Note: I have provided thinner comments this week than usual – basically just one short comment to each interrogation. I have, however, added some more extended general comments at the end of the interrogations.

1.   Adam Slez

Though David Grusky (2005) clearly outlines the theoretical foundations of micro-class analysis in his discussion of the possibility of a Durkheimian model of class, I think that the motivation for the micro-class project is shown most clearly in his empirical work with Kim Weeden (e.g., Weeden and Grusky 2005; Grusky and Weeden 2006). In arguing for a new class (i.e. micro-class) map, Weeden and Grusky begin by noting that "[o]ver the last 25 years, the goal of class analysis has shifted from developing accounts of collective action, revolutions, and other macro-level outcomes…to explaining variability in individual-level life chances, attitudes, and behaviors" (Weeden and Grusky 2005: 141). According to the authors, the problem is that this shift has not been accompanied efforts to develop the type of class map needed to address the latter set of problems. In short, we continue to employ a big-class map to address micro-class problems and, not surprisingly, are unsatisfied with the empirical results. If only because no mention of it has been made to this point in the semester, I think that it would be useful to discuss whether or not the shift in the class analysis described by Weeden and Grusky has in fact occurred and, if so, why.

What I appreciate most about Weeden and Grusky's work is that it takes the *science* of class seriously. Their work is unique in the way in which it situates various types of class models in relation to the more general problem of inequality. More specifically, Grusky and Weeden (2006) argue that if the class concept has any empirical purchase, then class models should serve as means of effectively reducing the dimensionality of the space of inequality. In other words, if multidimensionality is the problem, then class is, *at least potentially*, the solution. For Grusky and Weeden, the primary task is to first figure out what the problem looks like by examining the structure of inequality; only after examining the data is it reasonable to begin invoking class-based explanatory models. As suggested by Grusky and Weeden's typology of ideal-typical 'inequality regimes,' class (either micro or macro) is one solution among many. Furthermore, Grusky and Weeden propose that it is possible to use latent class analysis to empirically adjudicate between alternative models of inequality.

Thus rather than retaining and validating existing class models through theoretical fiat, Grusky and Weeden seem more willing than most to actually problematize and, if needed, revise the concept of class. Admittedly, scholars such as Kingston (2000) have used empirical data to argue against the efficacy of class as an explanatory variable. If Weeden and Grusky (2005) are correct, we shouldn't be surprised by the fact that

Kingston finds little evidence of class effects, in that he relies on a macro-class map to explain the types of micro-level outcomes that have, arguably, become the focus of contemporary class analysis. There isn't much to be gained from negative findings derived from what is, given Weeden and Grusky's account, a study based on a misapplied class map. Rather than deducing an a new class map and then trying to figure out *what can be explained*, Grusky and Weeden (2006) begin with data and ask the logically prior question—namely, *what needs to be explained.* We should be more concerned with whether the resulting theory can adequately explain the observed outcomes than with the problem of whether or not the theory in question can actually be called a theory of class (see Kingston 2000).   **[Of course we should be concerned with explanation, but it doesn't follow from this that you should "begin with data". I also do not see that *beginning* with data enables you to pose the question "what *needs* to be explained?" since the object of explanation is generally something driven either by anomalies in previous data analysis (not data, but data analysis), or theoretical concerns.]**

2.   Rudolfo Elbert

David Grusky presents his neo-Durkheimian model for class analysis as an alternative to the mainstream traditions in class analysis that "have invariably represented the class structure with highly aggregate categories that, for all their academic popularity, have never been deeply institutionalized in the world outside academia and hence fail the realist test" (Grusky, 2005:51). As the traditional class analysis models fail to explain the "real" world, Grusky considers his micro-classes model to be the best way to "save" class analysis from the post-modern critics. Taking this into account I would like to discuss to what extent his approach "saves" class analysis from his post-modern critics. In first place, I would like to focus this interrogation on the empirical discussion on social mobility. As Kingston (2000) points out, a realist approach to class analysis should be based on the assumption that a strong class structure (or structuration) might be reflected in low levels of inter and intra-generational mobility. If Grusky´s aim is to "save" class analysis from the postmodern critics, I would like to discuss what are the payoffs of developing a disaggregated class model for the analysis of social mobility. Taking into account that the main task of a class analysis schema is to develop groups that are internally homogeneous and highly differentiated from other groups, what happens when we compare the micro-classes approach to the big classes approach in terms of intra and inter-generational social mobility? It could be hypothesized that the mobility would be higher between occupational groups, as we can think that inter-occupational mobility in one individual's trajectory (and between parents and son's trajectories) is higher than inter-class mobility in the same trajectory. How does this challenge Grusky´s model? In particular, how does the higher rate of intra and inter-generational mobility makes class analysis weaker to confront the post-modern realist critique?

In second place, I would like to discuss to what extent can one "save" class analysis developing a Durkheimian framework. In particular, it is not clear to me why Grusky defines as "social classes" his disaggregated occupational groups. It seems to me that the tension between occupational groups and social classes in Grusky´s model might be related to the lack of relevance of the concept of class in Durkheim´s model. In other

words, what are the theoretical bases for defining these groups as social classes? Is there a class theory in Durkheim? How this author defines classes?

