

Sociology 924
Session 1. Introduction
Thursday, January 19, 2017

An agenda of meta-theoretical and methodological issues that will run through our discussions

1. The distinction between *concept* formation and *theory* construction:
 - concepts are building blocks
 - but concepts get their meaning in part from the theories in which they are to function
 - In any theory, concepts will vary in the extent to which they are tightly integrated into a conceptual framework. Some concepts are alien imports.
2. Concepts and typologies: concepts are located in some kind of conceptual space. Types of spaces:
 - Typologies: 2x2 is a classic form
 - Conceptual Trees
 - Multidimensional Qualitative inventory of conceptual differences
 - Checklist inventory of conceptual differences
3. The knotty problem of the *level of abstraction* at which particular concepts are formed, theories constructed, and empirical research is conducted. Mismatches are common.
 - Logics of abstraction: the problem of coherent complexity
 - Can we have a general *theory* of the state in general or an abstract concept of the state which is used in more concrete theories? The test: are their interesting explanatory propositions about “the state” that apply across all types of states?
 - How systematic is the move across levels of abstraction? How many coherent levels are there?
4. The problem of being clear on what precisely is the *object of explanation*: fine-grained vs coarse grained objects of explanation.
5. The heterogeneity of explanatory logics: causal, functional, intentional
6. “Clinical” vs “scientific” use of theory: learning *about* a case versus learning *from* a case.
7. The general idea of the “double discipline” of both concepts and theories: the importance of disciplining concepts/theories both in terms of their capacity to solve empirical problems and their logical coherence within broader conceptual frameworks. The tensions in this double discipline provokes theory transformation and concept reconstruction.
8. The necessary tension between eclectic and paradigmatic approaches to social science.
 - The idea of the optimal ecology of theoretical approaches in an intellectual environment
9. The crucial importance of *variation*: the capacity of concepts to give coherence to empirically observed variation.
10. The centrality of normative issues: emancipatory social science.

CONCEPT FOPRMAITON: four TYPES OF CONCEPTUAL SPACES

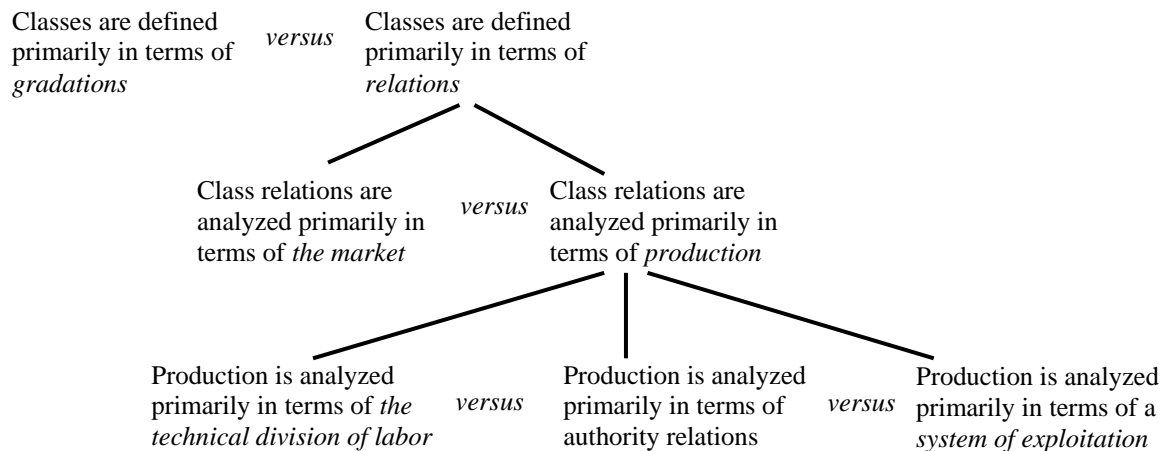
I. The 2 x 2 Typology

Typology of Anti-Capitalist Strategies

		<i>Goal of Strategy</i>	
		Neutralizing harms	Transcending structures
<i>Primary locus of strategy</i>	The state	<i>Taming capitalism</i>	<i>Smashing capitalism</i>
	Civil Society	<i>Resisting capitalism</i>	<i>Escaping capitalism</i>

II. Conceptual Tree

VARIETIES OF CONCEPTS OF CLASS



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

III. Qualitative Inventory of conceptual differences

<i>Envisioning Real Utopias</i> Figure 8.1 Three Models of Transformation: ruptural, interstitial, symbiotic					
Vision of trajectory of systemic transformations beyond capitalism	Political Tradition most closely associated with logic of transformation	Pivotal collective actors for transformation	Strategic logic with respect to the state	Strategic logic with respect to the capitalist class	Metaphors of success
<i>Ruptural</i>	Revolutionary socialist/communist	Classes organized in political parties	Attack the state	Confront the bourgeoisie	War (victories and defeats)
<i>Interstitial metamorphosis</i>	Anarchist	Social movements	Build alternatives outside of the state	Ignore the bourgeoisie	Ecological competition
<i>Symbiotic metamorphosis</i>	Social democratic	Coalitions of social forces and labor	Use the state: struggle on the terrain of the state	Collaborate with the bourgeoisie	Evolutionary adaptations

IV. Check-list Inventory of conceptual difference

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?”