

**I. The Problem: Words, Concepts & Theories**

**Two tasks:**

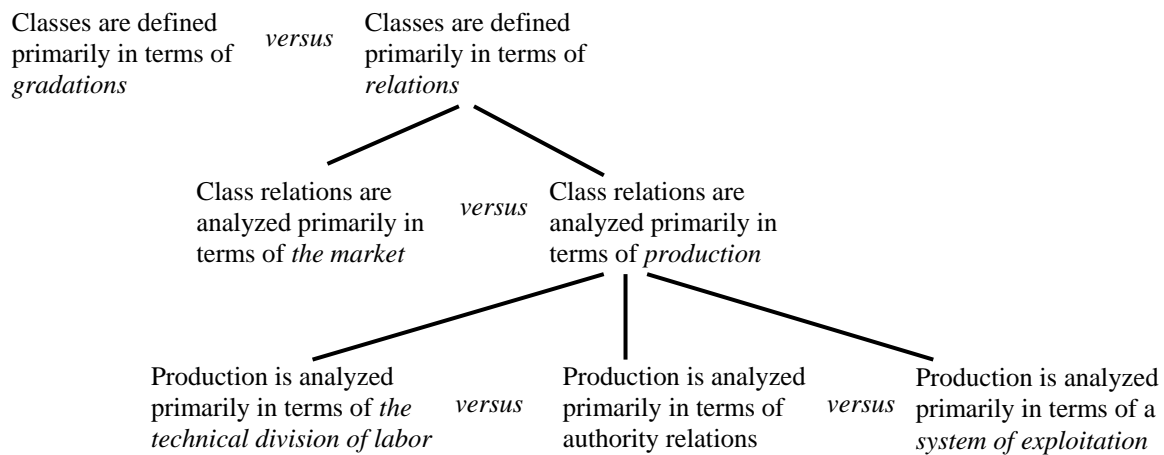
1. demarcating the Marxist concept of class from other concepts
2. producing a complex concept of class structure: from binary classes to a complex map of class locations

**II. Four strategies for differentiating Marxist class concepts from an array of others**

1. A branching tree diagram of alternative class concepts (1978)
2. A check-list inventory of conceptual difference (2005)
3. An micro/macro causal model that integrates different class mechanisms (2009)
4. Nested antagonism within a “Game”: Games/Rules/Moves (2015)

**1. BRANCHING TREE TYPOLOGY**

**VARIETIES OF CONCEPTS OF CLASS**



*Class Structure and Income Determination* (New York: Academic Press, 1978), p.5.

2. CHECK LIST INVENTORY

*Approaches to Class Analysis, Conclusion,*  
**Table 1. Six Primary Questions of Class Analysis**

*Anchoring questions*

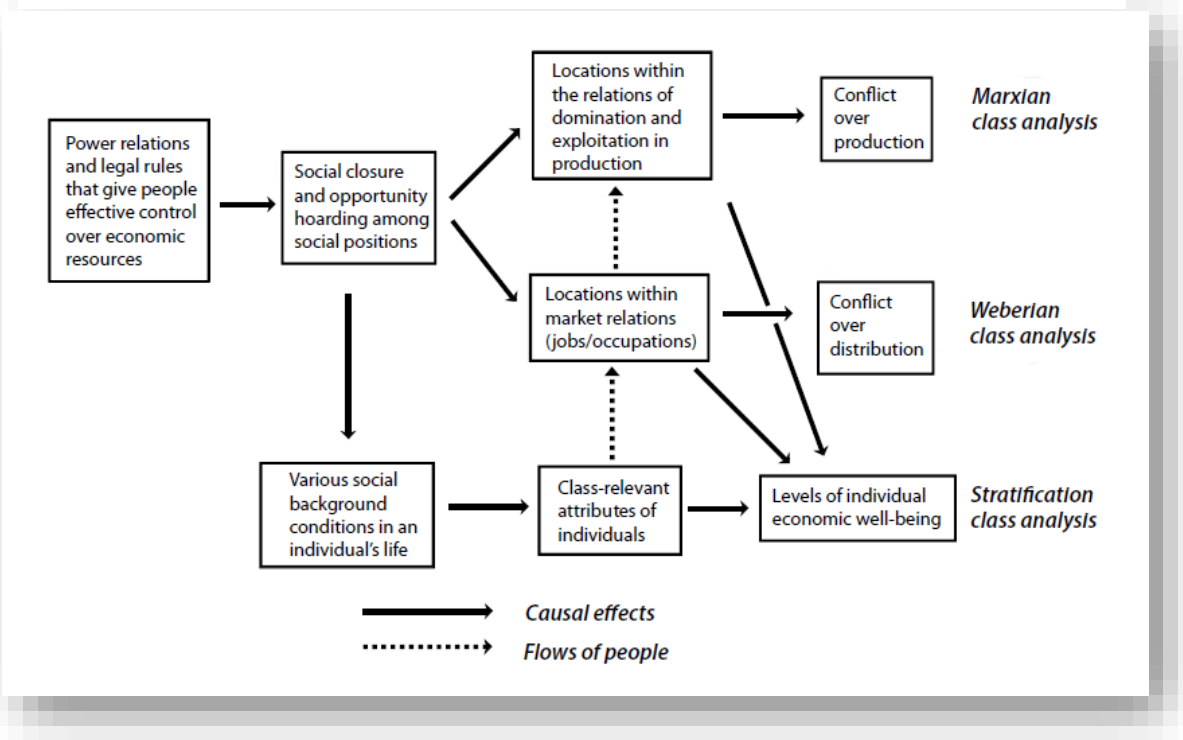
Approach to Class Analysis	1. Distributional location	2. Subjectively salient groups	3. Life-chances	4. Antagonistic conflicts	5. Historical variation	6. Emancipation
Popular usage	***	*	**	*		
David Grusky (neo-Durheimian)	**	***	**	*	*	
Jan Pakulski	**	***	**	**	**	
Pierre Bourdieu	**	**	***	*		
Richard Breen & John Goldthorpe (neo-Weberian)	**	*	***	*		
Aage Sorenson	**	*	**	***		
Max Weber	*	*	**	*	***	
Erik Olin Wright (neo-Marxian)	*	*	**	**	**	***

