Business enterprise curtails production in order to drive up price for the sake of profit. Laborers, engineers, and many other workers in the machine process work and take part in the machine process in order for its smooth functioning, but businessmen work against this in the name of profit. Serviceability and

efficiency, technological institutions, are not pertinent to businessmen, but profit are. By stating that businessmen live off the surplus productivity of the machine process, Veblen (2013, 35-36) makes it apparent that business is inhibiting its technological growth. Also, Veblen (2013, 101,112) states that slumps are characteristic of business and not industry because of the business enterprise's quest for profit and dominance over the machine industry.

While the dichotomy between business enterprise and the machine process have clear socioeconomic affects, Veblen also displays the dichotomy's influence on culture and technology. By pointing out how old or ceremonial institutions are associated with business enterprise and the new or technological characteristics are a part of the machine process, Veblen (2013, 37-42) describes the interplay of these two sets and how they affect norms or behaviors. Furthermore, a system of these new technological characteristics replacing the old institutions is put forward and Veblen states that this process is how cultural development takes place. Like the socioeconomic side, business enterprise inhibits or slows this cultural growth. Also, William Waller (1982, 760) states Veblen thought that institutions, or the ceremonial side of the Veblenian dichotomy, are non-dynamic for the development of culture. Although, Veblen (2013,154) states that technological aspects are slowly becoming more pervasive, growing stronger, and weakening ceremonial or old institutions. Veblen (2013, 163-164) hypothesizes that the new or technological aspect of the machine process will gradually overtake the ceremonial institutions of business enterprise and change them. Later on, Veblen (2013, 176) outlines his exploration of the topic by discussing how cultural growth will take place as technological aspects become more prominent. The ceremonial institutions will inhibit

these technological aspects, but the technological aspects will alter these ceremonial institutions and culture, which will allow technological growth.

Throughout his abstractions, Veblen does clearly outline aspects and institutions that reside on each side of the dichotomy. For example, Veblen (2013, 44) claims that standardization remains a characteristic of the machine process, growth of industry, and thus a technological aspect. On the other hand, property ownership acts as an institution of business enterprise, the past, and thus a ceremonial institution. Veblen (2013,128) saw that laws and politics were also affected by business. Also, Veblen (2013, 155-163) saw trade unionism as an emerging technological characteristic, which he believed would continue to develop into socialism. Veblen believed this because he saw trade unions adapting to the machine process and its focus on development, the future, and away from business enterprise institutions, like property rights. Instead, Veblen believed trade unions moved into new institutions that would allow for technological growth. This shift away from property rights is clear in the industrial classes who Veblen believed were losing their connectivity to individual ownership. In all of this, Veblen (2013, 127) puts forward the hypothesis that ceremonial institutions, such as the right of ownership, are incompatible with these technological aspects, the machine process, and technological growth.

Rick Tilman's Approach

Rick Tilman also considers the relationship between Thorstein Veblen and C. Wright Mills in terms of the Veblenian dichotomy. Tilman (1984, 17) brings up an important point that a scholar may employ certain sources, but then use them in a different system than from which

the source originated. This is essential for analyzing the relationship between Mills and Veblen in terms of the ceremonial-technological dichotomy. First off, Tilman (1984, 62) claims that Veblen was the scholar who had the greatest impact on Mills. If this is true, the ceremonial-institutional dichotomy must be somewhat present in the works of Mills. Mills, according to Tilman (1984, 63), clearly grasped Veblen's concepts as well as their importance. Also, Tilman points out that Clarence Ayres was a professor of Mills. Tilman makes it clear that Clarence Ayres had an influence on Mills and introduced Veblen to Mills. Ayres was a proponent of Veblen's and Tilman (1984, 70) claims that Ayres refined Veblen's thoughts on business enterprise and the machine process and first called it the ceremonial-technological dichotomy. Also, William Waller (1982, 762-763) further cements this relationship between Veblen and Ayres as well as furthers the discourse on the Veblenian dichotomy.

While Ayres taught much to Mills, Tilman makes it apparent that Mills clearly understood the ceremonial-technological dichotomy. Tilman (1984, 64) states that technological continuity as a part of economic development influenced Mills development intellectually. Also, Mills' ideas, in the viewpoint of Tilman (1984, 67-68), on the technological sphere are closely related to Veblen's concept of the industrial arts and their state. Both Mills and Veblen used the word technology to explain tool skills as well as tools. These tool skills encompass scientific knowledge as well. This fact also keeps on the institutional tradition and connection between the technological sphere and the industrial arts. Tilman puts forward that Veblen and Ayres clearly understood the interplay of the ceremonial and technological while Mills had his own formulations on the topic. Mills was a conflict theorist and inherited his dichotomous view of society from Veblen. Tilman acknowledges the possibility that Mills could

have inherited it from Marx, but that Marx's theories focused more on the forces of production and relations of production, but Mills and Veblen focused on the aspects of change. This is apparent to Tilman because Mills emphasizes social institutions with change resistant qualities like Veblen. Also, Marx accounted for a shorter time adjustment in his theories of social change while Veblen and Mills process of change was more time consuming. Also, both Mills and Veblen, in the viewpoint of Tilman, did not account for labor forming a proletarian uprising. Mills technological aspects or theories on how social change took place focused on those who had power to bring about change.

While Tilman points out how Mills used this ceremonial-technological dichotomy, Tilman also makes it apparent that Mills was critical of the rest of social studies' use of it. Tilman (1984, 69-70) states that Mills thought social studies' use of this theory was too progressive, oriented toward a utopian future, and that the social studies manipulated it. Mills thought that only Veblen correctly applied this theory of social change.

