

hypothetical possibility, for example, might be something like the following:

Let us introduce a distinction between the process of class formation under conditions of stable social reproduction in democratic capitalism and under conditions of systemic capitalist crisis. Under the first of these conditions, categories of economic actors become collectively organized on the basis of divisions of *immediate* material interests—divisions defined entirely within the “rules of the game” of capitalism; under the second set of conditions, social categories have a much higher probability of becoming organized around “fundamental interests,” interests defined in terms of what game is to be played. Now, the kinds of distinctions in market situations embodied in Weberian class concepts do define divisions within immediate interests among sellers of labor power. Under conditions of stable reproduction, then, these are likely to become more salient as bases of social differentiation and collective organization. In short: Weberian class categories will have greater micro-level explanatory power under conditions of stable reproduction than under conditions of generalized economic crisis.

Other theoretical strategies for incorporating Weberian empirical results within a Marxist theoretical framework could also be entertained: these empirical findings could, perhaps, be treated as generated by the particular institutional organization of bargaining arrangements (as in the literature on corporatism), or as effects of the particular strategies of political parties (as in Przeworski’s analyses of social democracy). In each of these possible lines of theoretical argument, the empirical observations generated within Weberian class analysis would be taken seriously rather than simply dismissed out of hand. The task of Marxist class analysis, then, would be to explain the “conditions of possibility” of the Weberian patterns.

A critique of empiricism is thus not equivalent to a critique of empirical research or of empirically grounded knowledge. The point is simply that the task of adjudicating between alternative general approaches to class analysis—alternative “paradigms,” as they are sometimes called—is an arduous one, and cannot be reduced to the simple task of testing predictive power in a concrete empirical setting.

Weberian solutions, therefore, do represent a way of avoiding the conceptual knots generated by trying to conceptualize the middle classes within the Marxist tradition. But these solutions are purchased at the price of lowering the ambitiousness of one’s theoretical aspirations and abandoning the attempt at consistency with the conceptual framework—Marxism broadly conceived—that remains the most coherent general approach to radical, emancipatory social theory. Sticking with that framework, however, creates headaches; since the conceptual knots won’t disappear and cannot be indefinitely avoided by evasion, new

efforts at untying them must be attempted. In what follows I will present some of the elements which may facilitate such an attempt.

5 New Complexities

Recall the basic task at hand: to produce a more differentiated repertoire of Marxist class structure concepts capable of being used effectively at concrete, micro levels of analysis. In this enterprise, the problem of the middle class has loomed large, both because of the conceptual difficulties it poses for attempts at rendering more concrete the abstract, mode of production concept of class and because of its salience in the micro-level processes that affect class formation.

Each of my previous strategies of constructing a comprehensive concept of class structure was built around a specific analytical principle: the notion that a given location in a class structure could be simultaneously in two or more classes (strategy 1) and the notion that a given location could be situated with respect to more than one mechanism of exploitation (strategy 2). In each case I tried to build a differentiated map of the class structure on the basis of a single principle. I cannot at this point offer a third general strategy of this sort which will dissolve the anomalies and difficulties of the previous two. Indeed, it is not obvious that the proper way to proceed is to search for a new, unitary principle for solving the puzzle of the middle class(es).

The structural problem of the middle class, however, is not the only important issue involved in elaborating a concrete, micro-level concept of class structure. In this section I want to explore a number of new complexities that bear not only on the problem of understanding the middle class, but on the problem linking class structures to individual lives in general. In section 6, then, we will return to the problem of the middle class and see how these new complexities may help to clarify its class character.

In the past, all of my work on class structure has treated class structures as sets of relationally defined “locations” filled by individuals, in which a location was basically equivalent to a “job.” The class structure was thus essentially a relational map of the job structure. The underlying premiss of the analysis, as discussed in section 2 above, was that the nature of the material interests of *individuals* could be derived from an account of the social relations of production in which their *jobs* were embedded. The kind of complexity I introduced in order to generate a more differentiated map of class structures, therefore, was entirely preoccupied with the complexities of the relations in which jobs were embedded.

I now want to introduce a different sort of complexity. Without abandoning the centrality of work and production to the specification of class structures, I think the simple linkage of *individuals-in-jobs* to *classes* needs to be modified in several ways. First, some recognition needs to be taken both of the fact that individuals may occupy more than one formal job, and, furthermore, that class-based material interests may not be associated with "jobs" as such. Second, the description of class structure needs to include what I will call "mediated class locations," locations that are derived from various kinds of social networks rather than directly from individual participation in the relations of production. And third, an analysis of class structure must take account of what can be termed the *temporal dimension* of material interests, especially as these are tied to careers. As we shall see in section 6, each of these new complexities can help to understand the problem of the "middle class."

5.1 Multiple Locations

Virtually all discussions of class structure, including my own, assume that individuals occupy one and only one location in the class structure. While I have argued that some locations have a dual class character, I have nevertheless still assumed that individuals occupy unique locations.

There are two contexts in which this description is clearly inadequate. First, and most obviously, many people have more than one job. While in the United States, most people with second jobs are in jobs with the same class character as their "primary" job, this is certainly not the case in all times and places. In contemporary Hungary, for example, the large majority of second jobs are petty bourgeois (self-employed) whereas primary jobs are overwhelmingly employees of the state.⁷⁰

The second context in which individuals can be thought of as occupying multiple locations is, I think, of more general importance for understanding the American class structure. Rather than having two proper jobs, many people are both owners of capitalist property (and accordingly receive some of their income as returns on capitalist investment) and are employees in a job. This situation is most notoriously the case for high level executives in large corporations, whose income comes both from direct salaries as employees of the corporation and from

70. According to Robert Manchin of the Institute of Sociology in Budapest while less than 5 percent of all Hungarians in the labor force are self-employed in their primary job, over 75 percent of all Hungarian households receive some income from self-employment. This is, needless to say, vastly higher than the corresponding figures in the United States.

stockholding in the corporation. But more generally, there is a fairly wide spectrum of people who are employees in jobs with sufficiently high pay that they are able to convert some of their employment earnings into capitalist property through investments and savings. In many cases, of course, such investments are trivial and only marginally shape the material interests of the individual. The United States is certainly far from the fantasy of a "People's Capitalism" in which share ownership is so widespread that the distinction between owners and workers begins to wither away. Nevertheless, for certain segments of the employee population, particularly managers and professionals, the ability to turn surplus income into capital can become a significant part of their class situation. These kinds of situations define a specific kind of complexity in the class structure, since certain people may occupy a different location in the class structure through their jobs and through their investments. Work and property ownership can be uncoupled.⁷¹

5.2 Mediated Class Locations

The second new complexity to the map of class structures concerns the various ways the class interests of people are conditioned by social relations other than their direct relation to the process of production (either through their jobs or their personal ownership of property). I will refer to this dimension of the class structure as "mediated" class locations in contrast to the "direct" class locations embodied in an individual's immediate job and personal ownership of productive assets. The most crucial example of these relations are those embedded in kinship networks and family structures, but in certain contexts the relation to the state can also constitute the basis for a mediated class location.

