

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI[®]

NOTE TO USERS

This reproduction is the best copy available.

UMI[®]

A

STRUCTURE, CAUSE, AND CONFLICT: CLASS THEORY AND CLASS
ANALYSIS IN BOURDIEU

by

Elliot B. Weininger

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2001

UMI Number: 9997128

Copyright 2001 by
Weininger, Elliot B.

All rights reserved.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 9997128

Copyright 2001 by Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

© 2001

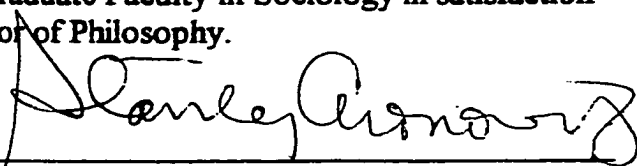
Elliot B. Weininger

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

1-9-01

Date



Chair of Examining Committee
Professor Stanley Aronowitz

1/30/01

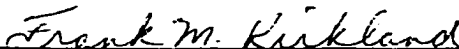
Date



Executive Officer
Professor Julia Wrigley



Professor Rolf Meyersohn



Professor Frank Kirkland

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

/uw/

Abstract

STRUCTURE, CAUSE, AND CONFLICT: CLASS THEORY AND CLASS
ANALYSIS IN BOURDIEU

by

Elliot B. Weininger

Advisor: Prof. Stanley Aronowitz

Despite the burgeoning secondary literature on Bourdieu, his sociology still provokes both open confusion and opposing, contradictory assessments. Much of the misunderstanding surrounding this sociology, I argue, is directly or indirectly related to its utilization of the concept of class. I therefore seek to reconstruct this concept in detail, especially as it pertains to *Distinction* and subsequent work. In large part, this entails untangling a set of meta-theoretic, epistemic, and substantive issues which are densely interwoven, and which often imply non-obvious departures from the canons of existing class theory and research. After sketching the landscape of contemporary class theory, I undertake an analysis of Bourdieu which hinges on four closely interrelated questions: his conceptualization of a class *structure*; the unusual *causal efficacy* that he attributes to this structure; the *explanatory program* which follows from such an attribution; and the consequences of the *conditional autonomy* which he nevertheless grants to the practices constitutive of *class formations*. Only when these issues have been clarified can we plausibly relate Bourdieu's approach to more familiar traditions of class and stratification theory. Moreover, only clarification of them will enable us to account for the most incongruous aspects of this approach—including the prominent role that it confers upon

occupational categories, and more importantly, the vexing function fulfilled by the so-called “secondary properties” (e.g. gender) within it.

Once this has been accomplished, it becomes possible to evaluate the most contentious aspect of Bourdieu’s class analysis: the assertion of the universality of class qua sociological *explanans*. There are good reasons, I argue, to regard this claim as implausible. Such an assessment finds confirmation in the recent writings by Bourdieu on gender and by Wacquant on race, which carry an implicit critique of certain aspects of the class analytic approach. However, once the implications of this critique have been appreciated, we will be able to discern the outlines of a form of class analysis that is less encompassing, but nevertheless retains the key insight of Bourdieu’s earlier work—namely, its focus on symbolic systems of classification, understood as the vehicle of an often-latent class conflict.

Acknowledgements

I owe a debt of gratitude to Stanley Aronowitz, Frank Kirkland, and Rolf Meyersohn, each of whom exhibited an extraordinary combination of enthusiasm and patience, without which this project could not have been completed. The support and encouragement offered by Julie Ford over the years have been equally essential.

Contents

Chapter 1.	Introduction	1
	I. The Concept of Class Today	1
	II. Pierre Bourdieu: Sociology as Class Analysis	3
	III. Analyzing Bourdieu's Class Analysis	10
Chapter 2.	Present-day Constellations of Class Theory	16
	I. The Basic Divisions of Class Theory	16
	II. Weberian Theories of Class	19
	A. Dahrendorf	19
	B. Goldthorpe	28
	C. Aron	32
	D. Parkin	38
	E. Giddens	41
	III. Marxian Theories of Class	48
	A. Poulantzas	50
	B. Thompson and Przeworski	62
	C. Wright	69
	IV. Some Theories of Status	83
	V. A "Neo-Durkheimian" Theory of Stratification	87
Chapter 3.	Structure, Cause, Conflict: Class in Bourdieu's Sociology	97
	I. Problems with Class	97
	II. An Early View of Class and Status Group	102
	III. Education and the Facets of Class Membership	111
	IV. Objective Class: Social Topography	119
	V. Objective Class: Structure and Cause	123
	VI. The Explanatory Function of Objective Class	129
	VII. From the In-itself to the (Not Quite) For-itself	138
	VIII. Sociology and Class Analysis	152
	IX. Class Control Decentered	165
	X. Class and Necessity	168
Chapter 4.	Class Analysis and Beyond	182
	I. Assessing Bourdieuean Class Theory and Analysis	182
	II. Causality and the "Secondary Properties"	185
	A. Causal Interactivity	187
	B. Causal Asymmetry	191
	III. Class and "Race"	198
	A. Structure, Closure, and Classification	199
	B. Bourdieu and Wacquant on the Intersection of "Race" and Class	202
	IV. In Conclusion: Class Analysis and the Durkheimian Program	207
References		214

Figures

Chapter 2.	Figure 1.	Goldthorpe's Seven Class Scheme	30
	Figure 2.	Wright's Early Class Scheme	72
	Figure 3.	Wright's Later Class Scheme	78
Chapter 3.	Figure 1.	Overdetermination of Consumption Practices	132

Chapter 1. Introduction

I. The Concept of Class Today

In a 1966 introduction to the field, Robert Nisbet attempts to construe sociology as an encompassing intellectual tradition, one which forms the context from which contemporary theory and research must take their bearings (Nisbet 1993). He does so not by focusing on the discipline's "founding figures" and their works per se, but by elaborating five "unit-ideas" which he considers to be constitutive of sociology as such. Included among these foundational themes is the couplet "class/status." However, if the concept of class achieves this august stature in Nisbet's view, it is strictly on historical grounds; sociology, after all, may be embedded in a constitutive tradition, but its particular elements neither can nor should be conserved in pristine form for their own sake. Indeed, some years earlier Nisbet had advocated an expulsion of class from the contemporary sociological repertoire (Nisbet 1959). His proposal had proceeded from the invocation of historical transformation, and was grounded in a variety of now-familiar arguments—elite pluralism, the "managerial revolution," expansion (absolute and relative) of the tertiary economic sector, etc.—which, taken together, were said to have had the consequence of robbing social classes of any clear delimitability. When he made this recommendation, Nisbet had presented it with the drama of a sociological heresy. At the time of the 1966 introduction, by contrast, he feels confident in asserting a historical *fait accompli*: in the conclusion to his elaboration of the Weberian distinction between class and status, he declares, with purely descriptive intent, that "[t]oday, as a sociological concept, class is dead" (1993, 216).

Whether or not Nisbet was the first to declare the concept of class expired for one reason or another, he most certainly was not the last. Thus, for example, if we survey the contemporary scene, we find Pakulski and Waters pronouncing *The Death of Class* (1996). Here again, at issue are various historical transformations: when confronted with contemporary reality, the concept of class cannot muster the same explanatory powers it once exhibited. Pakulski and Waters, however, want to hold out an upbeat image of the future: once sociologists have worked through the grieving process, they will discover that there is a sociological “life after class” which is still worth living. Indeed, as with Nisbet, they recommend that, where class once reigned supreme, we now substitute “status” (though in order to prevent the replacement of a putatively obsolete term by a thoroughly archaic one, they feel compelled to refurbish the latter with a set of “postmodern” fixtures). In a somewhat similar vein, Turner decries some recent “psuedo-debates” in Britain over the viability of class analysis. Although a tension between resource scarcity, on the one hand, and the socially constructive power of solidarity, on the other, remains one of the central concerns of sociology, “class theory and analysis, far from aiding the search for comprehension, has become its fetter” (Turner 1996, 261; see also Kingston 2000).

As with pronouncements of the death of God, it seems safe to say that contemporary farewells of this sort do not carry the atheistic shock that they once did. If this is the case, it is at least partly due to the fact that such declarations have shadowed the concept of class for so long that a small corner of “the sociological tradition” has been reserved for their residence.¹ Be this as it may, however, I would like to suggest that if we attempt to take a wide view, we find that contemporary sociology is, on the whole,

relatively uninterested in whether or not the patient has capitulated. Indeed, at risk of oversimplification, it seems to me that American sociology in particular—despite certain notable exceptions (which will be discussed below)—has largely lost interest in questions concerning the applicability of *class* as a sociological concept, and that this is due less to a widespread consensus over its epochally-conditioned exhaustion than to sheer routinization. More specifically, it seems to me that class and “socioeconomic status”—their old battle long forgotten—have become *practical* equivalents within much (most?) American sociology. Among researchers, it goes without saying that one must control for effects of “socioeconomic stratification” when analyzing one or another behavior, a necessity that is typically met by deploying amalgamated measures of income, education, and occupational status (the latter generally referring to prestige, but sometimes also to things like job autonomy). But that the amalgamations are to be understood as an *index*, one whose referent, in turn, requires theoretical explication, no longer appears to serve as a guiding norm. This tendency has been exacerbated insofar as the great turn towards Culture among those who specialize in theory is construed in terms of a need to free the analysis of symbolic objects and processes from an overly rigid economic frame.

II. Pierre Bourdieu: Sociology as Class Analysis

Within the U.S. context, the growing interest in the work of Pierre Bourdieu provides us with an opportunity to reconsider this trend. Indeed, Bourdieu, whose sociology is being translated and commented upon at an accelerating rate, is one of the few contemporary figures to consistently pursue an agenda of class theory and analysis. Moreover, his work has been punctuated, almost from the start, with frequent reflections

on the meta-theoretical meaning of the concept of class, on the epistemic status of class as an explanatory concept, on the appropriate methodological tools for undertaking class analysis, on the substantive nature of contemporary class relations, and on the form and consequences of contemporary class conflicts. This has led to the production of a body of research of impressive scope, with major studies analyzing various aspects of education, lifestyle, and cultural practices and institutions, to mention only the most well-known.

Bourdieu's early study of the educational system, *The Inheritors* (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979; originally published 1964), first developed the premise that the cultural orientations absorbed during early childhood socialization must be analyzed sociologically as a resource—that is, as a form of potential “privilege.” This is because the educational system presupposes a certain relation to culture among its students, and its success or failure in accomplishing a further “accumulation” of culture is largely a function of the presence or absence of this original “endowment.” For Bourdieu and Passeron, the cultural orientations at issue were, above all, class-specific ones. On the basis of the (well-founded) assumption that educational results are central in determining access to social positions later in life, they were thus able to argue that the educational system has the effect of “consecrating” class differences—that is, of legitimating such differences by constituting them as differences of individual “talent” and “giftedness” (*ibid.*, 29).² When they subsequently returned to this theme in *Reproduction* (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; originally published 1970), Bourdieu and Passeron, able to draw upon a more densely developed conceptual repertoire, provided a radicalized formulation: the educational system “need only obey its own rules in order...to fulfil

simultaneously its social function of reproducing...class relations, by ensuring the hereditary transmission of cultural capital, and its ideological function of concealing that social function..." (*ibid.*, 199).

Questions concerning the relation between class and culture also stand at the heart of the study which Bourdieu and his collaborators published in 1965 on photography (Bourdieu et al. 1990). The analysis takes aim at the assumption that the widespread emergence of mass produced cultural commodities had led to a leveling of class-specific cultures of consumption.³ The choice of subject matter for this study was thus strategic: on the one hand, photographic equipment had become readily available, relatively inexpensive, and required no special training to use; and, on the other, photography was not a "consecrated" art—that is, as a cultural practice, it was not routinely measured against explicitly formulated aesthetic norms which were elaborated and promulgated in (de facto) closed institutional venues such as museums and, in particular above all, schools. Consequently, photography amounted to a cultural practice whose adoption was not overly restricted by economic, technical, or cultural barriers. And, indeed, with certain exceptions, Bourdieu and his colleagues found relatively little variation in the actual photographic practices of members of different classes: in the vast majority of cases, photographic picture-taking served to record and solemnize ceremonial occasions in which the group (usually the family) was gathered, and thereby to express its unity (*ibid.*, 25). Nevertheless, behind this seeming homogeneity of practice—and coexisting with it—there stood, according to Bourdieu, wide variations in the *attitudes* which members of the different classes exhibited towards photography (*ibid.*, 46-72). Thus, among the rural peasantry and urban working class, the data revealed a strong

commitment to aesthetic realism, often coupled with an explicit moralism (i.e. an interest in “edifying” subjects). Among various segments of the middle class, by contrast, this realism was ardently rejected, though without recourse to a clear alternative. And, within the upper class Bourdieu discerned a set of formalistic aesthetic commitments, often coupled with disdain for the aesthetic potentials of photography as an artform.

The analyses contained in *Distinction* (Bourdieu 1984; originally published 1979) also reveal a core interest in questions concerning class. Indeed, the purpose of the project, according to Bourdieu, was to re-formulate the relation between the concepts of class and *Stand* (*ibid.*, xi-xii). Specifically, he asserted that “status groups” are not to be understood—even at the analytical level—in independence from classes. He thus sought to invert the famous Weberian account, according to which the terms designate two different forms of the “distribution of power within a community” (Weber 1978, 927), each of which is as likely to impede the formation of the other as to reinforce it. In opposition, Bourdieu asserted that “status” is to be viewed as a symbolic “expression” of class. And, as with his studies of education, the question of legitimation was given centrality: insofar as class relations are experienced primarily as symbolic relations—that is, insofar as differences of social position are “lived” and “felt” merely as differences of lifestyle—class domination is to some extent dissimulated: “[s]tatus groups’ based on a ‘life-style’ and a ‘stylization’ of life are not, as Weber thought, a different kind of group from classes, but dominant classes that have denied or, so to speak, sublimated themselves and so legitimated themselves” (Bourdieu 1990b, 139). At the same time, however, Bourdieu did not restrict the sociological function of status practices to this “expressive” function; he also asserted, to the contrary, that they must also be understood

as a type of “strategic” endeavor. This implied that the differences exhibited by the status practices characteristic of the members of opposing classes could be interpreted in terms of latent (or in his words, “sublimated”) class *conflict*.

Notwithstanding its extensive influence in various sociological arenas, Bourdieu’s usage of the concept of class remains—despite (or perhaps because of) the burgeoning secondary literature—deeply obscure. This can be illustrated with a simple juxtaposition. The Bourdieuean notion of cultural capital, according to Poulantzas, serves little purpose other than to capture the status unity of various elite sub-groups. Consequently, Bourdieu’s sociology can be written off on the grounds of its “impenitent Weberianism,” and his utilization the concept of class decried as an empty “Marxism *oblige*” (Poulantzas 1975, 177-8). To this we may contrast the evaluation recently offered by Alexander, in which Bourdieu is said to incorporate Weberian premises only via a highly distorted interpretation, one that recalls “‘sympathetic’ Marxist” and polemical “neo-Marxist” readings. Here, in stark opposition, the explanatory intentions which animate Bourdieu’s sociology can only give rise to “crudely” and “strikingly reductionist” accounts of this or that object (Alexander 1995, 160, 171, 178, and *passim*). Indeed, in Alexander’s conceptual lexicon, the language of “class fractions” in Bourdieu is enough to confer a “Poulantzian” tendency on his sociology (*ibid.*, 166).

A class analysis which is simultaneously guilty of both impenitence and reductionism, of (bad) Weberianism and (bad) Marxism, is—at least *prima facie*—one that has been poorly understood. In contrast to these assessments, I will argue that Bourdieu has consistently and continuously developed an innovative, viable approach to class analysis. In doing so, I would like the exegesis and evaluation which follow to

serve two purposes: in the broader arena, I hope they will help reinvigorate sociological discussions of class by rigorously delineating the Bourdieuan approach; and within narrower confines, I hope that they will clarify an opaque element which lies at the center of Bourdieu's thought, one whose meaning is typically taken for granted by those who proffer charges along the lines of those cited above.

Bourdieu's work is characterized by a combination—and indeed, an integration—of theoretical concept-building and empirical research which is, by and large, without analogue in sociology. His insistence that theory and research cannot be separated is indicative of a more general attitude which insists that both sociological practice and sociological thought are beset by “false” antinomies which tend to impede scientific progress (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 162; see 1991b, 163-70). The result of this orientation is an approach to sociology that frequently revolves around the desire to transcend some of the conceptual oppositions which stand at the core of the discipline. It was precisely such an orientation that was put on view in Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), the first systematic elaboration of the famous concept of “habitus.” The text is prefaced by a quotation from Marx's “Theses on Feuerbach,” insisting that human practice cannot be grasped in its “concretion” by either materialism or idealism—and that only their synthesis offers the possibility an adequate understanding of human history. In similar fashion, the elaboration of the concept of habitus is set against an equally broad background: the opposition between “objectivism” and “subjectivism.” Each of the terms of this opposition is understood in its widest sense. Thus, for example, the former notion is meant to encompass both linguistic structures, as analyzed by structural linguistics, and social structures, such as the

economy; and the latter term encompasses both the calculating actor of rational action theory and the “symbolizing” actor characteristic of phenomenological approaches. Without taking up here the substance of Bourdieu’s attempts at this sort of conceptual reconciliation, I would merely like to note that the notion of class is particularly susceptible to the type of conceptual dualism which Bourdieu has set out to demolish. Indeed, from the famous Marxian distinction between the class “in-itself” and “for-itself” onward, sociological thought about class typically has been founded on a conceptual lexicon that veers to one pole or the other of the objectivism/subjectivism divide, an embarrassment of which Bourdieu is not unaware. We thus find the following remarks in a lecture delivered in 1977:

[the] opposition—reduced...to its most basic expression—between deterministic scientism and subjectivism or spontaneism is perfectly clear as regards social classes. If I take the example of social classes, this is no accident. [“Class” is] both something that sociologists need in order to conceptualize reality and something which “exists” in reality, that’s to say, both in the objective distribution of properties and in the heads of the people who are part of social reality. It’s the most complicated problem there is to think about, because you’re trying to think about what you think with, something that is no doubt at least partly determined by what you want to think; and so—I admit this in all sincerity—I am very likely to speak of it less than satisfactorily. (1993a, 55; my addition)

The hesitation evinced here is quite real: as will become readily apparent, a vast proportion of Bourdieu’s sociological corpus—produced over the course of a forty year career—may be read as an ongoing reflection on the problems associated with the use of concept of class. From the start, this reflection has recognized the inherently “two-sided” nature of class. But as Bourdieu emphasizes, the complications which issue from it implicate sociological practice itself:

[i]n the Marxist tradition, there is a permanent struggle between an objectivist tendency which tries to find classes in reality (hence the eternal problem: “how many classes are there?”) and a voluntarist or spontaneist theory in which classes

are something that people make. On one side, the talk is of class condition; on the other, of class consciousness. On one side, talk of position in the relations of production; on the other, of “class struggle,” action and mobilization. The objectivist vision is more that of the academic; the spontaneist vision more that of the militant. In fact, I think that the position one takes on the question of classes depends on the position one occupies in the class structure. (*ibid.*, 57)

In following the various convolutions of Bourdieu’s approach to class theory and class analysis, it is important to recall this more or less openly displayed ambivalence (and in particular, when registering the implications of statements which may have originally been designed to provoke—or, as he likes to say, to “twist the stick in another direction”). In order to deploy the concept of class, it is not adequate for the sociologist to merely “dissolve himself or herself into the data”; the “question of class” is, simultaneously and inseparably, the question of sociology.

III. Analyzing Bourdieu’s Class Analysis

The present study differs from other treatments of Bourdieu’s work in that it places a particular *substantive* question at the center of the analysis: the issue of class. Thus, the examination of his writings and the evaluation of his conceptual repertoire will not be undertaken as ends in themselves; on the contrary, they will be carried out from the perspective which this question presents to us. To be sure, as the preceding remarks suggest, for Bourdieu, the problems entailed by the use of the concept of class stand very close to those which circumscribe the practice of sociology *as such*. Hence, it would be thoroughly inadequate to merely examine programmatic statements or pronouncements. Instead, we are obligated to discern the logic underlying his actual (or “practical”) use of the concept in the course of empirical study; and for this purpose, programmatic declarations can count, at most, as clues. My hope is that this tight substantive focus will

at least attenuate the probability that the study will wind up promoting the type of disconnected theoreticism against which Bourdieu so often rails.

I believe that the need for an analysis of Bourdieu's approach to class derives, in large measure, from the fact that much of the novelty and insight which it exhibits can only be fully appreciated once the extent and direction of his *departures* from existing schools and theories have been recognized. Consequently, the majority of the next chapter will be devoted to a review of the most recent incarnations of the central traditions in class theory. As is widely recognized, this theory tends to fracture along the line which routinely distinguishes "Weberian" approaches from their "Marxian" competitors. Nevertheless, the labels conceal more than they reveal. Indeed, as is particularly apparent when we undertake a consideration of the main figures typically grouped under the Weberian heading—Dahrendorf, Goldthorpe, Aron, Parkin, and Giddens—there is little or no conceptual unity linking the various positions together other than an expressed antipathy to Marxian approaches (and even this is highly variable in its orientation and its depth). And, while the latter tradition may appear, at least from a distance, to obtain a certain measure of coherence as a result of its orientation to the same body of canonical principles, as soon we draw near—and here this will be carried out through an examination of Poulantzas, Thompson, Przeworski, and Wright—it too begins to splinter. Thus, these discussions will not attempt to argue the relative merits and faults of various positions, nor to reconcile them. Instead, it will sketch the landscape of contemporary class theory, and thus serve as a background against which salient elements of the Bourdieuean approach can be brought into focus.

However, on its own, such an account would not be adequate. As will ultimately be demonstrated, the pertinent theoretical background includes not only the various traditions of class theory, but also the main sociological alternatives to it. Hence, I will also take up those approaches whose premises have typically been offered as substitutes for those of class theory—meaning, by and large, theories of status, but also a more recent position which can be loosely construed as a Durkheimian form of stratification analysis. Only with this broadened background will we be in a position to fully analyze Bourdieuan class analysis.

The analysis in Chapter 3 will thus develop a full-blown elaboration of Bourdieuan sociology from the perspective of the question of class. In the first place, it will examine a number of Bourdieu's early writings, in order to identify the role played by class and the concepts used to elaborate its meaning, but also to specify the gaps which threaten to undermine the undeniable lucidity of these works (and in particular, those dealing with education). Subsequently, I will take up Bourdieu's *Distinction* (originally published in 1979) and associated texts from the same period. My argument will be that it is only with this work that Bourdieu develops a fully coherent approach to sociological class analysis. In order to delineate his approach, it will be necessary to untangle a set of meta-theoretic, epistemic, and substantive issues which are densely interwoven, and which imply a variety of non-obvious departures from basic principles of existing class theory and research. More specifically, this analysis will hinge on four closely interrelated questions:

- Bourdieu's conceptualization of a class *structure*;
- the unusual *causal efficacy* that he attributes to this structure;

- the *explanatory program* which follows from such an attribution;
- and the implications of the *conditional autonomy* which he nevertheless grants to the practices constitutive of *class formations*.

It is only once these questions have been answered that we can plausibly undertake to relate Bourdieu's class analysis to that carried out from more familiar perspectives.

Bourdieu's answers to these four questions, it will be demonstrated, ultimately result, despite the certain obligatory qualifications, in an inflation of the class analytic approach beyond a point that can be plausibly sustained. Indeed, it will be shown that class, in Bourdieu's peculiar sense of the term, is asserted to comprise a universal explanatory principle (at least when the object of study is a "modern" society). Thus, in a Chapter 4, I will undertake an extensive evaluation of the implications of the Bourdieuean approach to class. These become apparent as soon as we take into consideration those of Bourdieu's writings in which the meaning and scope of the class analytic approach are implicitly revised. Above all, it is the question of gender domination which forces this re-evaluation; however, questions surrounding the sociology of ethnicity and "race" are also pertinent. On the basis of these writings, I will argue that the most problematic aspects of Bourdieu's approach to class theory derive from the exemplar from which it takes its orientation—namely, the thesis, propounded by Durkheim and Mauss, of a "correspondence" between social structures and symbolic structures. While the adaptation of this thesis to the study of contemporary society facilitates a highly innovative conceptualization of class and class analysis, it also carries with it certain deleterious presuppositions. Consequently, it becomes necessary to at least sketch the most important modification which this framework requires in order for the

basic thesis is to be retained. These modifications, however, render the Bourdieuan the a viable option for class analysis today.

Notes

¹ Already in 1973, for example, Giddens felt it necessary to preface his book on the subject with a claim that the concept of class had “become enveloped in an atmosphere of seedy decay”—at least among non-Marxists (Giddens 1973, 9).

² Their discussion focuses on the substantively unequal results of formal educational equality (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979 21ff.), and thus echoes some of Weber’s remarks concerning law and democracy.

³ For an account of the intellectual context in which Bourdieu’s early works on cultural production and consumption were carried out, see Lane (2000, 34–58).

Chapter 2. Present-day Constellations of Class Theory

I. The Basic Divisions of Class Theory

No single concept, it might be argued, has a lengthier sociological pedigree than that of class. Indeed, treatises on the concept of class have become numerous enough, and the theme persistent enough, to take on their own conventions. Thus it is almost a matter of tradition to begin such works by quoting the closing section of the third volume of *Capital*, to proceed through the more or less famous remarks from the rest of Marx's work (including a digression to deal with the essays on events in France), and thence on to the two versions of Weber's "Class, Status, and Party." However, my purpose is not to provide a thoroughgoing genealogy, and I will therefore forego this (occasionally ritualistic) endeavor here; nor I am interested in interrogating the transhistorical applicability of the concept. Rather, in what follows I merely wish to sketch a picture that may productively serve as background. This is necessary because Bourdieu self-consciously undertakes a resolution—or, in fact, transcendence—of the conceptual "antinomies" and "oppositions" which the history of sociology tends to bequeath to its practitioners. Thus, in elaborating this sketch, my foremost intention will not be to demonstrate the thematic unity which may or may not unite the various traditions and sub-traditions of class analysis, nor to argue in favor of one or another; instead, I wish establish what might be seen—from a contemporary perspective—as the most important nodal points that necessarily confront anyone who wishes to engage in class analysis.

The most prominent rift in the history of class theory is undoubtedly that which contrasts Weberian to Marxian orientations. Consequently, the majority of this

discussion will be devoted to a consideration of the most pertinent recent positions within each of these traditions. However, both orientations have long been at odds with theories of status stratification. Originating primarily in the U.S. context, the latter also have a direct bearing on Bourdieu's idiosyncratic approach to class analysis, and examples of this approach will therefore be discussed. Finally, a self-described neo-Durkheimian perspective on the phenomena typically analyzed in class terms will briefly be considered.

The opposition between Marxian and Weberian approaches has largely been construed in terms of two fairly decisive distinctions. The first concerns the constitution of class structure. On the one hand, the former tradition has developed its treatment of class from the perspective of "production-centered" account of the genesis of class differentiation. This implies that, particularly in the paradigm case of the relation of wage labor and capital, it is the extraction and appropriation of surplus that constitutes the core of the class structure. On this view, the confrontation which occurs in the labor market between those with capital and those with mere labor power (which is itself characterized by commodity status) is the enabling condition of the extractive process.¹ On the other hand, most strands of the Weberian tradition consider class differentiation to be the consequence of differentials in "market position"—that is, the ability of individuals to secure desirable positions, and thus greater returns on labor or assets, by virtue of the relevant factors that they bring to the exchange relation. Absent a theory of the labor-derived value of commodities, the confrontation which occurs in the market thus becomes the definitive factor conditioning "class position." The second widely recognized distinction closely follows from this: while Weber recognizes ownership of

property—and even “property in the means of production”—as the single most important “asset” to be present or absent in the exchange relation, he also attributes great significance to differences in “skill.” One consequence of this, of course, has been that his scheme has always held out the appeal of being easily able to accommodate salaried “experts” and the like as a distinct (“middle”) class; in other words, it has provided a theoretical foundation for the intuition that the demarcation of “manual” from “mental” labor constitutes a class distinction—a foundation, moreover, which has typically been less difficult to clarify (both theoretically and empirically) than that between “productive” and “unproductive” labor.

Nevertheless, a focus on these “classical” differences obscures the fact that both traditions have branched out in numerous directions. In the case of Weber, this derives from the utilization of arguments and analyses pertinent to the theory of class, but which, in his work, were never integrated into his brief attempts to develop this theory—including aspects of his sociology of organizations, his discussions of power-holders and elites, and his consideration of “the economic relationships of organized groups” (from which the concept of “closure” is mobilized). In the case of Marx, more recent developments have originated primarily in the need to come to grips with empirical phenomena which were not treated—or were which received inadequate treatment—in Marx’s own writings. Chief among these is the growth of the non-owning “middle class,” meaning managers, highly skilled “experts,” and members of the “liberal professions”; also important have been the growing “de-differentiation” of state and economy, as well as the increasing social (and hence sociological) salience accorded to categories such as race and gender.

II. Weberian Theories of Class

Weber's work has given rise to a multitude of class theories. Since each takes its bearing from different aspects of Weber's sprawling sociological edifice—and since the degree to which each intends to link up *systematically* with the Weberian corpus varies widely—I do not consider it particularly fruitful to search for a deep-seated unity (which, in any event, may not exist). In what follows, I therefore will not seek to develop a single, integrated “Weberian position”; instead, I merely wish to draw out the ways in which Weber's writings have been used—directly or indirectly—to pose solutions to various problems in class theory. I will begin with Dahrendorf's attempt to replace the economic dimensions of class with the hierarchy of legitimate authority in “imperatively coordinated associations.” Subsequently, I will discuss Goldthorpe's combination of this focus on the authority structure of the organization with a more traditional market-centered approach. This will be followed by a sketch of Aron's subsumption of economic class theory under a theory of the “ruling class.” I will conclude with a discussion of the of concept of “closure” as it used, first, in Parkin's anti-structural account of classes, and, secondly, in Giddens' attempt to synthesize various divergent strands of class theory.

A. Dahrendorf

Dahrendorf makes little in the way of direct reference to Weber, and insofar as he belongs to any “Weberian” tradition, his ties derive mainly from an affinity with the analysis of bureaucracy and bureaucratization: his central contribution consists of an

attempt to move the hierarchical distribution of legitimate authority within organizations to the center of class theory. Dahrendorf, in other words, seeks to replace the productive enterprise with the “imperatively coordinated association” (in Weber’s terminology) as the locus of class structure.

This theoretical shift is developed in the context of a critique of Marx, one which proceeds by designating myriad historical transformations which a Marxian approach is (purportedly) incapable of dealing with, and all of which are said to attenuate the potency of labor/capital conflict—which thus no longer stands as the definitive rift throughout society as a whole. Under the rubric of the “decomposition of labor” Dahrendorf includes a well-known phenomenon: the distribution of the skills necessary to fulfill various economic functions has increasingly dissolved whatever homogeneity may have characterized the working class in industrial societies during the nineteenth century; as a result, greater variation has become apparent within the ranks of the employed on measures of lifestyle, opinion, and the like, and unitary conduct in pursuit of collective interests has become less and less likely (Dahrendorf 1959, 48-51). Associated with this is the increasing centrality of the educational system in the process of economic “role allocation,” and, consequently, dramatic growth in mobility rates (*ibid.*, 57-61). The enmity between labor and capital has further been eroded by the institutionalization of collective bargaining procedures (*ibid.*, 64-7). And the “dynamic” force of the principle of equality, manifest in the extension of citizenship rights beyond the political and economic realms and into the social (à la Marshall), has dissipated the kinds of “alienation” characteristic of nineteenth century capitalism (*ibid.*, 61-4).

While an adequate class theory must be able to cope with all of these developments, none of them, as such, have decisive theoretical consequences for Dahrendorf. Rather, what interests him from a theoretical perspective is what he refers to as the “decomposition of capital.” With this phrase Dahrendorf refers to the widely discussed phenomenon of the “separation of ownership and control” within the economic enterprise.² This is seen as a result of the growth of corporations, whose capital needs can no longer be satisfied by the prototypical individual entrepreneur (himself averse to excessive risk), and which therefore have typically become “publicly” owned (in the sense that shares are traded publicly) rather than individual or familial property. The consequent dispersal of ownership has meant that owners, as a rule, no longer participate in the day-to-day running of the enterprise, a function which has instead passed over to a separate managerial group. The latter, moreover, are considered highly distinct in many pertinent sociological respects: for example, managers are subject to recruitment and career-patterns typical of professionals (unlike entrepreneurs)—that is, via specialized education and credentialization. Correlatively, they tend to be salaried, implying that their organizationally defined role separates their own economic self-interest from the realization of maximum profit.³ It also leads to a distinct set of value commitments and attitudes, at least within the workplace (*ibid.*, 41-8 and *passim.*)—in short, a bureaucratic ethos.⁴

For Dahrendorf, this development points up a particular presupposition upon which the entirety of Marxian class theory rests, one whose erroneous nature proves fatal. For if capitalist class domination rests on specific relations of production, and if these, in

turn, derive from private ownership of the means of production, then it is property relations which form the foundation of power relations. Dahrendorf thus asks:

[d]oes Marx understand, by the relations of property or production, the relations of factual control and subordination in the enterprises of industrial production—or merely the authority relations in so far as they are based on the legal title of property? Does he conceive of property in a loose (sociological) sense—i.e., in terms of the exclusiveness of legitimate control (in which the manager also exercises property functions)—or merely as a statutory property right in connection with such control? Is property for Marx a special case of authority—or, vice-versa, authority a special case of property? (*ibid.*, 21)

Dahrendorf argues that if Marx can be said to have taken the legalistic (“narrow”) view, this would imply that the theory is unable to come to grips with the assumption of control by non-owners, and the corresponding loss of authority on the part of owners. Indeed, using the terminology of Karl Renner, Dahrendorf refers to the structural differentiation of “functionaries without capital” and “capitalists without function.” The latter are said to be removed “altogether from the sphere of production”—the site where class domination, according to Marxian theory, is ultimately generated (*ibid.*, 43).

On Dahrendorf’s interpretation, Marx does in fact take the *de jure* view, and thus ultimately considers social power to be a function of property rights. At the same time, however, Dahrendorf wants to use Marx “against himself” by raising the famous evaluation of the joint-stock company in the third volume of *Capital* to the center of the discussion. For it is there that Marx fully identifies the separation of ownership and control, ascribing to it the significance of an “abolition of the capitalist mode of production within the capitalist mode of production itself,” and thus a “point of transition to a new form of production” (Marx 1991, 569). On the basis of this discussion, Dahrendorf postulates a theoretical inversion according to which it is actually the distribution of legitimate authority within the organization which constitutes the

generative “ground zero” of class structure. During the period of laissez-faire capitalism, the distribution of property and the distribution of legitimate authority actually corresponded; this means that the “sociological” (as opposed to “philosophical” or “Hegelian”) elements of Marx’s analysis of his contemporary society achieved a certain empirical validity. However, due largely to his anticipation of a classless society, Marx made the decisive choice which lent theoretical priority to the social distribution of legitimate property rights over legitimate power—for while the eventual socialization of private property could be seen by Marx as plausible expectation, he could only postulate the abolition of hierarchical relations of authority by attributing a derivative status to them (Dahrendorf 1959, 41).⁵ This choice fatally compromised the scope of Marx’s sociology.

Thus, in place of Marx’s sociology, Dahrendorf, as noted, wishes to construct a sociology of conflict which places the distribution of authority at its center. He attempts to lay out his basic premises, albeit sketchily, at the level of meta-theory, by establishing an opposition with Parsons. The Parsonian perspective, which is anchored by the concepts of value consensus, social integration, and system maintenance, is dangerously one-sided; society, as a total object, is in fact Janus-faced according to Dahrendorf. Conflict theory is therefore not meant to replace the Parsonian perspective, but to provide the complement without which the latter can issue only a distorted view of the social world. Dahrendorf proceeds by setting out a group of counter-propositions asserting the normality of social change and the ubiquity of conflict, and claiming the distribution of legitimate authority as the fulcrum which connects them (see *ibid.*, 162ff.).⁶ He further proposes a conception of authority which, too, is meant to balance out the one-sided

distortions of the Parsonian perspective. This entails an insistence on a “zero-sum” character: in contrast to phenomena such as wealth, in terms of which all members of a society can be placed on single “continuum of possession,” the distribution of authority results—at least in principle—in a “clear line” which separates those who exercise it from those who “are subject to the authoritative commands of others” (*ibid.*, 170).⁷

On this basis, Dahrendorf redefines the concept of class: “classes are social conflict groups the determinant...of which can be found in the participation in or exclusion from the exercise of authority within any imperatively coordinated association” (*ibid.*, 138). This definition serves to theoretically distinguish classes from other types of conflict groups (Dahrendorf refers to those which are generated according to religious, ethnic, or legal differences). It also has the effect of rendering class independent of *all* economic criteria. Indeed, Dahrendorf repeats this point a number of times (disavowing Weber as well as Marx along the way), often in relation to the “embourgeoisment” argument:

[e]ven a “bourgeoisified proletariat” can function as a subjected conflict group, for conflict groups and group conflicts are solely based on the one criterion of participation in or exclusion from the exercise of authority in imperatively coordinated associations. Difficult as it may be for minds schooled in Marx to separate the category of the “suppressed class” from the ideas of poverty and exploitation, a well-formulated theory of group conflict requires the radical separation of these spheres. (*ibid.*, 200-1; see also 253).

Nevertheless, within the context of this departure from the classical concept of class, Dahrendorf proceeds to retain certain fundamental premises which could be said to derive (at least loosely) from Weber and even Marx. Among these is the attempt to distinguish between classes as aggregations of positions within the social structure, and classes as collectivities of individuals, united, primarily, by “a feeling of belongingness,” some

degree of organization, and some type of collective goal (*ibid.*, 180). Dahrendorf draws this distinction by committing himself strongly to the notion of objective interests—i.e. interests which are derivable from the location of given positions within imperatively coordinated associations, and which are also “latent,” in the sense that they can be theoretically identified irrespective of whether the occupants of such positions are aware of them. These interests are defined in terms of the legitimacy which secures authority: “[i]n every association, the interests of the ruling group are the values that constitute the ideology of the legitimacy of its rule, whereas the interests of the subjected group constitute a threat to this ideology and the social relations it covers” (*ibid.*, 176). The occupants of a set positions characterized by the same “latent interests” form a “quasi-group”; once, they begin to develop a collective sentiment and a goal-directed organization, they exhibit “manifest interests,” and hence become an “interest group” proper. “Quasi-groups” are thus the fields from which interest-groups recruit. By no means, however, must the correspondence between the two be perfect (or, ultimately, can it)—groups may, for example, compete with one another for the same potential members. But once constituted, they become the agents of class conflicts.

In placing the “imperatively coordinated association” at the center of his definition of class, Dahrendorf seeks to free class analysis from the confines of the economic, in the sense that each of a society’s principal associational spheres—contingent upon the degree to which these are differentiated from one another—is said to exhibit its own class structure, and each individual is said to potentially exhibit a multiplicity of class memberships. This position leads him to an attempt to specify the possible empirical relations between multiple class structures. Insofar as the occupants of

super- or subordinate positions within one class structure also occupy such positions within another, the class conflicts potentially generated by each structure (assuming the emergence of active class groups) are “superimposed” upon one another (*ibid.*, 214). Conversely, insofar as the personnel on each side of the authority line vary from one class structure to the next within a society, a “pluralism” of potential class conflicts results. Dahrendorf identifies the polar opposition between “superimposition” and “pluralism” as one of the foremost factors conditioning the “intensity” of conflict within the given society, by which he means the degree to which individuals are willing to invest themselves in any particular conflict (on the supposition that subjection in one association may be offset by gratification in another, if the latter entails occupancy of a position of domination [*ibid.*, 215]). This set of concepts also provides Dahrendorf with a strategy to account for the (presumably numerous) observable instances of social struggle which, were it not for the fact that the legitimacy of authority played at best a secondary role in the contesting parties’ “ideologies” (e.g. wage demands), would otherwise count precisely as *class* conflicts. For just as class conflicts in different arenas may become “superimposed,” so too may class and non-class conflicts within the same associational sphere. In these cases, however, there is a tendency in Dahrendorf’s argument for the relevant non-class interests involved to become mere “intervening variables” which “supplement the interests accruing from authority structures” (*ibid.*, 182). He thus explains the evidently economic character of 19th century class conflicts as follows:

[b]oth capital and labor were united certain latent interests which, being contradictory, placed them on opposite sides of a conflict relation. While the most formal objective of the opposing interests was...either the maintenance or the change of the *status quo* of authority, the precise substance of the conflict might, in relation to the specific conditions of this period, be described as a clash

between capital's profit orientation and labor's orientation towards an improvement of their [sic] material status.

The intensity of conflict...was increased by the superimposition of authority and other factors of social status, especially income. [...] There was a clear correlation between the distribution of authority and social stratification.

[Moreover, the] dominating groups of industry were at the same time the dominating groups of the state, either in person, through members of their families, or by other agents. Conversely, the subjected groups of industry were as such excluded from political authority. Industry...[was] the dominating order of society; its structures of authority and patterns of conflict therefore...[extended] to the whole society. (*ibid.*, 242-3)⁸

Dahrendorf's willingness to embrace without question the premise of a divergence between actors' "formal objectives" and the "precise substance" of their manifest orientations must be noted. Beyond this, what is striking here is the tenacity with which he holds on to the singularity of the authority criterion. For even in Marx's conceptualization of class (as interpreted by Dahrendorf), authority remained a crucial, if secondary element; when Dahrendorf inverts the relation in order to declare the primacy of authority, productive property and wealth (the distinction between them necessarily evaporates) become theoretically incidental—they serve merely to tie up some empirical loose ends.⁹ Indeed, phenomena such as "embourgeoisment" and political incorporation—i.e. phenomena of "pluralization" in Dahrendorf's terminology—are invoked to support the assertion that "industrial society" has now entered a "post-capitalist" phase.

It is obvious that Dahrendorf's re-definition of class tends to take the concept out of the orbit of nearly all traditional usages, irrespective of the presence of those elements (e.g. the concept of class interests) which he attempts to conserve. And I believe that, at least if one scrutinizes the position closely, it is relatively easy to raise serious theoretical

doubts about its coherence.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Dahrendorf's resolute re-orientation of sociological attention away from the economic and onto authority structures has had a deep influence, and has, in many ways, posed a challenge taken up both by other schools of Weberian theory and by Marxism.

B. Goldthorpe

In the work of Goldthorpe and his associates, Dahrendorf's emphasis on organizational structures is retained, but is combined with a more traditional Weberian notion of class—i.e. one built around the relations of market exchange. In this, Goldthorpe follows Lockwood, and a brief account of the latter's approach is therefore useful. According to Lockwood, class must be analyzed in terms of two elements: a "market situation" and a "work situation" (Lockwood 1958, 15-6). The "market situation" encompasses all forms of leverage which the individual can exercise in the market in order to maximize his or her "life chances." These include, in the first instance, anything that contributes to or detracts from the individual's income prospects; also important, however, are job security—and specifically, the degree to which he or she is shielded from the vicissitudes of the labor market—and occupational mobility, meaning primarily the degree to which possibilities for promotion typically characterize an occupation, but also opportunities for predictable wage or salary increases (*ibid.*, 203-4). In contrast to this, the notion of "work situation" is meant to capture "[t]he matrix of social relations within which material satisfactions and dissatisfactions are experienced" (*ibid.*, 205). Here Lockwood refers primarily to relations of authority and the particular forms they may take (personalistic or bureaucratic); additionally, he includes the physical

segregation of those performing different occupational functions that may be brought about as result of the division of labor, and which (where it exists) may foster a sense of solidarity.

On the basis of the two dimensions of class identified by Lockwood, Goldthorpe seeks to develop a systematic “schema” of the class structure of industrial societies which can be utilized for empirical research. He thus proceeds by aggregating occupational categories into broader class categories which “appear, in light of the available evidence, to be typically comparable” on both dimensions (Goldthorpe 1987, 40).¹¹ However, Goldthorpe tends to view the process of aggregation in highly pragmatic terms, altering it according to the nature of the empirical questions he wishes to answer and the constraints imposed by available data. Consequently, he defines numerous different models of the class structure which vary in their levels of generality and detail. The criteria by which he undertakes the aggregation are of interest, and I will detail them for the seven-class version—a model of intermediate generality which is used most frequently (figure 1). Goldthorpe first distinguishes between employers, the self-employed, and employees. Within the first category, small employers are differentiated from large-scale employers, and grouped together with their self-employed counterparts in industry (the petty-bourgeoisie). On the side of employees, Goldthorpe distinguishes those whose relation to the employer is regulated by a service contract (the “salariat”) from those whose relation is regulated by a labor contract (wage laborers), as well as an intermediate category. The salaried positions—which include various sorts of professionals, experts, administrators, and managers—are then grouped with the large-scale employers, and together form the “service class.” The intermediate level of employees form a class of

“routine non-manual employees.” Positions entailing wage labor are differentiated into a class of skilled workers and one of non-skilled workers. Finally, two agricultural classes are specified—one which includes farm owners and the other farm workers (see Erikson and Goldthorpe 1993, 36, 38-9).