Mills was critical of how others used the ceremonial-technological dichotomy, but Tilman points out that he used it in the same context Veblen did. Tilman (1984, 70) claims Mills used the ceremonial and technological dichotomy to attack the corporate structure. Mills did this by contrasting corporate managers who worked in the financial sector. Mills contrasts two different types of corporate managers. Mills contrasts corporate managers who did not understand the industrial process, and were thus ceremonial with the corporate managers who did understand the industrial process and were thus technological. Tilman also points out that Mills saw American businessmen as industrially incompetent as well as scientifically ignorant, which coincides with Veblen's view of being technologically unfit. According to Tilman (1984,

71-72), Mills argues that technology and scientific growth had been impeded by ceremonial institutions and even referenced Veblen's ceremonial-technological dichotomy in his own work *Character and Social Structure*. Clearly, Tilman points to great connections between Mills and Veblen in terms of the ceremonial-technological dichotomy.

C. Wright Mills and the Veblenian Dichotomy

Tilman's statement on how scholars may borrow from other scholars, but use them in different manners is of great importance to this inquiry. Mills doesn't just adopt Veblen's viewpoint on the ceremonial-technological dichotomy, but instead develops it for his own purpose. In his book, *The New Men of Power*, Mills does just this. Mills (1948, 8-9) offers an opposing relationship between labor, or industry, and business. He explains how unions defy the power of business by defying business and businesses property, which gives business power over labor. This dichotomy between unions and property shows some resemblance to Veblen's own thoughts. Later on, Mills (1948, 116) discusses how business has the power to deal with this developing labor force and also receives support from the law while labor has the ability to take over all productive equipment, oust businessmen, and be rid of the parasite of business. Portraying business as a parasite, describing the struggle between labor and business, and showing how business uses old institutions of law to fight against the technology of industry shows some characteristics of Veblen's own concepts.

Mills was generally critical of business and supportive of unions because he saw the effects business had on society. On this line of thought, Mills (1948, 241-245) saw the growth of unions, organized labor, and industry and knew business would utilize all of its power to slow

this growth along with the leftward drift of unions. In fact, Mills viewed businesses acts of cutting production for profit and the slowing of industry quite similar to how Veblen saw it. It was apparent to Mills that business holding back its productive facilities was hampering industry's ability to flourish. Since Mills saw business as the perpetuator of this, Mills also believed that business was the cause for slumps. Mills saw business as doing an old job during a time in society it no longer fit into. According to Mills, new techniques of government promoting labor that had taken place around the world would not be considered by proponents of business or by business itself. Finally, Mills (1948, 251) states that labor and industry would replace the institutions of the past with matter of fact plans and analyses. All of this relates to Veblen in terms of business being inhibitory, cutting production for profit, hampering industry by doing so, business being the cause for slumps, business being an artifact of the past, and the replacement of institutions by industry.

While *The New Men of Power* offers a number of critical connections between Mills and Veblen, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* [1951] offers other adaptations of Veblen's concepts. Mills (2002, xx) begins by discussing how the nineteenth-century society has been destroyed and a new society has risen in its place. Old institutions can no longer deal with this new society since they were not meant for it. This new middle class that Mills discusses throughout this book is attempting to understand these new developments in society. Continuing on, Mills (2002, 3) discusses how the middle class has been reshaped by technology and institutions as well as points to examples in the city and on the farm. By pointing this out, Mills is trying to highlight how this change over time has made this class something different entirely. Also, Mills (2002,13) says that the free entrepreneurs of the old middle class, or the

farmers and small businessmen, are diminishing due to the large pull of industry in our modern society. By pointing to farmers, Mills (2002, 18-19) shows how the revolution in technology has caused their decline and that farming has become an incredibly capitalized business. Instead, Mills (2002, 25-28) uses the ceremonial-technological approach in the sense that Mills saw this old middle class as the ceremonial side and holding back development of technology and industry. In this exploration, Mills even saw technology, industry, and big business shifting away from this ceremonial old middle class. Furthermore, Mills states that the ideas of engineers, big industry and the influence of processors are overtaking the old middle class and that the old middle class is just slowing progress pictured by those focused on efficiency and technology. All of Mills concepts relate to Veblen in terms of technology being the motor for social change, old institutions not being applicable to the present, and the diminishing ceremonial roles or institutions.

Mills application of Veblen does not always resemble Veblen's own concepts directly. Instead, Mills (2002, 33-34) adapts the ceremonial-technological dichotomy to show how the nature of competition has changed and is also causing old entrepreneurs to decline. According to Mills, this old viewpoint on competition rings true for many people, but since society has changed, this logic has no place here. Also, Mills (2002, 43-44) points out the interplay between old and new institutions. In this, big business is flourishing and has increased productivity from industry. Big business manipulates this old perspective on competition for its benefit and small entrepreneurs do not realize it is what is destroying them. Mills makes it clear though that technology and the future of manufacturing will overtake farming, the old entrepreneur, and this old rhetoric. All of these viewpoints of Mills relate to Veblen in the sense

of scientific knowledge changing, the interplay of institutions, and technology and industry being a part of the process of societal change.