For certain categories of people in contemporary capitalism, location in the class structure is entirely constituted by mediated relations. This is most clearly the case for children. To say that children in a working class family are "in the working class" is to make a claim about the ways in which their class interests are shaped by their mediated relations (through their families) to the system of production, rather than by their direct location. Mediated class relations also loom large in understanding the class interests of housewives not in the paid labor force, the

71. Under certain circumstances, home ownership may also begin to function like a capitalist investment, if the rapid increase in housing prices gives the owners a substantial equity which they are able to use for investment purposes. Real estate speculation by workers is certainly not unheard of in the contemporary United States and, when it occurs, it should be treated as a specific kind of change in their class location.

unemployed, pensioners and students.⁷² In each of these cases an adequate picture of their class interests cannot be derived simply from examining their direct participation in the relations of production.

A class structure at the concrete level of analysis, then, should be understood as consisting of the totality of direct and mediated class relations. This implies that two class structures with identical patterns of direct class relations but differing mediated relations should be considered structurally different. Consider the following rather extreme contrast for purposes of illustration:

Class Structure I In 66 percent of all households, both husband and wife are employed in working-class jobs and in 33 per cent of households both husband and wife are co-owners of small businesses employing the workers from the other households.

Class Structure II 33 percent of the households are pure working-class households, 33 percent have a working-class husband and a small employer wife and 33 percent have a small employer husband and a working-class wife.

For a strict adherent of the view that class structures are constituted exclusively by the individual's direct relation to the means of production, these two class structures are the same: 66 percent working class, 33 percent small employers. If, however, class structures are defined in terms of the combination of direct and mediated class locations, then the two structures look quite different: in the first structure, two-thirds of the population is fully proletarianized (that is, both their direct and mediated class locations are working class); in the second structure, only one-third of the population is fully proletarianized.⁷³

72. To say that mediated class relations are particularly salient in understanding the class location of full time housewives is not to prejudge the question of whether or not the gender relations between husbands and wives should be considered a form of "class relations." While I do not think that this is a useful way of understanding gender relations within families, even if one adopts this view, it would still be the case that mediated class relations would be salient for housewives. The class locations of a housewife married to a capitalist and a factory worker are not the same, even if their status as a "domestic worker" itself constitutes a gender-based class location. For a more extended discussion of the relevance of the concept of mediated class locations for understanding the class location of "housewives" and married women in the paid labor force, see my essay, "Women in the Class Structure," *Politics and Society* (March, 1989).

73. Examples like this are not entirely fanciful. It is quite conceivable that in a Third World country one could have two communities in which the same proportions of the labor force were engaged in proletarianized wage labor activities and in self-employed subsistence peasant agriculture, but in which these corresponded to entirely different patterns of household proletarianization.

The concept of mediated class relations is particularly relevant for the analysis of class and gender.⁷⁴ More specifically, it provides a way of approaching the problem of the interconnection of gender relations, family structure, and class. In conventional sociological discussions of social classes, as recently reaffirmed in a controversial paper by John Goldthorpe, the family, rather than the individual, is treated as the fundamental "unit" within class structures.⁷⁵ The class location of that family unit, in turn, is generally determined by the class location of the job of the "head of the household"—typically, the "male breadwinner." This has the effect of deriving the class locations of all family members, including both housewives and wives in the paid labor force, from the class locations of husbands.

The basic rationale for this conception of families and class structure involves two interconnected claims. (1) All members of a family share essentially the same material interests, since families constitute units of pooled income and consumption. Thus, even if different family members bring income into the family through different class-based mechanisms, these differences are homogenized via the pooled consumption of the family unit. (2) In the determination of the material interests of the family as a whole, the husband's market capacity has overwhelming importance, not simply because at any single point in time the income derived from that capacity is generally much higher than that derived from the market capacity of the wife, but also because over time the material welfare of the family will be maximized if it gives precedence of the husband's job class over that of the wife. An economically rational family, therefore, will generally act as if its class interests were identical to that of the male breadwinner.⁷⁶

Both of these arguments have been subjected to considerable

74. The problem of the relationship between class structure and gender relations is not, by any means, simply a question of mediated class relations. At least four other theoretical issues are of considerable importance: (1) the role of gender mechanisms in sorting people into class relations; (2) the ways in which gender mechanisms can constitute the basis for systematic *divisions within* classes; (3) the problem of the causal effect of gender relations and gender conflicts on the form and development of class structures (and of class structure and conflict on gender relations); and (4) the conditions under which gender relations as such could be considered a specific type of class relation. Marxism traditionally has a much easier time contending with the first two of these issues than the last two. In any case, in the present context I will only directly address the problem of mediated class relations.

75. John Goldthorpe, "Women and Class Analysis: In Defense of the Conventional View," *Sociology*, vol. 17, no. 4 (1983), pp. 465-88.

76. Whatever criticisms one might want to bring against this view, it is important to note that it is *not* an inherently antifeminist view. One could argue, for example, that it is the institutions of male domination which generate the great disparities in market capacities of men and women and which, in turn, make it rational for men and women within individual families to give precedence to husbands' jobs over wives'.

criticism.⁷⁷ As a result, for a range of reasons which I will not review here, many people have objected to the simple identification of the class location of wives with that of their husbands. And yet, it also seems inappropriate to reduce the class of either husbands or wives in a family simply to their direct job class: should a school teacher married to a factory worker be seen as in the same class location as a fellow teacher married to a corporate manager or a capitalist? If the goal of the elaboration of a micro-level concept of class structure is to understand the impact of class structures on the material interests of individuals within that structure, and on this basis contribute to our understanding of their likely behavior, then some kind of differentiation between these two teachers is necessary.