Figure 1. Goldthorpe’s Seven Class Scheme

Class	Occupational categories
Service	Professionals, administrators and managers; higher-grade technicians; supervisors of non-manual workers; large proprietors
Routine non-manual	Routine non-manual employees in administration and commerce; sales personnel; other rank-and-file service workers
Petty bourgeoisie	Small proprietors and artisans, with and without employees
Farmers	Farmers and smallholders and other self-employed workers in primary production
Skilled workers	Lower grade-technicians; supervisors of manual workers; skilled manual workers
Semi- and unskilled manual workers	Semi- and unskilled manual workers
Agricultural and other workers in primary production	Agricultural and other workers in primary production

Source: Adapted from Erikson and Goldthorpe (1993, 38-9)

This model certain features which call for comment. In particular, Goldthorpe’s conceptualization of the “service class” is of interest. The identification of this class implies—contrary to the accounts of both Weber and Marx—that a model of the contemporary class structure need not (or in fact, ought not) specify an independent class of owners of productive property. Moreover, it also implies that, contrary to Dahrendorf’s interpretation of the “decomposition of capital,” a unity of sorts exist between those in privileged positions with respect to the distribution of authority and those situated in a similar manner with respect to productive property. Indeed, much of Goldthorpe’s argument in favor of his conceptualization of the service class rests on the

claim that ambiguity with respect to the nature of these positions—as evidenced, for example, by owners with a managerial role, or employees with an ownership interest—has become prevalent, if not the norm (Goldthorpe 1987, 40-1; Erikson and Goldthorpe 1993, 40-1).

The model is also beset with certain ambiguities. The grounds on which routine non-manual employees are differentiated from their white-collar counterparts in the “service class” proper remain unclear; similarly, the precise rationale for the differentiation of the manual categories—primarily according to skill level—is not fully clarified. In both cases, a “boundary” issue would seem to arise—that is, the distribution of the relevant factor would appear to be gradational, and a non-arbitrary criterion for locating the division to be lacking. (In the “full” version of Goldthorpe’s class schema, which contains 11 categories, these sorts of questions are multiplied. The service class, for example, is there broken out into a class including “higher grade professionals, administrators, and officials” and “managers in large industrial establishments,” on the one hand, and a class including their counterparts of “lower grade” in bureaucratic hierarchies or in smaller establishments, on the other.) This ambiguity is apparent in the general treatment of “skill” differences. For Goldthorpe, skill levels appear to be of significance primarily in terms of the market leverage they provide (see Erikson and Goldthorpe 1993, 42, 43); as a result, the schema does not account for any variation in the “work situation” which may result from skill differences (unless they are coincident with differences of authority). Underlying this sort of vagueness is the fact that, as Wright asserts (in Wright et al. 1998, 318-21), the Goldthorpe schema remains undertheorized. Thus, for example, it is unclear whether occupations exhibiting the same

market situation but a different work situation should be grouped into separate classes, or whether they should be viewed as “fractions” or “strata” within the same class.

Despite this lack of theoretical explication, the Goldthorpe schema has served as the basis for numerous contributions to the field of class analysis. Perhaps most compelling are the cross-national (and longitudinal) analyzes of mobility undertaken by Erikson and Goldthorpe (1993).¹² However, the schema has been widely utilized, and evidence has also been adduced to demonstrate contemporary importance of class to phenomena such as voting patterns, education, and health and mortality (see Marshall 1997, 10-13, and *passim*). Taken as a whole, such studies offer a strong empirically grounded case against the recent proponents of “status stratification”—in particular, those of the “death of class” variety.

C. Aron

Next, I would like to briefly consider Raymond Aron, who might be seen as a representative of the “oligarchic” strand of Weber interpretation. Like Dahrendorf, Aron wants to shift attention onto the question of power, while still retaining the vocabulary of class. However, Aron does not attempt a wholesale re-definition of the concept of class. Instead, he seeks to merge two traditionally exclusive usages: on the one hand, a notion of “social class” which derives from Marx and can be designated simply by reference to “ownership of the means of production,” and on the other, a notion of the “ruling class” which recalls, to one degree or another, Pareto as well as Michels (Aron 1962; 1966). By enlarging the vocabulary of class in this manner, Aron attempts to re-conceptualize the

relation of state to society; his most immediate goal in doing so is to develop a sociologically adequate account of the differences between Soviet and Western societies.

Aron is not particularly interested in the nuances of formal definition. He asks, simply enough, who it is that governs in society, and, in addition, which “other groups...are privileged and have power and prestige” (1966, 205). The “political class” in a society encompasses those “who actually exercise the political functions of government”—that is, office holders; it also includes higher level administrators, on the grounds that they are routinely in a position to influence the decisions made by politicians (*ibid.*, 204-5). This group, however, amounts to a subset of the “ruling class.”¹³ Indeed, the latter ultimately encompasses all those in the given society who can be identified as holders of effective power, and therefore are capable of affecting (or actually making) governmental decisions; as such, it includes those whose power derives from an economic position—whether this be one of ownership or one of leadership of “the masses.” Aron also includes in the “ruling class” military leaders and, interestingly, priests, intellectuals and scholars, and “party ideologists” (*ibid.*, 205).

The sociology of class, for Aron, seeks, above all, to analyze the network of relations between the members of different groups which constitutes the structure of the ruling class. This is because processes of modernization have created extraordinary potentials for variation in such structures:

[f]our antitheses—temporal power and spiritual power, civil power and military power, political power and administrative power, political power and economic power—illustrate the modern differentiation of functions of control, the increase in the number of social groups actually capable of exercising the function of control or of substantially influencing those who exercise it. (*ibid.*)

-

Power has become de-centered. In addition to the heads of state, it rests with those who establish or modify the hierarchy of values, the content of beliefs, and ways of thinking; with those who control the means of coercion; with those who control and operate the state's administrative apparatus; and with those who control large quantities of capital or labor.

On the basis of this premise, Aron develops a counter-Marxian thesis: it is the structure of the ruling class (and not of economic classes) that determines the shape of society as a whole. Thus,

[i]t is true that social groups are formed differently according to whether or not private ownership of the instruments of production, of the land, or of the machines is tolerated. Distribution of wages and level and style of living of groups are influenced by the status of property, and still more by the mode of regulation (market or planning). But the major differences come from the structure of the power groups, the relations established by the regime between the society and the State.

[T]he structure of the ruling groups, and not class-relationships, determines the essence of...economic-political regimes. (*ibid.*, 208)

Any such structure (or "modern oligarchy") is to be analysed by determining its place on a continuum. At one pole lie those social arrangements in which the basic centers of power are "re-grouped." This, in turn, may take two forms: on the one hand, it may be the result of an all-embracing formal authority structure, in which intellectual and ideological, economic, military, and political elites are all subject to dictates emanating from a single source, as with Soviet society; on the other hand, however, the ruling class may be found to be unified on informal grounds, if the individuals who occupy leading positions in each of the centers of control (including oppositional political parties) share a common social origin, a sense of solidarity, and, perhaps, familial ties to one another, as is the case in modern Britain according to Aron (*ibid.*, 204, 206). At the other end of the

continuum—to which most Western societies tend to approximate—lie those social arrangements in which the various elites exhibit a relatively low level of integration (whether formal or informal). Aron refers to these as “pluralistic” societies (1962, 10-1). Here “a sort of permanent cold war (or peaceful coexistence)” subsists between the leading groups, since they are engaged in continual processes of competition and negotiation with one another (*ibid.*; 1960, 206). It is in this context that Aron attempts to distinguish his position from that of critics interested merely in unmasking liberal democracy as an illusion, by returning to those outside the elite a role which extends beyond mere obedience:

[t]he question—to what extent do those who govern manipulate the masses or are simply translating the aspirations of the masses into acts—is to a large extent a false question. The plurality of parties, the regularity of elections, the freedom of debate, reinforce public opinion and reduce the margin of maneuver and manipulation by the dominant groups. But the existence of these factors, which gives certain guarantees to the governed, does not confer the reality or the illusion of power upon them. (*ibid.*, 209)

The governed, though bereft of power in any strict sense (that is, of the ability to make or influence binding governmental decisions), are nevertheless capable of resisting manipulation by virtue of the force of public opinion. Specifically, by altering the premises upon which legitimacy is accorded to conflicting elites, they are in principle capable of altering and constraining the parameters within which intra-elite competitions over the exercise of power occur.

Aron proceeds by utilizing the distinction between integrated and pluralistic elite structures to reflect on the ambiguities of the term “class.” This discussion, however, is initially oriented to the question of economic classes. The foremost issue here is that which, as has been discussed, is treated by Dahrendorf in terms of the difference between

“quasi-groups” and “conflict groups”; in Aron’s formulation, this becomes the question of whether to what extent classes constitute (mere) sociological representations, and whether and to what extent they comprise groups engaged in concerted (“willful”) action oriented towards a transformation of the social structure (1965). On the side of “representations” the question is whether it is possible to (sociologically) specify criteria according to which classes can be objectively distinguished. In response to this question we find now-familiar propositions: the increasing heterogeneity of the working-class, and the split between ownership and control with the bourgeoisie, severely diminishes the possibility of identifying coherent class unities.¹⁴ More and more, the development of “industrial society” diminishes the similarities linking together economically defined positions, thus rendering it possible to identify only indeterminate strata. However, the existence of a class “for-itself” (Aron often uses Sartrean terminology) is not wholly contingent upon the presence of objective coherence: “[c]lass awareness, the idea of a common vocation depends more on propaganda and on organization than on the degree of objective community” (1966, 207). This premise leads Aron to the conclusion that the potential existence of economic class formations within society which are united in class action is *itself* a function of the structure of the ruling class: ironically, the less integrated the elite, the more likely the existence of “la classe comme volonté”:

[b]ecause of its social and political institutions, a society of the Occidental type can admit of...classes which are “for-themselves,” attaining consciousness of themselves in action and by the intermediary of a party. Also inegalitarian and hierarchical, a society of the Soviet type precludes the organization of a class with a revolutionary vocation, and, consequently, makes it difficult or impossible for large social collectivities to approach self-consciousness.

In a period of calm, social tensions express themselves overtly in the West, in conflicts between interest groups and professional trade-unions; in the East they are more often invisible and are sovereignly arbitrated by [those who hold

institutional] power [over the entire society]. In a period of crisis, the industrial societies of the West risk again becoming class societies, whereas those of the East tend to resemble the dichotomous representation of the social order suggested by Machiavellian thought [in which those who govern stand opposed to the governed masses].... (1965, 28-9; my translation)

If we look beyond Aron's attempt (certainly tendentious at times) to rehabilitate liberal-democratic societies vis-à-vis their Soviet counterparts on the basis of a theory of oligopoly, what is of interest is the change of focus. For rather than asking whether the State is or is not fully penetrated by interests stemming from society, or treating the State merely as one more association in which those with power confront those with none, he reorients attention towards the ways in which *political conditions may influence class formation*. To be sure, in making the structure of the ruling class the factor which determines the "essence of...economic-political regimes," Aron goes too far: his assertions that the absence of precise, objective lines of demarcation implies a complete dissolution of economic classes into indeterminate strata have—more than those of any of the figures considered here—a hollow ring, amounting to little more than a quarrel with his own straw-Marx. Moreover, his insistent focus on the actions and composition of "the elite" tends to preclude more detailed analysis of the ways in which particular institutional arrangements may affect the nature and direction of class formation—a variable which he is usually content to account for solely in terms of the ever-present dichotomous contrast between Soviet and Western societies. Nevertheless, the question of the "integration" of the ruling class can be reinterpreted so as point to the determinations which flow from the nature of the State to the structure of society; in doing so it adds a distinct dimension.

D. Parkin

Parkin attempts to re-formulate the notion of class along “neo-Weberian” lines by developing a more encompassing stratification theory based upon Weber’s distinction between “open” and “closed” economic relationships (Parkin 1979, 41-2; Weber 1978, 341-55; see also 43-6)—a distinction which Weber himself never saw fit to integrate into his theoretical accounts of stratification. Parkin’s motivation lies, on the one hand, in the inability of Marxism to deal with forms of social domination that have an obvious economic dimension, yet remain irreducible to explanation in terms of the vocabulary of political economy (race, religion, etc.); and, on the other, the contrasting tendency of mainstream sociology to define “out of existence” the “powers and privileges emanating from the ownership of productive property” (Parkin 1979, 14).¹⁵ He thus specifies the key concept of *closure* in terms of “different means of mobilizing power for the purpose of engaging in distributive struggle” (*ibid.*, 45-6); it entails a socially operative distinction between groups whose principle or basis may serve as a “justificatory” ground for the monopolization of those resources or positions which determine the social allocation of material and immaterial rewards. Parkin expands Weber’s concept, distinguishing “exclusionary” and “usurpatory” closure—the former referring to attempts by the dominant to monopolize relevant resources and secure privileges, and the latter to attempts by the subordinate to gain access to them. However, both closure processes can (but need not) involve more than one line of social differentiation, as with a caste system (*ibid.*, 45); consequently, the degree to which the overall arrangement tends towards polarity or hierarchy remains a primary empirical variable.

The conceptualization of stratification in general, and class in particular, in terms of closure is meant to serve as an antithesis above all to structuralist strains of Marxian theory. Parkin therefore asserts the primacy of distributive struggle, and foregrounds the distinction of his approach from class analyses oriented to the sphere of production, especially insofar as these tend to de-emphasize action-theoretic concepts:

[t]here is...a recommendation [deriving from the “neo-Weberian” position] that social classes be defined by reference to their mode of collective action rather than to their place in the productive process or the division of labor. The reason for this is that incumbency of position in a formally defined structure does not normally correspond to class alignment where it really counts—at the level of organized political sentiment and conduct. This serious lack of fit between all positional or systemic definitions of class and the actual behavior of classes in the course of distributive struggle, is not due to any lack of refinement in the categories employed. It arises from the initial theoretical decision to discount the significance and effect of variations in the cultural and social make-up of the groups assigned to the categories in question. (*ibid.*, 113; see also 93)¹⁶

Of course, one consequence of this combination of anti-structuralist action theory with a focus on distributive struggle is that the difference between class and “communal” forms of stratification becomes difficult to specify. Indeed, insofar as either type of group may exhibit a greater or lesser degree of social and cultural unity, and either may mobilize on this basis in order pursue the monopolization of material and immaterial rewards, it is relatively easy to postulate the inflation of either term to the point where it encompasses the other. Parkin’s solution is to distinguish between the forms of exclusion through which closure occurs. When the latter rests on purely collectivist criteria, such as race or religion, the result will be “communal” groups. If, in contrast, the monopolization of rewards were to take place according to a strictly individualistic logic—as the ideology (but not the reality) of liberal individualism would have—the continuous exchange of individuals throughout the hierarchy would result in “discrete segmental statuses never

quite reaching the point of coalescence” (*ibid.*, 68). Classes, for Parkin, are formed when both types of closure operate simultaneously and in combination.¹⁷

This definition of class is, arguably of course, unsatisfying, at least in the sense that it deviates sharply from conventional uses of the term. In any event, Parkin himself does not seem fully convinced of his reformulation, as becomes clear when he points out that classes can be further differentiated from “communal” groups on the basis of the fact that their members occupy “strategic places in the division of labor”; members of a subordinate class can thus rely on the possibility of withholding their labor in order to pursue the distributive struggle, whereas their “communal” counterparts are typically reduced to reliance upon “expressive” mobilization and appeals to conscience (*ibid.*, 85). This further specification is, to say the least, “structural” in nature, and thus would appear to violate Parkin’s meta-theoretical orientation. Nevertheless, the version of class theory that he offers constitutes an important break. In particular, by resolutely focusing upon groups which appear highly anomalous from the perspective of a “purer” class theory—for example, white workers under the apartheid system (*ibid.*, 93)—Parkin forces recognition of the fact that groups which mobilize for struggle, distributive or otherwise, are invariably characterized by a *multiplicity* of socially salient characteristics. To be sure, even this insight becomes problematic, since, under these premises, sociology threatens to devolve into a highly descriptive enterprise:

[t]he answer to the question, why does exclusion and domination assume a predominantly racial form in one society, a religious form in another, and a largely class form in a third, is only explicable in historical terms. There is no general *theory* that could explain why some communities and not others experienced the migratory and demographic movements that finally resulted in communal divisions. These have to be treated as “just so” historical facts, not as events to be incorporated into some jumbo social theory. (*ibid.*, 114)

The challenge posed to other schools of class theory thus becomes that of refusing to relegate certain criteria of group formation to mere residual status at the expense of others, on the one hand, while simultaneously refusing to slip into ideographic historicism, on the other.

E. Giddens

In distilling the notion of closure from *Economy and Society*, Parkin never takes up the question of whether or how it relates to Weber's own ruminations on the meaning of class. This ceases to be surprising as soon as we recognize Weber's insistence on the contingency of the relation between class action and any notion of a class structure. He is particularly clear upon this point in the first version of "Class, Status, Party" essay: "classes' are not communities; they merely represent possible, and frequent, bases for social action" (Weber 1978, 927). In contrast to Parkin, the relation between "class structure" and classes as "communities" whose members exhibit a distinctive awareness or even consciousness of their social location—and who may, under appropriate conditions, undertake concerted collective action—forms the central problematic of Giddens' treatment (1973). Working under the premise that the Marxian conceptual apparatus requires revivification, Giddens seeks to imbue it with a Weberian spirit. The most important textual reference is the second version of Weber's elaboration of class and status (1978, 302-7), which is tacked on to the "Conceptual Exposition" that opens *Economy and Society* (and constitutes another notoriously unfinished text in the history of class theory). Weber here distinguishes between a "class situation" and a "social class": the former refers to the possibility of obtaining wealth and positions, and thus

satisfying wants, via the “relative control of goods and skills and from their income-producing use”; the latter, in contrast, denotes “the totality of those class situations in which individual and generational mobility is easy and typical” (*ibid.*, 302).¹⁸ Giddens, who wants to argue that a “class society” only comes into existence when the system of feudal estates has been dissolved by commodity markets (1973, 82ff.), is interested in the notion of “class situation” only insofar as this is determined by the contractual exchange of labor for wages (he thus terms it “market capacity”). He notes that, if taken at face value, Weber’s “class situation”—the derivation of income from goods and skills—implies an infinite diversity of classes, and thus, ultimately, a continuous hierarchy of situations rather than discrete classes (*ibid.*, 78-9). The notion of “social class” therefore provides a necessary complement, in that the criterion of mobility chances serves to designate a basis according to which a non-arbitrary aggregation of “class situations” may be specified: insofar as each of the basic sources of income—property, skills, and labor—may function as an *entry barrier* for certain positions, it introduces a distinct line (or lines) of demarcation into the plurality of class situations.¹⁹

Like Parkin, Giddens also therefore speaks of mobility “closure.” However, Giddens’ Weber interpretation leads him to a different problematic: for Giddens, the conceptual questions associated with class crystallize the meta-theoretical problem of reconciling structure and agency. Stated in summary form, it is necessary to “relate the capital/wage labor distinction on the one hand to the bourgeoisie/proletariat distinction on the other” (Giddens 1980, 887). Put otherwise, the predominant theoretical problem for Giddens is that of clarifying “the modes in which classes, founded in...[relationships and conflicts generated by the capitalist market], take on or ‘express’ themselves in definite

social forms” (1973, 104). It is only on the basis of a solution to this problem that a class may be considered a “historical, dynamic entity,” and class itself invoked as an *explanatory* aspect of any empirical analysis of social action. For Giddens, the Weberian emphasis on the demarcation function of mobility chances and entry barriers therefore becomes central. He terms this function “mediate structuration,” in order to denote its role in transforming economic relationships into “social relationships”:

[i]n general, the greater the degree of “closure” of mobility chances—both intergenerationally and within the career of the individual—the more this facilitates the formation of identifiable classes. For the effect of closure in terms of intergenerational movement is to provide for the *reproduction* of common life experiences over the generations; and this homogenization of experience is reinforced to the degree to which the individual’s movement within the labor market is confined to occupations which generate a similar range of material outcomes. In general we may state that the structuration of classes is facilitated to the degree to which mobility closure exists in relation to any specified form of market capacity. (*ibid.*, 107)

With its Weberian provenance, the premise of a factor which intervenes between “structure” and “identifiable class” is apparently meant to differentiate Giddens’ account from the Marxian distinction between the “in-itself” and the “for-itself.” When the latter moves away from the analysis of structure, Giddens implies, it tends to focus its attention on mobilization and organization of the conflict group, thereby short-circuiting a complex sociological process which is both *empirically variable* and *contingent*. From a somewhat different perspective, this conceptual wedge also serves to preclude a strict theoretical identification of the allocation of rewards, on the one hand, with those sociocultural processes in which criteria of solidaristic association and collective identity are determined, on the other.²⁰

In centering attention on the mediation of “economy and society,” Giddens’ approach exemplifies one of the classic interpretations of Weberian approach to class:

namely, the shift of attention away from production and onto “market relations.” Indeed, as we have noted, Giddens restricts the meaning of Weber’s “class situation” to encompass only “market capacity.” The same shift of focus becomes apparent in his redefinition of the Marxian notion of “class interests”: on the one hand, the infinitely gradated hierarchy of “market capacities” results in infinite plurality of particular interests in maximizing market rewards (*ibid.*, 106); on the other hand, however, it remains *empirically* possible that—insofar as the basic sources of “market capacity” fulfill a closure function—holders of each particular source will develop a collective interest in promoting its value (*ibid.*, 134–5; see also the famous remark in Weber 1978, 930).²¹ The point here is that “class interests” cannot be deduced directly from the generic mode of production, but remain contingent upon the prevailing nature of “class structuration.”

Nevertheless, within this broadly Weberian context, Giddens does at times seek to redefine certain concepts which are more strictly indigenous to Marxian class theory. Most notable among these is that of exploitation, which, interestingly, Parkin also wants to preserve. To be sure, in both cases, the concept is given a Weberian twist—in Giddens’ via characterization in terms of the asymmetrical distribution of “life chances” emanating from differences in “market capacity” and mobility opportunities (Giddens 1973, 130–1), and in Parkin’s action-theoretic terms via the similar notion of “[c]ollective efforts to restrict access to rewards and opportunities” (Parkin 1979, 46). To the obvious objection that these definitions do not retain the sense of an “appropriation” or “transfer” of surplus, however, they provide different answers. For Parkin, this issue is merely one of coming clean with the moral biases built into the usage of an inherently loaded term

(*ibid.*, 47).²² Giddens, by contrast, wants to conserve a link (however tenuous) to Marx; in a theory of alienation-writ-small, the concept of exploitation is therefore said to entail the asymmetrical distribution not only of opportunities for consumption, but also of the capacities necessary to utilize material rewards—i.e. of intrinsically cultural “tastes and abilities” (Giddens 1973, 131).

Interestingly, Giddens also reconnects with the Marxian tradition, albeit partially, by contending that the mediation of economy and society is itself conditioned by several supplementary factors. He uses the term “proximate structuration” to describe these, thus characterizing them as “‘localised’” factors which may either intensify or ameliorate the structuration effected by mobility closure (*ibid.*, 107). Of the three he names, two forms of proximate structuration take us to the sphere of production: the technical division of labor will facilitate the formation of “class relationships” insofar as it entails a physical segregation, and thus homogenous grouping, of employees who are subject to corresponding forms of mobility closure (as with the mental/manual divide); likewise, the authority hierarchy within the productive organization may function so as to differentiate those who formulate, enforce, or follow commands from one another (*ibid.*, 108-9). Within the category of proximate structuration, however, Giddens also includes Weber’s status groups. These are composed of two elements that, in principle, remain separable: distinctive patterns of consumption—which, in and of themselves, may lead to phenomena such residential segregation—and “conscious evaluations” of relative prestige and worth (*ibid.*, 109). Giddens clarifies the relation of status groups to other aspects of structuration as follows:

[t]raditionally, in class theory, racial or religious divisions have been regarded as just so many “obstacles” to the formation of classes as coherent unities. This may

often be so, where these foster types of structuration which deviate from that established by the “class principle”.... The idea that ethnic or cultural divisions serve to dilute or hinder the formation of classes is also very explicitly built into Weber’s separation of (economic) “class” and “status group.” [...] While it may be agreed, however, that the *bases* of the formation of classes and status groups...are different, nonetheless the tendency to class structuration may receive a considerable impetus *where class coincides with criteria of status group membership*—in other words, where structuration deriving from economic organization “overlaps” with...that deriving from evaluative categorisations based upon ethnic or cultural differences. (*Ibid.*, 111-2)

In such a situation, Giddens asserts, membership in a subordinate status group may itself become a (negative) form of “market capacity,” potentially resulting in what he terms an “underclass.”

What Giddens terms a “class society” has a tripartite composition: it includes an “upper,” “middle,” and “lower” class, with the members of each occupying their positions primarily on the basis of one of the corresponding sources of “market capacity” (private property in the means of production, skills, or labor power). Of particular interest is the manner in which he conceptualizes this basic category (“class society”) with respect to the issue of “structuration”:

to the extent to which the various bases of mediate and proximate structuration overlap, classes will exist as distinguishable formations. I wish to say...that *the combination of the sources of mediate and proximate structuration distinguished here, creating a threefold class structure, is generic to capitalist society*. But the mode in which these elements are merged to form *a specific class system*, in any given society, differs significantly according to variations in economic and political development. The problem of the existence of distinct class “boundaries,” therefore, is not one which can be settled *in abstracto*: one of the specific aims of class analysis in relation to empirical societies must necessarily be that of determining how strongly, in any given case, the “class principle” has become established as a mode of structuration. (*ibid.*, 110)

Giddens can thus be said to insist that a “mode of structuration” intervenes between something like the Marxian mode of production and society as a whole (and which therefore precludes an a priori designation of a “social totality” in class terms). He

attributes a wide scope of empirical variation to the constituent aspects of structuration: as we have noted, mobility chances may be more or less open or closed, and status group formation may or may not proceed along economic lines; likewise, the technical division of labor may contribute to the “fragmentation as well as the consolidation of class relationships” (*ibid.*, 108). Consequently, the efficacy with which the “class principle” structures society is intrinsically a matter of *degree* (*ibid.*, 20, 134-5).

Considered in broad terms, “Weberian class theory” can thus be said to extend far beyond a simple prioritization of “market relations” (over “production relations”), encompassing an extremely wide set of foci and premises. Although they are pitched at different levels of abstraction—and differ also in the degree and manner in which they tie theory to empirical research—these theories provide numerous directions which class theory may pursue, and a highly variegated background against which alternative theories might be assessed. Indeed, of the figures discussed here, only Giddens and Goldthorpe place the market at the center of their formulations, and in both cases this emphasis is supplemented by others. As the preceding discussions suggest, the traditions inspired by Weber frequently attempt to introduce non-economically derived forms of *power* into their accounts of the significance and meaning of concept of class. Thus, in the case of Dahrendorf and those influenced by him, *organizational authority relations* are construed as the factor which defines class, either supplanting the market criterion or combining with it in some manner. With Giddens, in particular, this combination takes the form of an account of the factors affecting class *formation*—that is, the factors which promote or inhibit the translation of market relations into relations of social conflict. In the case of

Aron, by contrast, a notion of “class” defined in terms of *relations of political domination* is supposed to supplant a Marxian-economic concept; as has been suggested, however, Aron’s reflections on the subject are generally instructive when they, too, are viewed in relation to the question of (economic) class formation. Aron is then seen to draw attention to the ways in which political domination constitutes a variable condition under which (economic) class formation does or does not occur, thereby inverting the more common question of the penetration of the state by (economic) classes, and—in certain formulations—its subservience to them. Moreover, if seen in relation to those figures who work to complicate the notion of class formation, Parkin presents the extreme form of such tendencies: in his account, classes are “formed” when non-economically constituted “groups” enter into the “distributive struggle” in order to monopolize various social rewards. Although power is construed primarily in relation to the economic domain here, the “class structure” (if the term has any sense at all) is reduced to these relations of monopolization, and the primary “mechanisms” responsible for the existence of classes within a given society are the cultural meaning patterns which tie “groups” together as collectivities.

III. Marxian Theories of Class

The Marxian formula which defines class according to “ownership of the means of production” has resulted—despite its ambiguities (is “ownership” a legal category? does it necessarily imply “control?” etc.)—in a theoretical tradition which appears, at least when viewed from a distance, somewhat less fragmented. Given the basic premise that classes are the result of a relationship to productive property, differences here tend to

derive from the conceptual oppositions which follow rather straightforwardly from this premise: that between the notion of a “class structure” and “class consciousness” (or a “class formation”), or that between an economic “base” and a non-economic “superstructure.”²³ Also following from the prioritization granted to productive property are all of the questions surrounding the notion of the “middle class(es)”—starting with the basic one of whether it (or they) actually exist. If, from a sociological perspective, the Marxian tradition can be said to be distinguishable from its Weberian counterpart in a single, central respect, it perhaps lies in the need to come to grips with the notion of economic “determination.” Consequently, the Marxian tradition is marked by a sustained reflection on the applicability of various concepts of causality.

In the following section I first take up the work of the Poulantzas. All of these concerns are readily apparent in Poulantzas’ attempt to elaborate the structuralism of Althusser and Balibar in such a way as to grasp the contours of a concrete, contemporary capitalist class structure. The reaction against structuralism will then be examined in the work of Thompson and Przeworski, both of whom attempt to formulate radically historical versions of Marxism. This entails re-definition of the notion of “determination,” such that a gap (of varying proportions) can be specified between the class structure and class formations. For Thompson and Przeworski, notions such as “agency” and “process” becomes keywords. Finally, I discuss the work of Wright. In his approach, Marxism is assiduously re-defined as a social scientific research program. This program is pursued on the basis of a more generic philosophy of science (“naturalism”). Class thus becomes a concept similar to various other basic social scientific terms—that is, one suitable for use in an explanatory context.

A. Poulantzas

The theory developed by Poulantzas is built on the general interpretation of Marx carried out by Althusser and Balibar in the 1960s (which lacked any serious account of the concept of class). It is therefore necessary to briefly sketch some of the wholesale transformations of Marxian theory which they brought about. These are largely focused on the key concept of the mode of production; however, their epistemological formulations also require brief attention. The latter hinge on a single distinction: against “empiricism,” which takes the adequacy of knowledge to lie in a faithful “reproduction” of reality, and “idealism,” which takes the adequacy of knowledge to lie in its amalgamation with the real, Althusser and Balibar sharply differentiate the object of knowledge from the “real-concrete” object (see Althusser and Balibar 1970, 41-3). Two consequences of this must be mentioned. First, the epistemological procedure that they specify—according to which thought begins with quasi-ideological notions and fashions them into concepts by means of the currently available scientific “tools”—has as its result a complete abolition of the problem of a correspondence or referential relation between the two types of object (see *ibid.*, 59, 249).

The second consequence of their epistemological premises concerns the status of the basic concepts of historical materialism—and in particular, that of the mode of production. Althusser and Balibar retain the distinction between base and superstructure: the former is comprised of the economic domain (itself comprised of the forces and relations of production), the latter of the political domain and the ideological domain (and each of which is itself comprised of various subsidiary domains). The domains are all

taken to be “instances” or “levels” of the mode of production. However, the concept of the mode of production, as a concept, belongs to the order of knowledge rather than that of the “real-concrete,” an order which does not follow a historical “logic” (*ibid.* 65). Consequently, Althusser and Balibar’s sharpest break from more conventional Marxian frameworks is achieved by denying that the “combination” of these different instances or levels into a “totality” can be understood in evolutionary or developmental terms: the mode of production is not a historical concept. This claim opens a way to the application of Saussure’s notion of “la langue,” according to which “language is a system of pure values which are determined by nothing except the momentary arrangement of its terms” (Saussure 1959, 80). Each mode of production, in other words, is to be understood according to the particular system of relations within which its component elements are combined (Althusser and Balibar 1970, 176-7).²⁴ Moreover, these elements are not invariants, such that from one mode of production to another they maintain the same features, even though the relations which tie them together are altered; rather, in any given mode of production the characteristic features of the economic instance, for example, are said to be fully derivative of its relations to the other instances (*ibid.*, 240-1).²⁵ Additionally, however, Althusser and Balibar do not simply appropriate the familiar structuralist axiom which prioritizes the “synchronic” system of relations (the “momentary arrangement”); rather, they attempt to reconcile it with a Marxian concept of determination. We thus find rather cryptic remarks such as the following:

if economic phenomena are determined by their *complexity* (i.e. their structure), the concept of linear causality can no longer be applied to them as it has been hitherto. A different concept is required in order to account for the new form of causality required by the new definition of the object of political economy, by its “complexity,” i.e. by its peculiar determination: *the determination by a structure.* (*ibid.*, 184)

[T]he effects are not outside the structure, are not a pre-existing object, element or space in which the structure arrives to *imprint its mark*: on the contrary,...the structure is immanent in its effects,...in...the...sense...that *the whole existence of the structure consists of its effects*, in short that the structure, which is merely a specific combination of its peculiar elements, is nothing outside its effects. (*ibid.*, 188-9)

These statements would appear to imply that the “instances” which are united in the “totality” of the mode of production are organized in a system of relations which are causal, but are not ordered in terms of succession—that is, cause and effect are not separated from each other in the order of time. Thus, cause and effect are not “exterior” to one another; rather, in keeping with the Spinozistic motif of a God who suffuses His creation, they are “immanent” (see Benton 1984, 64-5). The mode of production is thereby recast as a singular “combination” of relations of determination, through which its characteristic features are established. On the one hand, therefore, each of the elements—including the economic—is simultaneously subject to effects exerted by the others. This point requires emphasis: in any class society, the “relations of production presuppose the existence of a legal-political *superstructure* as a condition of their peculiar existence...” (Althusser and Balibar 1970). It is in this context that Althusser offers his well-known characterization of the totality as “overdetermined” (see 1969, 113). On the other hand, however, the various instances do not exhibit an equal import within this system. Instead they stand in a “hierarchy,” in which one instance is “dominant” over the others. By this they mean that a particular instance—in feudalism, for example, political relations of fealty—“assigns limits” to the effects that may be exerted by the other instances, both on the dominant instance itself and on one another. These limits define, at the same time, a “relative autonomy” for each instance—that is, a

particular range of variation in the determinations it may effect, as well as the bounds within which it is constrained.²⁶ And, the role of the dominant instance varies from mode of production to the next; it is this, however, which is determined “in the last instance” by the economic (see Althusser and Balibar 1970, 99, 220-4; Althusser 1969, 213).

Althusser and Balibar offer little in the way of a developed account of class, and their occasional statements on the subject are ambiguous. They lean heavily on Marx’s famous remark that individuals are to be viewed merely the “bearers” or “supports” of structural relations (Althusser and Balibar 1970, 111-2, 180, 252). This premise results, on the one hand, in a formulation which exhibits, as numerous critics have noted, a decidedly functionalist cast: “[c]lasses are *functions of the process of production as a whole*. They are not its subject, on the contrary, they are determined by its forms” (*ibid.*, 267-8); “[c]lasses are not the subjects of this mechanism [the distribution of the means of production] but its supports, and the concrete characteristics of these classes...are the *effects of this mechanism*” (*ibid.*, 233, my addition). In this type of formulation, “classes” tend to designate relations between agents whose practices can serve no other purpose than to contribute to the reproduction of the mode of production. Althusser’s oft-cited discussion of ideology (as an “interpellation” which “subjectivises” the addressee) renders this tendency in their thought the predominant one (1971, 127ff.). On the other hand, however, we also find scattered remarks which, emphasizing the “contradictory” nature of the relations constitutive of the mode of the production, refer to class struggle. In this case it is recognized that the relations of production are inherently antagonistic relations (as are political and ideological relations as well); moreover, there is now an assertion of the relative autonomy of the determination of “practice” by

“structures”: the latter merely set “limits” on the former (see Althusser and Balibar 1970, 222, 305). Nevertheless, even here, they insist, no third term intervenes in the step from structure to practice, and the agents involved are merely the “carriers” of contradictions which are situated at the level of objective relations. These divergent tendencies are not reconciled by Althusser and Balibar.

Poulantzas adopts Althusser and Balibar’s general re-orientation of Marxian theory with two (closely related) purposes: to develop the theory of class and to develop the theory of the state, especially as these pertain to capitalism. At the same time, he introduces a number of rectifications into the account developed by Althusser and Balibar, some of which must be mentioned. First, with very little fanfare, Poulantzas reinstates the question of the relation between concepts and “the real” as a condition of the validation of knowledge—though without going so far as to specify exactly how it is that reality “intervenes” in this process (1976, 66). Second, he sharpens and clarifies the distinction between the concept of the mode of production and that of the “social formation.” The latter term designates a “concrete,” existing society, understood as a structurally-articulated combination of different modes of production (in which one mode of production maintains dominance over the others: the contemporary relation between capitalism and “petty commodity production”). The essential point is that any social formation has a unique past, present, and future: the concept of a “social formation” is intrinsically historical (Poulantzas 1975, 22-3; 1978, 15-6). The majority of Poulantzas’ analyzes are taken up with questions pertaining the nature of class and politics within capitalist social formations. Third, faced with the oscillation in Althusser and Balibar between a functionalist tendency and a conflict orientation, he chooses the latter, and

within this context, attempts to more carefully integrate it with the analysis of social reproduction (see Poulantzas 1976, 78). Poulantzas thus accepts the basic premise that individuals are to be viewed as the “supports” of structural relations, and insists that these relations—at each level (economic, political, and ideological)—be viewed as antagonistic. He thus claims that the functioning of ideological and repressive “apparatuses”—and hence the reproduction of the social formation—is always mediated by class struggle (Poulantzas 1975, 24-7). On the basis of these premises, Poulantzas is able to affirm that “class struggle is the motor of history”—for the social formation (*ibid.*, 23). And, in keeping with this, he alters the definition of the term “conjuncture”—which, for Althusser, had tended to serve as a structural concept, designating the particularity of any given “combination” of elements (see Althusser and Balibar 1970, 106-7)—so that it comes to designate the “balance of forces” obtaining between the classes of a social formation at specific historical moment (Poulantzas 1975, 14; see also 1976, 78-9).²⁷

I will focus here primarily on Poulantzas’ theory of class, not his account of the state. Poulantzas defines class in terms of “the effects of the ensemble of structures, of the matrix of a mode of production or social formation, on the agents which constitute its supports: this concept reveals the effects of the global structure in the field of social relations” (1978, 67-8). Class is thus conceived here in terms of a network or system of social relations which is inscribed by the structure—that is, as a network or system of relations between groups of individuals which is a direct effect of the structure. This determination primarily takes the form of a distribution of agents into different places; it also, however, entails the establishment of limits: social interaction is constrained within structurally established limits, or in other words, enjoys a “relative autonomy” (*ibid.*, 95).

Poulantzas emphasizes that the entirety of the structure is implicated in this determination; consequently, various levels of class relations exist, corresponding to the various instances of the structure. Furthermore, as a consequence of “contradictions” within the structure, these social relations are necessarily relations of opposition: a class can only be identified in terms of its antagonistic relation to another class or classes (*ibid.*, 86). Consequently, classes necessarily imply “class practices”—that is, conflictual actions, or in other words, class struggle. It must be noted that Poulantzas repeatedly warns against reading back from conflict to any form of class consciousness (the class “for-itself”): it is quite possible that, in some place and times, the class struggle will be founded on a mere “class instinct,” understood as a form of ideology which operates without the need for “discourse” or “ideas” (1975, 16-7).

In what follows, I would like to examine how Poulantzas deploys this prodigious theoretical machinery to develop a structural-Marxist solution to problems of particular salience to sociology—namely, those concerning the elaboration of a class concept applicable to contemporary capitalist social formations. In particular, I would like to examine his attempt to come to grips with the emergence of all of those managerial, technical, and professional occupations which are often haphazardly taken to compose the “middle classes.” This attempt begins from certain features specific to the capitalist mode of production: in this mode, the economic “level” is the dominant instance (while also maintaining its determination in the last instance). Associated with this is the fact that the economic, within the capitalist mode of production, exhibits a unique autonomy—an autonomy traditionally understood in terms of the “separation of civil society and the state.”²⁸ Thus, in contrast to the classes of feudalism, for example, which

appear to be constituted from the fusion of economic criteria with political or ideological (i.e. religious) ones, in the case of capitalist classes it is unclear what role the non-economic instances may play. However, even if the autonomy of the economic in capitalism precludes this kind of fusion, it is nevertheless the case that the other instances exert effects within the economic. Poulantzas thus states that “the effects of the other instances on the capitalist supports are manifested in their specific relation to the relations of production inside this mode” (1978, 72; see 1975, 21; Althusser and Balibar 1970, 179). In a social formation in which the capitalist mode of production predominates, classes are therefore to be analyzed in terms of economic, political, and ideological criteria, as they operate at the economic level itself.

It is, however, the relations of production which are the primary determinant of classes. Following Althusser and Balibar, Poulantzas understands these in terms of two constituent relations: on the one hand, ownership of the means of production—here carefully distinguished from mere legal ownership (as was not the case in Dahrendorf)—and defined in terms of the “power to assign the means of production to given uses,” that is, to determine what gets produced, and to appropriate the product; and on the other hand, “possession” of the means of production, defined in terms of “the capacity to put the means of production into operation” (1975 18), that is, to control the labor process and determine how production is to proceed. Under capitalistic relations of productions, these two relations tend to coincide with one another—at least in the sense that the “direct producers” are excluded from control over the means of production in both of these aspects. (This is not necessarily the case in other class relations: in feudalism, for example, the serf may maintain a significant degree of “possession” over an area of land.)

Such considerations, however, are not sufficient to specify even the basic classes of the capitalism. On the side of capital, this stems from the differentiation of ownership and possession in the joint-stock company, thus raising the question of the class position of corporate “control.” On the side of labor, it derives from the fact that exclusion from both ownership and possession are not fully coincident with the production of surplus value: “[t]he class exploited within [the relations of production] ... is that which performs the productive labor of that mode of production. Therefore in the capitalist mode of production, all non-owners are not thereby workers” (*ibid.*, 29).

With respect to the question of the corporate “directors,” Poulantzas’ argument is relatively straightforward. Divisions between classes are the result of structural relations; consequently, arguments concerning putative differences in the behavioral motivations of owners and managers (“maximizing” versus “satisficing”) are irrelevant. In point of fact, “[t]he directing agents who directly exercise these powers [i.e. those relating to “possession”] and who fulfill the ‘functions of capital’ occupy the place of capital, and thus belong to the bourgeois class even if they do not hold formal legal ownership. In all cases, therefore, managers are an integral section of the bourgeois class” (*ibid.*, 180; my addition). Nevertheless, they are not to be considered a separate “fraction” of this class: class fractions are, similarly, structurally defined categories; consequently, in the case of capitalism the bourgeois class is internally differentiated in conformity with the logic of commodity production (into industrial, finance, and commercial fractions). The class position of managers is thus a function of this logic, in exactly the same manner as it is for owners—irrespective of any disassociation between the agents fulfilling these “functions” (*ibid.*, 181). At the same time, however, this argument is supplemented by

some brief and rather cryptic remarks concerning the role of the ideological and the political in the determination of the class position of managers. Specifically, the directive function of managers, insofar as it is exercised within a system of “hierarchical authority of the despotic organization of work in the factory,” is taken to incorporate the effects of political relations of domination. Likewise, this function is also said to entail a monopolization of the knowledge which is essential to the operation of a complex labor process (at least under capitalistic conditions of production); the asymmetric distribution of knowledge, in turn, is taken to result in the ideological distinction between “mental” and “manual” labor. To be sure, Poulantzas’ invocation of ideological and political criteria seem rather ad hoc here; however, they become central in his discussion of the working class and of those agents who belong neither to it or to bourgeoisie—the so-called middle class.