This section of the inquiry has sought to establish that Thorstein Veblen heavily influenced C. Wright Mills in terms of the Veblenian dichotomy. In order to clearly show the connection, a thorough explanation of the Veblenian dichotomy and its origins was conducted. Also, Tilman's analysis on the topic was considered, which presented a number of important contributions on the subject. Finally, an independent and original critical analysis of Mills' works *The New Men of Power* and *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* was conducted in order to contribute to the literature that highlights the relationship between Mills and Veblen. Overall, Mills was heavily influenced by Veblen and was perhaps one of the greatest contributors to Mills intellectual development.

Subreption

This section of the inquiry seeks to establish that Thorstein Veblen's insights and uses of subreption profoundly influenced C. Wright Mills' thinking in *The Power Elite*, *White Collar: The American Middle Class*, and *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders*. Perspectives and views by John Hall, Alexander Dunlap, Joe Mitchell-Nelson, and William Dugger's on Veblen, Mills, and subreption will be considered to lend weight to this inquiry. In order to clearly understand how Veblen's use of subreption influenced Mills, an analysis of Veblen's *The Higher Learning in America* and how Veblen employs subreption in his work must be taken on in this inquiry. Finally, a thorough evaluation of Mills' works mentioned earlier will be undertaken to demonstrate how Veblen influenced Mills in terms of subreption. Thorstein Veblen's

understanding and employment of subreption profoundly influenced C. Wright Mills' thinking in *The Power Elite*, *White Collar: The American Middle Class*, and *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders*.

Understanding Subreption

In order for subreption to be fully understood in Veblen's work and how C. Wright Mills is influenced by Veblen in terms of subreption, an outline of what subreption is proves to be necessary. The piece *Subreption and Evolutionary Economics* remain essential due to its description of subreption. John Hall, Alexander Dunlap, and Joe Mitchell-Nelson (2015, 2-7) begin by discussing how subreption can first be found in Roman Law. This definition of subreption relates to introducing false evidence into a legal case. Subreption also has Latin translations, according to the authors, relating to reptiles and creeping and crawling. The authors take this information and begin to analyze Immanuel Kant and his concept *Erschleichung*. By showing their similarities in meaning and how they easily translate from one to the other, the authors equate Kant's concept of *Erschleichung* to subreption. The inquiry then moves on to discuss how Kant's work on subreption, or *Erschleichung*, is apparent in his fallacy of subreption. Kant's fallacy of subreption occurs when humans apply sensuous knowledge to properties or qualities that stand outside of them. Applying this sensuous knowledge thus introduces a falsehood into the person's reasoning and subreption takes place as the individual goes down a path of flawed reasoning.

While Kant's ideas on subreption remain important, this inquiry is interested in how Kant's ideas influenced Veblen. The Hall, Dunlap, and Mitchell-Nelson- (2015, 7-13) discuss how

Veblen's own inquiries and studies made him well versed in Kant. However, Veblen sees and utilizes subreption in a manner quite different from Kant's original concept. Veblen sees subreption as a process of institutional change. Next, the authors define subreption, since Veblen does not, as an act of introducing a set of values into an institution that does not share these same values, often having to disguise itself as similar to the original values held in the institution. This can be conscious or unconscious, but subreption takes place when the institution accepts the values that are introduced and in question. The inquiry continues on to describe how subreption occurs in *The Higher Learning in America*, which is similar to this inquiry's own description further in. In short, subreption exists as a form of institutional evolution that takes place as described above.

While the previous piece provides this inquiry with important development and background information on subreption, William Dugger offers modern examples and an operable definition. Dugger (1980, 403-405) offers an example in American society where Careerism enters into the family. Careerism is a value, created by the corporate bureaucracy, to rise above your peers in terms of occupation. Careerism enters the family through how marriage is perceived. Dugger states that men originally value marriage on its own, but that the corporation and Careerism enters the family life to change this value by using a man's pursuit of occupational success. Thus, the value of marriage changes from its own usefulness and desire to something else. Now, a corporate man must have a wife and values marriage for his own success in his career. Also, a corporate wife, as Dugger terms them, no longer remains her own person, but becomes an extension of her husband's career. Dugger claims this to be one of the many values in the home and life of a family that have been substituted or subrepted.

While the family and its values remain important, Dugger also analyzes the corporate structure and how its values have changed dramatically. Dugger (1988, 80-86) describes how corporations organized in a U-form, which each department executed only one function, but remained interconnected. This form of organization proved to be cumbersome as the corporation grew larger. Responsibility for errors could not be placed and it was generally inefficient. After World War II, the M-form organization style began to dominate and became more suiting to a large growing corporation due to its separation of functions into different divisions and generally acted autonomously. This new form lacks a sense of cooperation though due to the autonomy in divisions, but is brought back by the corporation through introducing a corporate culture. One example of a corporate culture and how it has subverted values is how corporate culture has shifted the employee's desire and value to do well in their work to an impulse or pressure to get ahead. By introducing this falsehood of getting ahead, the values of the employees change from a value to do well in their work to a value of working hard for the corporation to get ahead. According to Dugger, this becomes a tool of corporate control.

Dugger also introduces a concept called invaluation processes. These invaluation processes describe how values change over time. There are four invaluation processes, which are contamination, subordination, emulation, and mystification. Contamination occurs when values are transferred from one person to another. Subordination takes place when a person tries to overcome another person's values by determining them to be lower than other values. Emulation is defined as envying other values deemed higher and trying to copy them. Mystification happens when people try to confuse others' values into supporting different values. Each of these are relatable to subreption and make subreption operable.