Finally, I would like to discuss in class what is the relevance of the capitalist class in Grusky´s class analysis. According to this author, "for Durkheim, organic solidarity is also normatively expressed through the rise of occupational regulation that institutionalizes industrial conflict, most notably that between labor and capital" (60) However, in the subsequent analysis of "Durkheim´s micro-classes story" there is no place to "capital" and Grusky refers to occupational groupings that in a Marxist sense would be aggregated in the working class. So, where is the capitalist class in Gruksy´s analysis? **[Another way of making your very good point here is that Grusky has shown that the relevant solidarity-groupings and life-experience groupings within the abstractly defined working class are occupational-groups rather than "subclasses" – i.e. they are not defined by any distinctive social relational propreties or relational mechanisms, but by the qualitative demarcations within the technical divison of labor.]**

3.   Elizabeth Wrigley-Field

I thought Grusky and Weeden's analysis of allocation, social conditioning, and institutionalization of conditions as processes producing homogeneity among occupations at the micro-level was very interesting. A question I want to pose starts by going in the opposite direction of their analysis: as they examine the bounded occupations within what they call "big classes," what happens when we consider the differences *within* occupations? It seems to me that people occupying the same "occupation" very often have jobs that differ in ways that are quite significant for some of the micro-level processes that Grusky and Weeden are interested in explaining. For example, the Silicon Valley boom in the '90s produced a minority of computer programmers who were extremely economically successful, had substantial control over their own time, often had substantial control over the work done by others, etc., while my understanding is that most people of the same occupation have fundamentally insecure jobs with little control over their own work lives or those of others, few benefits, etc. Similarly, the occupation "sociologist" may include tenured professors as well as adjuncts – a difference that might be quite significant for at least some of the micro-level concerns motivating the analysis.

These distinctions don't necessarily meet the criteria that Grusky and Weeden consider most salient in their discussions of why categorization at the occupational level seems optimal. For example, they may be right that Wright's "nonskilled managers" or Erikson and Goldthorpe's "routine nonmanuals" lack clear closure mechanisms, in the sense that there may not be clear institutional practices governing who gains entry to these positions: why one person in the non-manager job and another in the manager version of the same job may seem, and may be, arbitrary with respect to matters such as their credentials. The tenured professor and the adjunct went through very similar or identical credentialing processes (before the job search that directly determined their category of employment). Yet regardless of whether there are clear institutional

"gatekeepers" determining which person ends where, which one they do end up in still really seems to matter. **[This is a very nicely framed point: even if people were randomly allocated to positions, the conditions of life in those positions could vary in salient ways that are tapped by the reasoning of "big classes" – i.e. abstractly defined mechanisms.]**

Although I started by posing this question as suggesting an even *more* micro-level class analysis, I don't think that's the only way to conceive of important economic distinctions that divide occupational categories. It seems to me that we could equally well call my point an intuition that "big-class" categories do matter after all. Matters like exploitation and supervision can be not only significant, but can operate differentially within occupational categories, as well as cross them. And on those dimensions, people may have more in common with some people with different occupations than they do with some people who share their own. Thus, rather than describing the picture as being even more at the micro-level, I would be inclined to call the distinction I'm suggested as a separate dimension of labor market locations, which does not fully map on to the occupational and institutional dimension analyzed by Grusky and Weeden.

I don't think this really challenges a lot of the significance of Grusky and Weeden's analysis of the institutionalization of occupations. But it does make me wonder whether the best way to interpret Grusky and Weeden's insights is really as an analysis of class. Mightn't it be more helpful to describe it as an analysis of the institutionalization of occupations, which takes place alongside – and cuts across – such class-based mechanisms as extraction of effort and domination? **[I think the better way to frame this has to do with the level of abstraction at which one identifies causally-efficacious mechanisms rather than "Big" vs "Micro" categories. An abstract mechanism does indeed apply to more settings than a very concretely described mechanism, but it is not the size of the category that is relevant but the abstraction of the characterization of the mechanism.]**

4.   Joe Ferrare

The framework outlined by Grusky and Weeden attempts to address the inability of "big class" frameworks to explain substantial variation in behaviors, attitudes, and opinions, while simultaneously responding to postmodern critics who claim that class is no longer a structuring force in social life. With respect to this latter point, I believe the authors rightfully reject the postmodern claims by arguing that structuration exists at the site of production. However, regarding the former point I think the authors only partially satisfy their own critique of "big class" schemas. I will first argue that many of the "big class" schemas have different objectives than explaining behaviors, attitudes, and opinions, and then raise specific questions about Grusky and Weeden's micro-class schema.