Poulantzas demarcates the working class from non-working class wage earners according to the criterion of productive labor (*ibid.*, 209-23). I will not address this argument; suffice it to say that the criterion has become the object of extensive criticism. He proceeds almost by a process of elimination: if, within the context of capitalist social formations, a whole series of occupations can be identified which do not entail productive labor, yet which clearly do not belong to bourgeoisie, we must nevertheless assume that they do not stand altogether outside of class relations; therefore, they must belong to the petty-bourgeoisie. In this manner he attempts to assimilate a mass of white collar “tertiary” or “service” occupations to the petty-bourgeois class, which he declares to be split into an “old” and a “new” fraction. The fact that all of these occupations are wage-earning (or salaried) is taken to be unproblematic: “if certain groupings which at first

sight seem to occupy different places in economic relations can be considered as belonging to the same class, this is because these places, although they are different, nevertheless have the same effects at the political and ideological levels” (*ibid.*, 205). As has been pointed out (see the discussion of Wright, below), this rather abrupt revocation of the priority of the economic—at this level, the new and old fractions of the petty-bourgeoisie share only the fact of their exclusion from the working class and the bourgeoisie—opens the way to a “politico-ideological” determinism.²⁹

Those aspects of political and ideological relations which were brought up in a rather casual manner in the discussion of corporate directors become central in the discussion of the new petty-bourgeoisie: hierarchical authority relations and the mental/manual division. Thus, insofar as they supervise productive workers, non-directive managers fulfill not just a technical task, but a socio-political one as well: “[t]he work of management and supervision, under capitalism, is the direct reproduction, within the process of production itself, of the political relations between the capitalist class and the working class” (*ibid.*, 228). Furthermore, Poulantzas attempts to interpret the multitude of white collar positions which do not entail any direct supervision of the working class in terms of a bureaucratized hierarchy of authority which amounts to a sort of distorted reflection (within the new petty-bourgeoisie itself) of this relation of political class domination (*ibid.*, 276-7). Similarly, the technicians, engineers, and the like who are directly involved with material production are primarily characterized, for Poulantzas, by their monopolization of the specialized knowledge which is mobilized in large-scale capitalist production. Such knowledge is inseparably technical and social (*ibid.*, 238), and takes the form of a division between mental and manual labor. This distinction, it

must be stressed, does not stem from anything intrinsic to the respective forms of labor themselves (i.e. “hand” work versus “head” work). Since all forms of labor involve some type of specialized knowledge—and indeed, the working class itself is differentiated by levels of “skill” (*ibid.*, 242-5)—this division can only represent to a separation which has received a strictly social legitimation, more or less arbitrarily segregating one group of positions from another (*ibid.*, 238, 253ff.). Such considerations also obtain in the case of those occupations which, standing outside of material production (most members of the “professions,” for example), are typically recognized as “mental” labor: their basic characteristics are said to derive primarily from a negative reference to those of the working class (*ibid.*, 258-9).

The structuralist re-interpretation of Marx forms the touchstone for nearly all subsequent Marxian theories of class. Responses, however, take at least two forms. On the one hand, the results obtained by Poulantzas in his attempt to account for the class structure of contemporary capitalist social formations via a mobilization of the theoretical apparatus developed by Althusser and Balibar are rejected on the basis of their specific inadequacies (above all, the attempt to come to grips with the “middle” classes by means of the concept of the new petty-bourgeoisie). The encompassing structuralist framework is of secondary interest here (Wright). On the other hand, it is also argued that this framework itself must be dispensed with. This stance, as exemplified by Thompson’s later work, seeks to re-cast the concept of class in “historicist” terms. Within this context, the position developed by Przeworski can be seen as an intermediate one.

B. Thompson and Przeworski

Thompson's (1966) famous study of the English working class insists that class be viewed as something "which in fact happens" rather than as a "structure" or a "category." By this he appears to mean that use of the term "class" must be restricted so as to refer only to a definite social relationship between groups of individuals—individuals who have come to perceive a community of interest among themselves and other group members as a result of common experiences. Indeed, "experience," in this sense, cannot be deduced directly from a structural analysis of the mode of production; rather, experience is an inherently temporal phenomenon, and "interests," consequently, are only constituted historically: "[i]f we stop history at a given point, then are no classes but simply a multitude of individuals.... But if we watch these men over an adequate period of social change, we observe patterns in their relationships, their ideas, and their institutions. Class is defined by men as they live their own history..." (*ibid.*, 11; see Thompson 1995, 137).

Thompson extrapolates this rather cryptic formulation in much of his later work, often in the context of a critique of structuralist Marxist accounts of class. The flaws of these accounts can be traced back to the mode of analysis utilized in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, in which—as with "bourgeois political economy" itself—a certain set of activities (economic ones) are isolated for study, and a system of categories developed whose content remains thoroughly closed to influences from the excluded domains of social life. Such a procedure results, Thompson repeatedly asserts, in a *static* conceptual system. Thus, "when capital and its relations are seen as a structure in a given moment of capital's forms, then this structure has a categorical stasis; that is, it can allow for no

impingement of any influence from any other region...which could modify its relations..." (*ibid.*, 83). This remains true even when (as in Marx) the hypostatized categories exhibit an inbuilt temporal logic, since even here their combinations, transformations, developments and permutations can never be more than derivatives of the initial content (*ibid.*, 113). With respect to the category of class, disavowal of such "static" category systems means that "we cannot put 'class' here and 'class consciousness' there, as two separate entities, the one sequential upon the other, since both must be taken together—the experience of determination, and the handling of this in conscious ways" (*ibid.*, 143). The interpretation instigated by Althusser and Balibar magnifies the errors of Marx's late work exponentially: first by extending the reach of "static" analysis far beyond the economic, and secondly by denying any significance to the manner in which the agents who are subject to the identified structures "handle" them.

Of course, at first glance this merely appears to defer the question of the relation between "structure," on the one hand, and "experience" or "consciousness," on the other. For even if we reserve the term "class" for those phenomena typically addressed in terms of "class formations"—for example, patterns of "consciousness," "ideas," and "institutions"—we are still left to inquire about the *object* of the "experiences" which may be implicated in the observable unity of any such patterns. And, to be sure, Thompson does at times refer to the "relations of production" in this regard. Consequently, many of the criticisms which he levels at structuralist versions of Marxism amount to an attempt to revert to the well-known distinction between class "in-itself" and class "for-itself" in a way that de-emphasizes the significance of the "objective" side. To

this end, he offers a number of arguments meant to demonstrate the irreducibility of historical processes with respect to questions of class.

In order to account for the effectivity of the relations of production (and of economic structure in general) Thompson's later work repeatedly invokes a concept of causality ("determination"), developed by Williams (1977, esp. 83-9). In the first place, "determination" refers to the "setting of limits"; this, however, immediately recalls two typical meanings. Limitations may derive from something *external*, as when God or History are said to necessitate a particular event's outcome, or from something *immanent*, as when the properties of the agents involved necessitate it (*ibid.*, 84). The latter sense is that of a "scientific law"; however, the two are sometimes combined, as when Marxism appeals to "laws of historical development." Against them, there stands a well-known concept of limitation in which events are the result of human agency, but an agency which must take *given* (historical) "conditions" as its point of departure. The difference is therefore that which separates an "abstract objectivity"—which is both "inherited" and "independent of human will"—from a "historical objectivity," i.e. one which is inherited but malleable (*ibid.* 85). In the second instance, however, "determination" cannot be restricted to the idea of limitation, even if it is purged of metaphysical or scientific distortions. For "historical objectivity" also exerts "pressures." These "are...often...derived from the formation and momentum of a given social mode: in effect a compulsion to act in ways that maintain and renew it. They are also, and vitally, pressures exerted by new formations, with their as yet unrealized intentions and demands" (*ibid.*, 87). In introducing this second sense, Williams wishes to disallow any restriction of the notion of determination to a meaning which separates and isolates

individual agents, on the one hand, and “society,” on the other. The use of the term “pressure” is thus meant to indicate a way in which “agency” itself may be seen as the outcome of a causal process—insofar as it realizes a propulsion generated “externally”—without slipping back into the language of causal laws.³⁰ Williams thus defines determination as “a complex and interrelated process of limits and pressures” (*ibid.*).

By means of this concept, Thompson intends to return to Marxism a purchase on the “historical process” in all of its open-ended contingency, and to simultaneously rehabilitate “empiricism”—the object of unremitting scorn on the part of Althusser and his followers—understood as the development of verifiable propositions about this “process.” Indeed, the more restricted concept of determination permits a recovery of Marx’s most important pre-*Grundrisse* insight: “the logic of capitalist processes has found expression within all the activities of a society, and exerted a determining pressure upon its development and form: hence entitling us to speak of...capitalist societies” (Thompson 1995, 84-5). Against Marx’s overly logicized later works, this gives us the idea of a “real historical process.” In such a context, class becomes a crucial concept. Thompson repeatedly attempts to describe its ambiguous character: class sits at the “junction” between structure and process (*ibid.*, 148); it congeals “the crucial ambivalence of our human presence in our own history, part-subjects, part-objects” (*ibid.*, 119); “class formations...arise at the intersection of determination and self-activity” (*ibid.*, 142).

Thus, against sociologies or social theories which elevate the analysis of class structures to centrality, Thompson reserves this place for class formations, and for the irreducible intricacy of their historical variations. Structural analysis, he asserts, remains

“essential”; however, while it can reveal the “limitations” and “pressures” which impact agents’ experience, it cannot provide a “historical... equation—that these productive relations = these class formations” (Thompson 1978, 147, note 32). Indeed, such analysis, in the archetypal form of Marxian political economy, must posit that productive relations *already* comprise “classes.” By this Thompson appears to mean that, as a consequence of its isolation of certain activities, political economy must assume that social actors behave merely as the “bearers” of economic relations. Once we relinquish this abstraction and return to the “full historical process,” this postulate is necessarily dissolved, and “we find that (economic, military) exploitation are *experienced* in class ways and only thence give rise to class formations...” (*ibid.*, 149, note 36). It remains, in other words, an open question whether actors will *in fact* behave in conformity with what would be expected of “bearers.” For this reason, Thompson’s anti-structuralism leads him to generally reserve the term “class” for class formations. Reference to “objective” classes (or classes “in-themselves”) is asserted to be a legitimate form of analysis; however, it ultimately amounts to no more than a shorthand identification of the interplay between those economic “limits” and “pressures” which affect agents’ experience, and if the “classes” identified in such an analysis are not subsequently dissolved into the flux this experience, the result will be an illegitimate hypostatization.

Thompson, on the one hand, is able to draw some striking conclusions from this position. In particular, he can invert the typical order of explanation, often found in sociology and in Marxian analysis alike, by claiming that “class struggles” are temporally—and therefore, logically—*prior* to “classes” (meaning, of course, class formations). “[P]eople find themselves in a society structured in determined ways

(crucially, but not exclusively, in productive relations), they experience exploitation..., they identify points of antagonistic interest, they commence to struggle around these issues and in the process of struggling they discover themselves as classes...” (*ibid.*, 149). On the other hand, however, this de-emphasis of structure remains ambiguous in certain respects. Specifically, we find no theoretically codified account of how it is, exactly, that the concept of a “class structure” can be re-cast merely as a bundle of “limitations” and “pressures.” For this reason, it is worth considering a slightly different formulation of the position, one slightly less hostile to the possibility that concepts of “stasis”—rather than simply comprising a category error—may in fact be necessary to designate certain real phenomena of social “inertia” (in Sartre’s phrase), but which does not, at the same time, slide back into structuralist premises.

Przeworski’s influential essay (1985, 47-97) on proletarian class formation, initially published in 1977 (that is, just as Thompson was working his critique of structuralism) develops an argument quite similar to Thompson’s: “classes” are not the precondition of conflicts or struggles; they are, instead, their *results*. By this Przeworski means that economic relations—or indeed, the totality of “objective conditions” (including, in Poulantzian fashion, ideological and political relations of domination as well)—do not “uniquely” determine the possibilities of class formation at a given moment. Consequently, before there can be any conflict *between* classes, there must first be struggle *about* classes—that is, one in which the pertinent collectivities identify themselves and their alter(s) as such, evaluate and recognize their own interests and those of others, organize, mobilize, and so forth (*ibid.*, 70ff.). In a manner similar to Thompson, Przeworski insists that classes are subject to formation and transformation

over time. He thereby attempts to reintroduce history and historical contingency into Marxism (after their expulsion at the hands of Althusser and his followers) without, at the same time, falling back into teleological accounts of class conflict (“historicism”).

Przeworski describes the relations between the “totality of objective conditions” and class formation as follows:

Classes are not given uniquely by any objective positions because they constitute effects of struggles, and these struggles are not determined uniquely by the relations of production. The traditional [Marxian] formulation does not allow us to think theoretically about class struggles, since it either reduces them to an epiphenomenon or enjoins them with freedom from objective determination. Class struggles are neither epiphenomenal, nor free from determination. They are structured by the totality of economic, political, and ideological relations; and they have an autonomous effect upon the process of class formation. ...[I]f struggles do have an autonomous effect upon class formation, then the places in the relations of production, whatever they are, can no longer be viewed as objective in the sense of the problematic of “class-in-itself,” that is, in the sense of determining uniquely what classes will emerge as classes-in-struggle.

[P]ositions within social relations constitute limits upon the success of political practice, but within these historically concrete limits the formation of classes-in-struggle is determined by struggles that have class formation as their effect. (*ibid.*, 66-7; my addition)

We find familiar premises here: “objective conditions” (including the relations of production) place limits upon different “projects” of class formation, and thus determine which projects are “feasible”—though not “uniquely”; consequently, “classes” (in the sense of class formations) are to be viewed as outcomes of conflicts, not their prerequisite. The actions of the agents who carry out these struggles are, in a word, at least partially autonomous. Przeworski draws important additional conclusions from this line of reasoning. First, as Thompson implied, classes are not stable, “static” entities; rather, it must be recognized that they undergo continuous processes of “organization, disorganization,...[and] reorganization” (*ibid.*, 73). Secondly, Przeworski acknowledges

that, classes, in his sense, do not exist prior to ideology and politics (*ibid.*, 70). Indeed, struggles “about” class—that is, the practices through which social actors identify themselves (and their opponents) as members of opposed classes are intrinsically political and ideological. Of course, in trying to conserve Poulantzas’ anti-economism, Przeworski opens himself to a question which can also be directed at Poulantzas: is it in fact not the case that, in these formulations of Marxism, the different “instances” or “elements of the objective conditions” have become coeval (within the order of determination)? This is one of the questions posed by Wright.

C. Wright

Wright presents an interesting contrast with the figures already considered. On the one hand, he attempts to develop a rigorous formulation of the Marxian concept of class—initially via a critique of Poulantzas—that re-emphasizes the role of the class structure, as against class formations, class consciousness, and the like. On the other hand, he combines this abiding interest in Marxian theory with a relatively conventional social scientific epistemology in order to develop a Marxian program in empirical sociological research, generally carried out through quantitative hypothesis testing. I would like to first discuss his early work, including the critique of Poulantzas, his alternative concept of “contradictory class locations” (and the class schema which follows from it), the account of causality with which he attempts to make this concept serviceable for research, and his discussion of the relation between class structures and class formations. Subsequently, I will take up the criticisms that have been directed at the concept of “contradictory class locations” (the best of which, in a commendable style

of self-criticism, were articulated by Wright himself), and the comprehensive re-formulation that followed. Lastly, I will discuss the consequences of his attempt to resolve the manifest difficulties of this later formulation.

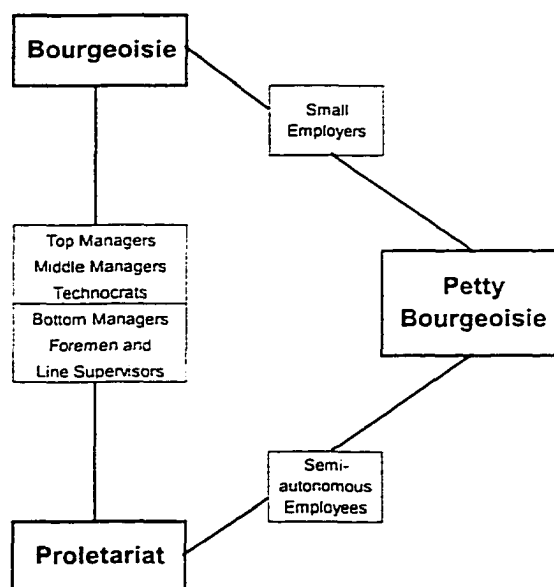
Wright's criticisms of Poulantzas' attempt to identify the basic classes of contemporary capitalist social formations are generally well-founded. Against the latter's inclusion of managerial positions within the capitalist class (on the grounds of "possession"—i.e. control), Wright asserts that the absence of economic ownership could just as easily be viewed as a criterion of exclusion from this class (Wright 1978, 59-61). More importantly, Wright develops several arguments against Poulantzas' exclusion of various categories of employees from working class. These concern, first of all, the fact that, *in practice*, Poulantzas tends to lend equal weight to economic, political, and ideological criteria in attempting to develop a rationale for differentiating (and hence defining) the "new petty bourgeoisie," thereby violating the primacy which he claims inheres in the economic (*ibid.*, 51-3). When Wright develops his alternative conception of the class structure, he departs from structuralist premises by restricting it to the "level" of the social division of labor.³¹ Secondly, Wright asserts that the distinction between productive and unproductive labor—the key economic criterion in the determination of the boundaries of the working class—remains both difficult to clarify conceptually and difficult to apply to actual economic positions (since these will often be heterogeneous with respect to the distinction); moreover, and decisively, nothing about this distinction implies that particular *objective interests* can be deduced from its respective terms (*ibid.*, 48).

In developing an alternative model of the class structure, Wright, like Poulantzas, begins from the premise that the classic Marxian accounts of the capitalist mode of production are pitched at a level of abstraction which must be concretized in order to be applicable to contemporary social formations. In doing so, he too comes face-to-face with all of the problems surrounding the existence of the “middle classes.” However, Wright makes an important assumption: “not all positions in the social structure can be seen as firmly rooted in a single class; some positions occupy objectively contradictory locations between classes” (*ibid.*, 31). Above all, this assumption is meant to bring the concept of interests back to the center of the definition of classes: a “contradictory” location is characterized, to some degree, by diverging material interests. Wright sees three basic questions as determinative of class relations in “advanced capitalism”:

“control over the labor process,” that is, over one’s own and/or others’ work; “control over the physical means of production,” that is, over the manner in which they are utilized; and “control over investments and resource allocation,” that is, over the very purpose of production (*ibid.*, 73).³² The two basic classes of capitalism are defined by their polarization on *each* of these questions. The petty-bourgeoisie is restricted to its traditional definition: it is characterized by economic ownership (power over investment and allocation) and control of the means of production, coupled with a self-directed labor process (and the absence of power over the labor of others). Beyond these classes, however, Wright identifies a number of “contradictory locations” (*ibid.*, 77ff.). As we rise through the managerial hierarchy, we find positions exhibiting greater and greater power over both work processes and the labor power of others—though with little or no ownership. Interests attributable to *both* bourgeoisie and proletariat can be deduced for

occupants of such positions. Similarly, between the working class and the petty-bourgeoisie we find various categories of “white-collar technical employees and certain highly skilled craftsmen” whose occupants are partially exempted from the authority chain of the organization, and therefore retain at least some control over what they produce and how they produce it (*ibid.*, 81). Finally, between the petty-bourgeoisie and the capitalist class there stand small employers—i.e. proprietors whose own labor (and that of family members) produces at least as much of the surplus as that of their employees (*ibid.*, 80). These premises yield the schema in figure 2.

Figure 2. Wright’s Early Class Scheme



Source: Wright (1978, 86)

The purpose of the diagram—and indeed, of the whole formulation—is primarily that of clarifying the contradictory interests to which members of the so-called “middle

class(es)” are subject for the purposes of analyzing various possibilities of class alliance. I will not recount this discussion; it does, however, point us in the direction of Wright’s account of class formation and class struggle.

The link between Wright’s account of the class structure and class formations occurs via an explication of various “modes of determination” which extends far beyond the discussion in Williams, and which is supposed to permit the class schema to be used for empirical analysis (*ibid.*, 15-29). Wright identifies six types of causal process:

- “Structural limitation” is defined as a causal relation in which a particular social structure determines the boundaries within which another can vary (as well as the relative likelihood among the possible “values” of the latter). Wright offers, as an example, the claim that a capitalist class structure constrains the possible forms which the state may take (his interpretation of determination in the “last instance”).
- “Selection” refers to the determination—within an already limited range of possibilities—of a particular outcome. Thus, the structure of the state may determine—within constraints established by the class structure—the particular form taken by class struggles; likewise, class conflict may influence the selection of particular state policies.
- “Reproduction/non-reproduction” is essentially the same as structural limitation, except that it implies that the determined structure—the one whose possible forms are limited—could mutate beyond these limits were it not subject to constraint. Thus, the state might be said to reproduce capitalist economic structures by preventing them from exceeding the limits of a certain range of variation.

- Limitation of “functional compatibility” refers to a process in which the organization of a given structure establishes whether—and to what degree—the influence exerted by another structure upon it is, in fact, optimal for the latter’s reproduction (or non-reproduction). The point here is that the organization of the economic both establishes limitations upon the state and determines to what degree the state’s own action upon it will contribute to the perpetuation of this particular form of economic organization. (Wright wants to assert that while the economic exercises both forms of determination with respect to the state, they may not necessarily “coincide,” thereby resulting in a contradiction.)
- “Transformation” refers to processes by which a social structure is altered as a result of class struggle. Such alterations will in turn affect the causal processes attributable to the transformed structure.
- “Mediation” is also an attribute of class struggle.³³ It denotes an alteration of the outcome of another causal process (such as limitation) by the influence of such struggle. As such, it amounts to what Wright calls a “contextual variable”: processes of mediation determine the terrain on which other modes of determination operate” (*ibid.*, 23).

Combining each of these processes into complicated whole, Wright offers a provisional model of the relations between the class structure, the state, state policy, and class struggle. This model need not be reproduced here; however, it does call for a brief discussion. According to Wright, the six “modes of determination” are supposed to amount to an elaboration and decomposition of Althusser’s “abstract” concept of structural causality. The model he constructs therefore represents a “structured totality”

(*ibid.*, 15). The Althusserian influence is already apparent from Wright's use of concepts such as "reproduction" and "functional compatibility," which imply various forms of reciprocal causation. The model he constructs is, in fact, thoroughly non-recursive. This means that none of the causal paths which comprise it are temporally ordered, and no exogenous elements identifiable (see *ibid.*, 21 and 104, on the "simultaneity" of causes). Wright tends to jettison much of this structuralist inheritance in his later work (as a result of his association with proponents of rational action versions of Marxism). Additionally, we should note that despite the various forms of limitation and selection to which they are subject, Wright nevertheless insists on attributing an explicitly "transformative" capacity to class struggles, and therefore implies that they remain at least partially irreducible, and the outcomes they are implicated in partially contingent. This becomes apparent in his account class formations.

Wright describes class formations in terms of intra-class relations (*ibid.*, 98ff.). This definition is meant to highlight the question of "class capacities," i.e. the organizational means which the class has at its disposal in order to pursue class struggles. He constructs a model of the relations between the class structure, class formations, and class struggles which again draws on the various modes of determination. Particularly important is the claim that class struggle mediates the relation of limitation by which the class structure affects class formations (i.e. the organizational capacities of classes). For in saying this, Wright wishes to appropriate Przeworski's insight that in order for there to be conflict "between" classes, there must already have occurred a struggle "about" classes. The significance of the insight lies in the fact of an ever-growing number of "contradictory locations": the incorporation (or non-incorporation) of such positions into

particular class formations is in part determined by the class structure—that is, by the ratio of diverging interests which pull them towards one class or another; it is also, however, determined by struggles about class—that is, quite simply, about who belongs where. This said, however, it must also be noted that, as with his previous models, the present one is completely non-recursive. It is therefore difficult (if not impossible) to ascribe a historical logic of any sort to it.³⁴

In his subsequent work, Wright develops a set of criticisms of the notion “contradictory locations” which, he believes, are serious enough to require that it be jettisoned (Wright 1985, 51-7). In the first place, the objective interests of “semi-autonomous employees” and small employers may be heterogeneous, but can they, in any clear sense, be said to be contradictory?³⁵ This points up a host of more general problems associated with the implication that objective interests can be derived from the criterion of autonomy in the labor process, and the automatic association of this criterion with the petty-bourgeoisie. More importantly, in Wright’s view, with the concept of “contradictory locations,” relations of domination—that is, Dahrendorfian relations of authority—became highly prominent, at the cost of a systematic minimization of the *sine qua non* of Marxian class theory: exploitation.³⁶ In order to re-draw a micro-level map of the class structure (one appropriate to the level of social formations), Wright leans heavily on a theory of exploitation formulated by Roemer in terms of game theory.

The theory begins from the assumption of a differential distribution of ownership rights in various kinds of productive property; it proceeds by analyzing the results of exchange between rational agents under the condition of such a distribution. “Exploitation” is defined as a situation in which a withdrawal (under certain conditions)

of the least well endowed agents from the exchange process would have as its outcome an improvement in their material well-being, and a corresponding diminution in that of the better endowed agents (*ibid.*, 68). Particular withdrawal conditions help to define the “type” of game being played; thus, a capitalist game entails departure with a per capita share of all productive assets. The point of these constructions is that it is possible to demonstrate that the material well-being of one group is causally dependent on the deprivation of the other, as a result of the appropriation of the product of the latter’s labor by the former. Their details need not be elaborated here. Wright describes the import of the theory as follows:

[t]he central message of...Roemer’s strategies for analysing exploitation is that the material basis of exploitation lies in inequalities in the distribution of productive assets, usually referred to as property relations. The asset-exploitation nexus depends...upon the capacity of asset-holders to deprive others of equal access to that asset.... [I]nequalities of assets are sufficient to account for transfers of surplus labor.... Classes are then defined as positions within the social relations of production derived from the property relations which determine the patterns of exploitation. (*ibid.*, 71-2)

Importantly, there are, broadly speaking, a number of different types of productive assets which can be sifted through these constructions. In each case, the distribution of the pertinent asset (plus the appropriate withdrawal rule) is supposed to yield an exploitation pattern which can serve as the core of the conceptualization of a particular mode of production. Wright modifies Roemer’s account of the various assets so that they include *labor power*, which is at the basis of the feudal mode of production; the (physical) *means of production*, which are at the basis of the capitalist mode of production; *organizational assets*, which are at the basis of what Wright calls bureaucratic-statist production; and *skills*, which are (or would be) at the basis of the socialist mode of production (*ibid.*, 83). In order to construe organizational control in terms of an exploitative relation, Wright

argues that the technical division of labor constitutes an important productive force, and that effective control over it permits holders to appropriate at least some of the surplus social product (*ibid.*, 78-82). In order to construe skills in this manner, Wright notes the fact that economically salient skills often earn higher returns in the labor market than their “cost” (that is, the costs of education or training); consequently, he suggests, there must be a mechanism at work which restricts access to these skills, such that they remain scarce enough to bring their “owners” this premium. Following Collins (1979), he identifies credentialization processes as this mechanism (Wright 1985, 76-7).

The exploitation-centered theory yields a new schema for analyzing capitalist social formations (figure 3).

Figure 3. Wright’s Later Class Scheme

	Owners of the means of production	Non-Owners			
Owns sufficient capital to hire workers and not work	Bourgeoisie	Expert Managers	Semi-Credentialed Managers	Uncredentialed Managers	+
Owns sufficient capital to hire workers but must work	Small Employers	Expert Supervisors	Semi-Credentialed Supervisors	Uncredentialed Supervisors	>0
Owns sufficient capital to work for self but not to hire workers	Petty Bourgeoisie	Non-Managerial Experts	Semi-Credentialed Workers	Proletarians	-
		+	>0	-	Skill/Credential Assets

Organization Assets

Source: Wright (1985, 88)

As the diagram indicates, Wright conceptualizes the class structure of capitalist social formations in terms of the combination of a dominant axis of exploitation with various

subordinate axes (see *ibid.*, 109-14). Consequently, it becomes possible for particular positions to be characterized as exploitative on one dimension, yet exploited on others. Wright maintains that such positions can, in fact, be characterized according to the notion of “contradictory locations,” but that this now takes on a clearer meaning. Indeed, the “asset mix” characterizing each position implies a specific material “optimizing strategy” from which the basic interests associated with it can be derived (*ibid.*, 91-2), both as they pertain to capitalistic social formations and to non-capitalistic ones (meaning, in the latter case, interests in “withdrawal” or “non-withdrawal” to a particular alternative “game”). Additionally, the new schema can be connected up more systematically with the basic concept of modes of production than could the earlier one; Wright also feels that it enables him to develop various analyses around the issue of class alliances on specifically materialist terrain—that is, according to the logic of material interests (*ibid.*, 124-6)—rather than having to lean heavily on ideological and political factors for this purpose.

The new theory of class is combined with a more global transformation of Wright’s approach to Marxism. In particular, he sheds much of the structuralist inheritance and becomes associated with the practitioners of “Analytical Marxism.” By his own account, this association entails: an extensive elaboration and systemization of basic concepts, fine-grained specification in the course of this elaboration and systemization, and a commitment to conventional scientific norms (Wright 1994, 178-98). At the philosophical level, the latter commitment is translated into a subscription to ontological realism. At a programmatic level it implies, for Wright, an explanatory agenda based on the identification of distinct, theoretically explicated mechanisms (see Wright, in Wright et al. 1998, 290-1) in order to develop verifiable models of the

phenomena of interest—which, in his case, means phenomena that can be linked to class.³⁷ As a result of these commitments, class analysis is forced to renounce all *a priori* claims to the primacy of class as a causal mechanism. Indeed, after class has been demoted to the status of one mechanism among many, it becomes the obligation of class analysis to attempt to empirically demonstrate the *pervasive salience* of class relative to these other mechanisms (Wright, Levine, and Sober 1992, 174-5). In particular, class formations (including alliances between members of one of the polarized classes—bourgeoisie or proletariat—and occupants of the various “contradictory” locations) are now seen as the combined outcome of processes stemming from the class structure and from various additional mechanisms which are generally autonomous with respect to it.

Wright’s new schema has served him well in its capacity as a tool for empirical research (see Wright 1997). However, in the disputes which followed the initial formulation, a number of theoretical problems emerged (see the critical essays in Wright et al. 1998)—many of which, to his credit, Wright had already anticipated to one degree or another (Wright 1985, 92-5). At the most general level, Wright’s approach to the concept of exploitation is criticized by Carchedi (in Wright et al. 1998, 108-9) on the grounds that, following Roemer, it emphasizes distributional outcomes exclusively. Consequently, were surplus to be (radically) redistributed, exploitation would evaporate—*without* in any way affecting the structure of the relations of production. This objection can be at least partially answered by reformulating the connection between exploitation and class interests in a way that ties interests to these relations more carefully (Wright, in Wright et al. 1998, 280-88). At a more specific level, however, the concept of exploitation generates serious conceptual difficulties. In particular, the notion of

credential/skill based exploitation is implausible: it remains just as reasonable to interpret the economic return to credentials to mean that professionals, experts and the like are merely *less* exploited wage earners, not that they are exploiters. Lurking behind this observation is the fact that credential holders are not, as such, intrinsically tied to non-holders via a definite social relation of appropriation (Wright, in Wright et al. 1998, 308-10). And similar concerns may be raised about the whether managerial relations of domination carry any implication concerning the appropriation of surplus generated by the dominated. Wright's response to these problems is to retain the class schema itself but to jettison the idea "multiple exploitations"; in doing so, he returns to the idea of positions that exhibit multiple, simultaneous class memberships in the case of managerial labor, and treats skills as the basis of a differentiation of strata within the working class, albeit a differentiation which generates divergent material interests (see *ibid.*, 331-40, esp. 333; 1997, 20-23).

There is a further, unexpected result of Wright's revised model that requires comment. As various commentators have pointed out (Edgell 1993, 36), and as he himself acknowledges, when this model is operationalized for purposes of empirical research, it bears a strong resemblance to various Weberian class schemes—especially that of Goldthorpe (Wright, in Wright et al. 1998, 318-23). In the face of this convergence at the practical level, Wright is left to emphasize conceptual and political differences: Weberian classes exhibit divergent material interests, but not *antagonistic* material interests attributable to intrinsically *interdependent* parties; Weberian class analysis is relatively undertheorized, in the sense that it is not systematically connected to Weber's larger interest in social evolution; Marxism (and even a Marxian science)

remains—unlike its Weberian counterpart—internally related to emancipatory political movements. But none of this alters the basic fact that broad theoretical frameworks are underdetermining with respect to empirical research categories (Wright 1997, 37).

The Marxian view of class, as we have seen, forces a number of broad questions to the fore, many of which center on the issue of “determination.” At the most abstract level, oppositions between structure and agency or structure and history are instigated by the need to specify the meaning of the key term “mode of production”; and within any elaboration of this term, the question of “determination” re-appears in the intricacies of the “base/superstructure” relation or the relation of class “structure” and class “formation.” For Poulantzas, Marxism remained fully equipped to respond to these questions; and, of course, the structuralist approach did so in an emphatic manner. While the resulting theory led to the emergence or development of the counter-positions discussed above, it also provoked more complete departures from the Marxian camp. The writings of Cutler, Hindess, Hirst and Hussain (1978, 257-8) comprise one of the foremost examples. In the interest of resurrecting an “agency” which has been thoroughly smothered by “structures,” “the authors reject all general theories of causality” (Johnston 1986, 112). Needless to say, the consequence of this strategy is a crumbling of the entire Marxian framework: in place of “determination” and “relative autonomy” they assert the autonomy pure and simple of the various domains of the social formation; in place of the “reduction” of politics to class conflict (i.e. “economism”), they assert their “general non-correspondence”; etc. (see *ibid.*, 116-7). As we have seen, alternative strategies exist. This is clearest in the case of Wright, who retains from

Marxism little more than a (reconstructed) notion of exploitation-based classes and class interests. Because he utilizes this notion according to the tenets of a social scientific naturalism, the significance of the class structure becomes an entirely a posteriori question. However, since, from such a perspective, this structure merely amounts to one (potentially efficacious) “mechanism” among many, the project of explaining phenomena by reference to class cannot be conflated with “class reductionism” (Wright, in Wright et al. 1998, 279). In the case of Thompson, there is also a commitment to an explanatory program. Thompson seeks to disallow the use of structural concepts except as a heuristic abstraction from the “full historical process.” And although Przeworski remains open to the language of “objective conditions,” he, like Thompson, insists that the consequences of any social mechanism can only be specified by examining how the associated processes are “consciously handled” or “experienced” by the agents involved (though for him, this is inherently conflictual). The resulting notion of determination—as exemplified by Thompson’s use of Williams’ term “pressure”—remains ill-defined and ambiguous, designating a socially generated “propulsion” to act in a particular manner. We might thus paraphrase Thompson and conclude that Marxian concept of class itself evidences a “crucial ambivalence.”

IV. Some Theories of Status

The concept of “status” has routinely been invoked as an alternative to class. As is well known, Weber’s use of term was derived both from the image of caste societies or of feudal estate societies. However, after Weber—and primarily in the U.S. context—numerous accounts were developed in which “status” was construed as the core concept

of stratification theories applicable to contemporary contexts, which thus came to serve as alternatives to class-based ones. Although some of these accounts (such as that of Nisbet and his contemporary followers) have been premised on epochal claims concerning the changing nature of capitalism or of the historically emergent salience of altogether non-economic forms of stratification, others have been pitched in meta-theoretical terms. In the present section I will briefly discuss some of these.

The conceptual background of the term “status” is, if anything, even more checkered than that of class, in the sense that the various instances of its use demonstrate little or no systematicity, nor even any clear meta-theoretical rationale for their evident divergences. The various instances have been nicely summarized by Ollivier (1999). She suggests that vast majority can be related in terms some combination of two aspects: each is either categorical or gradational, and each is either positional or normative/evaluative. In what follows, I am interested only in gradational conceptions of status, which have been far more influential, and more likely to be offered explicitly as substitutes for the concept of class. The reason for this is nicely summarized by Parkin: “[t]he possession of a toothbrush or an oilfield confers similar rights and obligations upon their owners, so that property laws cannot be interpreted as class laws” (1979, 50). The approaches developed by Barber (1957) and Lenski (1966) represent the major variants of this approach.

Barber’s theory of stratification is developed according to the premises of Parsonian functionalism. Thus, stratification is seen to emerge from a differential ranking of roles within a given societal subsystem. This ranking finds its standard in the more or less consensually shared value system which is at the basis of the “societal

community.” Because it entails both a differentiation and evaluation of social roles, its result is “a structure of regularized inequality” (Barber 1957, 7). The evaluative consensus thus furnishes the legitimation that is necessary for the system of unequally distributed rewards and sanctions (which may be immaterial as well as material) to fulfill a socially integrative function. It also provides a basis for the motivational dimension of the personality system, both by directing individual aspirations towards particular social roles, and providing incentives for the quality of the performance of these roles.

According to Barber, social roles which are “functionally essential”—including political, occupational, and religious roles—constitute the “primary” object of the evaluative judgments constitutive of the stratification system; these are contrasted with inessential, “secondary” role systems, such as lineage or ethnicity (*ibid.*, 30-65). I will not pursue this distinction, as it no longer has any theoretical purchase. Instead, I merely want to note Barber’s insistence that, however much they may overlap or “correlate” at an empirical level, these different dimensions of stratification of are analytically *independent* of one another.

Within this context, Barber insists that the stratification system has a gradational organization: “[t]here seems to be no reason to suppose that there are any gaps in the linear dimension of evaluation based on functionally significant roles that are the determinants of stratificational position in society” (*ibid.*, 77). And, he does not hesitate to draw the obvious conclusion contained in this assertion: although sociology may often find it necessary to speak of stratified “classes,” the lines of division which differentiate these classes are ultimately arbitrary, with respect to both their overall number and

placement. Consequently, the identification of these lines of division must inevitably be a matter of simple convenience—whether the purposes at hand be practical or scientific.

For Lenski, stratification arises from the asymmetrical allocation of goods and services, over and above the bare minimum necessary for the perpetuation of the species. However, his approach begins from premises directly opposed to the Parsonian functionalism which Barber relied on: “[t]he distribution of rewards in a society is a function of the distribution of power, not of system needs” (1966, 63). Power is understood, following Weber, as the ability to attain one’s ends, despite the resistance of others, and the notion of legitimation given a purely instrumental meaning. Moreover, power is seen as the foremost determinant of privilege and prestige.

Distributive systems are composed of multiple “class systems,” in Lenski’s vocabulary, each of which is composed of individuals. Lenski uses the term class to refer to “an aggregation of persons in a society who stand in a similar position with respect to some form of power, privilege, or prestige” (*ibid.*, 74-5). Each class system is thus structured around the distribution of one particular asset. As with Barber, Lenski insists that these distributions are essentially continuous. Consequently, the designation of boundaries is merely a matter of analytical convenience (*ibid.*, 76, 79). Furthermore, Lenski emphasizes what he calls the “multidimensional” nature of stratification—that is, the fact that individuals are likely to be situated (at least in complex societies) within a multitude of different “class systems.” And, as with Barber, these various systems are viewed as analytically independent of one another, irrespective of the empirical question of whether any given individual’s status is “consistent” or “inconsistent” across them (*ibid.*, 80). Nevertheless, Lenski develops a further premise which Barber’s functionalist

framework precludes: distributive conflicts are not restricted to struggles between classes within a single system. To the contrary, conflicts may also break out “between class systems” themselves, in which case individuals become engaged in struggles over which of the available principles of distribution should enjoy primacy within the society as a whole.

V. A “Neo-Durkheimian” Theory of Stratification

Before concluding our survey, it is necessary to briefly consider one further alternative to class theory. The approach recently sketched by Grusky and Sørensen bills itself as “neo-Durkheimian,” on the (loose) grounds that it is built around the category of occupation, though without viewing locations in the occupational division of labor as mere indicators of positions on an underlying gradational measure of status.

Grusky and Sørensen begin by asserting that both the Marxian and Weberian traditions of class analysis have resulted in abject failure. They nevertheless take up a position against any abandonment of the “strong” explanatory programs which have characterized these traditions (and in particular, the Marxian), claiming instead that a radical reformulation is required. They thus propose that class categories be disaggregated to the occupational level, on the grounds that the structural dynamics which might exhibit robust explanatory power have, in many cases, devolved to a localistic level, such that aggregate categories are likely to distort or even obliterate them. Likewise, they contend, many of the phenomena that are usually assumed to be influenced by the economic structure (e.g. representations of the social world, collective action, and lifestyles) have been subject to greater and greater differentiation, such that

aggregate level accounts are also no longer plausible. Their re-formulation (*ibid.*, 1189-91) takes an unusual form. It deploys occupational categories from a perspective which is *realist*: occupational designations are not merely nominal conventions employed by the sociologist to indicate a more important underlying reality; it is also *categorical*: studies of occupational stratification must pay serious attention to divisions and boundaries, rather than postulating a linear structure.

Grusky and Sørensen's argument hinges on the assertion that occupations—and more specifically, occupational divisions—do not simply reflect the technical division of labor. Instead, they view them in terms of localistic collectivities which are formed out of a “competitive (but often latent) struggle in which occupational groupings vie with one another for functional niches in the division of labor” (*ibid.*, 1194); conflicts of this sort are said to generate “affiliative ties” (*ibid.*, 1215) which, in turn, are capable of producing the whole gamut of phenomena traditionally explained by reference to class. This is not to deny the pertinence of either technological change or economic rationality in conditioning the division of labor; however, “the technical structure of tasks [merely] renders certain jurisdictional solutions more likely than others” (*ibid.*, 1194, note 4; my addition). Paradigmatic examples of this type of jurisdictional conflict lie in restrictions on who may be hired to perform a particular type of labor (for example, craft unions) or who may undertake a given type of labor in the first place (for example, the professions). According to Grusky and Sørensen, however, strategies oriented to such restrictions comprise the norm within the economic sphere, even if the barriers put in place are often less formalized and less enforceable (and consequently, less rigid). Occupational designations themselves are assumed to be real (rather than simply nominal conventions) precisely on the grounds

that they reflect “jurisdictional settlements” in which “task monopolies” of this sort have been institutionalized. In this manner, they essentially transfer social closure theory to the disaggregate level (*ibid.*, 1202-5).

The “neo-Durkheimian” transformation of class theory has some interesting implications. First, capital has no clear place in this formulation. Thus, on the one hand, “capitalists” could conceivably be included within the framework only insofar as they comprise something like an occupational group—a particularly implausible assumption, at least in a context in which managerially-run corporations represent the norm. And, on the other hand, the dynamics of capital accumulation may function, in a manner similar to the technical division of labor, as an aspect of environment within which groups compete with one another for task niches. In this case, capital accumulation would merely comprise a background condition. Similarly, authority relations do not *per se* enter the constitution of potential conflict groups: “managers” are simply those who have occupied another particular functionally-necessary niche. The result is that no overarching principle can be identified at a theoretical level which would permit the specification of a global structure into which the plurality of occupations are integrated. Indeed, the upshot of Grusky and Sørensen’s reformulation is the notion of an economic structure with no unifying dynamic; to the contrary, the global profile of such a structure is merely the aggregate result of the conflicts occurring in a multitude of individual localities.

Notes

¹ Though it is not, of course, the sufficient condition. Elaboration of the latter would entail—or indeed, be equivalent to—an adequate characterization of the capitalist mode of production.

² This discussion extends at least as far back as Berle and Means' *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*, published in 1932.

³ See Giddens (1973, 160-2) for a discussion of more recent assertions to the effect that the profit motives of owners and managers take the form of an orientation to “maximizing,” on the one hand, and “satisficing,” on the other.

⁴ The whole thesis of separation of ownership and control—widely taken for granted in many sociological arenas for a number of years—is questioned by Maurice Zeitlin (1982) on both conceptual grounds (with respect to the question of what is actually meant by “control” of the enterprise) and empirical grounds (with respect to patterns of share ownership of large corporations).

⁵ Dahrendorf considers this a theoretical coup de main: “[f]or effective private property may disappear empirically, but authority relations can do so only by the magic trick of the system maniac” (Dahrendorf 1959, 31). A closer look at Marx, however, reveals an analysis which is both more complicated and more interesting than one might glean from Dahrendorf. Some of the most important aspects this analysis occur in the chapter dealing with the division of surplus-value into interest and “profit of enterprise” (Marx 1991, 493-514)—a section of the text which Dahrendorf never touches on. Dividends accruing to share ownership, according to Marx, amount to a kind of interest—a phenomenon apparently situated altogether outside of the production process. (Ultimately, however, interest, M - M', must be recognized as the “consummate form” of the fetish [*ibid.*, 523].) By contrast, the question of “profit of enterprise”—the profit left over once interest has been paid to creditors and/or shareholders—requires further specification.