Thorstein Veblen's Use of Subreption

In order to adequately show how C. Wright Mills thinking was influenced by Thorstein Veblen's use of subreption, we must also discuss Veblen's employment of subreption. In *The Higher Learning in America* [1918], Veblen (2005, 24-28) describes in great detail how the university changed from a spiritual and utilitarian institution to an institution based on pursuing knowledge due to a change in values. The university changes based on the prevailing or dominate mindset or ideals of the community. Before this change occurred, universities primarily focused on religion, medicine, law, and politics, which all served utilitarian, spiritual, or professional purposes. However, idle curiosity, or pursuing knowledge for its own sake, began to find shelter in this university dominated by utilitarian values. Idle curiosity often had to disguise itself as practical in order to maintain its position in the university. As time passed and values shifted in the world of scholarship, this idle curiosity came to dominate the university and the utilitarian, spiritual, and professional values of the university fell into the background of the university. Scholarly and scientific inquiry became the main values of the institution

With the university subrepted by idle curiosity, Veblen discusses the traits of this new institution. Veblen (2005, 11-15) begins by discussing how the university is associated with knowledge. The university, according to Veblen, must pursue scientific and scholarly inquiries while also teaching students. It is made apparent by Veblen that the university's role is no longer to prepare people for professional life or for a career after this change in values. Veblen states that this is the role of professional schools and that the university should not be overbearing on its students in this manner. Instead, the student ought to know what they want

to pursue in terms of knowledge. Altogether, the university after this shift becomes a place to pursue knowledge first and foremost, which teaching students helps further.

While the university may have been in this state, Veblen begins to further elaborate on how new values are entering and subverting the university again. Veblen (2005, 30-35) sees society as being dominated by ideals and values that are pecuniary and practical. Since society has become dominated with business values, Veblen (2005, 45-51) posits that those in university and the university will be influenced by these values. The governing board, leadership in the university, and even some faculty will be greatly influenced by these prevalent business values. The governing board's composition is also largely made up out of businessmen, according to Veblen, who are driven by their pecuniary values. The reason the governing board becomes dominated by businessmen is because society associates businessmen with success and wisdom and are thus trusted with controlling the university. Even the head of the university, according to Veblen (2005,59-64), has to portray the business interests of the governing board as necessary to academia, furthering knowledge, and progressing education since they selected him or her. Also, the governing board usually chooses people with similar pecuniary interests. Overall an advance of new pecuniary values appears in the university.

This influence on members of the university allows these business values to advance further into the university. While maneuvering into the university, Veblen (2005, 45, 128) makes it clear that these business values must maintain the appearance of pursuing knowledge and higher learning though in order to maintain themselves. Altogether, Veblen (2005, 77-78, 127) posits that the university has been subverted and dominated by business values while

principles related to pursuing knowledge are diminishing. Pecuniary values have entered the university under the guise of pursuing knowledge and have firmly taken root.

With an outline of how the universities values have changed, Veblen begins to show examples of how the university was subrepted. Veblen (2005, 17-19, 62) states that undergraduate departments and their introduction to the university shows how these values begin to shift. Veblen sees undergraduate departments as a stunt by corporate authorities in the university establishing a way to enroll as many students as possible with pecuniary motives in mind. The university thus no longer functions as a place of higher learning, but instead becomes a place of training and preparation for a career according to Veblen. Undergraduate coursework gets set to measurable quantities, similar to business and remains controlled by systems of business.

While the undergraduate departments may be an example of business values subrepting the university, Veblen offers many more examples. According to Veblen (2005, 62-67), the university has shifted to focusing on investment and output similar to a business. In the terms of output, Veblen states that universities are competing for students in order to increase their output of degrees sold. The faculty, in the viewpoint of Veblen, is made into employees to provide services and produce quantifiable results. In order to attract students, the university must invest. Veblen (2005, 90-104) puts forward that the university invests in clubs, sports, and various other programs to satisfy student's genteel tastes. Also, the university invests in improving land, capital values, and the decoration of buildings to increase their value, but to also attract students. All of this falls under business values and shows the shift away from scholarly or scientific values that the university had before.

C. Wright Mills and Subreption

Now that a basic understanding of subreption and Veblen's employment of subreption have been laid out, an analysis of how Mills appears to have borrowed from Veblen in terms of subreption can be conducted. It should be stated that John Hall and Alexander Dunlap (2012, 10-12) also see this trend of C. Wright Mills being influenced by Thorstein Veblen in terms of subreption. Beginning with *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* [1951], Mills (2002, 37-39) discusses a shift in values. The economic hardship during the Great Depression remained pervasive throughout the 1930s and business was no exception. Mills claims that small business, in search of economic security and support, moves their fight for survival to the political realm and out of the economic realm. Small business, according to Mills, also desires what big business has achieved and grows tired of cutthroat competition. Thus, business, primarily small business, introduces fair competition, which Mills refers to as a guise. Mills (2002, 52-54) states business, under the introduction of a falsehood of fair competition, looks to government to solve its problems. Mills claims that this introduction of fair competition along with the shift to seeking government support has replaced the old values of supply and demand and competition.

Mills is also influenced in terms of subreption when he discusses the military. In *The Power Elite* [1956], Mills (2000, 219-220) discusses an ongoing campaign by the military to influence the public. According to Mills, programs in public relations set in place by the military push this campaign. These public relations programs review and censor everything the public comes into contact with that relates to the military. This censorship shows resemblance to trying to disguise values as similar to the original institution's values, which occurs during

subreption. The purpose of this campaign is to change the values of the public into supporting the military and to portray the military as attractive to civilians. Also, the military pursues this campaign in order for the military to be seen as appealing, to encourage support for the military, improve their prestige, garner public support for military policies, and have the government pay for them. This change in values by trying to censor information and carry out a public relations program seems similar to subreption.