The concept of mediated class locations provides one way of accomplishing this. The class location of husbands and wives should be treated as a function of both their direct class location and their mediated location. This means that in certain respects they can be viewed as sharing a common class location and in other respects as having—potentially—different class locations. The overall “class interests” of individuals, then, is formed out of some kind of weighted combination of these direct and mediated locations. This opens the door for a new sort of “contradictory location within class relations”: contradictory combinations of direct and mediated locations.

Under different social conditions, the precise way in which direct and mediated class locations are linked in the lives of individuals will vary. For example, one might expect the mediated class location of married women to have greater weight than their direct class location in shaping their overall class interests when wives are particularly dependent economically on their husbands (because of larger gender-based labor market differentials and an absence of significant nonwage income support for women from the state) and when there is a low rate of divorce (and thus a high probability that the economic fate of wives is closely tied to that of their husbands). In contrast, lowered economic dependency and/or high rates of divorce should increase the relative weight of direct class locations on the overall material interests of

77. For critical commentaries on Goldthorpe's views, see A. Heath and N. Brittain, “Women's Jobs Do Make a Difference: A Reply to Goldthorpe,” *Sociology*, vol. 18, no. 4 (1984), pp. 475–90 and M. Stanworth, 1984, “Women and Class Analysis: A Reply to John Goldthorpe,” *Sociology*, vol. 18, no. 4 (1984), pp. 161–9. Goldthorpe responds to these attacks in “Women and Class Analysis: A Reply to the Replies,” *Sociology*, vol. 18, no. 4 (1984), pp. 491–9. For a general assessment of the debate, see my essay, “Women in the Class Structure,” *Politics and Society*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1989).

married women. In each case, however, the full specification of a person's micro-level location within a class structure requires an account of such mediated relations as well as the more conventional direct locations linked to jobs.

5.3 Temporal locations

One common objection to the kind of structural class analysis I have pursued is that it treats locations in an excessively static manner.⁷⁸ Imagine the following extreme case: a large corporation requires that all of its managers spend two years at various jobs on the shop floor doing the ordinary nonmanagerial work of the workers in the corporation. After two years they begin performing their proper managerial tasks. In such a case it would certainly be silly to say that during the initial two years these individuals were in the working class. Their performance of typically working-class tasks was simply part of the career structure of these managerial locations. Or, to state the matter more abstractly, there is a systematic temporal dimension to their class location.

The problem of this temporal dimension of class structures is particularly salient when one treats material interests as the central commonality of class locations. The concept of “interests” is inherently a forward-looking concept: to talk about interests is always to imply something about future states, not simply present configurations. Two individuals in identical working-class jobs in terms of statically defined relational characteristics would have very different material interests if one was certain to be promoted into a managerial position and one was certain to remain for life in a working-class position.⁷⁹

Typically, analyses of the temporal dimension of class structures treat

78. This objection specifically to my approach was first raised by A. Stewart, K. Prandy, and R.M. Blackburn, *Social Stratification and Occupation* (London: Macmillan, 1980, pp. 271–2). They criticize my allocation of people into a working class and a managerial class on the basis of the authority relations of jobs, since a significant number of white collar workers so classified will eventually be promoted to management as a normal part of their careers.

79. Even if one regards lived experience as the critical commonality of class location, the temporal dimension of class remains important. One's subjective experience of the present is conditioned in part by one's anticipations of the future, and thus knowledge of career trajectories will not only affect material interests in the present but also lived experiences. To take a simple example, in certain large law offices it may be the case that in terms of the actual tasks being performed, the work of an experienced paralegal employee and a junior lawyer might not be that different. Nevertheless, they clearly face dramatically different career trajectories, and this will affect their immediate experience of what in other respects are similar duties.

this problem as one of *intragenerational* "mobility."⁸⁰ The suggestion in such a characterization is that individuals "move" from one location to another, and thus the locations are definable independently of the movements. If, however, specific jobs are embedded in *careers*, and certain kinds of careers cross class lines, then it probably does not make sense to treat such movements as mobility at all. The managers in the prior example did not experience "mobility" from the working class into the managerial class; they participated in a managerial career in which they progressed from the early career stage to the mid-career stage in an orderly fashion. They were always in the "managerial class."

This line of discussion suggests that in analyzing the temporal dimension of class structures it is important to distinguish between class careers and mobility between careers. This is a distinction which is often made in sociological discussions of *occupational* careers but has generally been exceedingly difficult to operationalize empirically. This difficulty stems from the fact that many "careers" are not nearly as orderly or determinate as the example of managers cited above. Individuals in specific jobs face a given *probability* of promotion across class lines, but the probability may be far less than certainty. It is therefore often difficult empirically to differentiate a situation in which an individual simply progresses through the stages of a given career from a situation in which a person moves across careers. Or, to put the matter somewhat differently, there may be a certain degree of *temporal indeterminacy* in the class location of people.

The issue of the temporality of class locations applies to mediated class locations as well as direct class locations. In particular, it may be useful to understand the class location of married women as partially determined by what might be called their "shadow class", the class location they would occupy in the case of dissolution of their marriage, either through divorce or widowhood.⁸¹ Since the shadow class for

80. To be somewhat more accurate, this kind of analysis by sociologists usually concerns *intragenerational occupational* mobility rather than *class* mobility as such. The issue under discussion, however, could just as easily apply to occupations: can an occupation be statically defined by a specific cluster of tasks and responsibilities within the technical division of labor or is it necessary, in some cases at least, to include a temporal ordering of tasks in the definition of an "occupation"? Such a temporally ordered occupation is often called a "career."

81. Johanna Brenner (in a personal communication) suggested that the concept of "shadow class" could be usefully deployed for certain categories of small employers and petty bourgeois. Because of the very high levels of bankruptcy in small businesses, many petty bourgeois and small employers may have a working-class "shadow class" and others a professional-employee "shadow class." The "location" of petty bourgeois in the class structure thus has a critical kind of temporal indeterminacy to it which should be important for their role in processes of class formation.

married women is frequently different from their current mediated class, this suggests that there is at least some temporal indeterminacy in the mediated class locations of many women, particularly given the relatively high rates of divorce. A fully elaborated account of class structure would need to take this kind of temporality into consideration.

For present purposes, the central point of all of this is that the class location of certain *jobs* cannot adequately be determined simply by looking at the relational properties of the job itself at one point in time. This is a particularly salient issue in establishing the class character of many professionals and credentialed experts, since it is frequently the case that the careers of such individuals normally take them on a trajectory of increasing responsibility and authority and increasing opportunity for actual capitalist property ownership (as discussed in 5.1 above).