If one were to consider the data presented by Grusky (2005 and 2006) and Kingston (2000) it could be concluded that highly aggregated class frameworks do not explain a substantial amount of variation in political attitudes, sentiments, or interactions (though I do think some of the big class frameworks account for a substantial amount of

mobility). However, I'm not certain that big class schemas, such as the one outlined by neo-Marxists, have the *primary* goal of explaining these variations. Rather, their specific goal is to identify the mechanisms that produce and reproduce inequality, and to locate social actors within these relations. The neo-Marxist concern with shared beliefs, attitudes, and opinions seems secondary to identifying mechanisms of exploitation, for example, with the intent of transforming these mechanisms. Therefore, when big class schemas are criticized for not explaining variations in behaviors, attitudes, and opinions, it seems as though these critics are dragging the debate onto terrain that the proponents of big class schemas (at least the neo-Marxists) are not necessarily concerned with. Is it not possible that there is no all-encompassing class framework, but instead that different frameworks are best suited to answer different questions? **[I think one might want to distinguish a consistency criterion from an explanatory power criterion here. "Big Class" analysis does have implications for behavior and attitudes at the mico-level, and thus it is fair game to show that the data are inconsistent with its expectations. But this is not the same as claiming that they would be the most powerful determinants of variations at the micro-level.]**

It may be the case, however, that the critics of big class schemas believe that class analysis *should* be concerned with shared attitudes, behaviors, and opinions. While I do not believe this is a prerequisite to critique capitalism, from a more general sociological perspective it seems productive for sociologists to seek out a schema around which structuration is strong. In this respect I think Grusky and Weeden's model is thought provoking and warrants further consideration. Grusky and Weeden argue that one of the reasons detailed occupations are a structuring force in social life is because of the inherent self-selection (see p. 59 in Wright and p. 187 in the AJS article). This certainly holds true for "professional" occupations and even skill-specific occupations such as mechanics or machine operators. However, I question the extent to which many actors self-select into positions such as those who work at McDonald's or customer service representatives that answer to cranky home mortgage customers for banks like Well's Fargo. In fact, it seems there are a large number of occupations that are not self-selected in the way someone chooses to be an engineer; instead, the above mentioned occupations are taken on out of a basic necessity to live. Does this suggest the need to disaggregate certain occupational categories while aggregating others (as Bourdieu does)? Could it be the case that certain occupational categories are increasingly resisting aggregation while other categories are not? Grusky and Weeden allude to a hybrid class schema (p. 188 of ASJ article) of this sort but do not elaborate on what such a schema would look like. What are the consequences of analyzing class in this way?

Another question that came to mind relates to class mobility within the micro-class framework. Class origin in the Goldthorpe framework, for example, is a substantial indicator of inter-generational mobility (despite Kingston's claim to the contrary), and a majority remain within the same class position throughout their lives (relatively stable intra-generational mobility). However, it is unclear to me how these patterns would hold up when looking at 126 categories. Without any immediate mobility data to consider my intuition tells me that there will not be substantial class reproduction and intra-generational mobility will be high minus a small number of occupations (e.g. engineers, lawyers, doctors, etc). In this respect, does it really make sense to refer to these micro-classes as "classes" in the traditional sense of the term? Then again, perhaps this is the

authors' main point, that it is time to rethink what we mean by class. If this is in fact their main objective, then how do we wrap our head's around such a disaggregated class schema in a way that makes it do meaningful work in sociology?

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5.   Michael Callaghan Pisapia

I would like to discuss which approach to class analysis best helps us to explain inter-occupational earnings differentials.

For Wright, occupational earnings would have to be explained in terms of one's position with respect to dimensions of ownership, skills and authority. Why does the manager get paid more than the worker even though both managers and workers are not owners? Because of the value that his authority commands in the system of exploitative relations of production: the owner uses the manager's authority to appropriate value from the worker, and part of that appropriated value accrues to the manager. For neo-Weberian approaches such as Goldthorpe's, wage differentials are explained by the type of employment contract and the possibility of effective monitoring of tasks: you get paid more if the employer values your on-the-job learning and if your work task involves personal discretion and is difficult to monitor; you get paid less if the job is low-skilled and the laborer is easily replaceable, and if his task is transparent. For Bourdieu, earning differentials are explained by a person's position in a multi-dimensional capital field: persons similarly positioned with respect to the field of economic capital may command differential earnings because of the amount of cultural capital they possess: the art of the critically acclaimed artist commands a higher price because his art is more difficult to appreciate than the realism of a typical landscape artist, but the high artist actually earns less because he takes a principled stand against his work being monetarily valued, and this stand has the effect of increasing the monetary value of his work …

In neo-Durkheimian approaches, such as Grusky's, earnings differentials are explained by the institutionalization of occupational schemes. These institutions include formal organizations such as the American Sociological Association, but also professional norms that constrain how, for instance, existing sociologists induct potential sociologists into their ranks, and how these inductees are turned into normal sociologists (they were already well on their way – being left-leaning themselves, these inductees had heard about the leftishness of sociology, and decided to join up). The Durkheimian approach helps us to see that "the occupational structure should be regarded as a double edged sword that works simultaneously to create closure and extract rent and to legitimate that rent and convince us that it is appropriate and unproblematic," (Grusky 2005: 75). This last point is especially interesting to me, and it seems to be a real strength of both Bourdieu and Grusky's accounts: class distinction and the reproduction of micro-classes (occupations) over time involve socializations into codes of appropriateness (or the habitus for Bourdieu). Why *do* people accept that financial consultants should be paid more than guidance counselors, or that waiters in high-end restaurants should be paid more than cashier clerks in fast food restaurants? Durkheimian analysis does a better job of highlighting these facts about wage acceptance *as* an interesting puzzle. But what mechanisms does it offer other than self-selection and socialization to explain why actors