While Mills outlines and shows the importance of the military being subrepted, he also discusses how labor unions are being subrepted as well in his book *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders*. Mills (1948, 224-233) begins discussing how unions and big business have been cooperating in order to seek cooperation, stability, and security. This search for cooperation, stability, and security is the falsehood being introduced in this process of subreption. In this cooperation, the union begins to behave as a stabilizing agent for industry. The union performs this role by maintaining order and labor, disciplining people for being too radical or forming a strike when the union has not called for it, and other actions that exert pressure on workers in the union. The leaders of the union also essentially become whips for industry to maintain order. Rules of conduct are also established in order to maintain stability. All of this makes industry more efficient. However, the change in values is clear in the manifestation of practice. Clearly, unions are serving industry and big business quite well and values in labor unions have shifted from the interests of the workers in the union to the interests of big business.

Also, in this search for stability and security through cooperation, the government plays a role. Mills (1948,229-235) warns that the government will outlaw strikes and thus side with

big business in this search for stability and security. Also, Mills states that as this search continues and grows, the state will continue to intervene more. This means a larger domination of unions by the government. This is apparent when Mills discusses how the government becomes a regulator of labor. The functions of the union are taken over by the government, the fight for labor is taken over by the government, and matters which were economic become political. Mills even state that unions will essentially become an organ of the government. Also, Mills states that the government has been becoming an instrument of employers. The government will take over mines, plants, or other production sites when unions begin to act up. All of this decreases the union's power. In essence, the introduction of cooperation, stability, and security allowed the values of the government as well as business to enter the labor union, change the values of the union, and their practices. This changed the union, in the perspective of Mills, into a manifestation that seeks the goals of big business more than its own original purposes.

This section of the inquiry has sought to establish that Thorstein Veblen's insight on and application of subreption substantially influenced C. Wright Mills' reasoning in *The Power Elite*, *White Collar: The American Middle Class*, and *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders*. John Hall, Alexander Dunlap, Joe Mitchell-Nelson, and William Dugger offer compelling information on the topic of subreption that lends weight to this inquiry in terms of what subreption is and examples of it in contemporary society. When analyzing Veblen's work in *The Higher Learning of America*, a clear picture of subreption is presented and thought through in the university. Finally, C. Wright Mills puts forward a number of examples in his works on how he was influenced by the concept of subreption and by Thorstein Veblen. This includes small

business being subrepted, the military subrepting the public, and labor unions being subrepted by the government and big business. Altogether, C. Wright Mills seems to be strongly affected by Thorstein Veblen's understanding and employment of subreption.

Cumulative Causation

This section of the inquiry seeks to establish that Thorstein Veblen's insights and uses of cumulative causation profoundly influenced C. Wright Mills' thinking in *The Power Elite*, *White Collar: The American Middle Class*, and *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders*. Perspectives and important contributions by John Hall and Olive Whybrow on Veblen's formation and use of cumulative causation are considered and lend weight to this inquiry. Also, an independent investigation of Veblen's "Why Is Economics Not an Evolutionary Science?" and the employment of cumulative causation is undertaken. Rick Tillman's investigation of the connection between Thorstein Veblen and C. Wright Mills in terms of cumulative causation is also considered. Finally, with a firm understanding of cumulative causation in place, this inquiry will investigate Mills' works mentioned earlier and attempt to provide examples of how Veblen's concept of cumulative causation influenced C. Wright Mills. Altogether, Thorstein Veblen's understanding and employment of cumulative causation profoundly influenced C. Wright Mills' thinking in *The Power Elite*, *White Collar: The American Middle Class*, and *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders*.

Understanding Cumulative Causation

In their article, “Continuity and Continuousness: The Chain of Ideas Linking Peirce’s Synechism to Veblen’s Cumulative Causation”, John Hall and Oliver Whybrow investigate connections between Charles Sanders Peirce and his likely influences on Veblen’s formulation of cumulative causation. Hall and Whybrow (2008, 350-351) discuss how Peirce invested large amounts of time investigating continuity and continuousness. Peirce uses the word *synechism* due to its Greek relation to the meaning of continuity. Peirce stresses the importance of true continuity of hypotheses in philosophical investigations. Hall and Whybrow continue on to discuss Peirce’s firstness, secondness, and thirdness and its importance to *synechism*. Firstness is based on chance, secondness is a reaction to firstness, and thirdness is related to firstness and secondness and is lost without the previous two. In all of this, Hall and Whybrow show the importance of continuity in Peirce’s studies.

Peirce’s understanding of continuity does not end here. Hall and Whybrow (2008, 349-351) state that Veblen was influenced by Peirce’s ideas on continuity and continuousness. The authors lay out a number of connections where Veblen could have learned Peirce’s thinking. It is put forward by the authors that Peirce and Veblen had contact with one another at Johns Hopkins University. Also, Veblen even attended at least one of Peirce’s courses while at Johns Hopkins University. Veblen, according to the authors, was incredibly well schooled in philosophy. Holding a doctorate in philosophy from Yale University, Veblen would have been

competent in understanding Peirce's theories. All of this allows the possibility that Veblen's formulation of cumulative causation is indeed likely to have been influenced by Peirce's thinking on continuity, and brings this inquiry one step closer to understanding cumulative causation and its possible influence on Mills.