It is, of course, an empirical question how much these temporal issues actually affect the overall character of the class structure in any given society. Most jobs are not part of well-ordered careers, and it seems likely that most careers are largely contained within a given class location. Nevertheless, for certain specific kinds of occupations, the temporal dimension of class may be essential for understanding their location in the class structure.

6 Back to the Middle Class

With these new conceptual elements in hand we can return to the problem of the "middle class." I will focus on the three categories that have provoked much of the discussion: professionals and experts; managers; and state employees.

6.1 Professionals and Experts

In many ways, experts and professionals of various sorts, particularly when they are not directly part of managerial hierarchies, constitute the category which has caused me (and others) the most persistent difficulty in formulating a coherent Marxist class structure concept. As indicated in section 3 above, neither of the solutions I have offered is entirely satisfactory. The skill exploitation approach is based on the problematic claim that the surplus appropriated by skill/credential owners necessarily constitutes exploitation of others, and this undermines the relational character of the class category built around skills. The semiautonomous employee solution does involve relations—since semiautonomy is only definable within a relation of domination—but

these relations no longer seem bound up with questions of material interests and antagonism in the characteristically Marxist way.⁸²

Lurking behind both of these solutions is the basic assumption that the *jobs* filled by experts or professionals (and perhaps other types of highly trained "mental labor") are not "really" in the working class. In some sense or other they are "middle class" and thus a conceptual justification for identifying their nonworking class location is needed. In a sense, the undertheorized intuition that credentialed experts were not in the working class provided the motivation for the attempt at "discovering" the conceptual criteria (semiautonomy and/or skill exploitation) that would validate this intuition.⁸³

This is a powerful intuition and has certainly served as the backdrop for my efforts at solving the "problem of the middle class." Let us for a moment relax this assumption and resist the underlying intuition by examining the implications of an alternative view, namely that in and of themselves, *jobs* filled by credentialed professional or expert non-managerial employees are in working-class locations in the class structure. With this claim as a point of departure, what I will argue, then, is that the basis for considering nonmanagerial professionals and experts as potentially part of the middle class is not a relational property of their jobs as such, but rather certain properties of the temporal dimension of professional work.

Three considerations are particularly important in this regard. The first concerns the capacity of professionals and experts to capitalize their income. As I argued earlier in the discussion of skill exploitation, holders of scarce skills, especially when these are legally certified through credentials, can be viewed as generally able to appropriate a "rent" component in their wage. Since the major institutional mechanism for reproducing such rents are credentials, I will refer to these as "credential rents," to distinguish them from the more general concept of "employment rents."⁸⁴ Whether or not one wants to describe this rent as "exploitation," it does constitute a component of income above the costs of reproducing the labor power of the skill-holder. This is equivalent to saying that what I previously called "skill exploiters" command discretionary income.

82. The logic of the category semiautonomous employees thus closely resembles Goldthorpe's *service class* in which professionals/experts are pictured as having a distinctive kind of social relation with employers (autonomy, trust, service relation) quite different from the proletarianized capital-labor employment relation.

83. There are a variety of other ways of playing out this intuition. For example, Nicos Poulantzas, in *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1975), argued that mental labor was itself a form of domination of workers and thus placed professionals and experts outside of the working class.

In and of itself, such credential rents constitute a specific kind of labor market privilege and thus could be considered the basis for distinguishing among *strata* within the working class. This might in fact be an appropriate way in general of defining "strata" within a relational class theory: strata are differentiated by varying *degrees* of exploitation within a common location in the social relations of production. Strata within the bourgeoisie, accordingly, depend upon the amount of surplus they appropriate; strata in the working class, by the amount of discretionary income they earn through various kinds of credential rents.

When such rents are organized in careers in such a way that they are relatively large and increase over time, then they generate a significant capacity for individuals to convert these credential rents into capitalist property: income-producing real estate, stocks, bonds, etc. To the extent that the ownership of such capitalist property begins to constitute a significant source of future income, then the privileged "worker" in question begins to occupy a distinctive kind of contradictory location within class relations. Both in terms of interests in material welfare and in terms of interests in material power, professionals who accumulate significant savings and investments begin to share material interests with capitalists. In my initial class structure analysis, managers were characterized as "simultaneously capitalist and worker" because they occupied jobs in which they were dominated by capitalists while at the same time they dominated workers. The new kind of contradictory location we are now examining can also be considered simultaneously in the capitalist class and in the working class, but in this case the duality of the class location comes from simultaneously owning capitalist property and selling labor power.

The second temporal issue in the class analysis of professionals and experts concerns career trajectories that move into managerial hierarchies. To the extent that it is a normal part of an orderly professional career that most professionals eventually become supervisors and

84. The concept of "employment rent" has been given a precise elaboration within a Marxist context in recent papers by Sam Bowles and Herbert Gintis. See especially Sam Bowles, "The Production Process in a Competitive Economy: Walrasian, Neo-Hobbesian and Marxian Models," *American Economic Review*, vol. 75, no. 1 (1985), pp. 16-36, and Sam Bowles and Herbert Gintis in "Contested Exchange" (*Politics and Society*, forthcoming). They demonstrate that *all* employed people, even under conditions of a pure competitive market equilibrium wage, receive at least some "employment rent" in their wages, where this is defined as a component of the wage above what Walrasians would call a "market clearing wage." The rents discussed here that are embodied in "skill exploitation" constitute a different kind of rent—a rent derived from the capacity of skill holders to restrict the supply of skilled labor power. It should in general be viewed as an additional form of rent above the employment rent described by Bowles and Gintis.

managers within the organizations in which they work, then it might be appropriate to consider those professionals and experts that are *outside* of the managerial hierarchy as nevertheless temporally inserted into the middle class. In the United States, roughly 70 percent of all experts are in fact either managers or supervisors. It therefore may be reasonable to treat most nonmanagerial professionals and experts as *premanagerial*. Thus, even if their current jobs are not in managerial contradictory locations, their careers typically are.