In any society in which the production process occurs cooperatively, says Marx, some type of “supervision and management” becomes necessary (*ibid.*, 507). This may take two “forms”—or better, it exhibits two “aspects.” On the one hand, there is the “productive labor” necessary to coordinate the process as a whole, “as with the conductor of an orchestra.” On the other hand, in any exploitative mode of production, it is necessary that there also be oversight of production—Marx simply calls it “domination”—in order to ensure the extraction of maximal labor effort (and thus value) from the “direct producers.” Of these two aspects, Marx states:

[t]he work of supervision and management, in so far as it arises from the antithetical character [of a process in which some appropriate what others have produced]...and is therefore common to all modes of production which, like the capitalist one, are based on class opposition, is also directly and inseparably fused, under the capitalist system, with the productive functions that all combined social labor assigns to particular individuals as their special work. (*Ibid.*, 510)

Historically, the fusion of coordination and domination has served a justificatory function: “management and supervision” tend to appear as a form of work, a form of labor (which they certainly are, in part); consequently, “profit of enterprise” is typically construed merely as a “wage of superintendence,” thereby eliding its character as an appropriation. This apologetism reaches its apotheosis in the case of slavery (which Marx thus treats as a class relation); however, it has also served as a justification for the industrial capitalist.

With the distinction between the coordination and domination of those engaged in the production process, Marx is attempting to differentiate those functions of “management and

supervision” which may be ascribed to technical division of labor and those which may be ascribed to the social division labor. The industrial enterprise, once organized in the form of joint-stock company, does not do away with the latter, of course. But with the separation of ownership and control, the wage of superintendence becomes what it always claimed to be: the cost of managerial labor power is determined on the market, as with any labor power, and is thus ultimately regulated by the costs associated with its production (i.e. qualification) and reproduction (*ibid.*, 513, 567). Conversely, profit of enterprise accrues (as interest) to owners who have no function in the production process; it therefore appears merely as what it is—the appropriation of value produced by others.

Thus, when he refers to joint-stock companies as “the abolition of capital as private property within the confines of the capitalist mode of production,” as a “point of transition to a new form of production” which, however, ultimately ends up reproducing the contradictions inherent in the capitalistic mode of production (see *ibid.*, 569, 571), Marx would appear to be asserting that this form of enterprise *partially* realizes the distinction between the coordination of and domination in production—not, of course, with respect to the labor process itself (which remains as exploitative as before), but at least with respect to the appropriation of surplus value. To be sure, a reading of this sort presupposes a global interpretation in which the evolution of the capitalist mode of production could be understood in terms of a progressive differentiation of factors constitutive of the technical division of labor, on the one hand, and factors constitutive of the social division of labor, one the other. (It also presumably entails an assumption that the former—the mere “orchestral” management of the labor process—rests on a *benign* form of authority.) However, merely pointing to these aspects of the discussion of the joint-stock company is adequate to clear the air of denunciations of the type which Dahrendorf sometimes indulges in, especially when these take the form of simple assertions of the functional indispensability of authority (see, for example, 1959, 219).

⁶ Authority, however, is not conceived as the sole source of conflict or conflict groups. This will be clarified.

⁷ This is not meant to imply that the bureaucratic hierarchy is not structured as a “continuum” of sorts; however, the latter exists only on the “plus” side of the line separating those in positions of domination (i.e. authority) from those in positions of subjection (*ibid.*, 171).

⁸ At risk of merely pointing out the obvious, we still have to ask the question: if industrial capitalists were previously able to dominate in the political sphere by means of their “agents,” why is it that they cannot be said to presently dominate industry by means of “agents”—i.e. via managers? In order to answer this question, it would be necessary for Dahrendorf to modify his interpretation of the emergence of the joint-stock company. The process would have to be seen to entail a *diffusion* of ownership and a consequent *dilution* of the power of particular owners—thus resulting in a sort of authority vacuum into which the managers could be said to have stepped. This is, in fact, how the thesis of a separation of ownership and control is frequently treated (see, again, Zeitlin [1982] for a critical treatment). However, embracing this form of the thesis implies recognizing ownership itself as a distinct source of power—one which may *compete* with that derived from occupancy of a strategic position within the enterprise. Dahrendorf refuses to take even the smallest step in this direction.

⁹ In his zeal to de-link the authority criterion from *all possible* economic connotations, Dahrendorf occasionally makes the error of reducing all possible “group conflicts” to class conflicts:

[t]he theory of group conflict does not postulate any connection between class conflict and economic conditions. [...] The fact that economic demands may provide the substance (a

substance situationally specific and in that sense incidental) of manifest interests must not give rise to the erroneous notion that satisfaction of these demands eliminates the causes of conflict. Social conflict is as universal as the relations of authority and imperatively coordinated associations, for it is the distribution of authority that provides the basis and cause of its occurrence. (*ibid.*, 253-4)

I see no reason not to view these occasional slippages (from class conflict to social conflict tout court) as mere overstatements of the thesis, rather than consequences of it.

¹⁰ As noted by Giddens, for example, “the most humble clerical worker” in a state bureaucracy, is, by virtue of this position, a (potential) member of the political ruling class (Giddens 1973, 72). To this we could add the equally obvious—but also counterintuitive—consequence that capitalists, once they are “without function,” have no place whatsoever in the “industrial” class structure. Dahrendorf seems perfectly willing to accept implications such as these. More trenchant issues arise when we consider his willingness to ratify the theoretical proliferation of class structures throughout a given society. For while he restricts his empirical attention to the arenas of industry and the state, he also acknowledges at various times that the church and even the chess club, as “imperatively coordinated associations,” exhibit their own class structures (Dahrendorf 1959, 192, 211-2). Once we recognize the full breadth of his extension of the class concept, we might ask what it is that unites the members of different organizations *within* the same societal arena into classes. Why is it that individuals in subjected positions within different industrial enterprises, for example, can be said to have a collective interest in the transformation of authority relations *throughout* the industrial sphere—and not just in the particular organization to which they belong? In the case of the political sphere, these questions are not hard to answer: insofar as all individuals within the territorial unit of the state are subject to the power vested in it, they may be said to fall on either one or the other side of a *single* authority line. In other words, by virtue of the state’s monopoly of the legitimate use of force, the political arena exhibits the peculiarity of encompassing only one “imperatively coordinated association.” However, when we ask what it is that connects those in positions of subordination *across* individual business enterprises—what it is, in other words, that might generate trans-organizational interests—a clear-cut answer of this sort cannot be discerned. Indeed, it seems to me that Dahrendorf is obligated to specify a mechanism which could here fulfil a function analogous to the state’s monopoly of the legitimate use of force—and, moreover, that the most plausible candidates available to him (e.g. *markets*) are a priori excluded on the basis of his anti-economism. This would seem to point to a dilemma that pervades the application of Dahrendorf’s class concept to any societal arena other than the political: insofar as all of the organizations within a particular societal arena are formally incorporated into an identifiable, centralized association (as with the relation between the Catholic Church and individual churches), we may still speak of trans-organizational “authority classes”; but insofar as no such centralized authority structure exists (particular synagogues or mosques, for example), Dahrendorf’s class concept would seem to devolve onto the organizational level, and the proliferation of “class structures” would seem to continue ad infinitum. If this is the case, it would imply that in the key arena of industry, we are reduced to speaking of mere “company classes” (on loose analogy to “company unions”). (The existence of unions and business associations does not provide a viable way out of this dilemma, since these comprise—at most—*two unrelated* class structures, according to Dahrendorf’s logic [see *ibid.*, 279].)

¹¹ When the schema is used in longitudinal analyzes with a relatively long time frame, this procedure leads to a dilemma which, to best of my of knowledge, neither Goldthorpe nor his associates have addressed: namely, insofar as there have been substantial shifts in the market or work situation associated with a particular occupation (*relative* to other occupations), it may thereby be implied that the occupational composition of particular classes has changed over time;

consequently, use of a schema derived from contemporary data for the purpose of analyzing previous configurations of the class structure may be misleading.

¹² Erikson and Goldthorpe must be credited for the strong theoretical case they make in favor of the proposition that mobility studies must be based on a class theory, rather than on a theory (or assumption) of hierarchies of prestige, status, or the like (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1993, 29-35).

¹³ Aron can be slightly vague: the “ruling class” is at times described as a group which is distinct from the “political class,” and the object of inquiry asserted to be the relations between the two. However, from statements that are made elsewhere it becomes clear that the “political class” amounts to particular subset of the “ruling class.”

¹⁴ Aron declares:

the fully developed societies are more and more complex. Not only because of the diversity of jobs and the augmentation of capacities and qualifications, but also because the diverse criteria [according to which classes are objectively identified]—the relation to property, the manual or intellectual nature of work, the source of income, the manner of life and the value system—are not in accord with one another, they do not form global collectivities, objectively recognizable totalities, with each member of the society belonging to one of these collectivities and aware of his membership in it. The representation of class—the objective totality that the sociologist discovers ready-made—is a myth, and it becomes more and more mythical...to the extent that the society modernizes or develops. (1965, 20-1; my translation)

¹⁵ This is something of self-directed criticism, since in his earlier work (1971), Parkin had insisted on the priority of skills differentials—i.e. the mental/manual divide—as the foundation of the contemporary class structure.

¹⁶ No matter how hard we try to peer through the litany of sarcasm which Parkin hurls at his enemies, we find an ironclad refusal to depart from the conceptual repertoire of action theory. As a consequence, it appears to be necessary that closure processes be fully assimilated to the language of strategy; this means that institutionalized mechanisms of “exclusionary” closure—in the contemporary case, primarily private property in the means of production and educational credentials—must be viewed strictly as the result of exclusionary “designs” on the part of the dominant class (see Parkin 1979, 55, 60, 62, and *passim*).

¹⁷ The distinction between collectivistic and individualistic types of exclusion is meant as a substitute for stratification theory’s distinction between “ascription” and “achievement,” which Parkin reasonably takes to be both normatively loaded and empirically inaccurate:

a girl from the black ghetto who succeeds via high school and college in becoming a junior school teacher will have demonstrated far more in the way of individual achievement and effort than, say, the son of a doctor who enters the medical profession. Yet every “achieving society” will lavish more benefits and honors on the latter than on the former. (Parkin 1979, 71).

This is essentially the same argument that Bourdieu and Passeron developed (1979, 68), in the mid-1960s, with respect to educational attainment.

¹⁸ The exposition is confused by virtue of the fact that Weber presents the notion of “social class” as part of a tripartite distinction, ostensibly between types of uniform class situations—the other two being “property classes” and “commercial classes.” However, according to the more or less

standard interpretation, the latter two concepts are meant to differentiate between various institutional *bases* of divergent class situations, while the former—the concept of a “social class”—is meant to denote the *process* by virtue of which the “control of goods and skills” may lead to a concrete demarcation of one class from another. Membership in a “commercial class” entails the derivation of income from assets by means of continual market exchange (for example, services for payment or labor for wages), whereas membership in a “property class” implies derivation of income from assets without any such exchange (as with “rentiers”). “Commercial classes” are determined by differences in “the marketability of goods and services,” while “property classes” are determined by “property differences” (Weber 1978, 302).

¹⁹ To Giddens remarks concerning Weber’s “class situation” we could add that the concept remains indifferent to variation in the *sources* of income—that is, two individuals with the same income are presumably within the same “class situation,” irrespective of the fact that one derives this income from profits, the other from wages earned on the basis of a high level of skill. Thus, in addition to providing a basis for identifying the non-arbitrary aggregation of “class situations” into “social classes,” the mobility criterion implies the differentiation of social classes on a *qualitative* dimension. This becomes apparent in Weber’s typology of contemporary social classes, which separates out “the propertyless intelligentsia and specialists” (1978, 305).

²⁰ On this question, see the contretemps initiated by Giddens’ review of Parkin’s *Marxism and Class Analysis* (Giddens 1980; Parkin 1980); see also Giddens (1973, 111-2).

²¹ These would presumably include the types of strategies “designed” to preserve (and enhance) or to challenge the monopoly value resulting from closure which Parkin describes.

²² Thus, for example, one segment of a subordinate class or group may be said to “exploit” another segment of that class or group if it engages in activities meant to restrict the access of the latter’s members to rewards. Parkin’s foremost example here is the effort of labor unions at various places and times to monopolize positions against members of certain ethnic or racial groups. In Giddens’ conceptualization too, inter-class exploitation is clearly not equivalent to exploitation as such, though his interest in drawing such a distinction lies in differentiating pre-class (and possibly post-class) from class societies (see Giddens 1973, 131).

²³ I do not mean to imply that similar oppositions are absent within the Weberian tradition—to the contrary, I believe that the review presented here demonstrates precisely that they are (as evidenced, for example, by the contrast between Goldthorpe and Parkin, or equally, by the very formulation of Giddens’ theoretical objectives). However, the various positions which I have grouped together under heading “Weberian” are also characterized (in certain instances) by a more or less complete absence of common premises, as in the opposition between a notion of class rooted in the distribution of organizational authority and one rooted in market relations.

²⁴ As is emphasized repeatedly, these constitutive relations are not simple relations between individuals, i.e. “intersubjective relations”; rather, the latter are “defined by” a primary relation between individuals and “things”—that is, the means of production (Althusser and Balibar 1970, 174-5).

²⁵ This is so because the “instances” are themselves—at least purportedly—“regional” structures, i.e. bundles of relations between “elements” (Althusser and Balibar 1970, 212ff., 235).

²⁶ For an attempt to give a more rigorous formulation to these premises, see the discussion of Wright, below.

²⁷ Whether Poulantzas is, in fact, able to dispense with the functionalist orientation in his concrete analyses of various socio-political formations has been repeatedly contested (for example, Frankel 1982; Connell 1982).

²⁸ Without taking up the details of the argument, it should be noted that Poulantzas is highly critical of this formulation (1978, 124-5).

²⁹ It must be pointed out that Poulantzas' position is heavily influenced by political considerations, insofar as, by denying that white collar and service sector workers can be assimilated to an encompassing working class on the grounds of their exclusion from the bourgeoisie, he is able to force the question of a working class/"middle class" alliance into the discussion.

³⁰ The unity apparent in an artistic style, genre or trend that originates in a particular time and place (e.g. "German Romanticism")—assuming it comes about without any explicit imitative intentions on the part of the artists involved—serves as an example of this kind of "pressure," at least insofar as it can be traced back (however mediately) to antecedent conditions in the "social mode" which might be plausibly be seen to exert the requisite "influence."

³¹ Wright also breaks from the structuralist school by insisting on the conceptual utility of "consciousness" (Wright 1978, 43-4, note 33).

³² The last of these, "control over investments and resource allocation," is a stand-in for "ownership." Wright subscribes to the position that the diffusion of legal ownership via stock in no way dissolves the existence (or efficacy) of ownership as a relation of production, as Dahrendorf assumed. To the contrary, this phenomenon permits those owners with the largest holdings to control a much greater amount of capital (Wright 1978, 69). Thus, effective ownership must be distinguished from its legal counterpart.

³³ It is unclear to me why Wright restricts processes of mediation to the effects of class struggle.

³⁴ This marks Wright's (unacknowledged) distance from Przeworski, who speaks of class formation as an intrinsically historical process. Additionally, in defining class formations merely as the system of organizational relations within a class, Wright extends the structuralist prioritization of relations between positions over relations between agents to this level (see Wright 1978, 106, note 92). Such an extension is clearly not in accord with Przeworski's notion of "class struggles."

³⁵ In the case of the various managerial positions the notion of "contradictory" locations is more plausible, since the divergent interests which characterize them are also *antagonistic*.

³⁶ Though I will not deal with it here, Wright is also highly critical of the fact his earlier formulation lacked the elements necessary to "give any...specificity to the class structures of post-capitalist societies or point the direction for the emergence of post-capitalist classes within capitalism" (Wright 1985, 56).

³⁷ For an account of the difference between explanation by mechanism and explanation by law (as well as that between prediction and explanation), see Elster (1989, 3-10). It must be noted that Wright also establishes a certain distance between himself and other well-known practitioners of

Analytical Marxism in that he does not *exclusively* adopt the epistemic postulates of methodological individualism or the meta-theoretic postulates of rational action theory (Wright 1994, 189-91).

Chapter 3. Structure, Cause, Conflict: Class in Bourdieu's Sociology

I. Problems with Class

In a highly influential article, Brubaker devotes considerable attention to the question of Bourdieu's concept of class, finding it to be one of the least satisfying of aspects his sociology. Indeed, for Brubaker, who is primarily interested in the concept as it is deployed in *Distinction*, this is because it has become something of a sociological monstrosity: “[b]y virtue of its strategic location at the intersection of shared external conditions of existence and shared internalized dispositions, shared configurations of power and shared styles of life, class is the universal explanatory principle in Bourdieu's metatheory” (1985, 769). To be sure, Bourdieu does assert the universality of social class *qua explanans* in *Distinction* (1984, 114). However, the precise nature of the concept, as used there, as well its explanatory significance, are not immediately evident. Indeed, at the time he published his essay, Brubaker was unable to take account of various articles and lectures in which Bourdieu has attempted to retrospectively clarify the (undoubtedly opaque) notion of class upon which *Distinction* drew (primarily Bourdieu 1985 and 1987a).¹ In the present chapter, I seek to reconstruct this notion on the basis of Bourdieu's more recent writings.

Bourdieu's recent approach to class, like his more general theory of practice, stresses the reconciliation of “objectivist” and “subjectivist” perspectives, of a “nominalist” view that sees only “classes on paper” with a “realist” view that sees “mobilized” and conflictual classes. Considered in very general terms, of course, the conceptual intentions revealed by this concern are in no way new—class, it could easily be argued, is a concept

that is particularly susceptible to the antinomies of sociological thought that Bourdieu everywhere derides. This being the case, we might try to identify the distinctive aspects of his approach from accounts originating “closer to home.” Thus, Bourdieu himself assesses the evolution of his thought by speaking of “the progress leading from the substantialist concept of class to the relational notion of class position, which was a crucial turning point, and thence to the notion of social space” (1993b, 264). Wacquant offers a similar appraisal when he declares that “within the same broad relational framework, . . . one can detect a notable evolution from earlier to later conceptualizations of class as an historical construction rooted in social space” (Wacquant, in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 6, note 10). The spatial model to which Bourdieu and Wacquant refer entails the treatment of the social order in terms of a structure of positions organized according to particular parameters, and is indeed intended to fulfill an explanatory function. To anticipate a later argument, I would like to suggest that Bourdieu’s most important innovation here lies in the fact that he construes the model as a *single* space which exhibits a *multidimensional* arrangement. At the same time, however, this structure is partially—but not fully—determinative of class formations (that is, of the emergence of groups composed of individuals who, given the same structural location, share a symbolically expressed collective identity). Indeed, Bourdieu characterizes the relationship between class structure and class formation in statistical terminology: analysis of structural positions allows one to identify only “probable classes” (1985, 725). This amounts to a qualification of the relation between the two aspects of social class (the “objective” and the “subjective” or the “nominal” and the “real,” etc.), in the sense that any such analysis reveals only the relative likelihood of particular class formations, given a certain structural arrangement. Indeed, for

Bourdieu, it actually implies that, given a structural arrangement, the formation of classes remains only one among other possibilities of “group” formation (as evidenced even by the title of Bourdieu 1987a).

While this preliminary characterization is both partial and vague, I believe that it is adequate to at least ameliorate objections, such as those expressed by Brubaker, concerning the purportedly totalizing nature of class in Bourdieu’s sociology: one might well ask whether Bourdieu’s “probable classes” could just as accurately be designated “probable ethnicities” and the like. What Brubaker apparently fails to acknowledge, in other words, is that although the relation between class structure and class formation is a *causal* one for Bourdieu, it is also a *conditional* one. This being said, however, it remains to be seen exactly how Bourdieu conceives the two aspects of class which are incorporated into this characterization, and more importantly, exactly how he understands their relation. In attempting to work through these issues in detail, I want to attend, in particular, to the question of how, for Bourdieu, class is understood to function as causal factor, and consequently, how it is utilized for explanatory purposes. The myriad criticisms of Bourdieu’s putative “reductionism” and “determinism”—and, associated with this, his alleged presupposition that social dynamics are geared towards the fulfillment of a socially reproductive function—all presume at least a measure of clarity concerning this side of his sociology. And, while it is certainly the true that the superficial denunciations and exaltations of Bourdieu’s sociology have been complemented, especially over the last decade, by increasingly serious and insightful secondary studies, it also remains true that this aspect of it, in particular, has remained unanalyzed. Thus, I am primarily interested here in developing this clarification (rather than evaluating the validity of objections aimed

at his work). I believe this endeavor to be as important to the critics as to Bourdieu's defenders, because, as I will suggest, his work cannot simply be assumed to fit neatly into one or another existing school of class or stratification analysis.

In what follows, I first seek to reconstruct, if only in outline, the earlier "evolution" of Bourdieu's thought on class (sections II-III). This serves to introduce problems and questions that are dealt with in *Distinction* (and in later work) without ever being explicitly stated there. Subsequently, I discuss *Distinction* in detail, focusing in particular on the meaning of what Bourdieu calls "objective class" and the nature of the causal efficacy he attributes to it (sections IV-V). Once this has been supplemented by an account of the meaning of class analysis as a sociological undertaking based on an explanatory program, the question of the place and role of class formations arises—a question which, due to the subject matter of the book, prioritizes the dimension of *lifestyle* (sections VI-VII). With these aspects of Bourdieu's project clarified, it becomes possible to situate it vis-à-vis other schools of class and stratification analysis (section VII). After briefly considering what I take to be the most important of Bourdieu's post-*Distinction* innovations—the concept of a "field of power"—and of its place in the class analysis of contemporary societies (section IX), I will conclude with a discussion of the underlying premises upon which, in my view, the edifice rests (section X).

Classes, Causes, and the Intricacies of Structure

Bourdieu's work can be read as a more or less sustained reflection on the meaning and use of the concept of class. While I do not intend to inventory these reflections, I do think it is necessary to draw from them a series of themes and questions in order to

appreciate fully the complexities of the class analysis put forth in *Distinction*. When reconstructed, Bourdieu's approach to class can be seen to parallel the development of his basic conceptual repertoire. Hence, to begin with, I examine a 1966 essay which has two purposes: first, it attempts to work out the degree to which classes must be seen as aggregates which are defined by strictly economic criteria. Here it becomes clear that when speaking of "class," Bourdieu wants to include a wide range of phenomena—such as the attitudes, beliefs, and practices of members—which cannot be fully reduced to the effect of economic determinations, but which, at the same time, are not independent of these determinations. He then proceeds, secondly, to introduce the theme of status groups. In this part of the essay, Bourdieu attempts to develop the now-familiar claim that lifestyle differences amount to a symbolic "expression" of class relations, an expression which, however, is not understood as such by the individuals who enter into symbolically mediated interactions. Subsequently, I undertake a consideration of Bourdieu's writings on education. In these analyses, the focus is somewhat different: given a basic notion of class, the question becomes one of establishing how this notion can be invoked to explain a process that unfolds over time (i.e. the movement of individuals through the levels of the educational system). As developed in *Reproduction*, the answer to this problem incorporates many of the basic sociological concepts that are associated with Bourdieu's work, the most important being "cultural capital" and "habitus." On the basis of such concepts, Bourdieu and Passeron seek to develop an ambitious model founded on the assertion of an identity that links putatively discreet causal processes. Once the ambiguities with which this model is beset have been sketched, it can be suggested that *Distinction*

amounts, at least in part, to a resolution of various conceptual problems which stood at the heart of Bourdieu's previous sociology.

II. An Early View of Class and Status Group

Bourdieu's 1966 article on class is divided into two parts; the first elaborates and defends a distinction between properties pertaining to "class situation" (or "class condition") and properties pertaining to "class position," while the second takes up the meaning of status groups, and—offering an early version of premise which forms the basis of *Distinction*—argues that such groups are actually "misrecognized" social classes (see also 1990b, 135-41). The manner in which these two discussions fit together is not especially clear. The former is largely committed to defending the viability of inter-societal generalizations in light of the distinction between "class situation" and "class position." The latter, by contrast, seeks to explicate and defend an account of the conditions under which a symbolic system may be analyzed in independence from the social arrangement to which it belongs. The two strands of the essay are, however, closely connected, although this is undoubtedly easier to discern retrospectively.

Bourdieu begins by asking whether sociologists have a well-defined meaning in mind when they utilize terms such as "social structure," "class structure," and the like. "To take the notion of social structure seriously is to inquire into what each social class owes to the fact that it occupies a position in a historically defined social structure, and is affected by the relations which connect it with the other constitutive parts of the structure." Any class characteristics that can be understood only via reference to these relations are termed "properties of position." These are contrasted with the properties deriving from the "class

situation”—which is to say, *ex negativo*, those that owe nothing to the location of the class within a particular structure, and which are therefore merely “juxtaposed” with those of other classes. Bourdieu refers here to those properties which are associated with “a certain type of occupational practice or the material conditions of existence” (Bourdieu 1966, 201).

The essay provides numerous illustrations. Taking up an assertion of Weber’s, Bourdieu contrasts those properties attributed to the peasantry which derive from its “situation and practice of working the earth” with those that derive from its position in a particular social structure. To the former belong “a certain type of respect for nature...and certain recurrent traits of peasant religiosity.” An instance of the latter can be seen in the case of “traditional Algeria, [where] the religion of the countryside owes a number of its characteristics to the fact that it does not cease to judge itself by reference to the religion of the town” (*ibid.*, 201-2). In another example, he illustrates the notion of situational properties with a claim asserting that instability of employment, and its resultant economic insecurity, tend to prevent the “sub-proletariat from constituting a coherent group capable of pursuing economic and social demands.” Contrasted with this, and thus illustrating the notion of positional properties, is the claim (again taken from Weber) that “resentment, disguised as moral indignation, is historically associated with an inferior position in the social structure, and, more precisely, with membership in the lower stratum of the middle classes” (*ibid.*, 205).

We can gain a purchase on Bourdieu’s argument if we note that the purpose of the essay, in many respects, is to work through his relationship to structuralism. In a number of writings from this period, Bourdieu suggests that the main contribution of structuralism lies in its application—within the human sciences—of the notion of “relationalism.” The

meaning of this notion can be stated in the form of a postulate: “single elements only hold their properties by virtue of the relations linking one with another within a system, that is to say, by virtue of the function they fulfill within the system of relations” (Bourdieu 1968, 682; see also Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron 1991, 46, and *passim*). Stated otherwise, this implies that an element *A* exhibits certain characteristics solely as a result of the fact that it is *not-B*, *not-C*, etc.; and likewise, *B* and *C* each attain their identity via the relations within which they stand opposed to other elements in the system. Relational properties—those which derive from differences—are therefore differentiated from “intrinsic” properties, which is to say, those which “attach to” or “inhere in” the element in question irrespective of its relations to other such entities or elements. When Bourdieu approaches the subject of class by means of this distinction, he thus affirms, on the one hand, that a class exhibits certain features which must be explained by reference to the members’ occupational practices or the “material conditions” within which they subsist; but he also implies, on the other, that such explanation is inevitably limited, and that certain features can only be accounted for via reference to the contrasting aspects of other classes. Hence, a strictly economic account of class—for Bourdieu, one oriented to occupational practices and “material conditions”—is both necessary but partial. The distinction between a “class situation” and a “class position,” in other words, implies a duality of explanatory principles.

This distinction is immediately complicated by the statement that the degree to which a class is characterized by one or the other type of property is variable—and that it will be found to vary not only from one society to the next, but also from one class to the next *within* a single society. This is because situational properties and positional properties

do not sit side by side, independent of one another. Indeed, according to Bourdieu, the “class situation defines the *margin of variation*, generally very narrow, which is left to properties of position” (1966, 202)—that is, the “material conditions of existence” differentially promote or constrain the emergence of relational properties. What Bourdieu seems to want to assert is the idea that classes are differentially affected by material necessity, in the sense that for those subject to material deprivation, practices and beliefs will be directly formed out of an adaptation to this situation. Thus, the less a particular class within a particular society is subjected to material necessity, the more it exhibits a “margin of variation,” in the sense that its characteristic practices and beliefs will have been determined according to the logic of inter-class opposition.² Bourdieu, of course, understands this latter “determination” in a strong sense: the fact that such characteristics are formed out of a “freedom from necessity” does not imply an open space of autonomy for the members of a given class. Relational propositions on social classes are, at least in principle, *structural* in nature.

However, this points us to a number of obscurities that suffuse Bourdieu’s early reflections on class. When he speaks of the situational properties associated with a class, Bourdieu is referring, in a more or less routine manner, to the economic determination of attitudes, beliefs, practices, and the like. Similarly, when he speaks of the positional properties associated with a class—that is, of those characteristic features which are determined by the relations which obtain between it and other classes—he is also referring to the emergence of particular attitudes, beliefs, and practices, on the supposition that the absence of economic necessity opens up a “space” for the play relational negation. Indeed, this latter point is supported by nearly all of the illustrative examples that he offers.

Nevertheless, as soon we recall that the original intent of the distinction was to develop a more precise formulation of the notion of *social structure*—particularly as it pertains to class—confusions become evident: if, in keeping with conventional usage, the notion of a “class structure” can be said to entail (at minimum) the identification of a system of *institutionally circumscribed* economic locations, then we must recognize that it is precisely this which is relegated to the notion of a “class situation.” In other words, in attempting to mobilize the structuralist postulate, but to simultaneously retain a concept of economic determination, Bourdieu is unable to break the notion of “relationalism” out of its semiotic mode—that is, its seeming affinity (in keeping with structuralist anthropology) for the analysis of systems of *meaning*. This assessment is essentially confirmed by an article from the same period which evaluates the relevance of structuralism’s prioritization of relations to “the sociological theory of knowledge”: “[m]ore than cultural systems, social formations resist the application of such a meta-theory” (1968, 689). The immediate implication of this is a disjunction between the institutional sense of the term “structure” (designating locations in the system of economic production) and what might be called, in keeping with Bourdieu’s terminology, its meta-theoretical sense (which asserts the primacy of relations).³ As a consequence, when Bourdieu turns to the topic of status groups, he will be unable to differentiate clearly between status properties and properties of position.

Bourdieu introduces the theme of status groups into the discussion in order to incorporate an additional dimension into the matrix of properties associated with class:

[a] social class is never defined solely by its situation and by its position in a social structure...; we must also number among its properties the fact that the individuals who compose it deliberately or objectively enter into symbolic relations which, in expressing differences of situation and position according to a systematic logic, tend to transmute them into *significant distinctions*. (Bourdieu 1966, 212)

The approach to status groups is familiar from *Distinction*: cultivated consumption practices are said to transfigure mere possession of a thing into a symbolically inflected action; whereas the object may be alienable—and its possession therefore considered accidental—the “art of consuming well,” “an inimitable form of rarity,” appears as “an essential property of the person” (*ibid.*, 214). Varying by class, these practices—as they pertain to objects such as clothing, food, decor and the like—are asserted to signify class membership, but in a “transformed form.” And, as with *Distinction*, this transformation is asserted to dissimulate underlying relations of domination.

The question immediately arises as to how, exactly, status groups are related to classes, and more specifically, how this new, symbolic dimension relates to the initial notion of class, founded on the distinction between situation and position. This can be clarified if we consider some further remarks Bourdieu offers:

everything seems to indicate that Weber opposes class and status group as two types of *real* unities which would come together more or less frequently according to the type of society (that is to say, according to the degree of autonomy and domination of the economic order); [but] to give Weberian analyses all of their force and impact, it is necessary to see them instead as *nominal* unities which can capture [*restituer*] reality more or less completely according to the type of society, but which are always the result of *a choice to accent the economic aspect or the symbolic aspect*—aspects which always coexist in the same reality (in different proportions according to the particular society and across social classes within the same society), because symbolic distinctions are always secondary in relation to the economic differences that they express in transforming them. (*ibid.*, 212-3; my addition)

Class and status group are two aspects of the same “unity”; more specifically, status amounts to a symbolic “expression” of class. Here again, we find Bourdieu invoking the relational logic of negation—on more comfortable terrain in the symbolic arena—in order to provide a principle which is capable of accounting for the meaning of such practices (they are now explained in terms of the Saussurian notion of “value”). Moreover, we again

find him claiming that the proportional weights that must be attributed to the two sides of the equation—in this case class (in toto) and status—are variable both across and within societies. It is therefore difficult to clearly differentiate status properties from properties of position, and more specifically, to conceive of the latter as a dimension of the “economic aspect” of the total “unity.” This confusion is only magnified by the fact that at least one of Bourdieu’s illustrations of positional properties actually refers to lifestyle differences (see *ibid.*, 206-7).⁴

Like properties of position, status properties are constrained within the limits of the class situation. These “material conditions of existence,” as Bourdieu refers to them, recall Marx’s description of the sphere of material production as a “realm of necessity.” In an ironic depreciation of the notion of the “free” wage-labor contract, Marx contrasted to this a “realm of freedom,” understood precisely as the sphere of activity that stands outside of production, and in which the advance of “civilization” might take the form of an ever-greater satisfaction of culturally defined “needs” (1991, 957-9). By yoking Marx’s “realm of freedom” to the Weberian notion of status groups, Bourdieu implicates it in the process of class domination.⁵ Furthermore, by insisting that the process in which symbolically mediated interpersonal relations give rise to social distinction has, as its condition of possibility, a material foundation, Bourdieu implies that the symbolic efficacy attributable to the practices of those trapped within the iron cage of necessity can only be understood privatively: “the classes which are the most disadvantaged from the economic point of view never intervene in the game of...distinction, the form par excellence of the properly cultural game which is *objectively* organized in relation to them, though only as foil, or more specifically, as *nature*” (1966, 222-3). Consequently, this game remains one for the

privileged, carried on “within those privileged societies that can offer themselves the luxury of dissimulating oppositions of fact—that is to say, of force—beneath oppositions of sense” (*ibid.*, 223).

Within this theoretical construction, the notion of “properties of position” functions as a sort of ill-defined but essential intervening “level”: on the one hand, it prevents the symbolic domain from appearing as a simple reflection of those determinations wrought directly by underlying material reality, while also precluding, on the other, its absolute autonomy (where it would stand in for Marx’s counterfactual “realm of freedom”). However, given the disjunction between the senses in which Bourdieu speaks of “structure” (the institutional and the meta-theoretical), he is left to simply assert that the relational determination of both properties of position and status properties—and the enclosure of both within the same material limits—results in a “predisposition” to a “pre-established harmony”:

[n]othing would be more false than to believe that symbolic actions (or the symbolic aspect of actions) signify nothing other than themselves: they always express social position according to a logic which is the same as that of the social structure, that of distinction. Signs—which, insofar as they are “defined not positively by their contents but negatively by their relation with the other terms of the system,” and which, being only that which the others are not, obtain their “value” from the structure of the symbolic system—are predisposed by a sort of pre-established harmony to express the status “rank” which...owes its essential “value” to its position in a social structure defined as a system of positions and oppositions. (*ibid.*, 215)

This claim elsewhere takes the form of an assertion that the two orders exhibit a “homologous” organization. Nevertheless, in the context of his aspiration to apply the relational mode of thought to both class and status, it is apparent that Bourdieu is unable to identify a mechanism which can account for their postulated “harmony.” He lacks, in other words, a concept which would permit him to construe the “expression” of which he speaks

as a form of *causality*. Bourdieu admits precisely this in his closing remark (which simultaneously reveals all of the ambiguities inherent in his use of the term “structure”): “[i]t is therefore a question of establishing how the structure of economic relations can, in determining the social conditions and positions of social subjects, determine the structure of symbolic relations which are organized according to a logic irreducible to that of economic relations” (*ibid.*, 223).

If we address this admittedly confusing essay from a retrospective vantage point, we can discern some of the conceptual clarifications that it necessitates. First, the emergence of the concept of cultural capital will enable Bourdieu to analyze cultural systems according to the logic of a resource, on par with economic capital (in that in it subject to monopolization and implicated in the regulation of access to social positions), rather than as a system of signification. The latter, in contradistinction, will be placed under the concept of “symbolic capital” (see Bourdieu 1986). Specification of the various forms of capital will allow Bourdieu to more clearly differentiate the “being” of a class from its symbolically encoded “being-perceived,” to employ his later terminology (1990b, 135). Second, throughout many of Bourdieu’s writings on education, there will occur a more or less subterranean reflection on the nature of social causation. Ultimately, however, Bourdieu will be required to reconcile the meta-theoretic and institutional notions of structure—a conceptual development which is announced programmatically at various points in the early 1970s (for example, Bourdieu 1991b, 163-70), but which is fully executed only in *Distinction*.

III. Education and the Facets of Class Membership

If we undertake even a brief survey, we find that Bourdieu's studies of education have been punctuated, from the start, by a consideration of manner in which the concept of class can (and should) be utilized for explanatory purposes. Thus, in an essay published in 1965 on the role of "linguistic misunderstanding" in the classroom, Bourdieu and his associates take up the significance of the fact that, at the higher levels of educational system, social class origin becomes a weak predictor of academic performance, while previous academic attainment functions more powerfully. This leads them to following assertion:

we should not see in social background simply the first link in a chain of causal connections. On the contrary, it is wholly in each of its mediations that class asserts its influence. Only by abstraction can we refer, for example, to "the student" or to the student child of the worker or even (as in multivariate analysis) to the student child born of working-class parents and taking Latin or Greek [i.e. a particular curriculum]. From the situation of a working-class child, we may be able to understand what it means to him to be studying Latin or not studying it, to be attending a teachers' college or a *petit séminaire*, to become a philosophy teacher or an experimental psychologist. But we cannot reassemble this or that experience from whichever one happens to be taken as the key to the whole. The real experiences described by these abstractions assume concrete, unitary and meaningful form only thanks to the fact that they are constituted by the class situation, the point from which every possible view unfolds and upon which no single point of view is possible. (Bourdieu, Passeron, and de Saint Martin 1994, 55-6; my addition)

In reading this passage, we should not, in my view, interpret the notion of "class situation" as it is used here according to the sharp distinction upon which the previous essay was based (i.e. in opposition to class position); rather, in this context it can be taken to denote the *totality* of class-specific properties. Indeed, as will become clear, Bourdieu's early writings on education exhibit some of the same confusions as the essay on class and status,

but magnified by the attempt to conceptualize the educational system precisely as a causal mechanism.

The most important aspect of the preceding remark lies in the attempt to rule out the view according to which—within the context of a biography—the significance of class membership is exhausted once “primary socialization” has occurred, and after which *discrete* causal factors, such as education, exert their influence. The alternative view of the relation between class and educational outcomes to which Bourdieu and his associates adhere remains somewhat nebulous; however, I believe that its meaning might be at least partially captured with a visual metaphor: just as (according to phenomenology) a perceptual object can only be grasped by apprehending the multiplicity of profiles through which it presents itself—and, indeed, ultimately amounts to nothing more than the unity of all possible profiles—the “class situation” is to be understood as a sociological object “upon which no single point of view is possible.” The metaphor would thus seem to suggest that some of the properties associated with or constitutive of class membership vary or change over the course of the biography, *but without forfeiting their class-specific identity*. (This, as I read it, is the meaning of the oblique reference to “mediations” in the above quotation.) The “properties” at issue are, above all, cultural ones, and the implication is that the secondary socialization effected by the educational system, and the acculturation thereby “acquired,” are not neutral with respect to class origin. The net effect of such a conception is an expansion of the phenomena which are opened up to explanation in terms of class, and correlatively, a meta-theoretical assertion of the primacy of class *qua explanans* (“the point from which every possible view unfolds”). At the same time, however, if it is the case that the properties associated with or constitutive of class are in

some sense variable, it is now necessary that they be theoretically re-specified in every instance in which class is to be mobilized for explanatory purposes; moreover, it also becomes incumbent on class analysis to register the nature of these variations, and to provide an account of the identity which holds them together. Bourdieu and his associates do not go very far here in working out these implications. However, when Bourdieu and Passeron re-analyze the same data in *Reproduction*, they attempt to develop a more detailed model.

The latter text has at its disposal a full-blown concept of cultural capital, thus setting it apart from the treatment of culture developed in the essay on class and status. Indeed, when referring to cultural systems here, Bourdieu and Passeron make liberal use of notion of the “arbitrary,” with obvious Saussurian resonances; nevertheless, the “relations” at issue with respect to cultural capital are not those which establish the identity of particular elements (“‘value’ in the linguistic sense”), but those which establish their relative efficacy as resources. Thus, under the assumption that any society recognizes a particular culture as legitimate, Bourdieu and Passeron assert that the “value” (in an economic sense) of the “cultural goods” transmitted by the family is a strict function of their proximity to or distance from those which are dominant in the society. They view this transmission in terms of both particular cultural contents and a particular relation to culture. The “material conditions” present in the initial familial milieu will foster the emergence of a detachment from or submersion in the practical necessities of everyday life, resulting in specific cultural competences and in a specific orientation towards culture in general. These, in turn, will be implicated in educational outcomes.⁶ With this concept in hand, the earlier analysis can be further developed. In the process, Bourdieu and Passeron also lay out a diagrammatic

model of the class-specific characteristics attaching to individuals in their movement through the educational system, and the causal processes these characteristics imply (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 71-89, 255-9).

The major refinement they introduce lies in their assertion of the need to undertake both “synchronic” and “diachronic” analysis, or in other words, to relate “structure” to “process.” With the former term in these pairs, they refer to those factors which are evident at a given stage in the educational process and serve to explain outcomes at the next stage—that is, to the set of properties which are causally operative at a given moment in the educational career. These are primarily capital and ethos (a term similar to habitus, in that it is meant to account for subjective preferences which evidence an objective logic). The diachronic analysis, by contrast, is meant to take account of the fact that the variations in capital and ethos apparent within the total school population at any particular stage are themselves the result of previous causal processes. Specifically, these variations are seen to result from the earlier institutional selection and the channeling of students (into particular curricula and disciplines). The empirical argument which Bourdieu and Passeron want to make with this distinction is roughly as follows: although at earlier stages of the school career, the family’s economic capital serves as the best predictor of success from one stage to the next, its explanatory significance declines over the course of the career, while the individual’s cultural capital takes on greater significance; the distribution of cultural capital at one of these later stages, however, is itself the consequence of (above all) the differential elimination rates of individuals who entered the system from the various classes.

Therefore,

[i]t is...necessary to construct the theoretical model of the various possible organizations of all the factors capable of acting, if only by their absence, at the

various moments of the educational career of children in the various [class] categories, in order to be able to inquire systematically into the discontinuously observed or measured effects of the systematic action of a particular constellation of factors. For example,...to grasp the specific form and the efficacy of factors such as linguistic capital or ethos at a given level of education, each of these elements has to be related to the system in which it belongs and which represents at the moment in question the retranslation and relaying of the primary determinations linked to social origin.

Social origin, with the initial family education and experience it entails, must therefore not be considered as a factor capable of directly determining practices, attitudes and opinions at every moment in a biography, since the constraints that are linked to social origin work only through the particular systems of factors in which they are actualized in a structure that is different each time. (*ibid.*, 87-8; my addition)

The basic theory which emerges from Bourdieu and Passeron's slightly smothering language—and which links this analysis to the rest of the book—is, again, that the educational system does not mediate between social origins and social destinations as an *autonomous* causal factor. Rather, through “pedagogical action” exerted on a population that is continuously subject to differential selection and channeling, it *constitutes* a set of causal factors which, while not operative or even present in the initial (familial) class milieu, are nevertheless not independent of it—the foremost of these being scholastic cultural capital. It is this premise which forms the basis of their contention that the factors which are operative at different stages of the career all amount to “retranslations” of the initial class situation, or (in the diagram) to “transformed forms” of the “system of class determinations,” and thus to the multi-faceted view of class announced earlier.⁷ And it is this assertion, in turn, which allows them to ultimately postulate the “functional duplicity” of the educational system—that is, its ability to satisfy an “external imperative” merely by fulfilling its “internal function” (*ibid.*, 177-219).⁸

A number of ambiguities emerge from these remarks which are pertinent to Bourdieu's later works. First, as with the earlier analysis of this data, Bourdieu and Passeron continuously utilize demographic variables—primarily sex and place of residence—along with social class for explanatory purposes. In the diagram, these appear to be interpreted as correlates (in some sense)—but not constituents—of class membership. As such, their explanatory function, and specifically, the nature of their relation to class, remains unexplained, resulting in an equivocation that is particularly striking in light of the attribution of meta-theoretical primacy to class, which is reiterated almost verbatim in this text (*ibid.*, 89). Secondly, Bourdieu and Passeron offer numerous critical comments pertaining to the inappropriate use of “multivariate analysis,” or to the inappropriate use of particular statistical techniques. Hence, for example, the indiscriminate use factor analysis is condemned on the grounds that it merely results in a “synchronic cross-section” of the relations between pertinent variables, and thereby “eliminates all reference to the genesis of the ensemble of...relations it is dealing with” (*ibid.*, 88). At the same time, the analysis of their own data never extends beyond the interpretation of crosstabulations (albeit ones generated with multiple controls in order to identify particular sub-populations). Thus, the critical remarks are accompanied by little that might point towards their conception of an appropriate employment of quantitative data. Thirdly, the key terms “structure” and “system” are used ambiguously. On the one hand, these terms designate the relations between the factors that are operative at a given stage of the educational career—in other words, they designate the synchronic aspect of the causal model. On the other hand, when referring to the total model (i.e. in both its synchronic and diachronic dimensions), Bourdieu and Passeron will invoke—on the same page (*ibid.*, 87)—the Althusserian

terminology of “structural causality” and make reference to the total “system of factors.” Again, the meaning of the terminology is not well-defined beyond its negative references—that is, its claim of the need for a model which, rather than treating the various factors at work over the course of a career as “substantial” and “isolable,” encompasses even the action of those which are “absent” at a given point in the career.