take these differentials to be legitimate? Obviously it would rule out a "false consciousness argument" (or would it?). Are there grounds in Grusky's analysis for the idea that these arrangements *are* morally problematic, even if local actors do not take them to be so? That they are legitimated but not legitimate, in the sense that the myths that help to legitimate the differentials (fairness of the market in rewarding talent) really are myths? What are the grounds for critique of existing occupational arrangements and earnings differentials? That they don't *really* allow for equality of opportunity? **[The self-selection and socialization may explain why rent appropriation (high earnings) is viewed as legitimate, but is the actual ability to extract rents simply a matter of legitimacy, or does it have to do with some structural properties – power, monitorability, skill scarcity, etc. -- of the job which make rent extraction easy? If there are structural properties which explain the rents, then you are back to the "big class" framework afterall.]**

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6.   **Assaf Meshulam**

The sophisticated tables and schemes and the new map of multivariate models that Grusky and Weeden present are a very appealing endeavor to combine together into one map several layers that existed before in separate tables. Grusky and Weeden's (2005) justification for their efforts is to close the existing gap in class maps, one that will respond to the "revolutionary shift in the rationale for class analysis" from macrolevel outcomes, thereby rejecting theoretical answers regarding both mechanism and "big-classes," to microlevel explanations of the "variability in individual-level life chances, attitudes, and behaviors" (2005:141). They believe that by focusing on the microlevel analysis, they provide a "highly detailed class scheme devised explicitly for the microlevel agenda [which] performs better than conventional class maps" (2005:142).

I feel that the importance of Grusky and Weeden's project is that it provides a "realist" answer to Kingston and others, by showing that different and distinct classes can be identified and that this can be done based on the site of production. However, their data-rich endeavor reflects, in my opinion, the limited explanatory power of the "realist" approach in general. Even if we put aside Kingston's criticism that they propose a division into too many classes, to my mind all they ultimately seem to succeed in doing is to present a thin understanding of class, in which there is no place to explain the mechanism for that classification, nor any attempt to respond to deeper questions that class analysts struggle with like relations between classes and issues of agency. To borrow Wright's words, all they seem to have done is present "subjectively salient groups" (Wright 2005:183). **[A note on "realist" approaches: I think that "Big Class" analysis is just as much a realist approach as micro-class analysis. They differ, however, in what they are realist about – what real processes or phenomena they are identifying in their conceptual schemas. Goldthorpe's "service relation" is a claim about a real relation that matters in the lives of people: it matters whether your employment contract takes the form of a labor contract or a service contract. These are two types of contracts. They define real mechanisms. Grusky is a realist**

about *groups* rather than about *relations*. That is fine, but it is not the same as saying that he is a realist and Goldthorpe (or me) a nominalist.]

Two minor remarks:
1. The claim that microclass categories are powerful rests on the premises that "unlike big classes, microclasses are institutionalized through various closure-generating mechanisms" (186). The four mechanisms through which "institutionalized categories come to be filled with workers who are similar to one another" are: self-selection, training, interactional closure, and institutionalization of conditions. In my opinion, at least with regard to "self-selection," this categorization was made from what seems to be an inherent middle-class bias or perspective of the authors. I think that Grusky and Weeden fail to see the reality of the working/lower/under-class. Many times, self-selection can only be a product of what one wishes to be or how one sees oneself or of the attraction of appealing stereotypes about a given workplace if one has *access* to what one finds appealing, something that perhaps only the middle class usually has in abundance, but that the authors assume is equally available to other classes. The lower classes do not have the same access to follow what one wishes to be or how one sees oneself or the attraction to a stereotype**.**

2. Table B1 in Appendix B shows that N= 813,911. However, the income category shows only 813,910, meaning according to this table one person had no income. Was he/she unemployed? Where is the place of unemployed in the scheme? Are they always to be treated as part of the underclass?

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7.   You-Geon Lee

Criticizing that conventional class models "fail to capitalize on the institutionalized social categories that develop at the detailed occupational level," Weeden and Grusky (2005: 141-142) emphasize "highly detailed class scheme devised explicitly for the microlevel agenda." In identifying "structural positions at the site of production that provide the strongest possible signal of life condition (143)," they argue that their microlevel approach is better than big class or aggregate approaches because these aggregate categories are poorly correlated with the life conditions and the individual-level behaviors. According to them, unlike big classes, disaggregate occupations as micro-classes shape behaviors and are institutionalized through four mechanisms: self-selection, training, interactional closure, and institutionalization of conditions. In other words, "these four processes combine to convert technical categories into socially meaningful ones and to generate closed grouping at the occupational level (187)."