With a firm understanding of Peirce's ideas and his influence on Veblen, Hall and Whybrow begin to investigate Veblen's cumulative causation. According to the Hall and Whybrow (2008, 350-353), Veblen seeks to move economics away from a mechanistic to an evolutionary approach in his article "Why is Economics Not an Evolutionary Science". Hall and Whybrow state that Veblen sees how other sciences have shifted away from this taxonomic style of science to a more evolutionary approach. Veblen emphasizes change in society and the importance of continuousness and connectedness in this evolution. Veblen sees a cumulative change and a cumulative process in humans and society and wants this to be reflected in the field of economics. Finally, Hall and Whybrow offer a clear definition of Veblen's cumulative causation as an interaction of physical and metaphysical components and forces, which create processes in the economy and society. With a clear understanding of cumulative causation, we can further investigate how Veblen uses cumulative causation and then consider whether Mills was indeed influenced by Veblen's theorizing.

Thorstein Veblen and Cumulative Causation

In his seminal article, "Why Is Economics Not an Evolutionary Science?", Thorstein Veblen discusses cumulative causation and its relation to the discipline of economics in detail. In this article, Veblen's portrayal of evolutionary economics should be seen as correlated with

this inquiry's investigation into cumulative causation. Veblen (1898, 373-375) begins by discussing how the discipline of economics needs a change and has fallen behind other social and natural sciences. These other disciplines have taken an evolutionary approach to their field while economics lagged behind. Veblen believes economics is based upon administrative expediency, natural rights, and utilitarianism, and so does not reflect evolutionary thinking. By doing this, Veblen sounds the call for a shift towards a more evolutionary approach to economics.

In attempting to make this shift, Veblen begins to analyze other schools of thought dominant in economics during the time. Veblen (1898, 388-390) discusses the Historical School and how he does not consider it to fit into this new evolutionary economics. The historical school gives a narrative of economic phenomena that occur and the process that takes place, but Veblen does not consider this evolutionary economics. Veblen also analyzes the Austrian School of thought in economics. It is stated by Veblen that the Austrian School has failed to move away from a taxonomic approach. When discussing their theory, Veblen calls up the term hedonistic and does not consider the consequent or the antecedent. Instead, events are isolated and are not connected or continuous. The Austrian School's approach appears to be self-contained where the processes of life are external and foreign. By discussing how these schools do not fit into evolutionary economics, Veblen brings us a step closer to understanding evolutionary economics and cumulative causation.

Veblen discusses other qualities in the field of economics that do not make it an evolutionary science and how economics is not an evolutionary science during this time. Veblen (1898, 375) discusses how realism fails to render economics an evolutionary science. When

discussing this, Veblen points to the Historical School again and states how its realism and data usage do not qualify it as an evolutionary approach. Also, a simple process of unfolding sequences does not make economics an evolutionary science. Next, Veblen (1898, 384) brings up the tendency in economics to analyze things in a manner of cause and effect. Veblen makes it clear that this method leaves out other larger forces at work in the economic process. Once again, Veblen considers this method of cause and effect to be economic taxonomy.

With a clear outline of what evolutionary economics is not, Veblen begins to move towards what he thinks it does entail. Veblen (1898, 377-381) discusses how evolutionary sciences differ with respect to evaluation and handling of facts. Evolutionary sciences, in Veblen's view, consider comprehensive sequences and relations. It is also made clear that Veblen wants to move from an approach completely focused on cause and effect and towards an approach that considers comprehensive processes. This comprehensive process is later described by Veblen as being large and cumulative forces coming together to influence and impact economic and non-economic social characteristics of society. This shift in approach does not completely abandon the cause and effect method, but realizes how larger aspects and outside forces can cumulatively influence aspects of society, both economic and non-economic. In all of this, it is clear that a larger, cumulative, and comprehensive approach to evaluating the cause of economic phenomena is necessary for economics to be an evolutionary discipline.

While this cumulative approach to economics being an evolutionary science remains important, Veblen stresses other factors as well. Veblen (1898, 387-395) makes it clear again that the old taxonomic or mechanical style of economics is not effective, especially for development theories. Veblen stresses the importance of human knowledge, skill, and

preferences when evaluating development and understanding the previously discussed cumulative change process. It is put forward by Veblen that material facts changing only continue to breed more change through humans. Thus, economic development must be analyzed through the human factor. In order to do this, Veblen states that a reevaluation of people is necessary. Other sciences show humans as reactionary while economics seems to simply make people a bundle of desires that can be fulfilled when in the direction of the environment and its various forces. Instead, Veblen states that people are a cohesive organization of habits and tendencies. These habits and tendencies express and realize themselves in different activities. Furthermore, people are not these isolated globes, but instead are influenced by past events, their situations, their environment, and the consequences of their actions. Past experiences that have accumulated over time influence them. Veblen describes the economic history of individual's lives as a process of cumulatively adapting to ends which cumulatively adjust as the process continues. The individual's methods are enforced on them by the propensities and circumstances of the day before. The antecedent, the cultural, and the hereditary influence the individual and all of their decisions. The importance of humans and the precedent in evolutionary economics and cumulative causation cannot be understated.