The diagrammatic model reveals some additional ambiguities. It is constructed from a biographical vantage point: the “material conditions” characteristic of the initial milieu are associated with a specific cultural “inheritance” and a particular ethos; these factors, in turn, determine the probabilities of the various educational outcomes at each stage of the career, while being continuously “retranslated” and “transformed” along the way. The eventual result is a class-specific destination. However, having specified the nature of educational mechanism in detail, Bourdieu and Passeron merely gloss the meaning of this destination, describing it as a “position in economic and social structures, particularly in the various fields of legitimacy and in [the] power structure” (*ibid.*, 259). Consequently, as with the essay on class and status, these “positions” and “structures” remain ill-defined—indeed, here they receive no attention whatsoever.⁹ We are thus left to impute to them a more or less traditional sociological meaning. Because the *substantive* nature of the class structure falls outside of the purview of the analysis, it is difficult not see in the conceptualization of cultural capital (and its certification) precisely a theory of social reproduction; but this being the case, the essential foundation of the “structure” which is being reproduced would appear to be strictly economic.

Distinction as Class Analysis

By the time he wrote *Distinction*, Bourdieu had filled out his basic conceptual repertoire, so that “habitus” and “capital” were complemented by “field” as central terms. In keeping with some of the programmatic statements made in the 1966 essay, the text sets as its immediate goal the explanation of differences of lifestyle. “Lifestyle” is interpreted quite widely, so as to encompass not only mundane, “ordinary” consumption practices, but also “extraordinary” ones (those pertaining to art, literature, etc.); indeed, because these are oriented to objects comprising the “legitimate culture,” they form an essential aspect of the analysis. Within the context of this project, Bourdieu again attempts to defend the thesis that lifestyle differences amount to “sublimated” expressions of class differences, which in turn account for their patterning. Given this explanatory intent, the analysis has two aspects: the treatment of “objective class” and the treatment of status group (or “symbolic class”). In the following I would like to devote extensive consideration to the former, on the grounds that it has received less attention in the secondary literature than has Bourdieu’s approach to lifestyle, and more specifically, because it condenses, in a less than obvious manner, positions on the nature of causation, on the explanatory logic associated with this view of causation, and on the methodological techniques which can most appropriately put such a logic into practice—positions which thus should be seen as solutions to problems that, as I have tried to suggest, had previously become acute. However, once we have clarified Bourdieu’s approach to these problems, I believe we will be able to deepen the understanding of the analysis of lifestyle (and indeed, of symbolic phenomena in general), thereby clarifying the meaning of a “sociology of symbolic violence.” In other words, much of Bourdieu’s post-*Distinction* work can be read as an

extension of the basic standpoint developed in this text, and thus seen to rest—sometimes explicitly, sometimes obliquely—on a class analytical foundation. Moreover, the broad viewpoint yielded by these discussions should allow us to situate Bourdieu, however sketchily, in relation to existing schools of class and stratification analysis; and it should also permit us to specify the rationale underlying his notoriously vexing treatment of the so-called “demographic” properties.

IV. Objective Class: Social Topography

In *Distinction* Bourdieu approaches the objective analysis of social structure by constructing a “social space” exhibiting a “chiastic” organization. This space is defined by three orthogonal axes: total volume of capital, composition of this capital, and trajectory (i.e. the transformation of volume and/or composition over time). The first axis thus differentiates between classes, and the second within classes (this is the context in which Bourdieu speaks of “class fractions”). The unit of analysis for the construction is a set of broadly defined occupational categories; the fact that the three axes are organized into a single space implies that each category is situated with respect to each of the axes. As a result, the occupational categories are positioned according to three parameters, and are thus receive spatial locations which can be interpreted in terms of their relative proximity and distance to one another.

Bourdieu utilizes correspondence analysis (a variant of factor analysis which operates with categorical data) to formulate the axes. As is indicated by some of the remarks which he and his associates proffered in the earlier studies of education, he considers the selection of statistical techniques to be a serious issue: when conceived of in

merely technical terms, such procedures can often wind up concealing a commitment to particular “social philosophy” (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron 1991, 254; see also Bourdieu, in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 113–4; Swartz 1998, 62–4). For Bourdieu, correspondence analysis amounts to the “relational” procedure *par excellence*, insofar as it spatializes the categories under analysis in terms of the attribute “values” (in a statistical sense) which distinguish them from other categories. This is because the

idea of difference... is at the basis of the very notion of *space*, that is, a set of distinct and coexisting positions which are exterior to one another and which are defined in relation to one another through their *mutual exteriority* and their relations of proximity, vicinity, or distance, as well as through relations of order, such as above, below, and *between*. Certain properties of members of the *petit-bourgeoisie* can, for example, be deduced from the fact that they occupy an intermediate position between two extreme positions, without being objectively identifiable and subjectively identified with one or the other position. (Bourdieu 1998a, 6)

Correspondence analysis analyzes property sets (discrete variables) by associating the properties of category occupants according to their over- or under-representation relative to a random distribution—that is, the frequencies with which the properties would appear within each occupational category if they were randomly distributed. Thus, insofar as a property set such as educational attainment is associated with occupation, one property from the set (e.g. a low-level educational credential) will be clustered with a particular occupational category (or group of categories), while a different property from the same set (e.g. a high-level credential) will cluster with a different category (or category group). As a statistical representation of the distribution of capital (in both its quantity and its type), the first two axes serve to capture those properties characterizing a social location which are the most fundamental in any explanation its occupants’ practices.¹⁰

I would like to defer, for the moment, a consideration of the significance Bourdieu attributes to occupational categories as the basic unit with which to carry out class analysis.

For now we can simply note that the conceptualization developed here at least serves to clarify the relation between class designations and these categories, which at times seemed to be interchangeable in Bourdieu's earlier work: classes are composed of occupational positions whose "inhabitants" tend to exhibit a similar volume of capital holdings; class fractions, in turn, are composed of positions which are differentiated from others within the same class by virtue of the particular capital which occupants tend to hold (or the ratio of capitals held). Beyond this, we must recognize that the model which results from the use of correspondence analysis—that of a multi-dimensional space—serves to effectively concretize the underdeveloped ruminations on the nature of a "social structure" which we found in the earlier work. Specifically, the constitutive role assigned to the concepts of "volume" and "composition" amount to an increase in the degree of abstraction with which Bourdieu approaches the class structure. In the earliest work, the economic domain—understood in terms of "occupational practices and the material conditions of existence"—is immediately set apart in toto from relational class properties, with the implicit result that the re-formulation of the notion of "structure" cannot break out of a culturalistic mold. In the educational writings, by contrast, possession of cultural capital apparently sits in one-to-one relation with possession of economic capital, and thus to function as an essential but nevertheless adjunctive "tool" by means of which the distribution of the latter is reproduced; the "hierarchy" of positions to which cultural capital and the education system regulate access, in other words, has all the appearances of a more traditionally construed economic structure. In this context, the shift to an explication in terms of capital "volume" and "composition" is significant because it breaks apart straightforward identifications of the class structure with one or another (theoretically privileged) form of capital.¹¹

Following from this, the earlier distinction between class position and class situation (or “class condition”) is transformed. Here, each relationally-defined position corresponds to a “relatively homogeneous” class situation, which in turn tends to “inculcate,” in Bourdieu’s terminology, a class-specific (or fraction-specific) habitus. Consequently, situational properties—those stemming from the “conditions of existence” associated with a certain location—may retain a genetic (or biographical) primacy with respect to relational properties. But it is only through “properties of position”—those which reveal the structural relations between different positions—that the different class conditions can systematically take on *relative* significance. Bourdieu states:

[e]ach class condition is defined, simultaneously, by its intrinsic properties and by the relational properties which it derives from its position in the system of class conditions, which is also a system of...differential positions, i.e. by everything which distinguishes it from what it is not.... This means that inevitably inscribed within the dispositions of the habitus is the whole structure of the system of conditions, as it presents itself in the experience of a life-condition occupying a particular position within that structure. (Bourdieu 1984, 170-2)

The distinction between class condition and class position thus no longer corresponds to that between the social and the cultural or to the differentiation of social origins and social destinations (that is, it is not tied to the biographical life-course). Rather, it is here shorn of substantive content, and instead becomes purely epistemic: condition and position amount to different views of the *same* “object.” The former describes the first-person experience of “membership” in a particular occupational category, and specifically, of the necessities and freedoms which it “imposes” on agents, the pressures or “facilities” which it entails. The latter, by contrast, focuses not on the impositions to which the occupant of such as location is subject, but on the relations which differentiate this location from others; it thereby reveals it precisely as a position within a structure. Because they describe different aspects

of the same “object,” these two views can occasionally be collapsed—as when Bourdieu speaks of a “system of conditions.”

This being said, we must still get clear about the status of Bourdieu’s “social space.” The model that he constructs does not, in and of itself, represent a causal process: it is, literally, a *map*. To be sure, this model will be invoked for explanatory purposes, on the assumption of a process which flows from the social structure, via the habitus, to particular practices—practices which, in turn, are to be evaluated according to the contribution they make to the conservation or transformation of the initial structure (see *ibid.*, 171). Indeed, when Bourdieu superimposes diagrams depicting differences of lifestyle on top of those depicting social space in order to demonstrate their homologous arrangement, there is clearly an implied causal relation—and at one point he asserts that between these two, there should be a third set of diagrams which capture the different “generative formulae” (i.e. habitus) through which the occupants of the correlative positions orient their practices (*ibid.*, 126). Nevertheless, Bourdieu’s correspondence analyses are not confirmatory, and his account of the causal relations which result in the observed homologies occurs in a different context. This means that—given the broad meta-theoretical assumption of a process connecting structure, habitus, and practice—it remains to be seen how causal relations between the social structure and particular, empirical practices are to be modeled sociologically.

V. Objective Class: Structure and Cause

In order to relate particular, observable practices (such as those constitutive of lifestyle) to the social structure, Bourdieu must be able to invoke the latter as a causal factor

(or set of factors). Since the structure is essentially delimited in terms of volume and composition of capital (and secondarily, their change or stability over time), it is these which are primarily expected to account for particular practices at the empirical level, and which therefore form the basis of his explanatory models. However, Bourdieu complicates this tidy schema. For in the process of elaborating his explanatory principles, he quickly launches into a discussion of the role of so-called “secondary properties” in determining practices. The term is used to refer to what we have previously labeled “demographic factors”—primarily sex, place of residence, and age (race and ethnicity are mentioned in passing, but do not figure in the analysis).

Bourdieu’s assertion is that while the socially current definition of an occupation may be expressed in purely technical terms, this definition often functions as a tacit barrier which serves to exclude those characterized by certain demographic properties. Thus, for example, educational criteria, construed as a technical requirement for a given occupation, may actually effect a type of informal closure by largely disallowing the entry of women (*ibid.*, 105). More generally, because factors such as a certain sex-ratio or age-ratio may contribute to the determination of the place which a particular job occupies in the class structure, it is not sufficient merely to account for the manner in which such factors may influence practices; it is also necessary *include* them in the definition of the classes themselves. Bourdieu summarizes his argument in a remark that has become notorious: “[s]exual properties are as inseparable from class properties as the yellowness of a lemon is from its acidity: a class is defined in an essential respect by the place and value it gives to the two sexes and to their socially constituted dispositions” (*ibid.*, 107). This premise, on the one hand, appears to immediately bring Bourdieu’s analysis into a greater proximity to

certain schools of stratification analysis in which the different stratifying factors are asserted to coalesce into a single formation; on the other hand, however, it is also the source of much of the consternation expressed by those who perceive a sort of class-analytical imperialism precisely in his propensity to pull all such factors into the orbit of social class.¹² We will take up the question of where Bourdieu's position stands in relation both to stratification theory and to "purer" forms of class analysis later. In the meantime, I would like to address the manner in which Bourdieu incorporates this plurality into his definition of objective class. At the beginning of the discussion, we find a remark reminiscent of statements made in earlier writings on education:

[s]ocial class is not defined by a property (not even the most determinant one, such as the volume and composition of capital) nor by a collection of properties (of sex, age, social origin, ethnic origin...), nor even by a chain of properties strung out from a fundamental property (position in the relations of production) in a relation of cause and effect, conditioner and conditioned.... (*ibid.*, 106)

The relation of the primary properties (those pertaining to capital) to the secondary properties is not a causal one. Indeed, the secondary factors are not "external" to the class structure, but instead "belong to it."¹³ At the same time, classes are also not to be viewed as mere aggregates of these various properties. It is the course of explaining these strictures that we find Bourdieu, once again, summoning the language of "structural causality" (*ibid.*, 107); here, however, I believe that this terminology takes on a reasonably clear meaning.

For Bourdieu (whose opinion of Althusserian class theory is well known), the notion of "structural causality" counts more as a motif than as the paragon premise which Althusser sought. Indeed, throughout his early work Bourdieu insists that the utility of structuralism can be maintained only insofar as its appropriation develops the explanatory program of the social sciences. Given this, I believe that we can interpret Bourdieu's

utilization of the concept as an *empiricist redefinition* of the structuralist axiom. Its “empiricist” character derives from the fact that it does not postulate a single set of “elements” which are *a priori* constitutive of any possible social formation (see Althusser and Balibar 1975, 204, 225; Poulantzas 1978, 25ff., 94-5). Bourdieu’s redefinition becomes apparent in the statement that it is “the structure of relations between all the pertinent properties which gives it specific value to each of them and to the effects they exert on practices” (1984, 106). Such an assertion—reminiscent of those from *Reproduction*, to be sure—takes on greater clarity in this context, precisely because it can be applied to a clearly identifiable set of concrete factors.¹⁴ Indeed, if we understand the term “value” in a statistical sense, an interpretation can be suggested according to which the effect of any factor on an outcome (i.e. a particular practice) is itself a function of the effects exerted by all of the other factors. Bourdieu’s proposition, in other words, implies that the plurality of factors are related to one another according to the principle of *causal interactivity*. We might thus read Bourdieu’s statements on causation as an affirmation of MacIver’s criticism of the “mechanistic fallacy”: social science errs, MacIver suggests, when it “treats the various components of a social situation, or of any organized system, as though they were detachable, isolable, homogeneous, independently operative, and therefore susceptible of being added to or subtracted from the causal complex, increasing or decreasing the result by that amount” (1964, 94). It is precisely this criticism, it seems to me, which Bourdieu himself proffers, albeit more tersely, when he denounces “the false independence of so-called independent variables” (1984, 103). It is further apparent in his assertion of the need “to break with *linear thinking*” (*ibid.*, 107)—which here seems to refer to the construction of *additive* models.¹⁵

The map of the social structure which Bourdieu constructs is thus seen here as an *empirical system of interacting factors*. The system is—or should be—heterogeneous, in the sense that it includes both the primary properties (those pertaining to capital) and the secondary ones (the demographic properties). The properties only become factors—that is, they only become determinative—in interactive combination, or in Bourdieu’s earlier language, when the effect of each is “mediated” by the effects of all of the others. However, as the very designations he uses make clear, Bourdieu does not ascribe an equal causal efficacy to these sets of factors: volume and composition of capital do not exert their effects in independence from the effects of gender, age, etc.; nevertheless, the factors pertaining to capital are “the most determinant” in the system. Indeed, at one point Bourdieu also declares that “volume and composition of capital give specific form and value to the determinations which the other factors (age, sex, place of residence, etc.) impose on practices” (*ibid.*, 107).¹⁶ Although it is difficult to know exactly how to decipher this statement, it seems to me that Bourdieu is here asserting an interpretive postulate. In general, the relation between interactive factors can be “read” both “forwards” and “backwards”—such that, for example, gender may be seen to condition the effect of education on income, *or* education may be seen to condition the effect of gender. Given this formal reversibility, the notion that the factors pertaining to capital “give form” to the effects of gender, age, and the like implies the *meta-theoretical* priority of a particular interpretation: the so-called secondary factors are to be seen as *moderators* of the effects exerted by the primary factors.¹⁷ It is this premise—the assertion of a “causal primacy” claim, in the language of Wright, Levine, and Sober (1992)—which drags the non-occupational bases of stratification and domination into the orbit of social class, and which,

ultimately, confers a “secondary” status upon them. The reasons underlying this premise will be considered below.

The final dimension of Bourdieu’s reflections on the nature of causality is perhaps the most crucial. In order for the notion of class to serve in an explanatory capacity, it is not sufficient to expand the set of properties which it encompasses or to re-conceptualize the nature of their causal action. Bourdieu further maintains that the (relative) causal “weight” of each particular factor varies according to context—that is, according to the “field” in which the practice to be explained occurs. The importance of this claim derives primarily from the fact that different “sub-species” of the various capitals can be identified. Thus, in the case of an object which (like lifestyle) is composed of multiple, heterogeneous practices, scholastic cultural capital may be more powerful in one arena (e.g. philosophical preferences), while inherited cultural capital is more effective in another (e.g. food preferences):

[i]n practice, that is, in a particular field, the properties...which are attached to agents are not simultaneously operative; the specific logic of the field determines those which are valid in this market, which are pertinent and active in the game in question, and which, in the relationship with this field, function as a specific capital—and consequently, as a factor explaining practices. This means, concretely, that the social rank and specific power which agents are assigned in a specific field depend firstly on the specific capital they can mobilize, whatever their additional wealth in other types of capital.... (*ibid.*, 113)

We can recognize here an image similar to the one that we examined in *Reproduction*: Bourdieu is re-working the notion of a system of causal factors which shifts its “configuration,” such that certain factors may be “absent” in a particular context.¹⁸ Here, however, the need to develop a theory of causality has been separated from the problem of reconciling “structure” and “process” (which is dealt with in separate conceptual step). The result of this is yet another source of consternation: for on the basis of the notion of a causal

system comprised of *varying profiles*, Bourdieu is attempting to buy the flexibility necessary to claim that the diversity of social practices are subject to a “complex” but *unitary* explanation, and thus to accord class the role of explanatory principle *par excellence* (*ibid.*, 113-4). In this manner, we may infer, he is able simultaneously to satisfy the meta-theoretical impulse to affirm the explanatory priority of social class, and the epistemic impulse that prioritizes scientific parsimony.¹⁹

VI. The Explanatory Function of Objective Class

The causal action of the factors constitutive of class has as its product the habitus; the latter, in other words, is to be understood as an *effect* of the class structure. At the same time, the habitus also *generates* meaningful practices. It is, so to speak, structure “converted” to sense. This “conversion,” in turn, is understood in terms of a set of “conditionings” imposed by the “conditions of existence” which the individual experiences, and which are merely the flip-side of his or her structural position (*ibid.*, 170). In what follows I do not intend to undertake a systematic explication of the concept of habitus, much less an evaluation; instead, I wish to sketch the place it occupies in Bourdieu’s sociology only to the extent that is necessary in order to develop the question here under consideration—namely, the explanatory project which he pursues.

We may begin by noting that, as the immediate outcome of the causal action associated with the class structure, the habitus is comprised of socially constituted *dispositions*. This implies a specific view of the agents who populate the social world: as Boham points out, a disposition is markedly distinct from a mental state such as a belief or a desire: dispositions are more “deeply” embedded, and thus, in contrast to beliefs or

desires, alteration of them implies a more or less full-fledged transformation of the agent's identity (1999, 134).²⁰ Bourdieu thus states that:

the structures characteristic of a determinate type of conditions of existence, through the economic and social necessity which they bring to bear on the relatively autonomous universe of family relationships, or more precisely, through the mediation of the specifically familial manifestations of this external necessity (sexual division of labor, domestic morality, cares, strifes, tastes, etc.), produce the structures of the habitus which become in turn the basis of perception and appreciation of all subsequent experience. (Bourdieu 1977, 78)

In order to describe the dispositional generation of practices, Bourdieu frequently employs a phenomenological idiom: practices are typically oriented towards a particular end—a future state of affairs—in terms of “protentions” rather than “projects” (Bourdieu 1998a, 80-2). The distinction serves to characterize a “practical sense” which is able to react to the given situation and pursue its end without consciously weighing multiple alternatives and evaluating probabilities. The behavior of an athlete engaged in his or her sport provides a paradigmatic illustration of this practical sense: the act of charging the net in order to win a point contrasts starkly with the lesson that the coach retrospectively articulates, and which presents rushing to the net as one strategy to be thematically weighed against others according to the demands of the game at a particular moment (Bourdieu 1990a, 11). From the perspective of the question of class, what must be stressed is the fact that, *qua* result, this dispositional “feel for the game” is variable across agents.²¹

Taylor has provided a useful summary of the notion of habitus (1993). Taking up the puzzles surrounding the question of what it means to “follow a rule,” he insists that the habitus be conceptualized as a form of embodied understanding. It thus designates a relation between agent and world which is primarily non-cognitive, but which cannot be reduced to a stimulus-response model. Taylor further suggests, following Bourdieu's own

terminology, that the habitus should be viewed as a kind of abstract, “formulaic” worldview, but only so long as it is clear that the “formulae” do not (and cannot) dictate their own application. This implies, among other things, that they are “transposable”—that is, the same disposition may potentially be “realized” in an infinite variety of contexts.²² It also means, in Taylor’s view, that even the most mundane action is fraught with uncertainty. He attempts to capture this by invoking the Aristotelian virtue of “phronesis”:

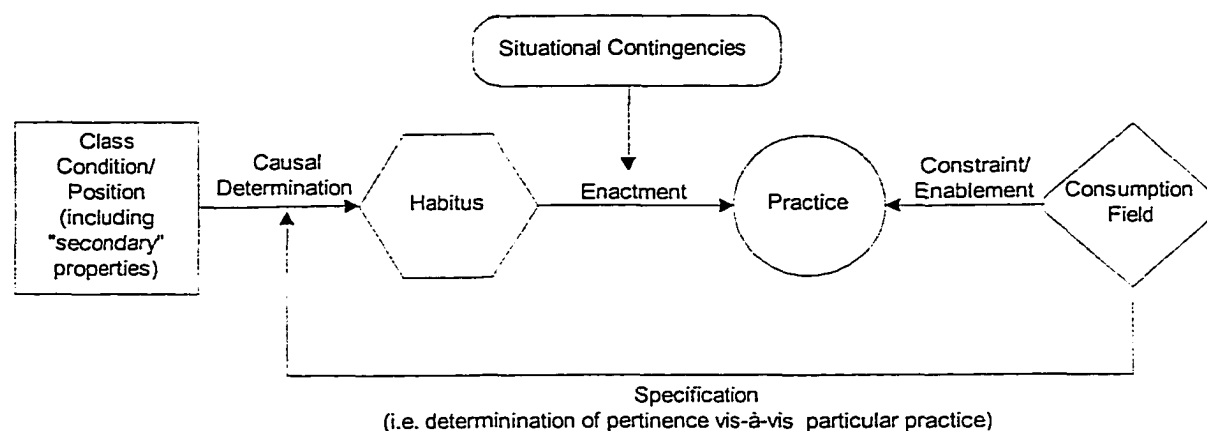
[d]etermining what a norm actually amounts to in any given situation can take a high degree of insightful understanding. Just being able to formulate rules will not be enough. The person of real practical wisdom is marked out less by the ability to formulate rules than by knowing how to act in each particular situation. There is, as it were, a crucial “phronetic gap” between the formula and its enactment.... (*ibid.*, 57; see Bourdieu, in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 128)

For Bourdieu, these types of contingencies—which, at least in part, pertain to the here-and-now, the indexical—are potentially resolved in a “moment” which is not that of wisdom or virtue (much less “accounting”), but of *strategy*.²³

The explanation of practices is not exhausted by tracing them back to the generative habitus, and this, in turn, to the class structure. As we noted above, every practice is undertaken within a specific social context, which Bourdieu refers to as a “field” (and which is not to be confused with the here-and-now of the action “situation”). In the case of consumption practices, this encompasses such mundane activities as selecting a beverage (French wine or German wine, etc.) or a preferred literary genre (high modernism or science fiction, etc.). Fields present agents with a “space of possibles.” The various “possibles” take on an objective status vis-à-vis the agent. Hence, they exert a *constraint*, delimiting the range of legitimate choices; at the same time, however, they are also *enabling*, presenting the agent with a set of available options (see Bourdieu 1995, 234-9; 1984, 230-1). It is precisely because of the additional influence exerted by these spaces

that—at least in the case of a “composite” object which, like lifestyle, incorporates practices situated in a multitude of different fields—the causal action exerted by class must be seen to shift its “profile” according to the limitations and options pertaining to each particular practice. And it is also in light of this that Bourdieu, not unreasonably, refers to practices as “overdetermined” (Bourdieu 1984, 107, *passim.*; 1991a, 57). With some trepidation, I offer a graphic representation summarizing the various relationships implicated in the explanation of consumption practices (figure 1).²⁴

Figure 1. Overdetermination of Consumption Practices



I would like to consider more closely some issues concerning the place and function of objective class in this representation. To begin with, it must be acknowledged that Bourdieu does not make any attempt to quantify causal relations. In the first instance, this may appear to be the case because practices can only be accounted for by reference to the habitus—that is, in terms of the (typically non-cognitive) meaning they carry for agents; however, this fact, in and of itself, does not preclude *utilization* of quantitative techniques to

model causality—a fact testified to by much of the sociological literature on cultural consumption, public opinion, etc. (often able to rely on relatively simple coding methods). Instead, the refusal to quantify appears to derive, at least in large part, from the “composite” character of the object. The diversity of practices associated with a particular habitus have, for Bourdieu, a quasi-systematic unity. This derives precisely from the fact that the habitus amounts to a single “generative formula” (or to a small set of such formulae), which is infinitely transposable according to the requirements of the field within which each practice is located and the particular situation within that field. Consequently, the habitus is capable of producing an infinite diversity of practices which are “phenomenally different,” but whose systematicity is open to reconstruction. This side of the explanatory project, however, is intrinsically *verstehend*: the semi-logical “unity” that connects an array of different practices can only be made evident semantically, through the apprehension of a singular “principle” (or “practical philosophy”) from which they could derive their coherence (see Bourdieu 1984, 173). According to the broad historical thesis argued in *Distinction*, which asserts the supersession of the normative dimensions of culture by the aesthetic in securing the stability of a class society (*ibid.*, 153-4, 310-1, 367-71, 384), these “formulae” tend to manifest themselves in class-specific regularities of *taste*.²⁵ In analyzing such regularities, Bourdieu demonstrates an impressive ability to reconstruct lifestyles out of qualitative observations and frequency tables recording information on the mundane activities of everyday life—an ability which Brubaker (1985, 768) and Vandenberghe (1999, 47) go so far as to declare “Proustian.” As an aspect of the explanatory project, this step is required precisely on the grounds that it is *only* in the semantic dimension that the mutual affinity of the multiplicity of practices constitutive of a

style of life can be grasped without resorting to a mechanical theory of economic determination (see Bourdieu 1984, 375).²⁶

However, the “interpretive” reconstruction must itself be contextualized. Specifically, each of the practices constitutive of lifestyle stands in a field of “possibles”; consequently, the meaning of each is also qualified relationally—so that, for example, to routinely drink French wine is not to drink German wine, to read science fiction is not to read high modernist fiction, and so forth. Bourdieu, in other words, returns here to the Saussurian postulate: “interpretive” explication is necessary in order to discern the semantic unity inherent in practices situated across multiple fields; nevertheless, each practice obtains its own meaning in its difference (i.e. distinction) from the alternative practical possibilities. How is this possible? For Bourdieu, the habitus is itself a kind of “relational operator,” which realizes its own meanings primarily through a practical logic of opposition: “each life-style can only really be constructed in relation to the other, which is its objective *and subjective* negation” (*ibid.*, 193; my emphasis; see 1998a, 8). This means that the various lifestyles are not self-contained, but belong to a system—that is, they are elements of a symbolic structure, one which, though constantly undergoing re-generation and renewal in the flux of practices, has an objective or quasi-objective status. He thus declares that the habitus “continuously transforms...constraints into preferences, and, without any mechanical determination,...generates the set of ‘choices’ constituting lifestyles, which derive their meaning, i.e., their value, from their position in a system of oppositions and correlations” (Bourdieu 1984, 175).

Clarification of this allows us to pose a further question: namely, how does Bourdieu undertake a verification of his causal hypotheses? Indeed, should they even be

regarded as falsifiable? (Vandenberghe [1999, 47], who ascribes to Bourdieu a “coherence” theory of truth, apparently thinks not.) Here we come upon another seemingly incongruous methodological procedure. While Bourdieu certainly does not clarify to the extent that we might wish, it would appear that the notion of verification with which he works leads him to present superimposed correspondence diagrams, whose validation of the causal theory is taken to lie in a demonstration of the isomorphic organizations of *explanans* and *explanandum* (1984, 126-31, 258-63, 339; 1995, 233-4). In other words, assuming an adequate account of the meaning of the different lifestyle complexes—and of the associated habitus—verification entails the demonstration of a homology, in Bourdieu’s preferred language, between social structure and symbolic structure. For this reason I believe that *Distinction* may be read as an attempt to provide a solution to the problems—more epistemic and methodological than substantive—which lay at the heart of the 1966 essay on class and status group.

The question of verification is, however, unclear enough with respect to *Distinction*, in particular, to require an extended discussion. Indeed, if we leave aside the “interpretive” work devoted to the identification of habitus and the reconstruction of lifestyles, it is still the case that we are confronted with not one but two presentations meant to demonstrate a global homology between class positions and lifestyles in this text (compare Bourdieu 1984, 128-9, with 260, 340). The first is based mainly on data from INSEE, a statistical agency of the French government, while the second is produced from Bourdieu’s own survey data. It is difficult to know what the relation between them is. Nonetheless, we might take as clues, however vague, the fact that in the discussion surrounding the first (*ibid.*, 101ff.) we find constant reference to the “construction” of “theoretical” class and

lifestyle structures, whereas the second contrasts to this an analysis meant to “draw out...immanent structures without imposing any presuppositions” (*ibid.*, 258). Though presumably without precedent in methodology textbooks, this would seem to imply that the first demonstration is intended as “something like” a confirmatory analysis, while the second is intended as “something like” an exploratory one—the full verification apparently requiring a correspondence between them. (To put it a bit pithily, verification appears to entail a correspondence between corresponding correspondence diagrams, and thus, whatever else one may say about it, hardly evidences a “coherence” theory of truth.) What, in turn, could be the source of such an odd procedure?

One has not finished with theory, nor even with the construction of hypotheses, once one has subjected the hypothesis to verification... Every well-constructed experiment has the effect of intensifying the dialectic between reason and experiment, but only on condition that one has an adequate understanding of the results, even negative ones, that it produces, and asks oneself what reasons make the facts right to say no. (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron 1991, 61)

(This section of *Craft* presents quotations—affirmatively—from Popper and even Hempel.)

The “dialectic” of which Bourdieu speaks implies that there is no critical threshold (e.g. “sig T < .05”) beyond which we may deem the question of verification solved “for all practical purposes.” Conversely, the absence of such finality means that verification is a process which is *incremental and cumulative*, and entails the development of multiple (provisional) “proofs” capable reinforcing one another (see Bourdieu 1984, 506-7). Scientific demonstration is, at least in principle, permanently subject to extension and revision. The insistence on systematic “coherence,” which is certainly prominent in Bourdieu’s early epistemological writings (Bourdieu 1968, 686ff.), further suggests that the confirmation of theories can only be meaningful at the global level; more specifically, what must be tested are propositions about *systems of related* elements, not propositions about

individual elements. Indeed, the impulse to explain “isolated facts” is roundly derided as “pointillist verification” (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron 1991, 63).²⁷

If this provides us with at least a broad sketch of the nature of the explanatory project in Bourdieu’s sociology, it remains to be seen how the preceding reflections on causal interactivity relate to this project. Here again Bourdieu gives us relatively little to go on. Indeed, the supposition that variations in the factors cannot be taken to result in “incremental” differences between habitus remains vague, precisely because still quantitative. It basically implies (at a minimum) that differences on the secondary factors will be unique, or have unique consequences, for each configuration of volume and composition of capital. By and large, this aspect of the demonstration is restricted to the discursive (as opposed to statistical) level, in the description of within-class and within-fraction variations in habitus and practices attributable to variations in the secondary properties (primarily gender and age). It is apparent in various examples Bourdieu offers: men employed in typically feminine occupations, for instance, exhibit a divergence from the modal properties of the class, resulting in a “social identity deeply marked by this membership” (1984, 104).

The causal process associated with the class structure thus stretches from “substance” to “subject” to practice.²⁸ Because the effect of structure occurs only through this “conversion,” however, the process of causation is complemented by a process of signification that extends, so to speak, in the opposite direction. Each of the elements of a lifestyle, as well as their totality, operates as a sign: it “expresses,” in terminology which Bourdieu continues to use, an underlying class location. The various systems of lifestyle practices—conspicuous ostentation, pragmatic accommodation, and so forth—ultimately

obtain social meaning only in their inter-negation; and according to the logic of taste, they obtain their hierarchical *rank* from the rarity of the underlying dispositions and competencies which they presuppose (*ibid.*, 224, 228). Consequently, there results a perfect or near-perfect correspondence between “values”—that is, between the “linguistic” and economic senses of the term—and lifestyles refer back to their social conditions of possibility (*ibid.*, 246; 1990b, 140). And this being the case, it is, as we will see, class members’ distorted relation to the social world that confers upon the sociologist’s causal models, above and beyond their quasi-hermeneutical moments, the function of deciphering an opacity.

VII. From the In-itself to the (Not Quite) For-itself

Practices are enacted by a habitus which is itself open to explanation in explicitly causal terms. We might therefore ask why the analysis is not completed once this explanation has been carried out. Conversely, we might ask what place the famous theory of practice can have within the context of such a “strong” explanatory project. Bourdieu is, in fact, insistent that the symbolic dimension of practices makes a *causally irreducible* contribution to the constitution of classes. Before taking up the question of the symbolic, however, I would like to briefly return to the model of social space, in order to better delineate Bourdieu’s attempt to interweave “structure” and “agency.”

As was noted, this model—the map—is constructed by means of factor analysis, a technique that was earlier criticized on the grounds that it is strictly “synchronic” (see also Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron 1991, 47). In *Distinction*, this deficiency becomes, as Bourdieu often says, a virtue: unlike the type of model proposed in *Reproduction*, the

“topography” presented here can be interpreted as a “cross-section”—that is, as an individual historical moment which has been “frozen.” As such, it amounts to a simplification, insofar as it implicitly asserts that the explanatory project does not necessitate capturing a multiplicity of successive temporal “stages” within a *single*, simultaneously structural, model. More importantly, when understood in this manner, the map can also be seen as a “balance-sheet,” in the sense that, by recording the momentary distributions of the different capitals, it delineates the outcome of the class struggle at a given moment in time, but also the point of its further departure, and the structurally delimited objectives of this continuation (that is, conservation or transformation). Bourdieu thus declares:

one must move beyond this provisional objectivism, which, in “treating social facts as things,” reifies what it describes. The social positions which present themselves to the observer as places juxtaposed in a static order of discrete compartments...are also strategic emplacements, fortresses to be defended and captured in a field of struggles. (Bourdieu 1984, 244)

A distribution, in the statistical sense but also the political-economy sense, is the balance-sheet, at a given moment, of what has been won in previous battles and can be invested in subsequent battles; it expresses a state of the power relation between the classes or, more precisely, of the struggle for the possession of rare goods and for the specifically political power over the distribution or redistribution of profit. (*ibid.*, 245)

That the topographical model is essentially a synchronic representation is evident, above all, in the fact that immediately after constructing it, Bourdieu sets it in motion by providing an account which serves to record changes in the class structure occurring after the period in which the data “feeding” the model were collected (*ibid.*, 132ff.). This discussion, which may initially appear as a digression insofar as it dispenses with questions pertaining to lifestyle, instead addresses the implications of recent alterations in the nature of the relation between credentials and jobs. Bourdieu here analyzes the actions through which

individuals directly attempt to conserve or improve their position in the class structure—credentialization, with its unintended inflationary consequences—and through which they attempt to transform that structure itself—which for him amounts to a veritable social construction of occupation (see *ibid.*, 141, 153; Bourdieu and Boltanski 1981), and results in the emergence of professional “taste consultants,” “self-help” experts, and the like. The aggregative outcome of these individual (and familial) “strategies” is what Bourdieu terms a “displacement of the structure” (1984, 156-68). From our perspective, the significance of these comments lies in their function of rendering apparent the fact that the model of social space is also meant to reveal the point of departure for various *competitive processes*.

This being the case, the most important aspect of the topographical model lies in the third axis (trajectory). In capturing the manner in which the relative volume and composition of capital that identify the structural position of an occupational category have changed over time—Bourdieu speaks of each fraction’s “modal trajectory”—it refines the meaning of the experiential “conditions of existence” that are associated with the position. Specifically, the model’s delineation of antecedent changes of relative position within the class structure permits Bourdieu to register the consequences of such changes on the formation of the habitus. Thus, in addition to helping differentiate positions which are otherwise identical (that is, which exhibit the same volume and composition of capital), the third axis facilitates an explanation of subjective anticipations (of ascent, descent, or stability), an essential aspect of the “reconversion strategies” which result in structural displacement.²⁹ These anticipations are also important to the explanation of lifestyles—especially in the case of the petty-bourgeoisie, with both its rising and declining fractions, and the consequent internal variations in its preference patterns. The third axis, in short,

permits a *quasi-structural representation of time*, and hence frees Bourdieu from the overly elaborate type of model found in *Reproduction* (see also Bourdieu 1995, 159).

Thus, the class structure can itself be viewed as a field upon which agents' practices unfold, or in other words, as a "battlefield" or a "space of play" (Wacquant, in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 17, 19).³⁰ However, in order to account for the specifically symbolic efficacy that these practices are able to deploy, we must establish how it is, according to Bourdieu, that they may come to be differentially appreciated or valued. At the level of habitus, Bourdieu maintains, there exists a basic consensus which encompasses all members of the society. However, this does not take the form of an agreed upon set of values or the like; rather, it derives from the incorporation, by all those within the society, of a small number of structured schemes which are capable of orienting practice and the apprehension of others' practices:

[a]ll agents in a given social formation share a set of basic perceptual schemes, which receive the beginnings of objectification in the pairs of antagonistic adjectives commonly used to classify and qualify persons or objects in the most varied areas of practice. The network of oppositions between high (sublime, elevated, pure) and low (vulgar, low, and modest)...is the matrix of all the commonplaces which find such ready acceptance because behind them lies the whole social order. The network has its ultimate source in the opposition between the "élite" of the dominant and the mass of the dominated.... (Bourdieu 1984, 468)

This set of collectively shared schemes comprises what Bourdieu elsewhere analyzes under the phenomenological motif of *doxa*, referring to a lifeworld background which is "natural" in the sense that it is taken for granted without any thematization, and therefore immediately given as such to its "inhabitants" (1977, 163-71). However, and in keeping with the requirements of the concept of habitus—and more precisely, its social constitution—this *doxa* is said to exhibit *class- and fraction-specific inflections*. Consequently, when the production and apprehension of practices differentiates between

lifestyles (and implicitly, therefore, between class positions), there results a “classificatory struggle.” In a trenchant example, Bourdieu writes that:

[t]he fact that, in their relationship to the dominant, the dominated classes attribute to themselves strength in the sense of labor power and fighting strength...does not prevent the dominant groups from similarly conceiving the relationship in terms of the scheme strong/weak; but they reduce the strength which the dominated (or the young, or women) ascribe to themselves to brute strength, passion and instinct...and they attribute to themselves spiritual and intellectual strength, a self-control that predisposes them to control others, a strength of soul or spirit which allows them to conceive their relationship to the dominated...as that of the soul to the body, understanding to sensibility, culture to nature. (Bourdieu 1984, 479, and see 194-200)

The various class-specific “formulae” which *Distinction* extrapolates (petty-bourgeois “cultural goodwill,” the working class “taste for necessity,” etc.) are therefore merely the particular semantic garb with which each class or fraction clothes a small set of fundamental schemata that, when stripped bare, reveal the same hierarchical oppositions—oppositions which, however, have been construed in contrasting manners according to class position.³¹

Nevertheless, this does not exhaust the significance of the phenomena that Bourdieu places under the notion of a “classificatory struggle.” In order to fully specify them, it is necessary that we return once more to the map of social space. The final feature of the map to require comment lies in the fact that volume and composition of capital, the primary parameters which define this space, are treated as *continuously* or *gradationally* distributed factors. A space which is defined by means of continuous parameters is, ipso facto, devoid of inherent boundaries. On occasion, Bourdieu seems to give the impression that his approach is warranted primarily on empirical or methodological grounds (1987a, 15; 1991b, 120). However, this revocation of the discontinuous character of whatever distribution is taken to be at the basis of the social structure—upheld from Marx through

Dahrendorf precisely as the hallmark of a *class* structure—must be understood in epistemic terms: Bourdieu has repeatedly insisted that theoretical studies of class which take up the “boundary problem” illegitimately transpose a *social concern* into the realm of sociology, and thus tend to import the social interests that inevitably come with it (1985, 734-5). It is only by means of this proposition that Bourdieu is able to fully analyze the contribution which the symbolic dimensions of action make to the constitution of classes.

In order to identify this contribution, we may first note that the result of Bourdieu’s postulate is a massive, quasi-Durkheimian domain of analysis that takes as its object the formation of groups (above all, classes) precisely via strategic practices of *social demarcation*. More specifically, the introduction of *boundaries* into the continuous structure of social space is, *sui generis*, a function of practice; and it is only by virtue of this function—and the attendant differentiation of one set of agents from others—that social collectivities are formed. For Bourdieu, such boundaries are, above all, symbolic in nature—although they are not always exclusively symbolic.

When processes of group formation are situated at the “point of production,” the collectivities which are created by the demarcation of different regions of social space will have a more or less explicitly economic identity. Bourdieu has not devoted extensive attention to such cases; however, Boltanski’s (1987) study of the history of the French *cadres* may serve as an example. Bourdieu’s interest, by contrast, appears to be in cases in which the creation of boundaries results in group formation processes that follow the contours of the distribution of occupations across social space—in the sense that the members of a collectivity occupy *relatively proximate* locations within this space—while resting on a symbolically expressed identity that is not explicitly economic. In these

instances, class formation occurs in a “sublimated” fashion. Status groups are the foremost example of this transmutation; however, various other types of group formation processes tend to accord—to a greater or lesser extent—with the occupational distribution or with a particular sector of it. Indeed, Bourdieu has devoted much of his attention to these sorts of phenomena, and because this work extends in several directions, it is helpful to distinguish some major orientations. As can be seen, the various boundary-establishing practices which he has analyzed differ in a variety of ways:

- The analysis of everyday consumption practices, which we have been following, takes up the issue of *pre-political* (in the narrow sense)—and indeed, *pre-thematic*—class formation, by focusing on the relatively uncodified symbolic unification and differentiation of groups effected through lifestyle. “Distinctions” of this sort lack inherent durability because they are not, by and large, institutionally secured, and therefore are subject to continuous re-creation.
- The sociology of education shifts its focus somewhat in order to analyze (1) the mechanisms (as much subjective as objective) by which the educational system sorts and sifts students, and (2) the symbolic effects of credentialization, which result from the introduction of qualitative discontinuities (“consecration”) into the continuum of cultural competences (see Bourdieu 1996a, 30-53, 102ff.). Because of the relation to occupations, in this domain, unlike the arena of lifestyles, demarcations are inscribed into an institutional “objectivity”—albeit with a time lag in some cases (Bourdieu 1984, 154-5, 481; Bourdieu and Boltanski 1981)—and thus, as we have seen, *directly* affect (whether by reproducing or transforming) the class structure itself.