In their class scheme, it seems interesting to me that they argue that aggregated classes or big classes are too parsimony to capture individual-level outcomes and its life conditions while disaggregated classes as unit occupations make them relatively homogeneous categories. This argument of 'aggregation vs. disaggregation' seems like an argument of 'explanatory power vs. parsimony' in empirical researches. Grusky (2005: 78) argues that "the explanatory returns to dissaggregation should accordingly diminish, as the inveterate splitter disaggregates beyond the occupational boundaries... "

Then, to what extent should classes be disaggregated in order to capture individual-level behaviors and life conditions and make each individual in unit occupations homogeneous? To what extent should classes be aggregated for least explanatory losses? **[I think G's response to this would be that this is entirely an empirical/pragmatic question. The idea that there are "diminishing returns" is essentially that at some point a division/spolit of a category will not add any new explanatory power, and that is the point where you stop.]**
      Criticizing job-level aggregation approaches (or analytical approaches), Grusky (2005) compares the life style of economists to that of sociologists. He argues that relative conservatism of economists and liberalism of sociologists are socially produced rather than the technical conditions under which people labor. In his micro-class scheme, are sociology professors and economy professors considered as different classes or being in different class position even though they are within the boundary of same occupation? If so, how many divisions should be distinguished in terms of classes or class locations even in a same occupation? If not, are occupations appropriate categories for identifying homogeneity within classes? **[Given that G basically uses the term class to mean "coherent effect-producing social category" economics professors and sociology processes could well be in different classes; this would be an empirical auestion, not a theoretical one.]**

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8.   Charity Schmidt

My concern with Grusky's work (thus far) regards the possible limitations in the explanatory potential of class designations by occupation. Where in his framework of class structuration can we account for social relations and subjective interests? If I understand correctly, Grusky criticizes traditional Gemeinschaftlich for their claim that "aggregate classes have no comparable influence or authority over secondary socialization, and such aggregate cultures as emerge are accordingly more diffuse and abstract (Approaches to Class Analysis, p. 71)." How can we view the reverse proposition; what is the influence of socialization and social relations on class structuration and class identity? For example, in a home with two working adults with occupations that lie in different classes, according to Grusky's structuration, are class locations determined solely by individual occupational standing or are they influenced by a partner's occupational class as well? How do social relations affect a strictly occupation-based concept of class? **[I don't know precisely how G would respond to the family/household problem. I think he would say that this is a distinct social problem – how are families constituted as "groups" with bounded identities and the like. I imagine – without knowing – that he would anchor that in a life-style and consumption question rather than occupation-classes.]**

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9.   Fabian Pfeffer

Grusky's research projects are fascinating in ambition and ingenuity. And yet, reading his work I constantly oscillate between adoration and rejection. Not being narrowly

committed to one side of the stratification literature (class or gradational approaches), my hesitation to accept his agenda as a fruitful re-orientation of sociology cannot be blamed on academic reactionism. Rather, I feel that his agenda carries the risk of impeding sociological progress by making conclusions about the structure of inequality either unduly difficult or irrelevant. My argument revolves around the subject of parsimony.

Most of the presented empirical adjudications between concepts of inequality refer to a judgment of explained variance and model fit[1]. No doubt, the "micro-class" view yields a more accurate picture of the distribution of various important individual outcomes. Revealingly though, at no point are we confronted with a discussion of coefficients. Grusky might argue that this is not the time to do so yet, but let's imagine a sociological world in which "micro-classes"[2] have become accepted as the ultimate tool for the study of inequality. Will we feel comfortable interpreting 126 micro-class coefficients? Will we still be able to give a comprehensible account of social inequality or will we have to get lost in a discussion of differences between carpenters and sewers?

My guess is no, and my prediction is that for practical reasons alone we have to start "aggregating up" again. The implication, however, is that we move away from the single grouping criterion of "occupational institutionalization". In Grusky/Weeden (2006: 34) micro-classes are defined as "organic packages of conditions" […] with distinctive cultures" (p.34). Are there 126 of those? Bourdieu - from whom Grusky lends a good deal of theoretical insight at this point - has argued differently. Whether "aggregating up" is defensible empirically could easily be judged by statistical criteria of parsimony again.

Two points follow: Grusky concedes at various points (e.g. 2005: 63) that the degree of institutionalization is likely to differ across traditional class locations. It is therefore entirely possible that aggregating up is a necessary strategy that might well lead to "top-heavy [classifications] that disaggregate professional occupations and aggregate all others" (Weeden/Grusky, 2005: 146). Second, deciding about the accuracy of collapsing micro-classes is likely to depend on the outcome we choose. The distinction between economists and sociologists might make sense for the explanation of voting preferences, less so for the prediction of smoking. Would we have to use different "effect calibrated operationalizations" (Grusky/Weeden 2006) for each research project and end up with different occupational groupings - thereby thus abandon class measures that are comparable across research projects? Or could we agree on a chief outcome (such as income)? **[If it is the case that economists + sociologists are a single category with respect to predicting smoking but different categories with respect to predicting voting, then this suggests that there are two underlying mechanisms in play here, each of which is linked to occupational categories, but in different ways. I would argue that our attention should be on these underlying mechanisms, not on the occupational categories which embody them in different combinations. Those underlying mechanisms necessarily imply "Big Categories" in the empirical sense of covering lots of people.]**

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[1] Admittedly, his attention to BIC encompasses a concern for statistical parsimony (and there as has been argued by Weakliem (1999) even an affinity to overly parsimonious model); but as will become clear, my point is not so much about statistical parsimony per se.

[2] By the way, I understand that the focus on the production-site leads Grusky to name his occupational units micro-*classes*, nevertheless I see much more theoretical affinity to Weber's concept of *stand*.