While the individual remains important, Veblen also points to larger organizations. Veblen (1898, 392-395) posits that whatever is true of an individual also applies to the group. All of these interests and tendencies influence one another and begin to take shape as a whole. This changes habits of thought and can influence the economic community, including industry. Changes in economic institutions also take place. With this coming together of influences,

change in the economic community takes place and economic development occurs. Veblen claims that evolutionary economics must be theories concerned with the process of cultural growth in relation to economic subjects. An approach that focuses on cumulative succession of institutions that are economic in nature. In all of this, it becomes apparent how Veblen's repeated discussion of cumulative processes coming together to cause economic development, or cumulative causation, is important to evolutionary economics.

C. Wright Mills and Cumulative Causation

Before an independent analysis of C. Wright Mills work, this inquiry will consider Rick Tllman's investigation of the connection between C. Wright Mills and Thorstein Veblen. Tllman (1984, 17) makes it clear that Mills utilized Veblen and his concepts, but developed them into a different intellectual system. This will remain important in this inquiries investigation because Mills does not simply copy Veblen's ideas, but possibly utilizes them in his own formation of intellectual systems, concepts, and theories. Tllman (1984, 7) also provides us with an important insight that Charles Sanders Peirce was a large part of Mills education while working on his Masters in philosophy. Thus, this continued influence of continuity, cumulative change, interacting forces, and cumulative causation must have been present somewhat in Mills' formulations of intellectual systems. Tllman (1984, 62-64) continues this line of thought by discussing Mills in more detail along with Clarence Ayres. Ayres and Mills relationship was discussed in a previous section, but another evaluation of their relationship in terms of cumulative causation is important. Tllman quotes Clarence Ayres, one of Mills' professors, someone who studied Veblen's theories, and introduced those theories to Mills, and how Ayres

states that Mills recognizes the connection between Peirce and Veblen in terms of continuity. Tilman claims that this understanding of continuity influenced Mills publications and intellectual development. It is also put forward by Tilman that Mills use of evolutionary and institutional analysis was obtained from Veblen. It is important to restate that Tilman goes so far as to say Veblen was one of the biggest influences on C. Wright Mills and his intellectual development and Mills analysis of American society. Altogether, Tilman's input suggests that Mills may have been influenced by Thorstein Veblen in terms of cumulative causation.

With a clear definition of cumulative causation and Tilman's insight into the topic, we can now look at instances where Mills incorporates cumulative causation into his works. In *The Power Elite*, Mills (1956, 7-8) discusses how the military, political, and economic institutions have all become interconnected. This statement is reflective of the entire work. Mills continues by stating how the decisions of each of these institutions influence the other and developments around the world. It is made clear that neither of these institutions exist independent of the other. Mills makes it clear that this interconnection did not always exist, primarily in the nineteenth century when these institutions were smaller. Autonomous market forces and the political domain would conflict and due to the friction a new equilibrium would appear. However, as they are now, Mills makes it clear that this new interconnection cannot be ignored. Clearly, this is similar to Veblen's formulation of cumulative causation and how variables cannot be treated as independent of one another any longer. Also, Mills considers the antecedent and the consequent of this new interconnection. Mills and Veblen both state the importance of institutions, their interaction with one another, the relationships they have, and the affects they have on society.

Mills continues to offer us more examples of cumulative causation throughout *The Power Elite*. Mills (1956, 21) points to how cumulative human decisions affect events in our time rather than fate and that fate is simply multitudes of human decisions added up to cause an unintended incident. This viewpoint appears to fall back on the ideas Veblen offers as cumulative causation. Later on, Mills (1956,25) returns on the topic and says that the individual plays one minor part in economic and social aspects. He continues this thought and adds that any course or action will not end up as you planned due to the number of other forces. This shows some relation to Veblen's ideas on cumulative causation that were discussed earlier in this inquiry.

Mills also applies these ideas of cumulative causation when discussing the rich. Mills (1956, 114-5) points to one important economic fact about the incredibly rich. He states that they have accumulated many advantages because those who are wealthy have many options to accumulate even more wealth. This is also somewhat attested to the large organized companies that previous robber barons had made in the late nineteenth century. Mills continues to pull out statistics of how fewer and fewer of the rich have had to organize their own companies. This may be due to what Mills said earlier about wealth offering more options to gain more wealth. Mills also points out that single firms could not simply gain such large accumulated advantages, but that merged firms or trusts have caused this large gain in advantages by the very rich. The early robber barons led to the decline of people organizing their own companies and becoming rich. Firms began to join together and accrue more advantages and with such great wealth the rich could more easily accrue more wealth and advantages. It is also put forward that due to this accruing of advantages, it has become more

difficult for more people to crawl to the top and much safer to be born into the top. All of this is incredibly reminiscent of Veblen's ideas on cumulative causation. Also, it shows Mills use of Veblen's idea on the importance of the antecedent, in this case the past robber barons, and the consequent of that past and the present, the rich not having to organize their own companies and it being more difficult to make it to the top.