- The sociology of political mobilization and political parties addresses practices in which the identification of group boundaries and processes of group unification occur thematically (located primarily in Bourdieu 1991b; this topic is also touched on in some of the essays on the meaning of class—for example, 1987a, 12ff.); such practices are often founded on differences which already exist in the “practical state” (i.e. lifestyle differences). These analyses are to a large extent taken up with the collision between the symbolic and political senses of “representation.”
- The sociology of the state enters Bourdieu’s field of vision at a relatively late point in time, and is only briefly sketched so far (1998a, 35-63). It proceeds by modifying Weber’s formula, in order to define the state according to its monopolization of the legitimate use of “symbolic violence”—which is to say, according to the authority of the state to institute or at least adjudicate all systems of social classification which enjoy an *obligatory validity* (including educational credentials, but also census taxonomies, etc.). In this context, the notion of “officialized” category systems—which, in the studies of Kabylia, could refer simply to universally shared “collective representations”—are seen as having a specific type of social force that extends, in contradistinction to all others, beyond mere legitimacy (Bourdieu 1985, 744; 1998a, 54), as well as a particular institutional grounding. Closely associated with the sociology of the state, but not yet fully integrated with it, is Bourdieu’s analysis of law (1987b). Here, in large part, the focus is on obligatory rules and taxonomies which derive their legitimacy precisely from their formulation in abstract, logical, and generalized terms—that is, from their *form* (see also Bourdieu 1990a, 76-86; 1977, 188).

- With the Heidegger analysis (Bourdieu 1991a) and the work on literature (Bourdieu 1995), Bourdieu has undertaken research on different subsectors of the field of cultural production, which is itself understood as a sector of the class structure (see Bourdieu 1991b, 168-70). In these contexts, conflicts over boundaries follow their own dynamics—that is, they proceed according to their own “rules” and their own “stakes”; often, this means that, within a particular social microcosm, the categorical hierarchies which are current within (and oriented towards) the wider class structure are “reversed” or “inverted” (Bourdieu 1995, 81-4, 142-54, 223ff.). Moreover, at least in the case of artistic production, underlying positions are subject to a relatively weak degree of institutional circumscription. Conceptually, such studies seek to reconcile the existence of this sort of independent, internal logic with the fact that these microcosms remain susceptible to the effects of events occurring in the larger structure (*ibid.*, 223-32).

In each of these arenas, the formation of classes and class fractions is the primary—but by no means the sole—consequence that may arise from practices which serve to *partition the social space*. Each is a site in which the so-called “classificatory struggle” transpires continuously.

Utilization of the collectively shared schemata of the *doxa* represents a paradigmatic example of the “fuzzy” logic of practice: indefinite (in “intension” and “extension”), the schemata leave a considerable room for maneuver in which the play of interests can work itself out according to the contingencies of the given situation (Bourdieu 1990b, 85-90). Moreover, even if the difference is ultimately only one of degree rather than type, it must be noted that the “classificatory struggle” takes a more radical form when practical sense is led by the interests stemming from its position to attempt a *modification* of the normal

functioning of doxa—whether in its typical range of application, its content, or even its structure. Consequently,

[e]very real inquiry into the divisions of the social world has to analyse the interests associated with membership or non-membership. As is shown by the attention devoted to strategic, “frontier” groups such as the “labor aristocracy,” which hesitates between class struggle and class collaboration, . . . the laying down of boundaries between the classes is inspired by the strategic aim of “counting in” or “being counted in,” “cataloguing” or “annexing,” when it is not the simple recording of a legally guaranteed state of the power relation between the classified groups. (1984, 476)

(We see, incidentally, that because they are codified, formalized, and obligatory, classificatory systems authorized by the state can have the effect of *constricting* the room for maneuver available to agents; nevertheless, the state itself also becomes the object and site of classificatory struggles for agents who seek to monopolize this authority—whether on a permanent or temporary basis—in order to further what can only be termed their own “classificatory interests” [Bourdieu 1996a, 374ff.; see also 1990b, 303-4, note 2].) Much of the contingency which characterizes classificatory practices derives precisely from the “complex” character of objective classes—that is, from the fact that they include both the primary and secondary properties. Thus, agents may implicitly seek to “overlook” a previously salient difference when they draw the limits of a group; they may tacitly alter the “criteria” by which they include or exclude others; or they may seek to invoke altogether different schemata.³² Indeed, in certain instances agents may be inclined to explicitly deny the existence of any discontinuities whatsoever (Bourdieu 1990b, 137). In all of these cases, the doxa is stripped, to one degree or another, of its quasi-natural character, resulting, at least potentially, in the situation that Bourdieu analyzes—according to the motif of a “practical époque” (1991b, 128)—in terms of a play between orthodoxy and heterodoxy (1977, 168-70).

Because he considers the primary social function of the symbolic dimension of practices to lie in this *power to unify and dissolve* social collectivities, Bourdieu is fond of referring to the classificatory “formulae” of the habitus as “principles of vision and division” (for example, 1987a, 7). The implication of his approach is that even when overt antagonisms are largely absent, the social formation is thoroughly pervaded by a type of “class” conflict:

[t]he capacity to make entities exist in the explicit state, to publish, make public (i.e., render objectified, visible, and even official) what had not previously attained objective and collective existence and had therefore remained in the state of individual or serial existence—people’s malaise, anxiety, disquiet, expectations—represents a formidable social power, the power to make groups by making the *common sense*, the explicit consensus, of the whole group. In fact, this work of categorization, i.e. of making explicit and of classification, is performed incessantly, at every moment of ordinary existence, in the struggles in which agents clash over the meaning of the social world and of their position within it, the meaning of their social identity, through all forms of benediction and malediction.... (Bourdieu 1985, 729)

From the perspective of class theory, Bourdieu’s insistence on the ubiquity of classificatory conflicts has interesting results. On the one hand, “class,” in its more or less conventional designation of economically (in the narrow sense) or occupationally founded groups, becomes merely one among other competing principles of unification and mobilization. Thus, gender, as another such principle, implies the attempt to construct a group identity that cuts across the structure of social space (Bourdieu 1984, 107), and nationalism entails the construction of a collectivity that encompasses the entirety of this space (Bourdieu 1985, 726; 1987a, 15). On the other hand, however, the likelihood of success enjoyed by competing principles is itself conditioned by the social structure: the odds that a particular attempt at group formation will be effective are a function precisely of the *relative distance* in social space which separates the agents who are to be brought together (Bourdieu 1985,

725-6; 1998a, 11). Consequently, because the contours of the social space follow the structure of occupational positions, and the distance between agents therefore derives from their economic locations, “classes,” as economically founded groups, have a necessary, if only probabilistic, advantage in the competition between principles of construction—all other factors being equal. (We will take up later the reasons why this does not amount to a tautology.)

The analysis of “classificatory struggles” requires foregrounding here because it assumes the place that would ordinarily be occupied by the critique of ideology. Indeed, we might suggest that Bourdieu is unusual because he confers upon the Durkheimian tradition an equal or leading role in the theory and analysis of ideology (1985, 742). Be this as it may, we should not underestimate the social-constructionist twist with which he appropriates this tradition. Leaving aside for the moment the question of state-sanctioned taxonomies, we must note that the concept of the “success” of one or another competing classificatory scheme has a specific meaning: it implies a more or less universal *recognition* (even if taken for granted) of its validity (Bourdieu 1991b, 170). The conflict between orthodoxy and heterodoxy is thus a “struggle for recognition.” Bourdieu conceives of such struggles—and recognition in general—according to the concept of “symbolic capital,” “commonly called prestige, reputation, renown, etc., which is the form in which the different types of capital are perceived and recognized as legitimate” (1985, 724). This is what he elsewhere refers to (in somewhat less individualistic terminology) as the “being-perceived” of a collectivity, in contrast to its “being” (1990b, 135). It amounts to a “symbolic [transfiguration]...of de facto differences” (1985, 731). As such, the notion of symbolic capital describes a process of recognition that confers *legitimacy* upon something

arbitrary. In the first instance, this means simply the doxic adherence to a world that is socially differentiated: the actual, as Bourdieu likes to say, is not seen as particular case of the possible, that is, as a world which might be otherwise. Beyond the relation of tacit recognition there is also the explicit accord of legitimacy to orthodox breaks in social continua (“achievement,” “merit,” etc.)—a meaning which perhaps comes closest to the conventional usage of the term “ideology” (i.e. the “ruling ideas”). Ultimately, however, recognition implies an incognizance of the fact that all of the familiar partitions of the social world, with their vertical and horizontal arrangements, are the product of practices—that is, of the historical action of particular agents with particular interests (1991b, 169-70). And because it is founded on this incognizance, recognition is therefore also “misrecognition.”

It is thus clear why Bourdieu often speaks of an “alchemical” transformation of differences of position (that is, of differences of economic and cultural capital): “social magic always manages to produce [legitimate] discontinuity out of continuity” (*ibid.*, 120; my addition). With respect to the analysis of lifestyle, this implies that differences are perceived precisely as differences of “style,” that is, as purely symbolic differences rather than economically derived ones, and that the relation which obtains between the agent and the canonized culture elides awareness precisely of the historical “labor of canonization.” With respect to the state, it implies that obtainment of the official recognition of boundaries can be a way of securing “advantages and obligations”—but only at the cost of a “labor of officialization” (1984, 476-7). In all such instances, cultural and economic capital—one should add social capital, for the sake of completion—serve as the *resources*, mobilized through expenditure, for the constitution, maintenance, or transformation of distinctions; the *function* of such expenditures, “in the last analysis,” lies in their dissimulation of the

monopolization of this capital itself, a part of which is expended in the process. The ability of individuals and groups to institute boundaries—whether durable and official, or diffuse and momentary—is thus *conditioned* by their social position (Bourdieu 1985, 734; 1987a, 11 ff.); it remains, however, *irreducible* to the latter, on the grounds that between the symbolic order and the social order, there obtains a provisional autonomy:

[i]t is the relative independence of the structure of the system of classifying, classified words...in relation to the structure of the distribution capital, and more precisely, it is the time-lag...between changes in jobs, linked to changes in the productive apparatus, and changes in titles, which creates the space for symbolic strategies aimed at exploiting the discrepancies between the nominal and the real, appropriating words so as to get at the things they designate, or appropriating things while waiting to get the words that sanction them.... (Bourdieu 1984, 481)

It would thus seem to be the case for Bourdieu that the relative (analytical) autonomy of the symbolic, at least insofar as it does not lead to real insight, becomes a more or less effective mechanism for the perpetuation of (social) heteronomy.³³

The notion of misrecognition, as Bourdieu uses it, results in an image according to which all those who occupy the throne are pretenders. We should not, however, take this to imply a theory of the transcendence of power, in the form of an “eternal recurrence” or the like (as noted by Wacquant, in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 52). Rather, we should return to Bourdieu’s correspondence models, and to the decision to render the parameters of social space gradationally. For what is apparently no more than an innocuous decision concerning statistical technique actually serves as a device by means of which sociology is prevented from naturalizing social divisions. And because it amounts to a de-naturalization, the static, “synchronic” model ultimately imposes a historicist viewpoint upon sociological research, pointing it inevitably towards analysis of the “acts of institution” which underlie *all* social boundaries, and thereby effecting (at least in part) the

“epistemic break” which Bourdieu considers so essential. In this manner Bourdieu’s sociology is transported out of the orbit of structuralism altogether.³⁴

VIII. Sociology and Class Analysis

If it is the epistemic significance of Bourdieu’s decision to construct social space gradationally that initially requires comment, we still must not lose sight of its substantive implications. These are not hard to specify. The postulate of a social order in which “ranks”—construed “objectively,” in terms of occupational positions, for example—are distributed continuously across a hierarchy with no clear boundaries is typically associated with certain versions of “stratification” theory developed primarily in the U.S. context. It is not necessary to review the myriad versions of this theory, nor to resurrect the often accusatory disputations in which class analysis and stratification analysis have confronted one another. For even if Bourdieu conceptualizes the structure of social space in terms of the volume and composition of “*capital*,” it should be clear that his model shares a familial resemblance with various forms of stratification analysis, one which undoubtedly sets it apart from nearly all structural theories of class (whether grounded in the concept of the relations of production, authority, etc.). At the same time, however, it is equally obvious that with the notion of a “classificatory struggle”—the notion, that is, of practices which are oriented towards an inscription of group-constituting boundaries into symbolic and institutional “objectivity”—Bourdieu wishes to re-connect with the more traditional concept of classes as conflict groups. These disparate affinities allow him to undertake yet another “reconciliation of opposites”:

[t]he opposition between theories which describe the social world in the language of stratification and those which speak the language of the class struggle corresponds

to two ways of seeing the social world which, though difficult to reconcile in practice, are in no way mutually exclusive as regards their principle. “Empiricists” seem locked into the former, leaving the latter for “theorists,” because descriptive or explanatory surveys, which can only manifest classes or class fractions in the form of a punctual set of distributions of properties among individuals, always arrive after (or before) the battle and necessarily put into parentheses the struggle of which this distribution is the product. (Bourdieu 1984, 245)³⁵

As was stated earlier, I do not think that Bourdieu’s decision to construe his model gradationally can be justified on purely empirical grounds. Be this as it may, it is clear that any attempt to situate Bourdieu’s work with respect to class analysis implies, with equal necessity, the attempt to situate it with respect to stratification analysis.

In order to undertake the latter, let us briefly recall the approaches developed by Barber and Lenski. As we have seen, despite the different theoretical bases with which they defined a stratification order (normative consensus or the distribution of power), each viewed such order in strictly gradational. Consequently, although they both retained the term “class,” both also acknowledged that identification of class boundaries was merely a nominalist convention, to be specified by the researcher according to the dictates of his or her research problem. From a Bourdieuan perspective, such an approach is insufficient not because it fails to appreciate the existence of first-order classificatory systems—both Barber and Lenski makes reference to various “ideologies”—but because it does not acknowledge boundary-instituting practices as a fundamental form in which conflicts over the social structure itself are played out. It thereby fails to “reintroduce into the full definition of the object the primary representations of the object” (Bourdieu 1990b, 135). Beyond this, both Barber and Lenski takes account of the existence of multiple stratification orders—such as sex, age, religion, economic position—all of which exhibit the same unilinear organization, and thus sit side by side with each other analytically, however much

they may overlap empirically. In this instance, the relation to Bourdieu's position is more complicated. On the one hand, Bourdieu insists strongly on the *singularity* of the "stratification order," as evidenced by his assertion that class constitutes a universal explanatory principle. This amounts to an avowal of the conceptual (and causal) primacy of economic location, and results in the "secondary" status of factors other than capital. In this, his stance is similar to that assumed by Parkin, who criticizes the "exaggerated claims regarding the functional independence of different aspects of inequality" put forward by Barber and Lenski, and instead affirms the centrality of the occupational sphere (1971, 13-28). Moreover, for Bourdieu, this latter sphere is taken to extend beyond the domain of an economy founded on private property, in a manner reminiscent of Blau and Duncan's well-known statement:

[t]he occupational structure in modern industrial society not only constitutes an important foundation for the main dimensions of social stratification but also serves as the connecting link between different institutions and spheres of social life, and therein lies its great significance. The hierarchy of prestige strata...have their roots in the occupational structure; so does the hierarchy of political power and authority, for political authority in modern society is largely exercised as a full time occupation.... (Blau and Duncan 1967, 6-7)

On the other hand, however, Bourdieu also insists that the distribution of "ranks" within this sphere exhibits a *multidimensional* arrangement. This decision—undoubtedly motivated by an engagement with Marxism—opens his sociology to the analysis of a conflict dynamic altogether alien to stratification theory: that in which individuals and collectivities separated primarily by the composition of the capital they control vie to establish dominance.

Notwithstanding Bourdieu's dismay at the prospect of disquisitions on the relation to the "founding fathers," his work is far more difficult to situate with respect to the

traditions of class analysis instigated by Marx and Weber. This does not derive solely from the perennial problem of isolating “core” propositions. Bourdieu himself does not seem to feel that the conceptual precision that might differentiate between traditions is particularly important. Thus, for example, in certain instances we find him attempting to yoke his vocabulary to something like a labor theory of value in order to account for the generic identity of the different forms of capital, while at other times he appears to be more comfortable with the language of power.³⁶ Be this as it may, any such evaluation ultimately has to contend with the expanded definition of basic economic concepts (“capital,” but also terms like “profit,” “market,” etc.) which is one of the hallmarks of his thought. Hence, to make a somewhat obvious point, a model of the class structure which envisions the polar extremes of the dominant class to lie in the opposition between commercial employers and industrialists, on the one hand, and artists and intellectuals, on the other, stands quite apart from one modeled strictly on the logic of commodity production (and in which, for example, industrial capital would be opposed to finance capital, etc.). Likewise, if Bourdieu chooses to refer to a “new petite bourgeois” fraction (see Bourdieu 1984, 354-71), this terminological appropriation in no way indicates a conceptual camaraderie with Poulantzian theory: in contrast to the latter, which, as we have seen, is defined exclusively through negative criteria (non-productive labor, exclusion from the working class, exclusion from the bourgeoisie), Bourdieu’s formulation specifies this fraction in terms of an intermediate quantity of capital composed primarily of educational credentials.³⁷ Summarily put, all of this implies that a model of the class structure built primarily around the parameters of “volume” and “composition” of capital clearly falls outside the Marxian tradition, no matter how widely one may wish to define it. Indeed, it is quite impossible to

read Bourdieu's use of the notion of "capital" in terms of an exploitative appropriation of surplus value. Moreover, I believe it reasonable to further suggest, in keeping with remarks made by Calhoun (1995, 138-42), that one finds in Bourdieu little place for a rigorous notion of *capitalism*, at least if understood as a historically specific form of production in which qualitatively different activities are systematically related via units of an abstract measure of equivalence.³⁸ Perhaps more important in discussing Bourdieu's relation to Marxism, however, his unwillingness to take up the "boundary question" at the level of the class structure—that is, his unwillingness to identify *a priori* the "frontiers" which separate one class (or fraction) from another, in independence of agents' "will and representation"—has as its consequence a dramatic shift in the "problematic" which class analysis confronts (not least of all with respect to the issue of class politics). This is particularly apparent in comparison with authors such as Poulantzas and even Wright, for whom the accurate identification of the potential authors of social transformation is tied to the correct specification of class (and fraction) boundaries.

To be sure, as various commentators have noted, Bourdieu deploys the notion of capital in a "distributional" sense—that is, he does not thematize the fact that the distribution of economic capital, for example, results in a definite set of social relations *within* production, implying a variable control over the labor process itself (see Wright 1997, 34)—a tendency which has at times been loosely construed as Weberian.³⁹ Moreover, Weber's typology of contemporary "social classes" does include the "propertyless intelligentsia and specialists" among its ranks (1978, 305), thereby according significance to those who Bourdieu locates towards the "cultural" pole of social space. However, it has never been altogether clear whether Weber's typology should be

understood as the elaboration of an economic “structure” or of economically founded “groups.” Thus, for example, in the case of Goldthorpe’s class theory, which is based on the notion of differential forms of employment relations and work conditions, the issue of structural demarcations between classes arises just as it did in the Marxian case (albeit without the supervening political concerns). And a similar point may certainly be made concerning Dahrendorf’s specification of authority relations in terms of a “zero-sum” line separating those who issue commands from those who execute them, one which remains (sociologically) salient irrespective of whether the agents situated on either side of this line are aware of it—that is, irrespective of whether its significance remains merely “latent” for them. Furthermore, if we pause to consider the other dimension of Weberian sociology which has played a central role in class theory—namely, the closure concept—it is clear that, at least in the elaboration developed by Parkin, the divergence from Bourdieu is of equal magnitude. The view which sees in social structure only a dependent variable leaves little or no room for the type of explanatory project pursued in *Distinction*.

Whatever the case may be, if we wish to place Bourdieu’s work in relation to the arena of class analysis, however provisionally, then I believe a more fruitful approach might be to take up those concerns which he himself identifies as central. It is therefore instructive to return to the more recent articles that were discussed in section I (above), in which Bourdieu describes the constitutive antinomy that motivates his reflections on class:

contrary to the *nominalist realism* that cancels out social differences by reducing them to pure theoretical artifacts, one must...assert the existence of an objective space determining compatibilities and incompatibilities, proximities and distances. Contrary to the *realism of the intelligible* (or the reification of concepts), one must assert that the classes that can be separated out in social space...do not exist as real groups although they explain the probability of individuals constituting themselves as practical groups, in families..., clubs, associations, and even trade-union or political “movements.” (Bourdieu 1985, 725).

We might thus read Bourdieu's corpus in terms of a general orientation to the explanation of the classificatory practices through which social collectivities are "made and unmade" on the basis of the "existing" structure. Approached primarily from this perspective, I believe that the viewpoint from which he undertakes his analyses bears at least a partial resemblance to "structuration" theory, in the specific sense that Giddens gave this term in his early work on class (1973).⁴⁰

As we have seen, for Giddens, like Bourdieu, the conceptual questions associated with class crystallized the problem of reconciling structure and agency. The solution to this problem entailed the utilization of various non-Marxian concepts to examine those contingent, empirical processes which intervene between a "structure" and particular class formations, between economy and society. In Giddens' case, this meant the identification of various forms of market closure which may restrict mobility opportunities both intragenerationally and intergenerationally ("mediate class structuration"), and various secondary factors ("proximate structuration")—including the technical division of labor, patterns of organizational authority, and "evaluative categorisations based upon ethnic or cultural differences" (*ibid.*, 109-12)—which may potentially intensify or ameliorate mobility closure.

Like Giddens, Bourdieu is concerned to develop a sociological account of the relation between class structures and class formations which avoids what he takes to be the founding antinomy of Marxian class analysis—"a logic that is either totally determinist or totally voluntarist" (Bourdieu 1985, 726). Nevertheless, in order to avoid confusion, the most important differences between them must be elaborated. As I see it, there are four of these:

- Because Giddens works with the more or less Weberian category of “market capacity,” the economic domain receives its parameters from the distribution of the different sources of this capacity (i.e. private property, skills, and labor power). In contrast, even if we interpret Bourdieu’s notion of capital in a “distributional” sense, the use of “volume” and “composition” as basic parameters results in a very different arrangement of (objective) classes, one which might be seen as a gain in abstraction on Bourdieu’s part. Put more clearly, Giddens’ use of the concept of “market capacity” results in a construction that can be considered “structural” only in a weak sense (the different sources of this capacity corresponding, respectively, to a potential “upper,” “middle,” and “lower” class [Giddens 1973, 107]). Bourdieu’s approach, in contradistinction, is “structural” in a much stronger sense, insofar as the model he constructs is meant to locate all possible “asset configurations” within a set of *determinate objective relations*.
- Giddens understands the phenomena that may potentially reinforce the effects of closure in terms of “proximate structuration.” In the case of some of these phenomena, such as authority patterns, it may seem intuitive to presuppose some covariation with the distribution of the different sources of “market capacity.” However, as becomes particularly clear with respect to the technical division of labor and to “status” properties such as ethnicity, Giddens—who deploys the terminology of “overlap” and “superimposition”—views the different factors contributing to structuration as *analytically independent* of one another (*ibid.*, 111-2; 1980). Therefore, in contrast to Bourdieu, the *interaction* of these factors would appear to remain an empirical contingency.⁴¹

- For Giddens, all capitalist societies are characterized by the various sources of mediate and proximate structuration. However, mobility opportunities may be more or less closed in one society relative to another; additionally, the different sources of structuration may exhibit more or less “superimposition” from one society to the next—and indeed, in certain cases they could conceivably run at tangents to one another. Consequently, the question of whether the “class principle” is the *predominant* form of structuration within a given society appears to become a *fully* empirical one (*ibid.*, 20, 108, 110, 134-5). As we have noted, Bourdieu, while certainly refusing to obviate empirical contingency, explicitly ascribes to *class* formations a probabilistic advantage in the social competitions through which groups are “made and unmade.”
- Lastly, in Giddens’ class theory, the only analogue to the “Durkheimian” side of Bourdieu’s analysis—that is, to the attempt to relate strategies of symbolic demarcation back to interests grounded in the underlying social structure—lies in a revamped (and thin) account of “class consciousness” (*ibid.*, 111-7). Indeed, for Giddens, class consciousness—meaning attitudes and beliefs which have the class structure as their “content”—may or may not emerge from the prior foundation of “class awareness.” The latter term indicates attitudes and beliefs which are indigenous to a particular class, yet lack any such content. As such, class awareness is in no sense antagonistic. Consequently, Giddens’ account results in overall image of class society which is in no way *inherently* conflict-ridden, unlike that of Bourdieu.

With these differences in view, I believe that we may safely appropriate Giddens’ terminology in order to characterize Bourdieu’s endeavor.

Of course, we should not assume that Bourdieu's approach to class analysis is only negatively related to the Marxian tradition in class theory. Indeed, as became clear in the previous chapter, the theoretical concerns animating Giddens' approach also find expression in the work of Thompson and Przeworski, and specifically, in their attempts to loosen the absolute primacy accorded to structure in the works of Althusser and Poulantzas. A consideration of Przeworski's formulation of the problem is particularly illuminating with respect to the Bourdieuean position. It was Przeworski's contention that the "objective conditions" present at any given moment do not determine the "feasible" possibilities of class formation in a unique manner. Consequently, any struggle between classes must be preceded by a struggle "*about* classes"; hence, class formations themselves are continuously subject to processes of organization, disorganization, and reorganization. That this position leads Przeworski into close proximity with Bourdieu becomes fully apparent in remarks such as the following:

classifications of positions must be viewed as immanent to the practices that (may) result in class formation. The very theory of classes must be viewed as internal to particular political projects. Positions within the relations of production, or any other relations for that matter, are thus no longer viewed as objective in the sense of being prior to class struggles. They are objective only to the extent to which they validate or invalidate the practices of class formation, to the extent to which they make particular projects historically realizable or not. And here the mechanism of determination is not unique: several projects may be feasible at a particular conjuncture. (Przeworski 1985, 67)

There is clearly a deep affinity here with the Bourdieuean approach, and in particular, with its view of a "classificatory struggle" as the core process of class formation.

Nevertheless, when we further examine Przeworski's account, questions arise pertaining to the role of history. Given his general claim that "classes" should be understood as collectivities which are formed out of struggles "*about*" class, Przeworski,

like Bourdieu, is forced to confront the issue of whether the concept of “class” now fully devolves into one among the many first-order discourses through which agents classify each other. In his case, the question is as follows: if we accept the assumption that it is the “totality” of “objective conditions” (economic, political, and ideological) which serves to “validate or invalidate” competing practices of class formation, why does Marxism not simply dissolve into, for example, a generalized conflict sociology (*ibid.*, 80-1)? I will continue to postpone a consideration of Bourdieu’s position with regard to this type of question. For his part, Przeworski attempts to respond by suggesting that Marxism remains the science of “objective conditions,” and it is these which form both the point of departure and the point of arrival for all conflicts (including those which are not class struggles at the “phenomenal level”). This claim rests on an assertion that it is the relations of production which, ultimately, structure the “totality” of objective conditions (*ibid.*, 67). Such an assertion, however, leaves him in the position of having to reconcile the efficacy of this determination “in the last instance” with the efficacy of class conflicts (which may potentially have effects on the relations of production themselves). Though not completely clear, Przeworski’s strategy here (*ibid.*, 88-90) appears to be one of “partialling out” the different types of causality: struggles between the “carriers” of the capitalist relations of production are ultimately conditioned by long-term “tendencies” of capitalist development (via their influence upon the “totality of objective conditions”), as well as by the shorter-term consequences of past conflicts, insofar as these have been sedimented into “objectivity”; by contrast, the structuration of members of the “surplus labor force”—i.e. all individuals belonging neither to the proletariat nor the bourgeoisie—is declared to be *purely* the result of historical class struggles. As various critics have suggested, this

strategy flirts with the teleology that he elsewhere disavows (Aronowitz 1982, 76-7; Johnston 1986, 105-7). For reasons that I will detail, Bourdieu does not share the “problematic” which leads Przeworski to attempt this (arguably) awkward differentiation of causes.

If the preceding reflections suggest that we may reasonably understand Bourdieu’s class analysis via the concept of structuration, there remains the contentious issue of how we should interpret his reliance on occupational categories as units of analysis. Indeed, this reliance has fairly deep roots within Bourdieu’s class analysis: in some of the earliest writings on education, for example, we find parental occupation—broadly categorized (e.g. “senior-management”)—used to indicate social background, at times in admixture with class designations (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979, 10-11; Bourdieu, Passeron, and de Saint Martin 1994, 54-5). Moreover, shortly after *Reproduction*, we find Bourdieu beginning to refer to categories of this sort in the language of class “fractions” (e.g. 1973), yet offering no account of the relation between occupation and class. With *Distinction*, we may recall, broad occupational categories come to serve as the units from which the model of social space is constructed statistically, according to the properties exhibited by the incumbents of these categories. At this point in time, we can observe Bourdieu suggesting that data requirements necessitate the central place given to occupational categories (1984, 127). Elsewhere he asserts that occupation is essentially an “indicator,” standing in either for “economic and social condition” (*ibid.*, 106) or for “position in the relations of production” (*ibid.*, 101-2).⁴²

It might thus be asked whether we should interpret Bourdieu’s model of social space in terms of occupation or class—and whether, if we opt for latter, it is clearly

different from the former. Indeed, at first glance it might appear that we could substitute a strictly occupational terminology for Bourdieu's vocabulary of classes and fractions with little change in meaning. In this context, the proposal recently offered by Grusky and Sørensen (1998) is relevant, insofar as it claims an affinity with Bourdieu on precisely these grounds. According to Grusky and Sørensen, the robust explanatory power once associated with notions of class has dissipated, as a result of various economic and non-economic transformations. They thus recommend an approach which would disaggregate class categories to the occupational level, while simultaneously preserving the explanatory ambitions associated with class analysis. While their approach can claim a certain resemblance to Bourdieu, it nevertheless differs in an important respect. Specifically, it is doubtful that occupation, as conceptualized by Grusky and Sørensen, can be considered "relational," either in the quasi-Saussurian sense appropriated by Bourdieu, or in the more conventionally Marxian sense, according to which, for example, one cannot refer to the "proletariat" without also referring (implicitly or explicitly) to the "bourgeoisie" (e.g. Wright 1985, 34-5). The implications of this difference become clear if we recall that Bourdieu often refers to a fraction-specific "collective trajectory." This concept makes apparent the fact that, for Bourdieu, classes and class fractions are characterized by an identity (over time) which is not solely a function of their occupational composition, but also (and more importantly) of their structural position. Bourdieu thus remains closer to "structurally" inclined variants of class analysis in this respect, Marxism included.

IX. Class Control Decentered

Before concluding, it is necessary to mention the most important addition Bourdieu has made to his class analytical framework—namely, the introduction of the notion of a “field of power.” This term is used to designate the “upper” segment of the social space; it amounts, in other words, to another name for the structural position of the dominant class. As such, the field of power exhibits an arrangement with which we are already familiar: the different occupational categories are located in relation to one another according to the particular composition of the capitals which their incumbents are typically able to mobilize (see Bourdieu 1996a, 266, which draws on the structural map developed in *Distinction*). Thus, broadly put, the dominant class is differentiated along a continuum separating the holders of predominantly “temporal” power and predominantly “spiritual” power. Analyses of the field of power hence amount to a study of intra-class conflicts. Specifically, because the members of the dominant class are potentially able to mobilize at least two different forms of capital—economic and cultural—it is conceptualized as a site in which the fractions vie to determine the “dominant principle of domination” (*ibid.*, 265).

The field of power encompasses the occupants of top positions within industry and commerce, upper level executives (public and private), members of the professions, upper level civil servants, professors in higher education, and “artistic producers.” However, each of the institutional arenas within which these agents are situated is itself sub-field, and each exhibits its own internal dynamics. Indeed, Bourdieu attempts to demonstrate that the various sub-fields—organized around highly specific “stakes”—each exhibit a structure more or less homologous with that of the field of power as a whole; that is, each is organized around the opposition between temporally and spiritually founded dominance. In

the artistic field, for example, this opposes the avant-garde to commercially oriented artists (Bourdieu 1995); in the field of business, it opposes public sector managers (or managers of mixed enterprises) to private sector managers (who may also be owners) (Bourdieu 1996a, 300-8). It is this organization which generates their internal conflicts.

However, I do not wish to take up the difficult question of the relations (only sometimes causal) between the internal and external dynamics of these sub-fields, a question which is summed up well in Bourdieu's preferred phrase, "relative autonomy" (see Bourdieu 1995, 223ff.). Instead I am interested primarily in Bourdieu's conceptualization of relations between the fractions of the dominant class. Insofar as the members of the class control relatively large volumes of two types of capital, they are presented with two principles of hierarchization, which are structured inversely (Bourdieu 1996a, 270). The essential conflict between the fractions is not oriented to the monopolization of capital, but to the establishment of the primacy of one particular capital over the other. It often entails an attempt to influence state policy—for example, with respect to the regulation of the educational requirements for various occupations (Bourdieu, in Wacquant 1993, 27). Additionally, however, this conflict too exhibits a symbolic dimension: "[the] struggle to impose a dominant principle of domination is at the same time a struggle for legitimation, since to impose the domination of one form of capital is to produce the recognition of its legitimacy, in particular within the opposing camp" (Bourdieu, in *ibid.*, 26). The results of such conflict (which presumably tend to take the form of fraction "compromises") amount to what Bourdieu likes to term the "conversion rate" between capitals (1996a, 264-5). Importantly, to the extent that these conflicts concern the relative efficacy of the different capitals, their outcome will have consequences throughout the entirety of the social space.

In the present context, what is of interest is precisely the view of a singular locus of social (class) domination which is characterized by a high level of internal differentiation and which is founded on multiple and largely opposed forms of power. Indeed, this view leads Bourdieu to formulate some interesting empirical propositions concerning the implications of the progressive (but contingent) decentration of class dominance:

we may advance the notion that progress in the differentiation of the forms of power is constituted by so many protective acts against *tyranny*, understood, after the manner of Pascal, as the infringement of one order upon the rights of another, or more precisely, as an intrusion of the forms of power associated with one field in the functioning of another. [T]he dominated can always take advantage of or benefit from conflicts among the powerful, who, quite often, need their cooperation in order to triumph in these conflicts.... (*ibid.*, 398)⁴³

Although the premise that democratic-capitalist societies are characterized by multiple, differentiated centers of power—each of which may potentially function as a restraint on the others—has numerous precedents, the similarity with Aron’s account of the decentration of control under such conditions is certainly striking.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, “elite theory,” including the version promulgated by Aron, has typically argued that precisely this multiplicity obviates the validity of any attempt to view the social “totality” through the lens of a single, structurally-generated, dynamic (no matter how complex). As a result, such theory has tended to substitute an analysis of the composition of social groups (Aron’s “integrated” and “pluralistic” elites) for the analysis of social structure—or has at least tended to strip the former of its internal relation to the latter. When viewed in this context, Bourdieu’s extension of concept of “class structure” to encompass the occupational order as a whole (in contrast to the “private” economy), coupled with his specification of a dynamic grounded in the opposition of different species of capital, effects a rectification: the concept of the “ruling class” can now be given a properly structural foundation (see Bourdieu, in

Wacquant 1993, 20-1, 35-6). Furthermore, by re-casting the various members of the “elite” in the idiom of class fractions, Bourdieu is able to specify at a theoretical level (rather than a merely descriptive one) the potential sources of conflict which may divide it.

X. Class and Necessity

For reasons that I have tried to develop here, I believe that Bourdieu’s approach to class analysis innovates considerably in a number of different registers (epistemic, theoretical, and empirical). We can summarize these in four points.

- By applying to the relational meta-theory in such a manner that the factors constitutive of the model of social space are understood *gradationally*, Bourdieu develops a unique conceptualization of the class *structure*. This conceptualization entails a multidimensional model in which, as was noted, all possible combinations of the fundamental forms of social power (the different capitals) stand in definite objective relations to one another—or in other words, are subject to interpretation in terms of their relative proximity and distance.
- By insisting that the “secondary properties” are “inseparable” elements of (objective) classes, Bourdieu breaks with predominant views of the *causality* typically ascribed to the class structure. Moreover, in claiming that the system of interacting factors which are implicated in the explanation of a particular practice may alter their configuration according to the field in which that practice is situated, he is—arguably—able to conserve the premise that class comprises a universal explanatory principle.
- The resulting view of sociological verification implies the postulation of an *isomorphism* between the class *structure* and the *structure* of symbolically encoded

practices. It is as a consequence of this premise that the confirmation of causal hypotheses is demonstrated primarily through a juxtaposition of correspondence diagrams—a method whose evaluation is, of course, restricted to visual inspection.

- The principle that practices nonetheless enjoy a *conditional autonomy* is “built into” Bourdieu’s approach insofar as it views class (and fraction) conflicts in terms of agents’ attempts to partition a social space whose constitutive parameters are distributed in continuous fashion. Bourdieu is largely interested in those social divisions which, like lifestyle, are generated symbolically, and which can serve to legitimate the underlying distributions. He also analyzes, however, the processes through which such divisions may be more or less durably inscribed into the “objectivity” of institutions.

The result of these four propositions is a class analytical theory and research program that departs considerably from received traditions. As I have suggested, the theory and analysis can be provisionally understood via the concept of structuration, as long as we remain fully clear about those characteristics which set it apart from more familiar uses of the term.

There remains only the vexing issue of the place accorded to the so-called secondary properties, that is, their role as moderators. In attempting to make sense of this, we should not underestimate the vehemence with which Bourdieu argues against conflating “objective” class with the symbolically unified (and potentially mobilized) collectivity. Appropriate to a sociology which takes “symbolic violence” as its prized object, there is a strong constructivist element which is native to Bourdieu’s class analysis, one which implies that the “social discourse of class” is merely one among the myriad categorical forms through which agents undertake “the meaningful construction of the social world.” This implies that class formations can only be the result of a competition between symbolic

formulae. At the same time, however, we have already noted that Bourdieu ascribes a greater probability to the emergence of class formations, other factors being equal: “groups mobilized on the basis of a secondary criterion (such as sex or age) are likely to be bound together less permanently and less deeply than those mobilized on the basis of the fundamental determinants of their condition” (Bourdieu 1984, 107; see 1998a, 11 for a recent statement).

McCall (1992) has taken up this question with respect to the place of gender in Bourdieu’s sociology. She discerns two largely distinct tendencies: on the one hand, she finds in Bourdieu a propensity to confer upon gender a “mediating” role, whereby it determines the distribution of the capitals—which are essentially gender-neutral—*within* each class; on the other hand, and running contrary to the first tendency in her view, is Bourdieu’s more successful ability to develop highly nuanced descriptive accounts of the dispositions constitutive of the gendered habitus (see *ibid.*, 839-44). I believe that this diagnosis is inaccurate because it is not fully clear about the notion of structural causality that Bourdieu operates with (and the associated primacy claim). On the interpretation that was proposed above, in other words, the efficacy of capital is never exercised in independence from the moderating action of gender (and other secondary properties); capital can thus have no gender-neutral *effects*. Consequently, the habitus, as the product of this efficacy, is necessarily gendered—but only within the context of its associated economic determination. Indeed, it seems to me that in order to sustain her diagnosis, and specifically, her assessment of the second tendency she isolates, McCall must systematically play down Bourdieu’s insistence on class (and fraction) variations in gender dispositions (see Bourdieu 1984, 185ff., esp. 190-3, 206-7). This suggests that if we wish

to get clear about the “secondary” status accorded to these factors—a status accorded them in the *causal* order—then we must look elsewhere.

Ultimately, it seems to me that Bourdieu’s approach is conditioned by a presupposition that may seem both banal and obvious, yet which, if it remains unthematized, may introduce opacity into any attempt to engage his sociology. Let us recall the distinction between class condition and class position. On the interpretation offered above, Bourdieu was only able to break out of the inchoate position he developed in the 1966 article by re-casting this distinction in strictly epistemic terms. Thus, the notion of a class position was taken to refer to a particular occupational location within the relationally construed class structure. The notion of a class condition, in turn, was taken to refer to this *same* location, but seen from a different perspective. Specifically, it came to designate a viewpoint in which what counted were not the relations that differentiated the location from others, but the experiential “conditions of existence” entailed by occupancy of it, and the consequent “limitations” and “facilities” which they imposed, qua milieu, upon the formation of the habitus. The concept of a class condition, in other words, came to designate the particular experience of *necessity* associated with a given location, and the detachment from or submersion in the practical demands of life which resulted from it. The centrality of the class condition is reiterated throughout *Distinction*, but with relatively little explication.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, I believe we must acknowledge that the causal primacy accorded to volume and composition of capital in Bourdieu’s theory—understood specifically as the structural coordinates of an occupational location—derives precisely from the assumption that it is primarily via the economy (in the wide sense) that the *asymmetrical “distribution of necessity”* occurs (see Bourdieu 1990a, 117). That this

supposition should be operative in Bourdieu's sociology may well appear to be a trivial observation. Nevertheless, once recognized explicitly, it has interpretive implications. Above all, I believe we are compelled to reject categorically the view that class, in Bourdieu, amounts to no more than "a *metaphor* for the total set of social determinants" (Brubaker 1985, 769; my italics).

Notes

¹ Also important in this respect are Bourdieu (1990a, 122-39; 1998a, 1-13). Brubaker's essay was published in the same issue of *Theory and Society* as Bourdieu's article "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups" (1985).

² The nature of this "logic of opposition" is actually somewhat more complicated, since it can link not only different classes within the same "social order," but also the same class across different historical times. Thus, in what will become one of his favorite examples, Bourdieu speaks of the petty bourgeoisie as "the class of transition which defines itself fundamentally by that which it is no longer and by that which it is not yet" (1966, 207). For a more recent discussion of the sense and importance of the relational approach (now bound up with the concept of field), see Bourdieu (in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 96-7, 228-32).

³ The question thus arises of where the distinction between class situation and class position stands vis-à-vis Marxism. Bourdieu offers merely a passing answer, but it is of interest: "[t]here is no doubt that properties of position and properties of situation can only be dissociated by an operation of thought...[if] only because the class situation can also be defined in terms of position in the system of relations of production" (1966, 202). This remark appears to be a request, addressed to Marxism, for forbearance: situational properties—the condition of possibility of positional properties—may themselves be explicable in "relational" terms (that is, in terms of the relations between different positions within a structure)...but *only* "in the last instance." The implication seems to be that while classes may ultimately be determined by the relations of production, in a Marxian sense, simple structural facts such as wage labor or ownership of the productive enterprise are inadequate—if utilized in an immediate manner—to explain the host of phenomena which Bourdieu associates with social class. This being the case, the distinction between situation and position will prove worthwhile insofar and only insofar as it can demonstrate "heuristic fruitfulness" (Bourdieu 1966, 202).

⁴ Nevertheless, I believe that the interpretation developed by Swartz (1997, 150-3), which has been very helpful in other respects, is mistaken on this point. Because the concept of a "class-situation" comes directly from Weber, Swartz identifies situational properties with class as such (which he then assimilates to the notion of "life chances"), and correlatively identifies positional properties with status. This is precisely the type of elision that is invited by Bourdieu's inability to develop both the institutional and meta-theoretical notions of "structure." However, it is clear that Bourdieu does not wish to restrict the application of the meta-theoretical sense to symbolic systems alone. Indeed, the notion of a *social* structure (in the sense that Bourdieu speaks of it) has no real function within the context of Swartz's interpretation. (Moreover, we can find numerous statements to the effect that status distinctions are to be understood as symbolic expressions of *both* differences of situation and differences of position [e.g. Bourdieu 1966, 212, 222].) A similar misinterpretation can be found in Robbins, when he identifies "properties of position" with "position-takings," i.e. with a form of expressive practice: for Bourdieu, Robbins declares, "situations are given or received whereas positions are actively made. Situations are static whereas position-taking is the dynamic activity that constantly destabilises situations" (2000, 30). Again, when construed in this manner, Bourdieu's assertion that social structure itself must be understood in relational terms disappears from view. The distinction between properties of condition (or situation) and properties of position is essential to Bourdieu's subsequent thought on class, and is re-formulated in *Distinction*.

⁵ The social cultivation of new needs looms large in *Distinction* (for example, Bourdieu 1984, 153-4; for an earlier statement, see Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 38). See also Marx's famous remark on tobacco (1981, 479).

⁶ They write:

primary...[pedagogical work] prepares [the child] that much better for secondary...[pedagogical work] based on explicit pedagogy when exerted within a group or class whose material conditions of existence allow them [sic] to stand more completely aside from practice, in other words to “neutralize” in imagination or reflection the vital urgencies which thrust a pragmatic disposition on the dominated classes. (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 49)

See Lamont and Lareau (1988) for an extended discussion of the concept of cultural capital, one which, however, attempts to restrict its significance largely to the micro level.