The third temporal issue which is bound up with professional careers concerns what might be termed the petty bourgeois shadow class of employees in many professional occupations. This is most clearly the case for the classic "free professions" such as doctors and lawyers, who in many capitalist countries have the relatively open option of self-employment.⁸⁵ In such a situation, the employee doctor is not "forced to sell" his or her labor power in the same sense as is the case for other working-class employees; they choose to sell their labor power over self-employment because it is their preference.⁸⁶ In recent years, the availability of self-employment options has increased considerably for employee-professionals through the expansion of a range of consulting practices. For example, many academics in the United States, and considerably more in certain other countries, earn a significant second income through self-employed consulting on the side. To the extent that such consulting opportunities expand and are regularly available, then, again, they affect the class location even of those employee professionals who do not take advantage of them, since the availability of such consulting opportunities affects the material interests of employee-professional locations in general (that is, it affects the trade-offs and dilemmas faced by people in such jobs).

85. This implies that in a capitalist country where self-employment is not generally a viable option for certain categories of professionals—for example, for doctors in Britain before the Thatcher government—the class location of these employee professionals is affected. Efforts by the Thatcher government to facilitate private practice in medicine potentially affects the class location of all doctors, whether or not they actually become self-employed.

86. There is, even for unambiguously proletarian class locations—unskilled manual workers in manufacturing—a certain ambiguity in the notion that they are "forced" to sell their labor power. As G.A. Cohen argues in his essay, "The Structure of Proletarian Unfreedom," in J. Roemer (ed.), *Analytical Marxism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), this statement cannot be taken to mean literally that each and every proletarian is individually forced to sell his or her labor power, since with sufficient sacrifices and luck, at least some in fact can, as individuals, escape the proletarian condition into self-employment. The point is that this option is not available to manual industrial workers as a class. In the case of some categories of professionals, on the other hand, it may be the case that the option of self-employment is available to as many as want to avail themselves of this alternative.

Given this way of analyzing the class character of professional employment, then even if we do not consider autonomy within work or the ownership of skills/credentials as such as appropriate criteria for differentiating locations within a class structure, nevertheless professionals and experts would generally be considered in "middle-class contradictory locations" by virtue of their capacity to capitalize their income and their career trajectories into managerial hierarchies and viable petty bourgeois options. This way of thinking through the issues, however, introduces a new kind of ambiguity into the analysis of class structures. How should we treat conceptually professionals who consume all of the credential rent in their income? Credential rents generate a *capacity* for acquiring capitalist property, but of course not all individuals who have that capacity will utilize it. Discretionary income can be translated into high standards of living rather than investments.⁸⁷ Similarly, not all professionals or experts in careers that normally involve movement into the managerial hierarchy actually ever become managers. How should we understand the character of their individual class location? Should it be defined by the *characteristic* career pattern of professionals or by the *actual* career trajectory of the individual in question? And, in a similar vein, how should we understand the class location of professionals who opt permanently to be employees?⁸⁸

This may seem like a particularly scholastic issue reflecting the pre-occupations of a professional pigeon-holer. But as in most problems of formal classification, these issues reflect real underlying conceptual problems.

To help clarify this issue it will be useful to recall the discussion of

87. Particularly in employment contexts in which there are very high levels of job security, there is no systematic inherent pressure of "skill exploiters" to capitalize their credential rents. Unlike in the case of entrepreneurial capitalists for whom the imperative to accumulate is inherent in their class location (since investment and accumulation is a necessary condition for their reproduction as capitalists), there is no comparable imperative for high paid employees to accumulate. Their reproduction is not contingent on the capitalization of their income.

88. It is worth noting that this problem of discrepancies between outcomes for individual professionals and the characteristic career structure of professional employment confronts any class theory that treats the category "professional" as having a particular class character. Thus, for example, John Goldthorpe argues that professionals belong in the "service class" by virtue of the responsibilities and authority they have on the job, the prospective rewards that are built into professional careers and the general "service contract" character of the employment relation. While such descriptions may be characteristic of professional employment, there are certainly many specific professional jobs that lack one or more of these properties. Although to my knowledge Goldthorpe never discusses this problem, he in effect attributes class locations to individuals on the basis of the characteristic patterns for their occupations rather than their actual, individual situation.

material interests in section 2 above. In explicating the idea that the commonality of class locations is defined by common relationally determined material interests, I argued that "material interests" should be understood as common material trade-offs and dilemmas in the choices people face concerning material welfare and power. In these terms, working in careers which generate credential rents sufficiently large to enable a person to capitalize their income defines a set of alternatives unavailable to someone whose wages are simply sufficient to cover the costs of reproducing labor power. In a sense, therefore, whether or not the capitalist investments are actually made is a secondary matter; the primary issue is being in a position which makes such investments possible.

Nevertheless, it remains the case that as a result of the actual choices made by individuals in these kinds of careers, their material interests in the future change. Two professionals in identical careers, one of whom has systematically invested discretionary income and one of whom has not, eventually have divergent class interests. Similarly, a professional or expert who fails to ever become a manager (through choice or happenstance) or who chooses never to engage in self-employment is likely to end up with different class interests from a professional who moves up managerial hierarchies or becomes self-employed. In all of these cases we face a problem of what could be termed a degree of *indeterminacy* or *objective ambiguity* in defining the location of individuals in the class structure. To a greater or lesser extent in these cases, class locations are partially indeterminate or ambiguous because they depend not simply upon observable properties of *current* jobs, but upon *future* states (capital ownership, managerial positions, self-employment) linked to those jobs, and these future states depend in part upon contingent choices and events. Thus, in addition to characterizing certain locations in the class structure as "contradictory locations within class relations," it now seems appropriate to characterize some as at least partially "objectively ambiguous locations."⁸⁹

To recapitulate this argument about experts and professionals, one way of thinking about their concrete, micro-level class location is to focus on the temporal dimensions of class structures. In so far as pro-

89. Allowing a certain degree of indeterminacy in the location of professionals and experts in the class structure may help to explain why this category of social actors is frequently characterized by such high levels of internal ideological heterogeneity. Much more frequently than is the case for other segments of the "middle class", nonmanagerial professionals and experts can be found all over the ideological map. The objective temporal indeterminacy of their class location may allow for a variety of relatively contingent social processes that vary considerably among professionals and experts to have a relatively large impact on their ideological orientation.

professionals and experts can systematically capitalize their surplus income (and thus become capitalist property owners), move into managerial positions in a routine career trajectory (and thus occupy a contradictory class location) and opt for self-employment (and thus become petty bourgeois), then their class location can be considered "middle class." Insofar as there is a certain degree of real temporal indeterminacy in each of these possibilities, then their class location has an objectively ambiguous status as well.