One additional point: by focusing on "emergent features" of class (i.e. controlling for variables that define class), does Grusky do justice to class analysis? I am not referring to the analytical ambition of class ('nominal class concepts') but to the question whether class analysts like Wright or Goldthorpe actually claim that specific traits and cultures which follow from class positions impact individual outcomes? Don't they mainly conceive the monetary rewards of class positions as relevant to human behavior?

In conclusion, I want to stress that the empirical assessment of occupational groupings is most welcome but I am suspicious about the broader agenda for re-orienting sociological inquiry. I am not defending the theoretical neatness or analytical ambition of class analysis (of course, here Grusky, cannot add much, or how does the following sound to you: "the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of the struggle between hair stylists and plumbers versus insurance sellers and political administrators"). My argument is that it leads to an unduly complicated picture of social inequality that - worse so - might for all we know be more complicate as necessary. An interesting project seems to be the unpacking and *re-packing* of class categories along occupational lines, alas Grusky seems to exclude the latter. It is an empirical question whether the result of such "re-packing" would resemble a macro or a micro class structure. Meso?

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10. **Ann Pikus**
Weeden and Grusky argue against a marco-level analysis of class, believing too much is lost when occupations are aggregated and abstracted. They believe, at that point, classes become mere analytical categories serving only the goals of class theorists while being virtually devoid of meaning for the public. Instead, Weeden and Grusky promote a micro-class approach. They seem to define classes as "the institutionalized social categories that develop at the detailed occupational level." Weeden and Grusky argue that groups are more homogenous at the occupational level due primarily to three processes that occur at the site of production ("the social organizational setting within which goods and services are produced"): allocation, social conditioning, and institutionalization of work conditions. Allocation refers to how individuals get into occupations, including both self-selection (based on beliefs about which occupations provide a good fit in terms of of their preexisting beliefs, attitudes, lifestyle, demographics) and differential recruitment (occurs through both formal practices such as certifying organizations, licensing boards, unions and informal hiring practices like referral networks). Social conditioning involves four submechanisms: training, interactional closure (political and social attitudes crystallize out of social interactions), interest formation (pursue course of action given logic of the class situation), and learning generalization (workers unconsciously value features of their job or workplace both on and off the job). Finally, institutionalization of work conditions refers to the process by which the structure and rewards of work (eg. work hours, income) become institutionalized.
          I have a few concerns about this way of conceptualizing class. (1) Arguably, if the macro-level theories really don't have much explanatory power, disaggregation of some sort could be needed. However, it seems like a big jump to go from theories that use 12 categories to a 126-category theory. **[Is the real "jump" from a few categories**

to many, or from a relatively abstract description of causal mechanisms to a very concrete description of clusters of mechanisms? My "12 categories" is really three relational mechanisms. The 12 locations is just way of picturing how individuals are located with respect to these mechanisms.] While obviously we would want to use categories that explain something, 126 categories seems unnecessarily unwieldly. Is it possible to group occupations according to the homogenizing criteria (eg. occupations with similar methods of allocation, social conditioning and work conditions)? (2) While I might concede that the homogenizing processes could explain similarities among sociologists (and perhaps I'd concede other so-called middle and upper class occupations - doctors, lawyers, engineers), I am less convinced they would apply to occupations that do not involve much self-selection or training. For example, the decision to become a cashier likely does not require as much forethought and committment as becoming a doctor. Are the allocation and social conditioning processes of applying to and getting through medical school comparable to those involved for cashiering? If not, would we expect cashiers to be as homogenous as groups of sociologists or doctors may be? If not, is this theory only useful for explaining some of the variability caused by the division of labor for some subset occupations? (3) Finally, the local site of production is likely to have a big impact on allocation, social conditioning, and work conditions. For example, many different types of law firms (and other legal jobs) attract different types of lawyers. Looking at the occupational group will not reveal these distinctions, therefore, must occupation be broken down further to account for variations in one's actual type of workplace?

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11. Sarbani Chakraborty

I just have a few questions and at the outset I shall say that I am not competent to understand the analysis of class as proposed by Grusky and Weeden. Therefore I am still stuck at the basics. Why is micro-class analysis important? The question arises because I feel that doing a micro-class analysis is playing to the game of differentiation of labor, as if division/variation are so pronounced that class formations and class-ness are impossible. Even though that seems to be one of the most important issues to understand the multi-dimensions of inequality I am not sure I understand the logic completely. The more the pointing out of differentiation of occupation, the more the possibility of making the case of class less stronger. That is not to say, that one needs to remain silent about differentiations but only to say that the differentiations within occupations are created more to control the visibility of similar possible conditions of work. In other words differentiation or extreme division of labor may themselves be in place <mark>in order to create an illusion of dissimilarities</mark>, when the working conditions and terms be similar. **[This sounds like a claim that someone had the intention of creating illusions and therefore creates differentiations, or alternatively, that there is some hidden process which spontaneously generates this "functional" outcome. This seems a bit unlikely.]** The similarities of terms and conditions of work (I was not sure how the authors measured 'authority' at work) may require macro-class analysis that micro. **[Grusky's whole point is that if these conditions are so similar, why doesn't this**

generate similarity in outcomes – attitudes, behaviors, identities, etc.? The claim that X & Y have similar conditions and A & B have similar conditions different from those of X & Y, should imply that if we measure these conditions we would find that X & Y differ from A & B on whatever it is that "similar conditions" is supposed to explain. They claim that class analysis has failed to show this.]