⁷ The premise is succinctly stated in the note accompanying the diagram: “within this system of factors constantly restructured by its own action, the relative weight of the determinations due to initial class membership constantly declines to the advantage of the academic determinations which retranslate them” (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 259).

⁸ See Bourdieu and Passeron (1990, 199):

[i]t is precisely its relative autonomy that enables the traditional educational system to make a specific contribution towards reproducing the structure of class relations, since it need only obey its own rules in order to obey, additionally, the external imperatives defining its function of legitimating the established order, that is, to fulfill simultaneously its social function of reproducing the class relations, by ensuring the hereditary transmission of cultural capital, and its ideological function of concealing that social function by accrediting the illusion of its absolute autonomy.

On the ambiguously treated opposition between “traditional” and “rationalized” secondary pedagogy, see Bourdieu and Passeron (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 52-4).

⁹ Bottomore’s foreword to the English translation of *Reproduction* (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, xvi-xvii) notes that the text must presuppose a more general theory of classes, a point also made by various critics (e.g. Connell 1983, 147).

¹⁰ Bourdieu presents his map of the class structure in a diagram which is difficult to take in (1984, 128-9), both because it is printed with a second diagram superimposed (displaying the structure of lifestyle attributes), and because it is a composite representation of the results of correspondence analyses carried out on multiple data sets (see the discussion on 1984, 127). The axes are calculated from numerous measures of income, consumption power, educational attainment, and social origin, which are all understood as indicators (1984, 127-30, 538-43; consumption power is considered to be an indirect measure of economic capital: see 116). Elsewhere Bourdieu refers to the dangers entailed in interpreting “latent” factors (1988, 71-2).

¹¹ Indeed, the question of whether a particular form of capital is privileged now becomes an empirical one, since the analysis conceptualizes intra-class relations in terms of struggles over the “dominant principle of hierarchization” (Bourdieu 1984, 120)—that is, the *relative* power attaching to the different capitals. This will be discussed below.

¹² Here we might recall Dahrendorf’s (1959, 218) charge that Parsons displays “almost totalitarian convictions” in his stratification theory.

¹³ This is where Bourdieu’s discussion of “objective class” is most liable to result in confusion. In the text of *Distinction*, the construction of the spatial representation of the class structure occurs

after the discussion of the role of the secondary properties. (I have obviously found it convenient to invert this order of presentation.) Thus, given the extensive thematization to which they are subject, these properties ought to be featured prominently in the representation of the structure, along with those pertaining to capital. However, they are nearly invisible there: the construction includes only some indicators of residence and fertility (1984, 128-9). The most glaring absence is gender, since it is undoubtedly the most important of the secondary properties in the actual analyses. Thus, whereas the discussion had stressed the importance of the feminization of certain occupations, the diagrammatic presentation of objective classes does not contain any indication of where in social space this may be occurring. No explanation is given for this rather abrupt disappearance. In certain cases it may be the result of data limitations: at least some of the survey data Bourdieu uses in order to develop the representation of social space (especially that on economic resources), collected by governmental agencies, apparently included only information on men (see 1984, 519, item II, for example; for an inventory of the data sets that went into the construction of the objective classes, see 127). In other cases, however, it appears that Bourdieu only utilizes data on men, despite the availability of a more fully representative sample (for example, 1984, 520, item IV). All of this may be a manifestation the perennially unresolved question of the most appropriate approach to class analysis—i.e. via the individual or the family.

¹⁴ The relevant sections of the earlier educational studies, in other words, while making copious reference to the “total system of factors” and the like, never fully delineate the “members” of this system, and instead remain almost completely focused on cultural capital. As we have seen, these studies leave the broader conception of class with which they work implicit; associated with this is the fact that the place of the demographic factors (so-called secondary properties in *Distinction*) with respect to class is ambiguous.

¹⁵ I thus believe that Bourdieu would also concur with MacIver’s comment that “[a]n important distinction between a mechanical unity and...a social unity is that we can often change one factor in the former while keeping all the others wholly or practically unchanged” (1964, 94, note 30).

The implication of Bourdieu’s approach is that the question of the most appropriate conceptualization of causal processes must be seen as an *epistemic* one. Thus, just as it is incumbent on Bourdieu to provide supporting epistemic reasons for the adequacy or superiority of his approach, it would be equally incumbent on those who prefer to try and “partial out” the causal influence of individual factors to explain why such an approach is not “fallacious” (in MacIver’s sense). At the very least, inattention to these arguments in Bourdieu’s writing casts a dubious light on many of the attempts to test the validity or reproducibility of his results, insofar as they blithely rely on statistical techniques such as regression (for example, Robinson and Garnier 1985).

¹⁶ Another potential source of confusion arises from the fact that on the page immediately preceding this remark, we find Bourdieu stating that “[e]conomic and social condition, as identified by occupation, gives a specific form to all the properties of sex and age...” (1984, 106). Moreover, at a later point he even asserts that the influence of the secondary properties is “governed” by that of occupation (1984, 112). This confusion (social condition versus capital) can be forestalled, however, if we recall that the *same* sociological “object” (i.e. economic location) can be considered either in terms of the position which it occupies within the class structure, in which case it is understood according to the volume and composition of capital associated with it, or in terms of the “necessities and freedoms” which it imposes upon agents, in which case it is understood according to the “conditions of existence” it entails. In either case, the “object” being described is an economic location, which is in turn denoted by means of an occupational category.

¹⁷ While Bourdieu himself never directly invokes the concept of moderators, we can note that the examples he provides in order to illustrate the significance of the secondary properties (1984, 103-5) are precisely of this sort. The “moderating” function of these properties is perhaps clearest in the case of residency, which is sometimes referred to in Bourdieu’s earlier work in terms of the way in which it can condition the acquisition and utilization of cultural capital. Thus, for example, in the diagram in *Reproduction*, Bourdieu and Passeron elaborate the significance of residency to lie in “distance from the centre(s) of cultural values,” (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 259).

¹⁸ The “specificity” of the capital which is functional in a particular field in no way precludes the moderating effect of multiple secondary properties—although they too will have a “specificity” according to “logic” of the field. The question of whether, at least in certain contexts, one or more of the “secondary properties” might actually exhibit a *primary efficacy* (one whose effects are, in turn, moderated by capital) is not posed.

¹⁹ In a footnote, Bourdieu (1984, 571, note 9) disassociates himself from the methodological project of partialling covariances, on the grounds that it results in “partial explanations.”

²⁰ In order to avoid misrepresentation, it should be noted that Boham recoils from the strongly causalist understanding of the habitus, and counsels its complete abandonment (1999, 134-5). Many of Boham’s criticisms, however, are vitiated in my opinion by a lack of careful attention to the precise nature of the causal models Bourdieu constructs in the course of his empirical research—and in particular, to the fact that a habitus which acts is always located in a particular field within these models (a point to be discussed below)—as well as to the nature of the explanatory claims made (see, for example, the quotation in note 29, below).

²¹ Bourdieu writes that “[t]he habitus fulfills a function which another philosophy consigns to a transcendental consciousness: it is a socialized body, a structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or a particular sector of that world—a field—and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world” (1998a, 81; translation modified).

²² If only to forestall confusion, the following remark from Taylor must be mentioned:

[m]aps or representations, by their very nature, abstract from lived time and space. To make something like this the ultimate causal factor is to make the actual practice in time and space merely derivative, a mere application of a disengaged scheme. It is the ultimate Platonism. (Taylor 1993, 56)

The “schemes” of which Taylor speaks are indeed seen by Bourdieu as corporeal and pre-articulate, rather than free-floating entities or objects in the “realm” of culture (leaving aside the special case of codified rules, such as law [Taylor 1993, 59]). However, there is nothing intrinsically “Platonic” to the claim that these corporeal schemes are *themselves* the product of a class structure—even if this structure is best represented (for social scientific purposes) topographically (see Bourdieu 1984, 169).

²³ This means, obviously enough, that action tends to be oriented towards ends which can in some sense be deemed “optimal” (Elster 1981, 11). At the same time, given what has already been said concerning the pre-reflexive and non-cognitive nature of the habitus, it is equally clear that the notion of “strategy” implies a retrospective (i.e. sociological) reconstruction. Here again, the example of the athlete illustrates Bourdieu’s meaning well.

²⁴ This diagram is not meant to represent biographical processes, though biographical relations obviously obtain between class, habitus, and practice. In the case of cultural production, Bourdieu recasts the specification effect exerted by the field as an “imposition of form,” which he also describes with the psychoanalytical language of “censorship” (see Bourdieu 1991a, 70ff.).

²⁵ This empirical thesis, which is the basis of Lash’s (1990, 237-65) rather extravagant attempt to provide a “postmodern” interpretation of Bourdieu, is not always accounted for by critics (for example, Honneth 1995). However, it is only recognition of this claim (which, to be sure, is not argued comparatively) that allows us to begin to make sense of the fact that the sociological critique of normative-political judgments occupies an ancillary position in *Distinction*, reading like an appendix.

In my view, the strongest of the criticisms offered by Lamont in her often-cited study (1992) derive precisely from the empirical evidence she marshals in order to demonstrate the (continued) general salience of the normative dimensions of culture to the formation of group identity and lifestyle, thereby casting some doubt at least on extreme forms of the “supersession” argument. Of course, this should not be taken to disprove the tenets of the broader theory of practice, which is just as comfortable unmasking one form of disinterested action as it is another (see, in this regard, Bourdieu [1998a, 75-91]).

²⁶ The implications of Bourdieu’s approach to hermeneutic explication become most apparent not in the analysis of lifestyles, however, but in the Heidegger study (Bourdieu 1991a). Bourdieu’s method entails reconstructing “internally” the reasons which animate particular philosophical arguments and confer their specifically philosophical “force” on them. Nevertheless, rather than evaluating these arguments—rather than taking a position on their validity or invalidity—the sociology of knowledge re-interprets them in order to reveal their suffusion by any number of social “phantasms,” and to thus demonstrate the manner in which social conflicts pervade philosophical conflicts, conferring systematicity upon the “stances” and “position-takings” with which individuals and schools oppose one another (see Bourdieu 1991a, 56ff.; see also the remarks on method in 1993c). The paradigmatic status of the Heidegger study in this regard results from its fearless exhibition of the near-vertigo that derives from the act of taking as sociological object the processes influencing the production of a discourse which (among other things) denies the legitimacy of the concept of validity upon which the whole sociological endeavor rests.

²⁷ In order to confirm the obdurate effect of the “reality principle” in and upon Bourdieu’s sociology, it is adequate to recall the most serious *failure* in *Distinction*—namely, the inability to document any fractional differentiation within the working class. To be sure, when confronted with this rather embarrassing lack of findings, Bourdieu prefers to hold out for better data rather than reconsider the theory: differences in the composition of capital within the working class “must be the source of differences in lifestyle and religious and political opinion” (Bourdieu 1984, 115). Yet can there be any question that, in the meantime, this “must” amounts to nothing more than the proverbial “impotent ought”? (For a sympathetic attempt to revise both the theory and meta-theory in light of Bourdieu’s failure, see Rupp [1997].)

Griller’s appendix (1996, 26-8) provides an impressive summation of the convoluted and labyrinthine (but perhaps not atypical, for just this reason) research process that resulted in *Distinction*. I do not, however, find the essay’s criticisms overly compelling, most of which (including the charge of “positivism”) are supposed to be answerable by re-introducing “choice,” “will,” etc. In any event, Griller passes quickly over questions such as the relation between statistical technique—which, following Jenkins (1992, 60), is supposed to be merely “descriptive”—and verification (Griller 1996, 9), apparently out of a dislike for “determinism” (as entailed by the concept of habitus) at the meta-theoretical level. On this view it would appear that the symbolic, for

Bourdieu, can exhibit no significance in its own right (i.e. no status other than that of *result*). I what follows I argue for a thoroughly different interpretation.

²⁸ Brubaker identifies four “levels of analysis” in *Distinction*: status practices, habitus, conditions of existence, and capital (1985, 764-5). If the present argument is not incorrect, Brubaker’s claim can be said to lead to the mistaken assumption that the last two of these “levels” stand in a causal relation (I have suggested instead that they amount to an epistemic distinction between two ways of viewing an occupational location). At risk of trafficking in minutiae, I would point out that the methodological discussion in the chapter on objective class refers to the relation between only three distinct “spaces”: lifestyle, habitus, and class (Bourdieu 1984, 126).

²⁹ The effect of a change in position is attenuated, however, by the fact that the early socialization carries a disproportionate weight in the constitution of the habitus. Bourdieu speaks, in this context, of “ordinary perception’s” ability to identify “parvenus” and “déclassés” (1984, 109-10). This must be distinguished from the situation in which the structure of positions *itself* varies over time (which Bourdieu discusses in terms of “hysteresis”). Here occupancy of a position which becomes devalued, for example, leads to a discordance precisely because the habitus remains adjusted to a situation in which it carried a greater quantity of capital (for Bourdieu’s account of the distinction between absolute and relative mobility, see 1984, 127, 130; 1996, 277).

It is surprising that the treatment of mobility in *Distinction* has occasioned so little interest in the secondary literature, given the criticisms leveled at *Reproduction* in this regard. This is no doubt due to Bourdieu’s willingness to ascribe a decisively reproductive character to the aggregate results of individuals’ attempts to alter their positions; however, this should be balanced against other aspects of Bourdieu’s study, and in particular, as Swartz points out (1997, 182-3), against his own data on the social origins of the members of the dominant class. Be this as it may, Bourdieu’s approach innovates considerably on the theoretical side, especially by opening the way to an analysis of “lateral” movements (or the lateral dimension of movements) through the class structure (which Bourdieu describes in terms of “conversion” of capitals).

At risk of an extended digression, we should also note here—in opposition to those who find ultra-deterministic tendencies in the concept of habitus—that Bourdieu’s utilization of probabilistic statements places openly declared (though not elaborated) limitations on such tendencies:

[t]o say that the members of a class initially possessing a certain economic and cultural capital are destined, with a given probability, to an educational and social trajectory leading to a given position means in fact that a fraction of the class (*which cannot be determined a priori within the limits of this explanatory system*) will deviate from the trajectory most common for the class as a whole and follow the (higher or lower) trajectory which was most probable for members of another class. (Bourdieu 1984, 111; my emphasis)

(The term “fraction” obviously should not be taken in a structural sense here; “segment” or even “portion” could be substituted.) The footnote to this remark (1984, 571, note 12) expressly leaves open the question of the degree to which “deviant” trajectories themselves are open to causal explanation. The *consequences* of such trajectories are discussed in the recent work on education; they stand at the heart of what Bourdieu now calls the “statistical mode of reproduction” effected through the school (Bourdieu 1996, 183-7, 287-9; 1998, 19-30), which in turn forms the basis of his account of the legitimation function of education. Acknowledgement of remarks such as this one quoted here would, presumably, reduce the frequency of superficial claims of a pervasive functionalism in Bourdieu’s sociology.

³⁰ Elster criticizes Bourdieu precisely on the grounds that he allows the social space which he constructs to function both as a causal factor and as a field of “play” (or battle). As Elster puts it,

“[s]ymbolic action in Bourdieu’s view is explained twice over: first as the result of an insidious adaptation to necessity, and then as quasi-strategic and goal-directed behavior” (1981, 12). The seriousness one attributes to this objection will depend, simply enough, on how seriously one is willing to take the concept of habitus—and especially its “generative” character—the self-described purpose of which, from early on, has been to avoid the alternatives of “mechanism” and “finalism” (Bourdieu 1977, 72ff.). Elster (1981, 12), for his part, recommends a return to the position developed by Bourdieu in 1966, according to which the working class lifestyle may be accounted for in terms of an adaptation to necessity (i.e. mechanistically), while that of the “middle classes” may be accounted for in terms of the strategic search for distinction (i.e. finalistically). This would, obviously, eviscerate the place of a relationally construed class *structure* in the explanatory scheme.

³¹ I believe that it is only because Honneth overlooks this relation between a collective doxa and class-specific construals of it (Honneth 1985, 198 refers to a “functional” gap in the argument precisely in this respect), that he can assert a tension between implied “adaptive” tendencies and the commitment to particular collective identities. Here as elsewhere, Bourdieu insists that his use of the notion of “interest” can reconcile strategic denotations with existential ones (see 1984, 478; 1991b, 220-8; for a recent attempt to pursue this reconciliation in its meta-theoretical details, see 1998a, 75-91).

³² See Bourdieu (1984, 475-6). As an example of a change in range of application, we might identify the attempt to maintain class or fraction unity in the face of transformations in the ethnic or gender composition of an occupation. As an example of a modification of content, we could pick up the case of the “labor aristocracy,” and point to affirmations of the “mental” vs. “manual” divide in place of, say, authority differences as a means of maintaining unity. Finally, as an example of attempts to modify the structure of doxic schemata, we can note all instances—particularly potent in the political field, even if derivative from a semiotic viewpoint—of invocations of a “third way,” as well as certain appeals to the “middle” (of the opinion spectrum, income spectrum, etc.).

³³ For those who find in Bourdieu’s notion of “relative autonomy” nothing more than a meta-theoretically initiated belief in the efficacy of social reproduction, it ought to be pointed out that in the Heidegger study (1991a; 1993c) and in the recent work on literature (1995), we have examples of studies in which individual agents—while certainly not lucid and clear-headed about their own or others’ actions—are able, by means of innovative symbolic productions, to construct new social positions, *and thus to re-define the structure of the field itself*. By no means do these studies dispense with causal analysis, though the accent is undoubtedly shifted away from structural determinations and onto the strategies of the habitus. Thus, *pace* Kögler and others (and for better or for worse), Bourdieu is quite able to dispose of the specter of “endless reproduction” without having to invoke “learning processes,” “reflexivity,” or an “intentional response” (see Kögler 1997, esp. 152).

³⁴ Criticisms of Bourdieu, like that of Hall (1992), which object to the “structuralist holism” that is evident in the postulate of a single, systematic (and hierarchical) interrelation between all lifestyle practices in *Distinction*, are plausible insofar as—but only insofar as—they proceed on strictly empirical grounds. Although *Distinction* does not develop its own historical hypotheses (as I have already suggested), it is clear from other work that Bourdieu considers the “holistic integration” of fields to be a *historical variable*, according to the motif of a “unification of the market” (see, above all, Bourdieu 1991b, 43-65, and esp. 50ff., which openly targets Saussure). Much of Bourdieu’s recent work on cultural production (1995, 117-21 and *passim*.) develops this dimension of his approach, early “promissory notes” for which, however, can be identified (and sometimes where least expected: for example, Bourdieu and Passeron [1990, 14]).

This is a good place to mention Bourdieu's conceptualization of cultural diffusion, which has not received much discussion. Given the broader theory, Bourdieu seems to feel that processes of diffusion must *inevitably* take the form of a "trickle-down effect" (1984, 247-52, esp. note 28; see also 1998a, 4), according to which the distinctive practices undertaken by those located in a particular position within the class structure serve as the ideal towards which those below strive, only to be abandoned by the former in favor of new practices precisely to the extent that the latter are successful.

This model was taken up early on from Barber and Lobel's work on fashion (see Bourdieu 1966, 216), and Bourdieu tends to generalize it beyond the realm of lifestyle (see 1984, 164). At risk of intuitionism, however, we might wonder if, for example, the "trickle-down" concept is fully sufficient to characterize the empirical processes through which consumer culture circulates, at least in the contemporary U.S. context. And in response, we could note the model proposed by Bryson (1996), who—in an analysis that could, at least, easily be interpreted according to the tenets of the Bourdieuan theory of practice—offers up, with the appearance of intellectual necessity unfolding, the notion of "multi-cultural capital." Peterson and Kern's (1996) concept of cultural "omnivores" taps a similar idea. Bourdieu has recently recognized the existence of "trickle-up" phenomena, albeit parenthetically (1998b, 76-7).

³⁵ See also the remarks in Bourdieu (1993a, 31): "I have tried to move beyond what has been treated as a *theological* opposition between theories of social classes and theories of social stratification, an opposition that goes down well in lectures and in 'dialectical materialist' thinking, but which is in fact merely the reflection of a state of the sociological division of labor."

³⁶ At one point, Bourdieu (1986) attempts to combine these perspectives.

³⁷ This is one of the most interesting sections of *Distinction*. Bourdieu includes in the new petite bourgeoisie a variety of emergent occupations which he takes to be united on the grounds that they are oriented to the production of purely symbolic goods. The individuals who gravitate to such occupations tend to be those who have suffered the adverse consequences of credential inflation, i.e. those who have discovered that the occupations to which their educational trajectory apparently "destined" them were in fact closed off by an oversupply of qualified labor. For a discussion of the economic and political context of the emergence of the new petite bourgeoisie, and of Bourdieu's account of the formation of this context, see Lane (2000, 152-61).

³⁸ Alexander, in contrast, ever fixated upon the *idée rouge*, finds in Bourdieu's analyses of different social fields the ubiquitous, pathological repetition of a structure that is "most decidedly capitalist in form" (Alexander 1995, 160).

³⁹ However, contrary to the assertions of Lash (1993, 200-1), which imply that a "relational" account of social structure must be modeled in categorical terms, Bourdieu feels that utilization of gradational factors does not imperil the priority of "function" over "substance" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 228-30). This is because the concept of "space" that he appropriates has at its basis the notion of "mutual exteriority" (Bourdieu 1998a, 31); the factors are thus constituted from points understood to represent "infinitesimal" differences.

⁴⁰ However much this early text by Giddens may be concerned with purely conceptual puzzles, it undoubtedly does not display the preoccupation with "social ontology" that, for Wacquant at least, decisively differentiates Giddens and Bourdieu (see Wacquant, in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 3, note 3). For a comparative analysis that does revolve around such issues, see Sewell (1992), whose discussion of the meaning of "structure" in Bourdieu, however, touches only on the notion of

habitus. Wright (in Wright et al. 1998, 291-2) has noted the similarity between this work by Giddens and *Distinction*; he does not, however, undertake a systematic comparison.

⁴¹ There is one footnote in which Bourdieu seems to come close to a similar assumption of contingent “superimposition,” by speaking of the “reinforcement” that the organization of social space may receive from factors such as ethnicity or religion (Bourdieu 1985, 743, note 4). I consider these statements to run contrary to the argument developed in *Distinction*. The question will be taken up at length in the concluding chapter.

⁴² It is this statement which explains the (otherwise scandalous!) fact that Bourdieu occasionally (e.g. 1984, 396) uses phrases like “relations of production” and “occupational hierarchy” interchangeably. See also Bourdieu (1987a, 4).

⁴³ Nevertheless, when Pakulski and Waters declare that “Bourdieu...purges...the privileged position of the general economic power grid from what is still nominally a class theory” (1996, 44), they are attempting to discern a theoretical elegy where there is in fact only an empirical problematic:

[t]he relations of the other fields to the field of economic production [in the narrow sense] are both relations of structural homology and relations of causal dependence, the form of causal determination being defined by structural relations and the force of domination being greater when the relations in which it is exercised are closer to the relations of economic production. (Bourdieu 1991a, 246; my addition).

Need it be added that in Bourdieu’s judgement, any such “protection against tyranny” remains in principle tenuous, and at the present moment, particularly subject to regression (Bourdieu 1998b)?

⁴⁴ Though I am not interested in trying to identify the theoretical or empirical positions which actually motivated the formulation of Bourdieu’s arguments, he was undoubtedly familiar with Aron’s writings, as Bourdieu served as his assistant in the early 1960s, receiving key institutional support as a result. Disagreements apparently developed over Bourdieu’s thoroughly class-based analyses of the education system., culminating in a complete break after Bourdieu voiced support (albeit highly critical) for the demonstrations of May 1968 (see Swartz 1997, 21-5). Despite the fact that the relation is often mentioned in accounts of Bourdieu’s career, there is, to the best of my knowledge, no discussion in the secondary literature of the relation their thought. This is somewhat surprising, given that Aron frequently wrote about class (and the “ruling class,” in particular) during the 1950s and 1960s.

⁴⁵ The meaning and centrality of the class condition seem worth stressing in light of the fact that “relationalism” or “relationality”—construed epistemologically or ontologically—has become something of a cutting-edge “meta-position” in sociology of late (for example, Emirbayer 1997; Somers 1995, 1997; Vandenberghe 1999). This being the case, the quiet but crucial place which Bourdieu reserves for *intrinsic* properties within his class analysis ought to be considered by those developing one or another version of this “meta-position.” Indeed, we can point to the following statement (which appears in an essay sub-section titled “The Real is Relational,” no less): “[t]he habitus is this generative and unifying principle which retranslates the intrinsic and relational characteristics of a position into unitary lifestyle...” (Bourdieu 1998a, 8).

Chapter 4. Class Analysis and Beyond

I. Assessing Bourdieuan Class Theory and Analysis

The Bourdieuan approach to class clearly cannot be subsumed under existing schools or traditions. As such, it presents a novel alternative to the various positions which presently dot the landscape of class theory and analysis. Particularly worthwhile, I believe, is Bourdieu's reconciliation of the longstanding opposition between theories of class and theories of social stratification (as represented by the work of Lenski, for example). As I have argued, one of the peculiarities of Bourdieu's approach lies in the postulate of a "class structure" which is both gradational and multidimensional. This, of course, departs markedly from the meanings traditionally associated with the term. At the same time, however, Bourdieu does not accept the corollary proposition that such a structure can give rise only to "non-antagonistic strata"; to the contrary, as we have seen, much of his sociology is devoted to analyzing the "sublimated" instances of class conflict which occur when agents attempt to symbolically partition the continuous structure of social space, and thereby constitute or "construct" social collectivities. I would like to spell out some of the implications of this reconciliation.

It is undoubtedly true that a class theory based on Marxian premises, for example, would be perfectly capable of acknowledging that (economic) capital is distributed in a more or less continuous manner; however, it would also emphasize the fact that, depending upon where they fall along this continuum, individuals will be compelled to enter certain definite social relations of production: under capitalism, either by selling or buying labor power.¹ Such relations, in turn, cannot be construed as simple gradational differences; when taken as the basis of the class structure, they imply a definite "boundary." Indeed,

the same consideration applies to those approaches (for example, Goldthorpe's) which emphasize differential employment relations—even if they do not go so far as to develop a theory of exploitation within the context of such relations. In contrast to these approaches, Bourdieuean class analysis sees the constitutive parameters of the class structure in the distribution itself (or distributions, given the multiple forms of capital that it postulates). This has as its consequence the immediate removal of the “boundary problem” from the realm of theory and its transference to the object domain: as we have seen, class boundaries become a vehicle through which agents themselves carry out struggles over the underlying structure.² Thus, Bourdieu views class boundaries primarily in symbolic terms—even if he accepts that they may be “sedimented” into an institutional objectivity (such as law). Indeed, if we examine the full range of Bourdieu's class analysis, we find that the analysis of “symbolic boundaries” takes on a systematic—or almost typological—cast. The different forms of boundaries vary across multiple dimensions: the degree of *thematization* through which they orient practice; their characteristic degree of *codification and formalization*, both of which affect the “room for maneuver” that they typically leave to agents; and also the mechanisms through which they are *enforced* (i.e. formal or informal: “overt or covert *numerus clausus*,” in Bourdieu's lexicon [1984 102]).

Bourdieu's approach may thus claim the not inconsiderable virtue of reserving an essential place for the “sociology of symbolic forms”—that is, of culture—within class analysis, though without, at the same sliding off into the radical anti-economism or anti-structuralism likely to result in a pure “culturalism.” I believe that this alone is enough to recommend it, at least provisionally, as a viable framework that may be put to work in contexts distinct from that in which Bourdieu himself developed it.

At the same time, however, there remains one element of the approach which is particularly difficult to come to grips with—namely, Bourdieu’s assertion, stated quite baldly in *Distinction*, that class comprises a universal *explanans*. As we have seen, this claim to universality rests on his inclusion of the “secondary properties” within a single matrix of interactive causal factors, and his associated commitment to the notion of an asymmetrical relation between those factors pertaining to capital, and those pertaining to demographic characteristics. I believe that no account of the Bourdieuan approach to class can avoid the obligation to extrapolate the implications of these claims and critically evaluate them; and this is undoubtedly the case if we are to be able to recommend it in anything more than a provisional manner.

Consequently, before concluding, I would like to revisit these provocative arguments. Importantly, some of Bourdieu’s own recent work can assist us in this evaluation. Thus, in first addressing the issues surrounding the question of causality, I will attempt both to further clarify the significance of Bourdieu’s approach vis-à-vis class theory and analysis, and to indicate some deep-seated transformations of the class analytic approach which are implicit in the recent writings (section II). The first part of this discussion will assess Bourdieu’s claim that causal factors are related to one another interactively, and the contrast this establishes with certain other schools of class analysis; I will also take up the wider question of the significance of this claim for sociological explanation in general. The second part will revisit the meta-theoretical claim that the factors associated with the distribution of the capitals enjoy a causal primacy with respect to the “secondary” properties, and in particular, gender. It is this postulate, I will demonstrate, that has proven the particularly difficult for Bourdieu to maintain. Indeed,

questions concerning the tenability of both aspects of the account of causality, it will shown, ultimately imply the dissolution of the claim for the universality of the explanatory capacity of social class. Once this has been established, the question arises of how to analyze forms of stratification which are not primarily generated by disparities of cultural and economic capital. In addition to gender, “race” becomes a pressing concern, one which poses a challenge to the Bourdieuean framework (section III). Taken together, these considerations raise a number of thorny problems concerning the construction of explanatory models. Ultimately, they suggest that the sociological template which guided Bourdieu’s class analysis—the Durkheimian theory of the correspondence between social structures and symbolic structures—contained a number of dangerous simplifications. By way of conclusion (section IV), therefore, it becomes possible to sketch the work necessary to rectify this framework, thereby enabling it to be generalized.

II. Causality and the “Secondary Properties”

The unusual character of Bourdieu’s treatment of causality becomes apparent if we set it adjacent to the correlative aspects of Wright’s work as they have developed subsequent to his structuralist phase. Let us recall that Bourdieu conceptualized the causal action associated with the class structure in terms of two postulates: an epistemic assertion that causal factors are related to one another interactively, and a meta-theoretical assertion that the factors pertaining to capital enjoy a primacy vis-à-vis the secondary properties. In both respects, his treatment differs sharply from that of Wright. In the first place, Wright’s standpoint is more conventional, if measured against the

(usually implicit) assumptions of most explanatory sociology, insofar as it presupposes that causal factors operate independently of one another, unless and until the converse can be demonstrated empirically. Thus, against the type of fusion of causal actions implied by Bourdieu's approach, Wright's epistemic preference is for a "disaggregation" of effects attributable to distinct causal "mechanisms." More specifically, Wright's adherence to Bhaskar's philosophy of science leads him to distinguish between "mechanisms" and the "events" which they produce—typically in combination with one another (see Wright, in Wright et al. 1998, 58). On his interpretation, this means that the different "mechanisms" are to be viewed as analytically independent of one another, and therefore susceptible to independent explication at a theoretical level; consequently, their interaction becomes an empirical contingency. This means that the susceptibility of a causal complex to "disaggregation" is subject to all of the procedures of hypothesis testing (see *ibid.*, 291). In the second place, Wright is hostile to any causal primacy assertions which are based on relations of causal interactivity. This is due to what I previously termed the "formal reversibility" of interaction terms; in Wright's language, it stems from what he refers to as the "essential symmetry in an interactive causal process" (Wright, Levine, and Sober 1992, 153). The upshot of this symmetry is that assertions of causal primacy can only be grounded meta-theoretically (or at least, non-empirically). For Wright, however, meta-theoretical arguments of this sort are strictly precluded, on the grounds that—within the context of class analysis—they amount to a residual instance of Hegelian-Marxist *a priorism* (see *ibid.*, 173-5).

This comparison renders visible both the scope and direction of Bourdieu's departure from more conventional sociological procedures of hypothesis testing. I would like to consider the significance of each of his assertions separately.

A. Causal Interactivity

Abbott has carried out the most sustained reflection on the question of causation in sociology that we have available. He speaks of a "variables paradigm" which reigns in U.S. (and increasingly, world) sociology, even if it is not without exceptions and alternatives. The Kuhnian language in his label is fully intentional. In order to justify it, he has sketched the history of the process by which this paradigm eventually eclipsed an earlier, "ecological" approach, most closely associated with the tradition stemming from the Chicago school (Abbott 1997). Over the course of this history, he contends, available methods came to dictate conceptual choices:

[b]y the 1960s the generation trained under the pre-variables paradigm began to disappear. New students learned the methods not as an adjunct to more general analysis or as a quick solution for empirical problems set by the...[old] paradigm. Rather, in true Kuhnian fashion, they learned *from the method* a set of assumptions about social reality that fundamentally shaped their vision of the social world. The paradigm gradually became self-enclosed because its methods negated any social fact they could not comprehend. (*ibid.*, 1164)

Abbott, it should be noted, does not simply dismiss the "variables paradigm" out of hand. Rather, he recognizes that it may well facilitate valid sociological analysis. However, it becomes the source of profound errors precisely when the assumptions it forces on investigators are imputed a priori to the object of analysis—that is, to the social world. And, according to Abbott this is exactly what eventually occurred: "[b]y the 1970s many

sociologists imagined the social world as a kind of general linear reality” (*ibid.*; see also Bernert 1983, upon which Abbott draws).

The presupposition that the social world amounts to a “general linear reality” can be broken down into six component assumptions (Abbott 1988; 1992). According to the summary presentation in Abbott (1992, 433-4), these are as follows:

1. The social world is made up of fixed entities with varying attributes (demographic assumption)
 - 1a. Some attributes determine (cause) others
2. What happens to one case doesn’t constrain what happens to others, temporally or spatially (casewise independence assumption)
3. Attributes have one and only one causal meaning within a given study (univocal meaning assumption)
4. Attributes determine each other principally as independent scales rather than as constellations of attributes; main effects are more important than interactions (main effects assumption)
5. Things happen in discrete bits of uniform length and are not aggregated into overlapping “events” of varying length (continuity or uniform time-horizon assumption)...
6. The order in which attributes change does not influence what changes occur; all cases follow the same “causal narrative” or model (non-narrative assumption)

Abbott notes that various methodological strategies have been devised to partially relax individual assumptions. His own (more radical) preference is for the development of formal techniques which operationalize the characteristic features of narrative (see Abbott 1988, 182-3; 1992). This entails the development of methodological approaches which emphasize the mutability of “entities” (through birth, death, or merger, for example); the sequentiality of events; the variability of durations; and the importance of “contexts,” both with respect to the behavior of causal factors (in the sense that the effect generated by a cause is contingent upon the “environment” in which it is located) and cases (in the sense that the outcome for one case may be contingent upon processes occurring within another).

It is undoubtedly the case that Bourdieu would have a substantial measure of sympathy for any project devoted to loosening the hold of the “variables paradigm” on sociology, and in particular, for any attempt to overturn an unreflective ascendancy of method. Indeed, we might recall Bourdieu’s remark that a choice among methods entails, whether consciously or unconsciously, a whole “philosophy of causality, action, [and] the mode of existence of things” (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron 1991, 254).

Precisely what Bourdieu means is apparent from some remarks offered in the late 1960s:

one needs to ask whether the method of data analysis that seems most applicable to all types of quantifiable relations, i.e. multivariate analysis, should not be subjected each time to epistemological scrutiny. For, by postulating that one can successively isolate the action of the different variables from the complete system of relations within which they act, in order to identify the intrinsic efficacy of each of them, this technique makes it impossible to identify the efficacy that a factor may derive from its insertion in a structure and even the specifically structural efficacy of the system of factors. (*ibid.*, 46)

The notion of structural causality alluded to here, which, as we have seen, Bourdieu only made a full attempt to operationalize in *Distinction*, relates most clearly to the fourth characteristic in Abbott’s list (the “main effects assumption”)—and does so by turning it completely on its head. In Abbott’s terminology, such a position implies that it is the “environment” within which each variable is situated—meaning its relations to other variables—that determines its causal significance (1997, 1160-3). The result is a strictly conjunctural account of causation: the meaning or consequence of any given factor is a function of the state of the total “ensemble” of factors within which it happens to be located (Abbott 1988, 181). This has a number of implications. First, the Bourdieuan notion of causation clearly points in the direction of historicism: the “ensemble” of factors cannot be assumed to exhibit constancy from one moment to the next.³ Secondly, the postulate of interactivity necessarily negates the viability of any methodology resting

on the use of inferential statistics: as Abbott argues, these methods must presuppose precisely that the “values” of any given variable are comparable across all relevant contexts (Abbott 1997, 1163). Thus, as we have seen, Bourdieu has devised a methodology which dispenses altogether with the quantification of causal relations.

The question of Bourdieu’s approach to history comes to the fore in comments which directly follow those quoted above. Bourdieu goes on to state:

[m]oreover, when one uses a synchronic cross-section to produce a system defined by a momentary equilibrium, one is liable to fail to grasp all that the system owes to its past and, for example, the different meanings that two elements, similar in the order of simultaneities, may derive from their membership...[in] systems that differ in the order of succession, i.e. biographical trajectories. (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron 1991, 47)

The remarks offered here on the problem of trajectory evidence a further similarity with Abbott’s interest in issues of temporality (in particular, those of sequence). Nonetheless, it is clear that the causal model which forms the basis of *Distinction*, which we have examined in detail (figure 1 in chapter 3), bears little or no resemblance to the type of event “enchainment” that Abbott attempts to capture with his self-described method of “narrative positivism” (Abbott 1992). This is evident precisely in the peculiar manner in which Bourdieu treated questions of temporality—that is, social trajectories. As was noted in the previous chapter, he extends his model of social space along a third dimension, thereby differentiating each configuration of volume and composition of capital in terms of the various trajectories which lead to it.⁴ This amounts, I suggested, to a quasi-structural representation of time; it implies that Bourdieu’s model only accounts for temporal effects in a more or less “homogeneous” form—that is, one which is incapable of registering the kinds of variation in event sequence or duration that Abbott

emphasizes. Although Bourdieu has not, to the best of my knowledge, expressed an opinion on the kind of causal paradigm advocated by Abbott, I believe that he would be unlikely to embrace a fully narrative model. This stems from his meta-theoretical commitment to a tripartite explanatory framework revolving around the categories of social structure, habitus, and practice.⁵ Only with the notion of *strategy*—situated at the intersection of the levels of habitus and practice—does Bourdieu’s framework open itself to many of the effects Abbott associates with narrative, as evidenced, above all, by his famous reformulation of the theory of the gift (Bourdieu 1977, 4-9, *passim.*), in which “rules” of exchange provide the opportunity for the creation and dissolution of obligations: the utilization of such opportunities requires the skillful manipulation of both sequence and interval. It would thus appear to be the case that it is the particular notion of structure with which Bourdieu works—with its Saussurian inflection, and consequent emphasis on the “momentary arrangement” of elements (the “synchronic”)—that his models remain sharply separated from a narrative-centered account. It is because Bourdieu, in contrast to historians such as Thompson, for example, insists on retaining a central place for this notion of structure in the explanatory framework, that he remains *partially* tied to the ascendant paradigm via the question of time.

B. Causal Asymmetry

The causal primacy claim which animates Bourdieu’s thought is more difficult to evaluate than the claim for interactivity, if for no other reason than that it receives less attention, and thus requires a more reconstructive analysis. It is Bourdieu’s assertion of a relation of causal asymmetry which enables him to differentiate between “primary” and

“secondary” factors in the causal constellation. As I have argued, this assertion rests on Bourdieu’s understanding of the formation of the habitus, and specifically, of the primary role attributed to the “class condition” (or the “material conditions of existence”) in this process. It is worthwhile to recall his account (as presented in section 6 of chapter 3, above). According to Bourdieu, the constitution of the habitus is the consequence of the experience of the “social and economic” necessity associated with a determinate set of such conditions. This experience, however, is “mediated” by certain characteristics of the familial milieu, including “the sexual division of labor, domestic morality, cares, strifes, tastes, etc.” (*ibid.*, 78). It is only by way of such characteristics, in other words, that necessity is “given” in the experience of the child. The habitus is thus constituted out of the “combination” of “external” conditions and “internal” (familial) characteristics. On the one hand, the latter transmit the effects deriving from the former. On the other hand, however, the “internal” characteristics are also “relatively autonomous” according to Bourdieu, implying that they vary more or less independently within limits established by the external conditions (see *ibid.*, 78, 116). We may therefore assume that they do not “manifest” the external conditions in a transparent manner; that is, they confer upon these conditions a *particular* form. Consequently, in this context too (that is, in the causal-biographical order), we find Bourdieu speaking of a relation of “overdetermination” (*ibid.*, 87).

As we have seen, the primacy thesis played a central role in *Distinction*: the so-called secondary factors were treated there as moderators of the factors associated with capital. The majority of Bourdieu’s subsequent writings have not re-visited this question. However, he has, more recently, begun to sketch a sociology of gender relations which, at

least implicitly, returns it to the fore. I would like to take up these writings in order to consider the implications of the arguments they develop with respect to the position laid out in *Distinction*.

Bourdieu approaches the question of gender via an elaboration of his analyses of the Kabyles, under the supposition that, at the time of his observations, Kabylia amounted to a kind of “anthropological sanctuary” in which the gendered “modes of thought” that underlie the cultural traditions of the entire Mediterranean region were preserved more or less intact (Bourdieu 1996b, 192). He proceeds by reconstructing the classificatory cosmology which divides the universe according to a series of gendered oppositions. He describes the reproduction of the relation of gender domination in terms of the “inculcation” of this cosmology and the consequent formation of a gendered habitus, and its accord with a system of institutions (such as household and market). From our perspective, what is important is the fact that masculine domination is, at its basis, symbolic in nature—that is, it is a relation between agents characterized by positively or negatively valued symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1990c). Indeed, Bourdieu claims that in the context of Kabylia, the “economy of symbolic goods” obtrudes upon the “economy of material production” and upon the “economy of biological reproduction” (*ibid.*, 27).

In order to relate the analysis to differentiated societies, Bourdieu again invokes the “relative autonomy” of the symbolic economy, but in a sense far more radical than that of *Distinction*: as a result of this autonomy, “masculine domination can perpetuate itself despite transformations in the mode of production” (1996b, 200). He further asserts that the obtrusion of the dynamics of symbolic capital upon the material economy has been largely conserved, on the grounds that “the traditional structure of the division of

labor between the sexes was relatively unaffected by the industrial revolution” (Bourdieu 1990c, 27). This is the case despite the separation of the economic and domestic spheres in the modern West. Thus, the “material conditions of existence” have little role in these analyses. Indeed, what is of interest is the fact that the distribution of symbolic capital is not to be explained—or at least not fully explained—by reference to the distributions of economic and cultural capital, and its function is not restricted to the “transformation” and legitimation of these latter distributions. In other words, symbolic capital—understood precisely as a mechanism of classification and legitimation—exhibits an efficacy that extends far beyond the boundary conflicts through which classes and class fractions partition social space. As a consequence, Bourdieu is led to (briefly) recast the relation between gender domination and the class structure.

This reformulation does not dispense with the notion of class-based status group that stood at the heart of *Distinction*. Indeed, Bourdieu further asserts that, as a result of the relation of gender domination, it is women who are typically compelled to manufacture the symbolic expressions of the group—that is, to produce its status symbols: “it is by a simple extension of women’s traditional role that duties...in the production and consumption of symbolic goods and services—or more precisely, of *signs of distinction*—are, by and large, bestowed upon them” (*ibid.*, 28-9). Women are more or less socially destined to carry out the *labor of conversion* through which economic and cultural capital are transformed into symbolic capital (in the sense of consumption groups). It is women, in other words, who play the leading role in the class conflict *insofar* as it is carried out (in “sublimated” fashion) on the plane of symbolic relations. Importantly, this particular effect of “symbolic

violence” would appear to hold, despite certain variations, *across all locations in social space*; it would appear to comprise, in other words, a *constant*.⁶

Insofar as this amounts to an accurate representation of Bourdieu’s more recent thought, it implies a transformation of *both* the thesis of interactivity and the thesis of primacy. With respect to the former, this transformation is apparent in both Bourdieu’s methodology—with its insistence that Kabylia can provide us with a clearer view of mechanisms at work in contemporary Euro-American societies—and in his substantive claim that a particular configuration of gender relations has been able to perpetuate itself across transformations in the “mode of production.” The implication is that variations in the structure of economic and cultural capital, and therefore in the “material conditions of existence” associated with them, do not decisively transform the effects attributable to gender. As noted, Bourdieu invokes the familiar language of “relative autonomy” to account for this causal independence (and thereby seems to retain the possibility that material conditions impose some kind of constraint on the social relations generated through gender categories). Nevertheless, the type of model which results is quite distinct. Indeed, instead of resting on what was essentially an a priori claim for the necessary interactivity of factors, Bourdieu’s thought seems to approximate a basic feature of the “ecological” approach developed by the Chicago school, and which, according to Abbott, always insisted on the existence of “degrees of contextuality” (1997, 1154-7). The foremost implication of this insistence is that an appropriate conceptualization of causality must be specified for each object of analysis on the basis of theoretical considerations concerning the behavior of the particular factors which are taken to be operative.