While these kinds of temporal arguments may go a long way towards understanding the nature of the material class *interests* linked to professional and expert employment, nevertheless I am not entirely satisfied that it adequately captures their overall location in the class structure. And, as noted at the beginning of this discussion of professionals, this treatment certainly goes against the intuitions of most Marxists (and, needless to say, non-Marxists as well) in which, quite apart from these temporal issues, the very character of professional employment is seen as nonproletarian.

I think the standard intuition comes from the *lived experience* dimension of class structure analysis, not their material interests as such. To recall the arguments of section 2 above, at the highest level of abstraction the working class is characterized by three fundamental aspects of lived experience derived from their location within the social relations of production: the experience of having to sell one's labor power to live; the experience of being bossed around within work (at least in the minimal sense of being told what to do), and the experiences of basic powerlessness with respect to the allocation of social resources. On each of these dimensions, the lived experience associated with professional employment is relatively nonproletarianized. First, by virtue of viable self-employment alternatives, the labor market has a less coercive aspect for professionals than for most other categories of employees. Second, within the employment relation professionals and experts exert much more control over their own work. And third, because of their career roles in corporations and bureaucracies, professionals are typically much more involved in decisions over the allocation and use of resources than are workers, even if they do not necessarily formally have the power to actually appropriate those resources. With respect to each of these aspects of lived experience, professionals and experts can be thought to be less alienated than fully proletarianized workers, and in this sense they are in the "middle class."

Although I did not define the issues in these terms, my initial characterization of professionals and experts as "semiautonomous employees" occupying a class location that was simultaneously in the working class and the petty bourgeoisie can be viewed as attempting to

define the specificity of their class location in terms of the character of their lived experiences within work, not their interests. Because of the considerable difficulties I encountered in trying to use the concept of "semiautonomous employees" in empirical research I am hesitant to return to it as a basis for understanding the class character of professional/expert work, but it is important to recognize that it more closely corresponds to the underlying intuitions of many people about the class location of experts and professionals than does the argument based strictly on material interests.

6.2 Managers

There were two basic rationales for the shift in the treatment of managers as constituting a contradictory combination of capitalist and working-class locations (version 1) to the treatment of managers as organization asset exploiters (version 2). First, the general strategy of analysis of "contradictory locations within class relations" had been called into question because of conceptual problems with the category "semiautonomous employees." Since I was seeking a unitary conceptual strategy to solve the problem of the middle class, the difficulties with the category "semiautonomous employees" seemed to indict the concept of contradictory locations when applied to managers as well. If, however, we no longer try to discover a single strategy capable of simultaneously solving all of the various conceptual problems posed by different categories of "nonproletarianized employees," then it could well be the case that the concept of contradictory locations within class relations is an appropriate way for theorizing managers, while some other strategy is needed for other categories.

The second rationale for the shift away from the concept of contradictory locations for managers was that the introduction of the concept of organizational asset exploitation appeared to make it possible to link the analysis of managers within capitalism to the problem of classes in postcapitalist societies. Since one of the aspirations of Marxist class analysis is to see future forms of society as immanently present in earlier forms, treating the managerial middle class of capitalism as a latent dominant class in a future type of society based on control over organization assets was analytically attractive.⁹⁰ However, this conceptualization only made sense if it could be credibly argued that managers in capitalism, by virtue of their control over the organizational resources of production, had a material interest in a statist organization of production. Without contriving rather unlikely scenarios, this assertion seems implausible at best.

The two reasons I previously advanced for abandoning the treatment

of managers as contradictory locations thus do not seem very compelling. Furthermore, the original conceptual strategy seems to capture much more effectively the distinctive dilemmas that managers face within a capitalist society. Seeing managers as a contradictory location within class relations combining capitalist and working-class practices immediately draws our attention to the ways in which managers are tied to capitalist interests and yet are not an integral part of the capitalist class. This concept also makes it clear why foremen and lower-level supervisors are much more likely to be drawn into coalitions with the working class in struggles, while higher-level managers and executives are much more likely to side consistently with the capitalist class.

While I think the class location of managers is best understood in terms of the original concept of contradictory locations, this does not mean that we should abandon the idea of organizational exploitation altogether. Organization exploitation, like skill "exploitation," generates employment-based rents in the earnings of managers. The rent reflected in organization exploitation, however, is generated by a different mechanism from that associated with skill exploitation. In skill exploitation the central mechanism is that a restriction on the supply of a particular kind of skilled labor power pushes up the equilibrium market wage above the costs of producing that kind of labor power. In the case of organization exploitation, the mechanism revolves around the effective power that managers have within production by virtue of their organizational responsibilities. Because of the difficulty in a purely repressive form of social control of managerial activity, for employers to insure loyalty and responsible exercise of authority, managerial careers have to be structured around systematic wage increases tied to promotion up hierarchies.⁹¹ This hierarchically organized "incentive structure"

90. It should be added, I think, that this conceptualization was also aesthetically seductive. The treatment of the trajectory of history in terms of the progressive shedding of distinctive forms of exploitation in which the middle class of one form of society was the potential dominant class of the successor society had a high level of symmetry and elegance to it. It provided a way of retaining the essential intuitions of the classical vision of historical trajectory in historical materialism while allowing for a much more differentiated map of class structures and historical possibilities.

91. The difference in the mechanism through which managers and professionals appropriate part of the social surplus implies that they will adopt very different strategies in pursuing their class interests. For professionals the pivotal strategy is control over credentials, thus insuring their control over the supply of professional labor power. For managers, credentialism is clearly a secondary strategy. The protection of managerial prerogatives from direct interference by capitalist owners, particularly over the control of the managerial hierarchy itself, is the central way through which managerial surplus appropriation is reproduced. This strategy generally goes under the heading of "bureaucratization". Credentialization and bureaucratization thus constitute distinct strategies, associated with distinct types of contradictory locations within class relations.

generates what can be called "loyalty rents" in wages of managers. As in the case of professionals and experts, this gives managers the capacity to capitalize their income, particularly when their careers involve movements into higher reaches of managerial hierarchies. Indeed, in the case of executives in large corporations, these loyalty rents may become so substantial that the managers in question are capable of becoming full-fledged capitalists through the acquisition of capitalist property. In such cases they really cease to occupy contradictory locations within class relations in spite of their normal status as an "employee" of the corporation.