Also, there seems to be too much of a mish-mash in the analysis where concepts of poverty, inequality and class are all enmeshed together. Poverty as a concept is different from inequality (depending on the frameworks) and they both are different from class. While the authors do mention Sen in their theoretical framework, what they ignore is that, clubbing together perspectives of Sen's and Duncan's in an analysis might be a mistake because the former scholar is arguing from a completely different perspective of poverty *and* inequality from a position of freedom and transnationality. Whereas a researcher like Duncan is very specifically focusing on the policy perspective of poverty from a conventional paradigm within the US. Similarly for empirical interests, taking measures of poverty, inequality, class and occupations seem problematic as I feel that they are different aspects of an analysis, which may not be so easily clubbed together.

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12. Adrienne Pagac

Over these last 12 weeks, we have explored the difficulties found in the identification and explanation of class in advanced capitalist societies and this week does not prove to be an exception. David Grusky and Kim Weeden's formulation of micro-classes is another suggested route of analysis and framing of this problem wherein they claim class homogeneity (and I assume distinct class groupings themselves) are generated and maintained at the site of production or the occupational level. Grusky and Weeden also suggest that the micro-class map can and should be used as a *supplement* to the big-class formulations of the gradational and aggregate kind. It seems to me this class map could very well be extremely useful if employed in this regard as it seems to be able to tease out 'associations' of occupation and class expression that might be obscured using a larger, more generalized class map alone. However, I still have many, many questions left unanswered by the readings about what comes out of an analysis that has such a focused point of entry.

One question I have concerns applicability of the micro-class map. If it is true that Grusky and Weeden see it as solely a supplement to pre-existing big-class theories, then I believe the following question is moot (disclaimer). To use a cliché that I will surely misquote, might employ of the micro-class map essentially miss the forest for the trees? Meaning, if one looks at the inequalities between occupations (trees), how they differ, what kinds of individual classes these occupations generate, etc., is there a danger of missing out on what is common, structural, etc. among these inequalities (forest)? I would agree that the micro-class formulation would be helpful in teasing out the differences between cashiers and bank tellers at a greater degree than a big-class map could (we could know they are in a service class, but the mechanisms that Grusky and Weeden elaborate would remain obscured, i.e. the different socialization processes involved that may influence 'class' formation and how an individual in a particular class then behaves). But are those differences more important than something both

occupations would share, i.e., that if the norms and behaviors of the socialization process (just one of their mechanisms) are not followed, the employees could be fired for not acting according to the rules of the workplace? It seems to me that the fact that individuals who occupy both positions could potentially order their lives around this factor more than any other. **[This is a well framed observation. It of course raises the issue of whether or not clarity of analysis is improved by calling the difference between a cashier and a bank clerk a class division rather than just an occupation division or a group division or a social category division.]**

It seems to me that application of the micro-class map would become less helpful the more dissimilar the occupations become and perhaps it is not supposed to be applied in this case (comparing a physician to a salesperson let us say, though it would depend on how these categories are formulated). One could discover the various inequalities and differences between the classes resulting from their occupations, but how does one then go about trying to ameliorate those inequalities? If there is focus upon these differences at such a micro-level how can that be used to facilitate social change? Grusky and Weeden say it can (though it was not a focus of our readings)—I would be curious to know how they see the micro-class concept as a tool to eradicate inequality (in addition to how they would see micro-classes role in collective action, embodying antagonistic relations or not, etc.—all items outside the scope of our readings).

13. Jorge Sola

I find Grusky's readings interesting, but I am not sure why we must understand occupations units as classes (I know it is the less original commentary but I am not very inspired today). The Grusky case is the most appropriate one to ask: if class is the answer, what is the question?

He is right when he claims that "big classes" schemes are less realistic and therefore they might be more easily criticized (here, by the way, some of the criticisms are shared by postmodernists and empiricist sociologists) but it is also true that such schemes are both more theoretically ambitious and formally parsimonious. **[I am not so sure that Big Classes are any less "realistic" than micro-classes. Is the category "mammals" less "realistic" than the category "dog"? It is true that "mammals" include whales and mice, but this doesn't render the category "nominalist". The category still identifies a set of real mechanisms, just at a higher level of abstraction than "dogs".]** It is possible that micro-classes based in occupations units are better at describing the people's personal identity, but I cannot imagine how one could explain the macro-historical process studied by Michael Mann, for instance, in terms of "occupations units". In the case of the Marxist framework, where the big classes are apparently the biggest, Grusky's proposal doesn't satisfy many of the theoretical constrains pointed out by Wright (1985). Of course, Grusky can think that such constrains are but useless issues which are not worth regarding. Nevertheless, such discussion about the research goals takes place in a

theoretical level and cannot be empirically testable. One could think that they are different paradigms and both are possible. But it seems to me that the occupations units will be more useful to study fine-grained topics within (big) class relations.