Once the premise of interactivity has been loosened, the thesis of causal primacy is no longer sustainable in unaltered form. This question is tied to some broader changes in emphasis which can be found in some of Bourdieu's recent work. In *Distinction*, the issue of causal primacy arose in the context of the question of the relation between the primary and secondary properties. In this formulation, gender was registered at the level of structure as a simple demographic fact—one which functioned as a moderator of the effects stemming from capital. And, as a result of this “secondary” status, we found Bourdieu claiming that gender (and, by implication, all of the demographic properties) was less likely to serve as the basis of struggles over group formation—or in other words, as the basis of the symbolic constitution of social identities (see chapter 3, section 10, above). Here, by contrast, we find that Bourdieu views gender as a symbolic phenomenon *from the start*. Indeed, as noted, he goes so far as to speak of an “obtrusion” of the symbolic economy onto the material economy, and thereby seems to even raise the possibility of an *inversion* of the primacy claim found in *Distinction*. This implies, in any event, that explanatory models which seek to relate social structures and symbolic structures cannot treat gender as a demographic *datum simplex* which may or may not unleash important effects on the symbolic plane.⁷ Indeed, we might even go so far as to propose that Bourdieu was able to treat gender in this manner in *Distinction* solely because his model of objective class only registered temporal transformations in the distribution of capitals (i.e. the primary properties): once disembedded from its *history*, a property such as gender could be more plausibly viewed as meta-theoretically “secondary.”

Such an interpretation is at least *prima facie* compatible with various statements Bourdieu has offered lately, which suggest that symbolic capital—previously described as

a “subordinate power” (Bourdieu 1991b, 170)—now enjoys a certain priority vis-à-vis the other species of capital (e.g. Bourdieu 1993a, 274; 2000, 166). Wacquant affirms this prioritization explicitly in describing the *Pascalian Meditations*: “Bourdieu refutes...the utilitarian misreadings of his work by planting at the core of being the thirst for recognition...” (Wacquant 1999, 278). I do not think that one can draw any general conclusions, at least on the basis of texts available to date, concerning the construction of explanatory models. However, we can find some interesting clues. Of particular interest is Bourdieu’s retrospective account of the emergence of his antipathy to rational action models: “I was...led to question the universality of so-called rational economic dispositions and, by the same token, to address the question of the economic conditions—and cultural conditions—of access to these dispositions, a question which, paradoxically economists fail to address...” (Bourdieu 2000, 159-60; emphasis removed). This remark might be taken to imply that the “conditions of existence” out of which the habitus is formed are no longer to be seen as exclusively “material.” On such an interpretation, the characteristics of the familial milieu would no longer count primarily as the relays of “external” conditions (even if it was recognized that they carry out this function differentially); rather, the effects of these characteristics—in Bourdieu’s earlier account, “the sexual division of labor, domestic morality, cares, strifes, tastes, etc.”—would in fact be largely independent of, or perhaps even moderated by, the experience of material necessity which is encapsulated in early familial life.

III. Class and “Race”

The preceding discussion suggests that Bourdieu’s consideration of the phenomenon of gender domination has forced him to radically (if quietly) revise some key features of his earlier approach to class analysis. Indeed, the claim for the explanatory universality of class is implicitly abandoned in the newer work. This is encapsulated in certain conceptual developments: symbolic capital is no longer analyzed solely as a “transformed form” of cultural and economic capital, and correlatively, these the latter have no causal priority with respect to (gendering) symbolic capital; indeed, this form of symbolic capital is not treated as a dependent variable. The result is an interesting account of the articulation of class and gender domination: Bourdieu’s discussion suggests that the “sublimation” or “non-sublimation” of class conflict varies along the gender axis.

If the consideration of gender domination leads Bourdieu to this radical revision, we might also ask what consequences the analysis of “race” and “ethnicity” have. However, Bourdieu has had almost nothing to say on this subject. Nevertheless, a recent debate over the sociological theory of race touches on a number of questions surrounding social structure, history, and boundaries which are directly relevant to the present discussion. Furthermore, elements of Bourdieu’s thought entered the debate, if only peripherally. I would thus like to first review the debate from the perspective of its significance vis-à-vis Bourdieu’s sociology. Subsequently, I will survey Bourdieu’s occasional remarks on the relation between class and “ethnicity,” and, after summarizing the implications of the discussion, consider an essay by Wacquant which gives a clearer picture of relation between the two.

A. Structure, Closure, and Classification

In a recent paper, Bonilla-Silva has asserted that the sociological concept of “racism” can only make sense if it is pushed in the direction of a “structural interpretation” (1997). The object of his criticism is primarily psychological conceptualizations, which, though predominant in the discipline, exhibit myriad theoretical shortcomings: racism is seen as phenomenon of individual ideas, beliefs and stereotypes which may give rise to “racist” conduct; it is treated as a form of irrationality, which persists primarily as a vestigial phenomenon, and thus, is fundamentally static; and, it analyzed by means of a circular logic, whereby beliefs are inferred from conduct which is (ultimately) said to be motivated by these beliefs (*ibid.*, 467-9).

Against approaches which view racism—and by extension, race itself—in a subjectivist fashion Bonilla-Silva asserts that the concept can only be repaired for sociological use “by grounding...[it] in social relations among the races” (*ibid.*, 469). To this end, he develops an alternative by borrowing wholesale many of properties constitutive of the structuralist-Marxist concept of class. He thus defines a “racialized social system” as one in which racial classifications have been “institutionalized” in all domains, such that the “economic, political, social, and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories...” (*ibid.*). Societies of this sort exhibit hierarchical institutional arrangements, in the sense that they imply definite differences in life chances for those occupying the different “categories,” at each “level” of the social formation.⁸ To be sure, this institutional structuring is only “partial” because it may coexist with—and thus be “articulated” to—similarly institutionalized hierarchies of gender and class. Nevertheless, Bonilla-Silva further asserts that the structure gives rise to a system of social

interaction.⁹ He therefore postulates a set of conflictual (though not necessarily overt) antagonistic “racial practices” which, in structuralist fashion, would appear to be the direct effect of the structural whole.¹⁰ The groups that undertake such practices comprise “races” (*ibid.*, 472, 474).

Bonilla-Silva’s formulation thus accords race an objective existence beyond the vacillating beliefs to which individuals and groups may accord reality: “The placement of groups of people in racial categories stemmed initially from interests of powerful actors in the social system.... After racial categories were used to organize social relations in a society, however, race became an independent element of the operation of the social system” (*ibid.*, 473). As noted, this objectivity rests on the notion of differential life chances—which must therefore fulfill a role roughly analogous to that of “contradiction” in Marxian class theory. On the basis of the relation between this objective structure and the alternatives that individuals and groups face in the course of their practice, Bonilla-Silva claims that objective racial interests may be identified (*ibid.*, 470).

Bonilla-Silva’s account has drawn a sharp criticism from Loveman (1999), who invokes a number of Bourdieuean arguments.¹¹ Above all, she asserts, it is impossible to define the notion a “racialized social system” without tacit appeal to “folk notions” of “race”—and these are always specific to a particular time and place (*ibid.*, 895). Furthermore, this leads to a conflation of the “analytic” concept of race, understood as a category of sociological theory, with “race,” understood as an experiential category of “vision and division” that actors apply to and deploy within the social world. The result of this conflation is the presupposition of a correspondence between analytically defined categories and social collectivities. Such an assumption, in turn, precludes the study of

certain crucial aspects of the phenomenon: “[t]he extent to which ‘race’ becomes a basis of group association and identity as a consequence of imposed racial categorization is historically variable”; consequently, the degree of correspondence or non-correspondence between category and group must itself be made amenable to theoretical analysis and empirical investigation (*ibid.*, 892). To this end, Loveman proposes an alternative framework founded on the concept of closure. By this she means the study of “how social groups are constituted (to varying degrees) by the construction of symbolic boundaries (categorization) by collectivities with varying degrees of prior ‘groupness,’ and how such collectivities become groups with the potential to recognize and act upon collective interests to generate social change” (*ibid.*, 897). The sociology of race thus revolves around the analysis of closure processes which proceed by means of the imputation of “essentializing” characteristics to groups of individuals (*ibid.*).

In their focus on the question of the mediation of structure and practice, Loveman’s criticisms clearly reflect the Bourdieuean approach to class, which they selectively draw upon.¹² These criticisms might thus be summarized with the claim that Bonilla-Silva’s theory of “racial structure” lacks a theory of racial “structuration”—in the specific sense of the term that was developed in chapter 3 (above). At the same time, however, the alternative notion of closure receives only minimal delineation in Loveman’s formulation: since it is not intrinsically tied to distributive struggle (as with Parkin’s concept of class), Loveman can only refer to the undifferentiated panoply of “ideal and material motivations for constructing boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’” (*ibid.*, 896-7). This corresponds to an extreme de-emphasis of the “objective” side of the social world within which competing principles of “vision and di-vision” are situated (and upon which they are turned). Indeed,

her account is perhaps most similar to that of Przeworski in the arena of class theory, wherein the “totality of objective conditions” receives no specification beyond the assertion that the set of possibilities of class formation which it delimits is always larger than one.¹³ As we have seen, this (sociologically) minimalistic account of the nature and role of the “structural” conditions stands in sharp contrast to that which Bourdieu developed in his class theory—and which Bonilla-Silva (1997, 469, note 5) mentions as one of the sources of his conceptualization (though it in fact resembles that Poulantzas far more closely). In any event, as one might predict, Bonilla-Silva’s response to Loveman largely rests on the accusation of rampant subjectivism: as a theory of structuration (in our sense) without a theory of structure, it results in a “Weberian-inspired situationalist perspective” (Bonilla-Silva 1999, 904). Along the way, interestingly, he (rhetorically) dismisses a position which in fact echoes that of Bourdieu’s class theory: “[d]oes anyone doubt the existence of fundamental classes with divergent interests because analysts have suggested that there are ‘contradictory class locations’ . . . , or that there exist two genders with different interests because analysts have pointed out a continuum of sex types . . . ?” (*ibid.*, 902).

B. Bourdieu and Wacquant on the Intersection of “Race” and Class

To be sure, Bourdieu has not provided a concrete example which would allow us to discern the relation between his class theory and the analysis of “racial” or “ethnic” stratification. There is, however, a brief remark located in a footnote in one of his essays on class that is of interest. Bourdieu writes:

[i]n certain social universes, the principles of division which, like the volume and structure of capital, determine the structure of social space, are reinforced by principles of division that are relatively independent of economic or cultural properties, such as ethnic or religious affiliation. The distribution of agents appears

in this case as the product of the intersection of two spaces which are partly independent of each other, since an ethnic group situated in an inferior position in the space of ethnic groups can occupy positions in all the fields [of social space], even the highest, but with rates of representation that are inferior to those of an ethnic group situated at in a superior position. Each ethnic group can thus be characterized by the social positions [i.e., positions in social space] of its members, by the rate of dispersion of these positions and finally by its degree of social integration despite dispersion. (Bourdieu 1991b, 289, note 3)

The fact that Bourdieu declares the sociological characterization of an ethnic groups to derive from the allocation of its members across social space—and not vice-versa—makes it clear that he still held to the thesis of the primacy of class at the time of this essay. And, indeed, the section of the text which this note expounds upon does in fact assert that the distribution of capitals amounts to a more “fundamental” difference (*ibid.*, 232-3). Nevertheless, if we disregard this premise, some interesting divergences from Bourdieu’s class theory become apparent. In the first place, despite his reiteration of the primacy claim, we here find Bourdieu referring to the “relative” and “partial” independence of the two orders of stratification, and thereby departing from the more familiar insistence on (or presupposition of) the interactive relation between primary and secondary properties. Moreover, we also find him alluding to a “space of ethnic groups.” This suggests precisely that the “objective” relations between ethnic groups can be understood in structural terms—on at least loose analogy to the notion of a class structure. Unfortunately, Bourdieu offers little in the way of the conceptual work which would clarify exactly what is entailed in this view. Indeed, in one of his few forays into the subject, Bourdieu merely suggest that the symbolic constitution of the group depends—in addition to the recognition which a speaker is able to elicit for his or her discourse—on some “grounding” in “objectivity”: the

effectiveness of the discourse will be, in part, a function of the existence of “economic or cultural properties” which serve as a “principle of pertinence” (1991b, 223-4).

Let us take stock of preceding discussions. We have seen, first, that in his sociology of gender, Bourdieu has more or less explicitly revoked the thesis of causal primacy—or at the least, its meta-theoretical status. This revocation was accompanied by at least an implicit acceptance of the fact that any account of the symbolic consequences of the intersection of class stratification with gender differences required an acknowledgement of the historical constitution of the latter: the so-called secondary properties are not to be treated as demographic “givens.” The implication of this was that the incorporation of temporal variations into the objective side of the model should not be restricted to transformations of the distribution of capitals. And as a further consequence, it became clear that the theoretical account of the formation of the habitus—and specifically, the notion of the determinative “conditions” within which it is constituted—required alteration in a less strictly materialistic direction. Secondly, we have seen that, on those few occasions when he has touched upon questions surrounding the sociology of race and ethnicity, Bourdieu appears to be inclined to analyze these forms of stratification according to a “structuration” approach similar to the one which guided his class analysis: thus, he refers to a hierarchically organized objective “space” of ethnic positions, and implies that this may fulfill a “field” function, such that conflicts over the formation of groups are played out upon it. In other words, the elements of class analysis which, in the course of transfer to the problem of race, were severed from one another by Bonilla-Silva and Loveman, are to be reunited. However, we must also recognize that, as soon as we postulate a separate “space” or “field” in this manner, the a priori premise that different

stratifying factors can only combine interactively must be abandoned. This amounts to a rescission of the assertion made in *Distinction* to the effect that a demographic property such as gender (and by extension, ethnicity or race) “belongs” to the total system of properties which comprises objective class: the distribution of such properties may be, in Bourdieu’s own words, “partially” or “relatively independent” of the structure of social space, and consequently (we may assume), their effects separable.¹⁴ Thus, if we follow this disparate strands of Bourdieu’s thought, the upshot is that we are compelled to abandon the vantage point which sees in social class a universal *explanans*.

Where, then, do we stand? I believe that we can apprehend a number of these theoretical transformations at work in a recent essay by Wacquant which deals with the prison system in relation to the sociology of race in the U.S. (2001). Though it does not attempt to systematically test hypotheses against data, this essay exhibits a number of notable features. From our perspective, the first of these lies in Wacquant’s constant reference to “class and caste”—that is, his unwillingness to rank different principles of stratification on meta-theoretical grounds, or to assert that the various principles actually belong to a singular “system” of properties. Correlatively, he invokes the language of (partial) “overlap” to describe the relation between race and class. This mirrors the terminology—“superimposition,” “reinforcement,” etc.—of those theorists who conceptualized the interaction of class and other principles of stratification in terms of empirically contingent relations. (It also points to the type of empirical question which fascinated status theorists such as Lenski—namely, the degree to which a society exhibits “status crystallization” across different hierarchical dimensions.) At a more complicated level, however, we also find Wacquant alluding to a causal relation between social

structures and symbolic structures. He points to a series of institutions—ranging from slavery itself to the prison system—which, he asserts, have been responsible not merely for codifying black/white racial differences, but for creating and re-creating them: each of these institutions “*produces* (or co-produces) this division anew out of inherited demarcations and disparities of group power and inscribes it...in a distinctive constellation of material and symbolic forms” (*ibid.*). Importantly, with the reference to “inherited demarcations,” he acknowledges that each of these institutional arrangements has emerged out of a history in which the decisive events occurred *in part* on the symbolic plane. To be sure, according to the premises of this argument, the question of boundary construction cannot be viewed solely through the lens of practice, with all the contingencies this would entail. However, Wacquant is quite clear in arguing that this is an empirical feature of the specific processes under consideration: unlike classes—whose symbolic demarcation, not constrained by any underlying structural fissure, exhibited a far-reaching indeterminacy, and thus an extraordinary fluidity, in Bourdieu’s account of lifestyles—black/white racial division the U.S. is “virtually unique in the world for its rigidity and consequentiality” (*ibid.*, see also note 35). As a hierarchical form of symbolic classification which is particularly unmalleable, it gives rise to an “exclusionary closure” with respect to various resources (for example, cultural capital) necessary to participate in certain central domains of social life (*ibid.*), and thereby decisively conditions distributive outcomes, both economic and political.

Wacquant’s essay thus evidences many of the transformations of the initial Bourdieuan framework that we have been led to expect. It does not, however, provide concrete examples of explanatory models, and consequently, any inferences that we might

attempt to draw run the risks arising from a purely “speculative” mode of analysis.

Nevertheless, I believe that at least some of the implications that these transformations have for an explanatory sociological program can be developed in the present context.

IV. In Conclusion: Class Analysis and the Durkheimian Program

Bourdieu’s class analysis took its orientation from the study of “primitive classification”: “[a]ccording to [Frazer]..., men were divided into clans by a pre-existing classification of things; but, quite on the contrary, they classified things because they were divided by clans” (Durkheim and Mauss 1963, 82). Durkheim and Mauss thus place the search for “correspondences” between social structures and symbolic structures at the center of the sociological project. No doubt this way of approaching the subject of class had a certain appeal: it rendered a study of “primitives” the prototype for the study of “moderns,” and it helped enable Bourdieu to recast the basic concepts of class theory inherited from Marx and Weber in such a way that he avoided the “either/or” logic to which they tend to give rise. The template provided by Durkheim and Mauss, however, was not without its perils, the most serious of which were perhaps its unidirectional causality and its simplicity (the latter deriving, possibly, from the putative “simplicity” of the societies being studied). By way of conclusion, let us consider the implications of rectifying each of these shortcomings. This will allow to get clear about the transformations necessary in order to further develop a Bourdieuean mode of class analysis.

With its self-avowedly “dialectical” aspirations, Bourdieu’s “theory of practice”—and more specifically, its twin concepts of habitus of field—was meant to dispel the type of problems which derive from a one-way concept of causality. Difficulties arise, however,

in the translation of this theory into a methodology. In describing Bourdieu's methodology, Wacquant (in a much-commented upon passage) has stated that model construction *begins* by establishes the structure of the field which is of interest, and *subsequently* introduces agents and their representations of this structure (in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 11). We can see this reflected in Bourdieu's methodological self-understanding if we recall the following passage from *Distinction*:

one must move beyond this provisional objectivism, which, in "treating social facts as things," reifies what it describes. The social positions which present themselves to the observer as places juxtaposed in a static order of discrete compartments...are also strategic emplacements, fortresses to be defended and captured in a field of struggles. (Bourdieu 1984, 244)

The objective space of positions which functioned *qua explanans* in Bourdieu's model amounted to a methodological "arrest" of history. Of course, as we have seen, Bourdieu did make room for temporal effects in this space; however, his incorporation of temporal effects was limited to those which derive from variations in economic and cultural capital. The preceding argument has suggested that this amounted to an untenable simplification which (no matter how necessary from a practical point of view) led to the treatment of the "secondary" properties as mere demographic "givens." What therefore needs to be incorporated into the explanatory apparatus *at level of the model* is a recognition of the effects that symbolic capital (the asymmetric relation of recognition) may have on the configuration of objective properties—whether these be economic and cultural capital or a factor such as gender—at a subsequent point in time. In short, the contours of a social structure at any point in time—or of any configuration of objective properties capable of functioning in an explanatory capacity—has a history which is in part symbolic: words and representations may serve as building blocks for the construction of "strategic

emplacements” and “fortresses.” In this regard, one of the most important specific rectifications that must be developed, I believe, is a more systematic treatment of the mechanisms and procedures through which symbolic capital is converted or translated into the form of “temporal” resources, and thereby comes to alter to space of positions (or of objective properties in general). To be sure, Bourdieu’s sociology has never been blind to such phenomena; and in the case of his sociology of cultural production, we have fairly explicit examples of such processes. But in Bourdieu’s class analysis, it would seem to be the case that—perhaps because symbolic relations were viewed solely through the lens of an *accomplished or disrupted legitimation*—their contribution to the constitution of the *explanans* itself was largely disregarded. Once symbolic capital has been re-defined so that it is no longer seen *solely* as a “transformed form” of the other capitals, this constitutive function can come into focus.

Secondly, Bourdieu’s choice of the term “social space” to characterize the class structure is telling. As a “space” within which a plurality of sub-fields are situated, it amounts to a complex yet *singular* structural arrangement, and thereby evokes the image of a coherent social *totality*. It is of course significant in this context that Bourdieu asserted that the institutional locus of this structure lay, if not in the system of productive property, then in the occupational division of labor. Once we have jettisoned the assumption that the “secondary” properties play only a moderating role—and correlatively, acknowledged that they may be anchored in institutional loci outside the occupational sphere—this totality would appear to fracture. The class structure can thus no longer be identified with the social structure as a whole; rather, it becomes one among a plurality whose independence or interdependence remains a strictly empirical question (see, e.g. Wacquant 2001).

Thirdly, in analyzing “correspondences” between social structures and symbolic structures, there is nothing which ensures that one term in such an equation might not mutate while the other remains stable over the course of the historical long term. Bourdieu has apparently come to recognize this: it is precisely this idea which would seem to lurk beneath the use of terms such as “relative autonomy” in some of his more recent work. Furthermore, however, there is also nothing which ensures that the relation between the two structures at some point in time will necessarily take form of a simple, *one-to-one* “correspondence.” This premise, too, would appear to find provisional support in Bourdieu’s recent work. Indeed, both are apparent in his assessment of the mode in which gender operates in contemporary societies:

[t]he fundamental opposition [i.e. masculine/feminine], of which Kabyle society offers the canonical form, is dampened [*démultipliée*] and, as it were, diffracted in a series of homologous oppositions which reproduce it, but in dispersed and often misrecognizable forms (such as the opposition between the sciences and the art, or that between surgery and dermatology). These particularized [*spécifique*] oppositions enclose thought, in a more or less insidious manner, without ever allowing themselves to be apprehended in their unity and their truth—that is, as so many facets of the same structure of relations of sexual domination. (Bourdieu 1998c, 113)

When viewed in the context of the discussion of gender above, these remarks indicate the outlines of a complex explanatory scheme. This includes a recognition of the fact that the symbolic relation of domination through which gender is constituted has largely been detached from its original institutional locus (i.e. kinship structures), and has persisted across various social transformations. Thus, when analysis turns to the question of the contemporary role of gender, this symbolic system takes on the role of an *explanans*, one whose effects are simultaneously refracted into *multiple* institutional arenas (e.g. school, workplace, etc.). This would seem to imply that the decision of which element in the

“correspondence” is to occupy the place of *explanans* and which is to occupy the place of *explanandum* depends on the ability of the researcher to bring the postulated relation into its proper *historical focus*—that is, to delimit it in terms of time and place. Considerations of *relative* stability or mutability would seem constitute a key consideration in this decision.

I believe that the recent work of Bourdieu and his colleagues itself points towards these modifications, though neither Bourdieu nor his associates have yet provided a theoretical explication on par with the discussions of class that were offered after the publication of *Distinction*. Taken together, they dramatically complicate the exemplar handed down by the Durkheimian tradition. The template provided by that tradition suggests the image of two parallel planes; transformations at the symbolic level ensue straightforwardly from “morphological” transformations at the social level. Once we have jettisoned the unidirectional understanding of causality and the assumption that societies comprise structural totalities, explanation finds itself on more difficult terrain. The two “levels” need not move at the same duration; relations of causal independence or interdependence become contingent; and the effects of a structure at one “level” may be diffused throughout multiple structures at the other. All of these transformations point towards a more radical *historicization* of the Durkheimian program. And it is against this backdrop that Bourdieu’s commitment to the scientificity of sociology (by his own account, a “headlong, rather crazy commitment” [1990a, 6]) will have to prove itself. This, however, cannot be achieved by means of theoretical explication.

Notes

¹ I am grateful to Erik Wright for this point.

² It bears repeating that this is not to deny that analysts who proceed from, e.g., a Marxian standpoint can and do acknowledge this sort of conflict over boundaries. However, in contrast to Bourdieu, they must inevitably raise the question of the degree to which these boundaries approximate the structural ones which have been specified theoretically. The answer to this question almost inevitably takes the form of an account of class and/or fraction “alliances.”

³ There is nothing in Bourdieu, in other words, which suggests an affinity with Althusser’s interpretation of the ensemble as an atemporal “eternity”: for Bourdieu, the factors are nothing more than a set of social and demographic “facts,” albeit ones which are not given to direct observation.

⁴ For the sake of accuracy, it should be noted that Bourdieu in fact sketches two different extensions of the two-dimensional map into a third dimension, both of which serve to register temporal phenomena (see Bourdieu 1984, 127-30). As has just been noted, one of these represents variations in the trajectories leading to each position (its rate of endogenous recruitment); the other represents the expansion or contraction of the position itself (as with, for example, the decline of the “old” petty-bourgeoisie or the growth of the “new” petty-bourgeoisie). With these two extensions of the two-dimensional model, Bourdieu is attempting to capture the effects of “exchange mobility” and structurally generated mobility, respectively. See note 29 in chapter 3, above.

⁵ The following remark provides a synoptic assertion of this commitment:

[t]he proper object of social science...is...the *relation between two realizations of historical action*, in bodies and in things. It is the double and obscure relation between habitus, i.e., the durable and transposable systems of schemata of perception, appreciation, and action that result from the institution of the social in the body (or in biological individuals), and fields, i.e. systems of objective relations which are the product of the institution of the social in things or in mechanisms that have the quasi reality of physical objects; and, of course, of everything that is born of this relation, that is, social practices and representations.... (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 126-7)

⁶ This is not to say, of course, that it comprises a universal. Bourdieu offers up a reflection on the social and symbolic conditions which he feels would have to be met in order for a “gender revolution” to occur (1996b, 200-1).

⁷ Although this is no way to prejudge the *relative* salience of gender with respect to other potential bases of group formation.

⁸ The inclusion of the “social” among the list of “levels” constitutive of the social formation represents a departure from Althusserian and Poulantzian accounts. Though the meaning of this addition is not fully clarified, I take it to refer to the educational system and other institutional arenas which, in those accounts, were subsumed under the political via the quasi-residual category of “ideological state apparatuses.” In any event, for the sake of terminological clarity, it is necessary to distinguish the “social,” understood as a “level” of the structure, from the “social relations” (or “intersubjective relations,” as Althusser liked to say) that the structure *as a whole* gives rise to.

⁹ Bonilla-Silva thus accepts that sociological analysis entails the attempt to isolate the “independent effects” of the racial structure on life chances or other phenomena located at the various “levels.”

At the same time he is uncomfortable with the project: first, because “control factors” might actually function as relays, implying that techniques which hold factors “constant” may in fact be obliterating causal paths, and thus underestimating effects; and secondly, because the overall consequences of the structure may not be discernable by simply aggregating the effects that can be specified for isolated domains. Nevertheless, he does not offer a methodological program that could help the analyst to grasp the “totality” of either causal relations or effects.

¹⁰ Bonilla-Silva is in fact inconsistent on the question of ideology as it relates to practice. Early in his essay, he treats it an element of the structure (e.g. 1997, 469). According to the structuralist logic which is invoked there, it would presumably give rise to “ideological practices” as an effect. Later, in contrast (and despite an invocation of Poulantzas), he describes the function of ideology, following Gilroy, as one of “mediat[ing] the world of agents and the structures which are created by their social praxis” (*ibid.*, 474). For Poulantzas, however, it was precisely the view that structures are an “ossified praxis” which had to be rigorously rejected as a form of “historicism”—a view which he chastised Bourdieu, among others, for holding (Poulantzas 1978, 61-2, see also 87ff.). In the structuralist formulation, the relation between structure and practice was, precisely, an *unmediated* one.

¹¹ I leave aside here the dispute over whether a *theoretical* distinction between race and ethnicity can (Bonilla-Silva’s position) or cannot (Loveman’s position) be plausibly drawn.

¹² It can be noted that this formed the basis of Bourdieu’s criticism of the structural-Marxist theory of class from an early point (see Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 217-8, note 31).

¹³ I ignore here, for the sake of argument, the ambiguous remarks at the end of Przeworski’s essay in which he retracts the open range of group formation possibilities for the individuals who the “carriers” of specifically capitalist relations of production (i.e. bourgeoisie and proletariat).

¹⁴ Recall, in contrast, Bourdieu’s (provocative) statement that “[s]exual properties are as inseparable from class properties as the yellowness of a lemon is from its acidity: a class is defined in an essential respect by the place and value it gives to the two sexes” (1984, 107).

References

- Abbott, Andrew. 1988. Transcending General Linear Reality. *Sociological Theory* 6. Pp. 169-86.
- . 1992. From Causes to Events: Notes on Narrative Positivism. *Sociological Methods and Research* 20, 4. Pp. 428-55.
- . 1997. Of Time and Space: The Contemporary Relevance of the Chicago School. *Social Forces* 75, 4. Pp. 1149-82.
- Alexander, Jeffrey. 1995. *Fin de Siècle Social Theory: Relativism, Reduction, and the Problem of Reason*. London and New York: Verso.
- Althusser, Louis. 1969 [1965]. *For Marx*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Pantheon.
- . 1971. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Althusser, Louis, and Étienne Balibar. 1970 [1968]. *Reading Capital*. Trans. Ben Brewster. London: New Left Books.
- Aron, Raymond. 1962 [1950]. Social Structure and the Ruling Class. The Irvington Reprint Series, S-4. New York: Irvington Publishers. Part one originally published in *The British Journal of Sociology*, 1 (March), pp. 1-26; part two originally published in *The British Journal of Sociology*, 1 (June), pp. 126-43.
- . 1965. La classe comme représentation et comme volonté. *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 38 (Janvier - Juin). Pp. 11-29.
- . 1966 [1960]. Social Class, Political Class, Ruling Class. In *Class, Status, and Power: Social Stratification in Comparative Perspective*. Ed. Reinhard Bendix and Seymour Martin Lipset. New York: The Free Press. Pp. 201-10.
- Aronowitz, Stanley. 1981. *The Crisis in Historical Materialism: Class, Politics and Culture in Marxist Theory*. New York: Praeger.
- Barber, Bernard. 1957. *Social Stratification: A Comparative Analysis of Structure and Process*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.
- Benton, Ted. 1984. *The Rise and Fall of Structural Marxism: Althusser and his Influence*. London: Macmillan.
- Bernert, Christopher. 1983. The Career of Causal Analysis in American Sociology. *British Journal of Sociology* 34, 2. Pp. 230-54.
- Blau, Peter M., and Otis D. Duncan. 1967. *The American Occupational Structure*. New York: Wiley.

- Bohman, James. 1999. Practical Reason and Cultural Constraint: Agency in Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice. In *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*. Ed. Richard Shusterman. Oxford, UK: Blackwell. Pp. 129-52.
- Boltanski, Luc. 1987 [1982]. *The Making of a Class: Cadres in French Society*. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 1997. Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation. *American Sociological Review* 62, 3. Pp. 465-80.
- . 1999. The Essential Social Fact of Race. *American Sociological Review* 64, 6. Pp. 899-906.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1966. Condition de classe et position de classe. *Archives européennes de sociologie* 7, 2. Pp. 201-23.
- . 1968. Structuralism and the Theory of Sociological Knowledge. *Social Research* 35, 4. Pp. 681-706.
- . 1973 [1971]. Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction. In *Knowledge, Education, and Cultural Change: Papers in the Sociology of Education*. Ed. Richard Brown. London: Tavistock Publications. Pp. 71-112.
- . 1977 [1972]. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1984 [1979]. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- . 1985. The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups. *Theory and Society* 14, 6. Pp. 723-44.
- . 1986. The Forms of Capital. In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. Ed. John G. Richardson. New York: Greenwood Press. Pp. 241-58.
- . 1987a. What Makes a Social Class? On the Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 32. Pp. 1-17.
- . 1987b. The Force of Law: Toward a Sociology of the Juridical Field. *The Hastings Law Journal* 38. Pp. 814-53.
- . 1988 [1984]. *Homo Academicus*. Trans. Peter Collier. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- . 1990a. *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*. Trans. Matthew Adamson. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- . 1990b [1980]. *The Logic of Practice*. Trans. Richard Nice. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

- . 1990c. La domination masculine. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 84. Pp. 2-31.
- . 1991a [1988]. *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger*. Trans. Peter Collier. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- . 1991b. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- . 1993a. *Sociology in Question*. Trans. Richard Nice. London: Sage Publications.
- . 1993b. Concluding Remarks: For a Sociogenetic Understanding of Intellectual Works. In *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Craig Calhoun, Edward LiPuma, and Moishe Postone. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Pp. 263-75.
- . 1993c [1988]. Back to History: An Interview. In *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*. Ed. Richard Wolin. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Pp. 264-71.
- . 1995 [1992]. *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Trans. Susan Emanuel. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- . 1996a [1989]. *The State Nobility: Elite Schools and the Field of Power*. Trans. Laretta C. Clough. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- . 1996b. Masculine Domination Revisited. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 41. Pp. 189-203.
- . 1998a. [1994]. *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- . 1998b. *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market*. Trans. Richard Nice. New York: The New Press.
- . 1998c. *La domination masculine*. Paris: Seuil.
- . 2000. *Pascalian Meditations*. Trans. Richard Nice. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Luc Boltanski. 1981 [1975]. The Educational System and the Economy: Titles and Jobs. Trans. Richard Nice. In *French Sociology: Rupture and Renewal Since 1968*. Ed. Charles C. Lemert. New York: Columbia University Press. Pp. 141-51.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, Luc Boltanski, Robert Castel, Jean-Claude Chamboredon, and Dominique Schnapper. 1990 [1965]. *Photography: A Middlebrow Art*. Trans. Shaun Whiteside. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, Jean-Claude Chamboredon, and Jean-Claude Passeron. 1991 [1968]. *The Craft of Sociology: Epistemological Preliminaries*. Trans. Richard Nice. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean-Claude Passeron. 1979 [1964]. *The Inheritors: French Students and their Relation to Culture*. Trans. Richard Nice. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

———. 1990 [1970]. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. Trans. Richard Nice. London: Sage Publications.

Bourdieu, Pierre, Jean-Claude Passeron, and Monique de Saint Martin. 1994 [1965]. *Academic Discourse: Linguistic Misunderstanding and Professorial Power*. Trans. Richard Teese. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Loïc J. D. Wacquant. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Brubaker, Rogers. 1985. Rethinking Classical Theory: The Sociological Vision of Pierre Bourdieu. *Theory and Society* 14, 6. Pp. 745-75.

Bryson, Bethany. 1996. "Anything But Heavy Metal": Symbolic Exclusion and Cultural Dislikes. *American Sociological Review* 61, 5. Pp. 884-99.

Calhoun, Craig. 1995. *Critical Social Theory: Culture, History, and the Challenge of Difference*. Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell.

Collins, Randall. 1979. *The Credential Society: An Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification*. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Connell, R. W. 1982 [1979]. A Critique of the Althusserian Approach to Class. In *Classes, Power, and Conflict: Classical and Contemporary Debates*. Ed. Anthony Giddens and David Held. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. Pp. 130-47.

———. 1983. *Which Way is Up? Essays on Sex, Class and Culture*. Sydney: George Allen and Unwin.

Cutler, Anthony, Barry Hindess, Paul Hirst, and Athar Hussain. 1978. *Marx's "Capital" and Capitalism Today*. Vol. II. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Dahrendorf, Ralf. 1959. *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Durkheim, Émile, and Marcell Mauss. 1963 [1903]. *Primitive Classification*. Trans. Rodney Needham. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Edgell, Stephen. 1993. *Class*. London and New York: Routledge.

Elster, Jon. 1981. Snobs. *London Review of Books* 3, 20. Pp. 10-12.

———. 1989. *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Emirbayer, Mustafa. 1997. Manifesto for a Relational Sociology. *American Journal of Sociology* 103, 2. Pp. 281-317.

- Erikson, Robert, and John H. Goldthorpe. 1993. *The Constant Flux: A Study of Class Mobility in Industrial Societies*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Frankel, Boris. 1982 [1979]. On the State of the State: Marxist Theories of the State After Leninism. In *Classes, Power, and Conflict: Classical and Contemporary Debates*. Ed. Anthony Giddens and David Held. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. Pp. 257-73.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1973. *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies*. New York: Harper and Row.
- . 1980. Classes, Capitalism, and the State: A Discussion of Frank Parkin, *Marxism and Class Analysis: A Bourgeois Critique*. *Theory and Society* 9. Pp. 877-80.
- Goldthorpe, John H. 1987 [1980]. *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Griller, Robin. 1996. The Return of the Subject? The Methodology of Pierre Bourdieu. *Critical Sociology* 22, 1. Pp. 3-28.
- Grusky, David B., and Jesper B. Sørensen. 1998. Can Class Analysis be Salvaged? *American Journal of Sociology* 103, 5. Pp. 1187-234.
- Hall, John R. 1992. The Capital(s) of Culture: A Nonholistic Approach to Status Situations, Class, Gender, and Ethnicity. In *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality*. Ed. Michèle Lamont and Marcel Fournier. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 257-85.
- Honneth, Axel. 1995 [1984]. The Fragmented World of Symbolic Forms: Reflections on Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture. In *The Fragmented World of Symbolic Forms: Essays in Social and Political Philosophy*. Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press. Pp. 184-201.
- Jenkins, Richard. 1992. *Pierre Bourdieu*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Johnston, Les. 1986. *Marxism, Class Analysis and Socialist Pluralism: A Theoretical and Political Critique of Marxist Conceptions of Politics*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Kingston, Paul W. 2000. *The Classless Society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Kögler, Hans Herbert. 1997. Alienation as Epistemological Source: Reflexivity and Social Background After Mannheim and Bourdieu. *Social Epistemology* 11, 2. Pp. 141-64.
- Lamont, Michèle. 1992. *Money, Morals, and Manners: The Culture of the French and American Upper-Middle Class*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Lamont, Michèle, and Annette Lareau. 1988. Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments. *Sociological Theory* 6. Pp. 153-68.
- Lane, Jeremy F. 2000. *Pierre Bourdieu: A Critical Introduction*. London: Pluto Press.
- Lash, Scott. 1990. *Sociology of Postmodernism*. London and New York: Routledge.

- . 1993. Pierre Bourdieu: Cultural Economy and Social Change. In *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Craig Calhoun, Edward LiPuma, and Moishe Postone. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Pp. 193-211.
- Lenski, Gerhard E. 1966. *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Lockwood, David. 1958. *The Blackcoated Worker: A Study in Class Consciousness*. London: Unwin University Books.
- Loveman, Mara. 1999. Is "Race" Essential? *American Sociological Review* 64, 6. Pp. 891-8.
- MacIver, R. M. 1964 [1942]. *Social Causation*. New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- Marshall, Gordon. 1997. *Repositioning Class: Social Inequality in Industrial Societies*. London: Sage Publications.
- Marx, Karl. 1981 [1885]. *Capital*. Vol. II. Trans. David Fernbach. New York: Vintage Books.
- . 1991 [1894]. *Capital*. Vol. III. Trans. David Fernbach. London and New York: Penguin Books.
- McCall, Leslie. 1992. Does Gender Fit? Bourdieu, Feminism, and Conceptions of Social Order. *Theory and Society* 21, 6. Pp. 837-67.
- Nisbet, Robert A. 1959. The Decline and Fall of Social Class. *Pacific Sociological Review* 2, 1 (Spring). Pp. 11-28
- . 1993 [1962]. *The Sociological Tradition*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Ollivier, Michèle. Status in Postmodern Societies: The Renewal of a Concept. Paper presented at the 1999 meeting of the Eastern Sociological Society.
- Pakulski, Jan, and Malcolm Waters. 1996. *The Death of Class*. London: Sage Publications.
- Parkin, Frank. 1971. *Class Inequality and Political Order: Social Stratification in Capitalist and Communist Societies*. New York and Washington: Praeger.
- . 1979. *Marxism and Class Analysis: A Bourgeois Critique*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 1980. Reply to Giddens. *Theory and Society* 9. Pp. 891-4.
- Peterson, Richard A., and Roger M. Kern. 1996. Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore. *American Sociological Review* 61, 5. Pp. 900-7.
- Poulantzas, Nicos. 1975 [1974]. *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*. Trans. David Fernbach. London: New Left Books.

- . 1976. *The Capitalist State: A Reply to Miliband and Laclau*. Trans. Rupert Swyer. *New Left Review* 95. Pp. 63-83.
- . 1978 [1968]. *Political Power and Social Classes*. Trans. Timothy O'Hagan. London: Verso.
- Przeworski, Adam. 1985. *Capitalism and Social Democracy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Robbins, Derek. 2000. *Bourdieu and Culture*. London: Sage Publications.
- Robinson, Robert V., and Maurice A. Garnier. 1985. Class Reproduction Among Men and Women in France: Reproduction Theory on its Home Ground. *American Journal of Sociology* 91, 2. Pp. 250-80.
- Rupp, Jan C. C. 1997. Rethinking Cultural and Economic Capital. In *Reworking Class*. Ed. John R. Hall. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. Pp. 221-41.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de. 1959. *Course in General Linguistics*. Trans. Wade Boskins. New York: The Philosophical Library.
- Sewell, William H. 1992. A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation. *American Journal of Sociology* 98, 1. Pp. 1-29.
- Somers, Margaret R. 1995. What's Political or Cultural about Political Culture and the Public Sphere? Toward an Historical Sociology of Concept Formation. *Sociological Theory* 13, 2. Pp. 113-44.
- . 1997. Deconstructing and Reconstructing Class Formation Theory: Narrativity, Relational Analysis, and Social Theory. In *Reworking Class*. Ed. John R. Hall. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. Pp. 73-105.
- Swartz, David. 1997. *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Taylor, Charles. 1993. To Follow a Rule.... In *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Craig Calhoun, Edward LiPuma, and Moishe Postone. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Pp. 45-60.
- Thompson, E. P. 1966 [1963]. *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Vintage Books.
- . 1978. Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle Without Classes? *Social History* 3, 2. Pp. 133-65.
- . 1995 [1978]. *The Poverty of Theory: Or an Orrery of Errors*. London: Merlin Press.
- Turner, Bryan. 1996. Classes, Capitalism, and Citizenship. In *Conflicts About Class: Debating Inequality in Late Industrialism*. Ed. David J. Lee and Bryan S. Turner. London and New York: Longman. Pp. 254-61.

- Vandenberghe, Frédéric. 1999. "The Real is Relational": An Epistemological Analysis of Pierre Bourdieu's Generative Structuralism. *Sociological Theory* 17, 1. Pp. 32-67.
- Wacquant, Loïc J. D. 1993. From Ruling Class to Field of Power: An Interview with Pierre Bourdieu on *La noblesse d'État*. *Theory, Culture and Society* 10. Pp. 19-44.
- . 1999. The Double-Edged Sword of Reason: The Scholar's Predicament and the Sociologist's Mission. *European Journal of Social Theory* 2, 3. Pp. 275-81.
- . 2001. Deadly Symbiosis: When Ghetto and Prison Meet and Mesh. *Punishment and Society* 3, 1.
- Weber, Max. 1978 [1918]. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Trans. Ephraim Fischoff et al. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: The University of California Press.
- Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford, UK and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wright, Erik Olin. 1978. *Class, Crisis and the State*. London: New Left Books.
- . 1985. *Classes*. London and New York: Verso.
- . 1994. *Interrogating Inequality: Essays on Class Analysis, Socialism and Marxism*. London and New York: Verso.
- . 1997. *Class Counts: Comparative Studies in Class Analysis*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wright, Erik Olin, Andrew Levine, and Elliot Sober. 1992. *Reconstructing Marxism: Essays on Explanation and the Theory of History*. London and New York: Verso.
- Wright, Erik Olin, Uwe Becker, Johanna Brenner, Michael Burawoy, Val Burris, Guglielmo Carchedi, Gordon Marshall, Peter F. Meiksins, David Rose, Arthur Stinchcombe, and Philippe Van Parijs. 1998 [1989]. *The Debate on Classes*. London and New York: Verso.
- Zeitlin, Maurice. 1982 [1974]. Corporate Ownership and Control: The Large Corporation and the Capitalist Class. In *Classes, Power, and Conflict: Classical and Contemporary Debates*. Ed. Anthony Giddens and David Held. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California. Pp. 196-223.