Cumulative causation is not only present in the very rich though. Mills (1956, 215-7) references the military and its ascendance in recent history. Mills points out that America's military has been growing rapidly. This military growth is of course accompanied by increasingly larger military budgets. America has also grown to be one of the leading industrial states as well in a short period of time. Mills looks at these two trends and points out that our economy has become incredibly concentrated and aligned into hierarchies. He states that the military and the economy have also become interwoven and structurally connected. Mills calls this interrelated economy and military a war economy. The growth of the military and its effect on the economy does not stop there though. Mills points out that science technology development has become increasingly related to the military. Universities and corporations and their scientific research were encroached upon by the military. Mills terms this trend the militarization of science. The military has also begun to tamper with the population at large. Mills (1956, 219-20) identifies this trend due to the increasing effort of public relations managers engaging in a large effort to improve their image in respects to the population. According to Mills (1956, 205), the military has been engaging in this effort because of their increased dominance in foreign policy by maneuvering their way into positions as ambassadors. The aim of this public relations effort is improve the prestige of the military, create respect for

the members of the military, have the public ready for military encouraged policies, have Congress pay for them, and have the public prepared for the arrival of war. The discussion of the military and economy being interwoven and connected is similar to Veblen's formulations on cumulative causation. Also, by looking at the military and its impact on the economy, Mills is analyzing non-economic variables and their influence on the economy, which is similar to Veblen's insistence on the importance of non-economic variables. By pointing to a number of other aspects that are influenced by this interconnected military and economy, Mills continues to demonstrate how he was influenced by Veblen's cumulative connection.

In *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*, Mills also displays examples of how he was influenced by Veblen in terms of cumulative causation. Mills (1951, xx) discusses how in sociology, a person cannot understand their experience or fate unless they locate where they stand in epoch and its trends as well as the chances of life of the individuals in their social layer. Mills states that in order to understand the white collar class, a drawing of the social structure in which they stand, the relations, or absence of them, of the classes above and below it, and how these other classes influence this class. Clearly, a cumulative and comprehensive approach to understanding classes and people is taken by Mills. Also, by analyzing the epoch, Mills is stating the importance of larger variables in society that influence phenomena. By stating the importance of the classes related to the white collar class, Mills shows how the class cannot be viewed in isolation of itself, but needs to be viewed with its connection to others.

Also in *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*, Mills discusses the connection of income, work, property, and status and its effect on freedom and democracy. Mills (1951, 9) discusses how small entrepreneurs owned small pieces of land and while these were

investments, they were their own work. Because they owned the place of their work and were self-managed, these small entrepreneurs were independent. The small entrepreneur's work, property, and self-management were correlated then and, according to Mills, the psychological basis of democracy was put into place. Work and property were interconnected into one unit. Skills were used on one's own property and status was based on the condition and amount of property held. Income was based on property and thus income, work, property, and status were all connected. An interconnection of economic and noneconomic variables to create development in the economy and society are clearly present in this example of Mills.

In *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders*, Mills discusses union leaders and their relationship with political and economic entities. Mills (1948, 155) posits that union leaders must realize that the economic and the political are not separate orders, but must be considered together. It is made clear by Mills that many union leaders do not consider this connection and only seem to be making short run economic decisions as if they live strictly in an economic world. These short-run goals have political consequences in the long-run. Overall, these consequences can be ignored, but will only cause more destruction. Mills focusing on the interconnectedness of economic and political worlds is important because it relates to Veblen's views on economic and non-economic variables creating outcomes in society and the economy. Also, Mills considers the consequent of ignoring these larger forces in society, which also seems to resemble Veblen's own theories of cumulative causation.

This section of the inquiry has sought to establish that Thorstein Veblen's insight on and application of cumulative causation substantially influenced C. Wright Mills' reasoning in *The Power Elite*, *White Collar: The American Middle Class*, and *The New Men of Power: America's*

Labor Leaders. John Hall and Oliver Whybrow offer compelling information on Peirce influencing Veblen and Veblen's formulation of cumulative causation. Also, their contributions help further an understanding of cumulative causation. When analyzing Veblen's work in "Why Is Economics Not an Evolutionary Science?", a vivid and descriptive picture of cumulative causation is drawn together by Veblen. Rick Tiltman lends weight to this inquiry by focusing on the various connections between Thorstein Veblen and C. Wright Mills as well. Finally, an independent analysis of C. Wright Mills major works appear to cement a strong position that Thorstein Veblen's concept of cumulative causation influenced C. Wright Mills. Altogether, C. Wright Mills seems to be strongly affected by Thorstein Veblen's understanding and employment of cumulative causation.

Discussion and Conclusion

Both Mills and Veblen offer key insights into economic, social, and institutional analysis that can't be overlooked. This inquiry attempted to outline the importance of both of their concepts and methods of analysis. Each of Veblen's methods of analyzing social, economic, and institutional change analyzed in this study require further investigation and analysis. Also, the connection between Mills and Veblen ought to be further inspected due to them both offering key institutional concepts, insights, and methods of analysis. Also, this investigation and research into the connection between Mills and Veblen should be continued because their relationship suggested in this inquiry helps reinforce their institutional approaches, which remain essential for analyzing social and economic change.

This inquiry has sought to explore the relationship between C. Wright Mills and Thorstein Veblen in terms of Veblen's concepts the Veblenian dichotomy, subreption, and cumulative causation. A clear explanation of the Veblenian dichotomy was put forward, an analysis of Veblen's use of this dichotomy in *The Theory of Business Enterprise* was undertaken, Rick Tilman's insight was considered and lended great weight to this inquiry, and examples of Mills being influenced by the Veblenian dichotomy posited. Also, an understanding of subreption was stated, Veblen's use of subreption in *The Higher Learning in America* was explored, and how Mills was influenced by subreption was inspected. Finally, an examination of what cumulative causation is, how Veblen uses it in his seminal article "Why Is Economics Not an Evolutionary Science?", and how it influenced C. Wright Mills was undertaken. Thus, this inquiry's conclusion is that Mills does appear to borrow from Veblen in this manner, but like any good scholar, Mills further evolves what Veblen originally put forward into his own intellectual system.

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