6.3 *The State*

For Weberian sociologists, state employment in capitalist societies does not pose any particular problems for the analysis of class structures. If classes are fundamentally determined within market relations, and employees enter the state through basically the same kind of labor markets as they enter private employment, then the fact that some people are employed by capitalists and others by the state is largely irrelevant for specifying their class location.⁹²

In contrast, state employment has always posed a serious problem for Marxist class structural analysis. If classes are defined by distinctive forms of social relations of *production*, how should employees within the state be treated in a class analysis? On the one hand, most employees in the state do not own any means of production and have to sell their labor power on a labor market in order to acquire their subsistence. On these grounds, as Weberians would argue, they would appear to be indistinguishable from employees in the "private sector." The problem, however, is that while they enter the labor market with the same kinds of resources as private sector employees, they leave the market for a very different kind of social relation: instead of entering a capital-labor relation, they enter a state-labor relation.

The issue here is not simply how we should understand the class character of the state as a *political* institution. Rather, the issue is how we should conceptualize in class terms the social relations of production within the state. Are there distinctive classes within the state in capitalist

92. It is for this reason that Goldthorpe explicitly rejects the relevance of the site of employment as a basis for divisions in class structures. See p. 170 in John Goldthorpe, "On the Service Class: Its Formation and Future," in Anthony Giddens and Gavin McKenzie (eds), *Social Class and the Division of Labour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 162-85.

societies? Are the "locations" in the state outside of the class structure? Should the locations in the state simply be conceptually amalgamated with the corresponding classes of capitalism proper?

Most class analyses, whether of a Marxist or non-Marxist inspiration, simply ignore this issue altogether and apply the same criteria for defining class locations for employees in the state and in capitalist employment.⁹³ This is certainly how I have dealt with the issue in both of my class structural concepts: managers in capitalist corporations and state agencies were both treated as contradictory locations combining capitalist and working-class elements in the first concept, and were both treated as part of the middle class by virtue of organizational asset exploitation in the second concept.

When I developed the concept of organization asset exploitation, I hoped that this would provide a vehicle for dealing with the problem of the state and class structure. I argued that the monopolization of organizational assets defined the critical form of class relations in postcapitalist "statist" societies (societies within which the "state mode of production" was dominant). The state, in terms of the system of production, was thus viewed as the most superordinate site for the concentrated control of organizational resources. In capitalism, then, this meant that managers in capitalist corporations and managers in the state were both defined in class terms with respect to the same productive resource—organization assets—which in a postcapitalist society would become the basis for the state mode of production itself. Given this characterization of assets and exploitation, the state as such simply dropped out of the analysis of classes in capitalism.

This does not seem satisfactory. If a Marxist class theory is to respect the theoretical constraints discussed in section 3.3 above, then it is important that the concept of class structure be linked to the more abstract concept of mode of production, and this implies that some explicit conceptual account be taken of the problem of state employment.⁹⁴ One solution, of course, would be simply to argue that employees in the state are not in *any* class location; they are "outside" of the class structure. After all, as was argued in section 5.2 above, there

93. For example, Nicos Poulantzas attempts to define the class character of employees of the capitalist state in terms of the category "unproductive labor". All unproductive laborers, he argues, are part of the new petty bourgeoisie. However, since this argument applies equally well to unproductive laborers in capitalist employment (in banks, commerce, etc.), in the end there is no specificity for the class character of state employment as such in Poulantzas's analysis.

94. Employment in certain other sites—churches, nonprofit organizations, voluntary associations, unions, even political parties—pose similar problems. Here I will only discuss the issue of the state as such.

are many people in capitalist society who do not have a *direct* location in the class structure: children, pensioners, permanently disabled, students, perhaps housewives. State employees—and employees in a variety of other noncapitalist institutions—could be treated in a similar fashion. People within the state might still, of course, have *mediated* class locations through various kinds of social relations which tie them to capitalist production, but they would not be *directly* inserted into the class structure through their own jobs.

Such a treatment of state employees might possibly be appropriate for those people who work in what is narrowly the *political apparatuses* of the state—the taxing authority, the courts, the police, the administrative apparatuses of the executive, the legislature, etc. However, a great deal of what the state does in capitalist societies involves the production and distribution of use-values such as education, health, fire protection, sanitation, transportation, etc. These take place in what could be called the state service sector (or more generally, the state production sector since sometimes the products are actually things, not services). Typically these use-values are produced and distributed in distinctively *noncapitalist* ways in so far as the products and services in question are generally not fully commodified as in capitalist production itself. But this does not make such state activities somehow outside of production.

Once it is recognized that the state is not simply a rule-making and rule-enforcing apparatus, but also a site of considerable social production, then it follows that the social relations within which such production takes place must be considered a variety of social relations of production. If these relations of production in the state involve processes of exploitation and domination, then they constitute the basis for a state-centered class structure.

This line of reasoning leads directly towards the concept of a “state mode of production” (or, at a minimum, state relations of production).⁹⁵ This is not a particularly attractive term, but it seems preferable to the alternative expressions that are sometimes deployed to capture the same idea (such as state socialism or bureaucratic collectivism). If we wish to provide a coherent account of classes constituted within the state, then, we must interrogate this illusive concept.

The concept of a state mode of production is notoriously undertheorized. In my previous work I tried to develop it in a more rigorous way through the analysis of organizational assets and organizational

95. The term “state relations of production” avoids a commitment to the thesis that such relations of production could become the dominant principle of organization of the society at large, whereas the concept “state mode of production” implies that this concept is quite parallel to the capitalist mode of production.

exploitation. That strategy, however, missed what is perhaps the essential feature of a state-centered system of production, namely the role of the state’s coercive capacity to tax or in other ways appropriate the surplus. The state cannot reasonably be viewed simply as a giant corporation in which the material basis of the capacity of “state managers” to appropriate and allocate surplus is equivalent to that of corporate managers. I therefore do not think that the concept of organizational exploitation is a satisfactory way of approaching the problem of state production (even if it remains the case that organizational exploitation occurs within the state as within other complex organizations).

I cannot offer an alternative elaborated concept of the state mode of production. For the moment, therefore, let us operate with a rather simple set of undertheorized descriptions of the basic classes within these state-based relations of production: the dominant class would be defined as those agents in the state who politically direct the appropriation and allocation of the surplus acquired by the state; the subordinate class as those agents who directly produce use-values (goods and services) within the state; and, in a way analogous to contradictory locations in capitalism, contradictory locations inside of the state would be defined as state managers/bureaucrats who control the activity of state workers while being, at the same time, subordinated to the state dominant class.