The most important thing to me is that such an approach ignores, like Kingstom's, class mechanism based in capitalist exploitation (his neo-Durkheimian analysis of this topic seems to me clearly incomplete). In the case of the analysis of inequality, it is important not just to measure and to characterize it, but to explain why there are inequalities and why they increase or decrease under capitalism.

14. Hsing-Mei Pan

Grusky focuses on occupational groupings to reconceptualize the concept of class that is different from those of Marxists and Weberians. He sees people involved in the same occupation as the same class category (the same community: gemeinschaftlich) and thinks occupations constitute bases of analyzing class-like phenomena, demographic and health outcome, social behavior, life situations, and so on. I have some questions of his arguments.

It seems that Grusky mainly presents homogenous aspects involved in a class category and ignores heterogeneous aspects. In fact, there seems to exist unequal phenomena among people involved in the same occupation in addition to wages. For example, there may exist hierarchical relations among teachers in a school that even result in conflicts and antagonistic relations. To what degree, can we see them as a community? On the other hand, Grusky divides people into different class categories according to their occupations. It seems that his scheme of class is composed of atomic class units, so it mainly presents inequality in endowments, working conditions, and rewards among different classes. It seems to me that he obscures oppositely unequal relations between two or three or even more class categories. Is it appropriate to present the concept of class as atomic units if we want to struggle for equality between two or even more classes? **[What you are saying here, perhaps, is that once Grusky creates his inventory of micro-classes, the next task is to orchestrate a meta-analysis of the structures of inequality among these micro-classes. He proposes something a bit like this in one of the papers we looked at, but it might be argued that only at that stage would it be appropriate to use the word "class" to describe his categories. That is, only insofar as the micro-categories he generates are themselves organized into systematic relations of inequality over resources and opportunities would they constitute class categories.]**

Some General EOW comments from the interrogations & readings:

1. The meaning of "big classes": are these "highly aggregated categories" or "abstractly specified mechanisms"? The capital/labor relation identifies a specific kind of mechanism concerning how people are linked to means of production in a capitalist economy. Because individuals may be complexly related to this mechanism it is not a simple manner to specify it or to map individuals onto the mechanism, but nevertheless, it has distinctive effects. The simple test of this is whether or not, and in what ways, the following contrasts make a difference in people's lives:

- **owning sufficient means of production that one does not need to sell one's labor power on a labor market in order to obtain a culturally adequate standard of living vs having to sell one's labor power on a labor market**

- **working in a debt-free workers cooperative (i.e the coop has full ownership of the means of production) vs being an employee of a capitalist firm making the same product**

- **being a novelist or a composer or an actor with an "independent income" from a trust fund vs being a novelist or a composer or an actor that has to generate income from employment.**

- **being in a secure job with a stable career trajectory into the future vs being in a precarious job with no real prospects (Goldthorpe's service relation vs labor contract)**

- **having authority to hire and fire people, to allocate tasks to them, to discipline them, to give them rewards vs. having no authority over other people**

These contrasts deploy a very limited set of mechanisms to formulate the contrasts. All that "Big Class" analysis claims is that these mechanisms matter for the lives of people.

2. It is perhaps important to get back to the simple classical formulations of the problem in Marx and Weber. For Marx the mechanism described by the social relations of production in capitalism defined two fundamental class locations – capitalists and workers. In that abstract formulation, 85+% of the labor force in the US are workers, and perhaps 2-5% are capitalists of one sort or another. All of the "workers" are located with respect to this life-shaping mechanism in the same way: they must sell their labor power in order to obtain their means of subsistence because they lack ownership of the means of production.

 That is the first move. The second move is to recognize that some of that 85% have a very different relation to capital than the rest, meaning that there are other

mechanisms in play that define their position within social relations of production, and this leads to the differentiation of locations people initially treated as workers. The purpose of these further elaborations is to enhance the explanatory power of an initial description by recognizing complexity, but this does not in any way undermine the claim that the more abstract categories are based on real mechanisms with real consequences.

3. There is a distinction between saying (a) that "Big Classes" are trying to explain the same things as micro-classes, and it is a relevant comparison to see which does a "better" job, (b) the theory of the mechanisms embodied in "big classes" have implications for micro-attitudes and behavior, and it is a relevant test of the theory that the data are consistent with those predictions. A consistency criterion is entirely relevant for this second claim, and inconsistency does suggest an anomaly in need of theory reconstruction. I do not think that supporters of Big Class theory are committed to (a). I certainly do not believe that the mechanisms I identify with class will explain attitudes better than the categories deployed by Grustky, for example. I do, however, believe that my class analysis has systematic implications for how attitudes and income and other things will vary across individuals located differentially with respect to class mechanisms, and if those prediction consistently failed, then this would be a major challenge.

4. *Realism vs nominalism*. One view is that "Big Classes" are nominal categories whereas micro-classes are "real" categories. I don't think that this is an illuminating formulation of the problem. I am not so sure that Big Classes are any less "realistic" than micro-classes. Is the category "mammals" less "realistic" than the category "dog"? It is true that "mammals" include whales and mice, but this doesn't render the category "nominalist". The category still identifies a set of real mechanisms, just at a higher level of abstraction than "dogs". "Biog classes" identify a very limited number of relational mechanisms that are thought to be important, but those mechanisms are just as real as the categories specified in micro-classes.