- \*\*\* primary anchoring question for the concept of class
- \*\* secondary anchoring question (subordinated to primary anchor)
- \* additional questions relevant to the concept of class, but not central to anchoring the definition

The questions within which “class” figures in the answers:

1. *Distributional Location*: “How are people objectively located in distributions of material inequality?”
2. *Subjectively salient groups*: “What explains how people, individually and collectively, subjectively locate themselves and others within a structure of inequality?”
3. *Life Chances*: “What explains inequalities in economically-grounded life chances and material standards of living?”
4. *Antagonistic conflicts*: “what economically-based cleavages most systematically shape overt conflicts?”
5. *Historical Variation*: “How should we characterize and explain the variations across history in the social organization of inequalities?”
6. *Emancipation*: “What sorts of transformations are needed to eliminate economic oppression and exploitation within capitalist societies?”

**3. Integrated Causal model: different class-relevant mechanisms**



**4. Nested antagonistic conflicts of material interests within a Game**

Level of System at which Conflict Is Focused	Game Metaphor	Political Form of Conflict	Stakes in the Conflict	Form of Class Analysis
System level	What game to play	Revolutionary versus counter-revolutionary	Capitalism versus socialism	Marxist
Institutional level	Rules of the game	Reformist versus reactionary	Varieties of capitalism	Weberian
Situational level	Moves in the game	Interest group politics	Immediate economic interests	Durkheimian

**Table 6.1. The Game Metaphor for Mapping Politics and Class Analysis**

### III. The conceptual foundations of the Marxist concept of class: A Step-by-step guide

#### Step 1. Relational vs. gradational concepts

- Key idea = “social relation” – not at all a simple concept.

#### Step 2. What kind of relations constitute “class” relations?

- Class relations vs gender relations vs race relations vs friendship relations

##### Step 2a. The concept of relations of production:

- Assets have to be deployed in production – tools, raw materials
- deployment can be described in technical terms: a production function
- relational terms: rights and powers of actors (note: power and rights over *things* = *relations between people*)

##### Step 2b. Production relations become “Class relations” when these rights and powers are unequally distributed.

#### Step 3. Variations in class relations

- key idea = qualitatively different kinds of relations
- of course also quantitative variation: gap between rich & poor can be big or little
- qualitative variation is more crucial: *what can be owned*
- slavery = absolute property rights in people; feudalism = joint ownership in the labor resource of the peasant by lord & serf

#### Step 4. Class locations within class relations

- the places occupied by people
- simple polarization → two categories within every relation

#### Step 5. Micro- and Macro-class analysis

- *macro-concept* of class structure: the totality of all the class relations within some unit of analysis = its class structure – class structures of countries, of cities, of corporations, of the world
- *micro-concept* of class location = impact on the lives of persons within relations via two primary processes – *experiences & interests*. Experiences refers to things that happen to you because you are in a class location; interests to what you have to do to meet your material needs because of your class position.

#### Step 6. Levels of abstraction for specifying class structure

- Adding complexity in a systematic and coherent way: from binary class relations to complexly differentiated class locations: a fundamental problem for all empirical research.

#### Step 7. The Explanatory Claims: *The fundamental theses of class analysis*

- What you *have* determines what you *get*
- What you *have* determines what you *have to do to get what you get*.
- *What you have to do to get what you get* determines *whose interests are opposed to your interests*: friends, enemies, allies

#### Step 8. Marxist class analysis: the specificity of class mechanisms

**Exploitation:** a way of talking about how the interests of people within class relations are intrinsically antagonist

**Domination:** a way of talking about control over activities. You can have domination without exploitation, but exploitation always entails at least indirect domination.

### IV. A REPERTOIRE OF CLASS CONCEPTS – class as an adjective rather than a noun

1. *Class structure.*
2. *Class Interests.*
3. *Class formation.*
4. *Class capacities.*
5. *Class practices.*
6. *Class struggle.*
7. *Class consciousness.*