If we restrict our analysis to class locations defined directly by *jobs*—that is, to “direct” class locations in the terms of section 5.2 above—then these various locations within the state would be viewed as distinct classes from those in the private, capitalist sector. We would have a state working class and a capitalist working class; state contradictory locations and capitalist contradictory locations; etc.

But, as I argued earlier, class structures should not be analyzed exclusively in terms of direct class locations; *mediated* class relations may be equally important in defining the contours of a class structure. I have already briefly noted the importance of mediated class relations for specifying the class location of one particular kind of actor: housewives. A housewife can be viewed as a direct producer within a particular form of production relations, sometimes referred to as “subsistence production” or “domestic production.” In trying to understand a housewife’s location in a class structure, it would, however, be unsatisfactory to simply look at her position within domestic production; her mediated class location via the way in which her household is inserted into capitalist class relations is equally—and perhaps even more—important. Thus, by virtue of mediated class relations, we describe the full-time housewife of a capitalist as in the capitalist class and the full-time housewife of a worker in the working class.

A similar kind of analysis is needed for the specification of the location of state employees in the class structure, although in this case the mediating relations are not generally grounded in family structures. In a capitalist society—that is, a society within which the capitalist mode of production is the dominant form of production relations—a worker in the state is not simply in a “state working class,” but also through various kinds of mediating relations, linked to the capitalist working class. Above all, state workers occupy mediated locations within the capitalist working class via the commodified relations of labor markets. Similarly, the ruling “elite” in the state—the political directorate of state production—is not constituted in capitalist societies as an autonomous state dominant class; it is linked to the capitalist class through a variety of mediating social relations (career trajectories that move back and forth from public to private sectors; the ability of state elites to capitalize surplus income; etc.).

All of these mediated relations can exist with varying degrees of intensity. Different class locations in the state might have differing intensities of mediated links to classes in the private capitalist sector. It might be the case, for example, that in many capitalist societies contradictory locations within the state—middle level, career civil servants, and state officials—have the *weakest* mediated linkages to classes in the private sector. Unlike state workers, they are quite insulated from pressures of the capitalist labor market, and, unlike high level state elites, their careers are much more exclusively contained within the state. It might be expected, therefore, that people in these kinds of class locations within the state would be the most “statist” in their ideological orientation. On the other hand, it would generally be expected that top level state managers and elites in the capitalist state, should have the strongest mediated relations to the capitalist class structure. Without suggesting that the policies of the state can be viewed simply as the result of instrumental manipulations of the capitalist class itself, it would nevertheless in general be expected that the character of the class locations of the directorate of the capitalist state would be heavily shaped by mediated relations to the bourgeoisie.

The intensity of the mediated relations between classes in the state and capitalist sectors could also vary considerably across time and place. At one extreme one might imagine a capitalist society within which, on the one hand, state employment is highly insulated from the pressures of capitalist markets, where state employees have jobs for life in which the wages and working conditions are virtually unaffected by conditions in the capitalist labor market. In such a situation it might be appropriate to consider state workers and private sector workers as being in quite distinct classes. At another extreme, the state can significantly dissolve

the division between state and private employment by imposing conditions of state employment by mimicking private capitalist employment relations within the state, particularly by tying wages of state employees to the capitalist labor market. In such situations, the mediated class location of state workers and private sector workers could be very powerful and largely negate any differences in their direct class locations.

The implication of this analysis of classes within the state is that so long as state employment occurs within a society in which the capitalist mode of production is dominant, one cannot define the class location of state employees exclusively in terms of their locations within state production relations.⁹⁶ To a greater or lesser extent, therefore, state employees occupy a kind of dualistic class location: direct locations within state classes and mediated locations within capitalist relations.⁹⁷

This is, of course, not the only way to treat the problem of class relations within the capitalist state. Many theorists reject the concept of a state mode of production altogether. As a site of *production* in capitalist societies, state production can be treated simply as a peculiar form of capitalist production—one organized by public authority rather than private boards of directors. It is “capitalist” because it obtains its inputs from capitalist markets, it recruits its labor through capitalist markets, it is constrained in myriad ways by the process of private capital accumulation and, with some modification, its employment practices are largely shaped by capitalist practices of hierarchy and control. In this view, just as the household should not be viewed as a residual form of some precapitalist “domestic mode of production,” but rather as the domestic sphere of capitalist production, so too state production in capitalism should not be treated as the forerunner of some postcapitalist mode of production, but rather is simply the “public sphere” of capitalist production. Rather than considering class locations within the state as in any way distinct from the class locations of capitalism proper, therefore, they should simply be fused to them.

This alternative view of state-based production relations in capitalist societies should certainly not be dismissed out of hand. Implicitly, at

96. This is essentially what it means to say that the capitalist mode of production is in fact “dominant”: all other relations of production are, through one mechanism or another, integrated with capitalism in a subordinate manner. This does not imply that they have no effects of their own, but simply that their effects always occur within limits imposed by capitalist relations.

97. I refer to this situation as “dualistic class locations” rather than “contradictory locations” because there is no inherent reason why the interests generated by the direct and mediated relations contradict each other.

least, it is the approach which most theorists adopt in practice. Nevertheless, I feel that this view of state employment suffers from a kind of latent functionalism in its assessment of the relationship between state production and capitalist production.⁹⁸ To describe state production as *simply* the public sphere of capitalist production suggests that its logic of development and internal organization is not just *constrained by* capitalism, but is strictly *derived from* the logic of capitalism. That is, there is something called the “logic of capitalism” which is embodied in a number of interconnected spheres of production—domestic, capitalist proper, public/state. The articulation of such spheres, then, would be regulated by some kind of principle of functional integration. Without such a functional principle, it is hard to see how the public sphere of production could be treated as fundamentally capitalist in its character.

This kind of functional derivation of institutional logics has come under considerable criticism in recent years.⁹⁹ Instead of such a functional derivation, it seems to me more plausible to treat the degree to which state production in capitalism is effectively subsumed under a capitalist logic as a variable rather than a constant. Thus, the statist character of state production, and accordingly the noncapitalist character of the class relations constituted within state production, will also vary across time and place. In some instances—perhaps, for example, the United States—it might well be a reasonable first approximation simply to ignore the distinction between state and private employment in the analysis of class structures because state employment is so effectively tied to capitalism, whereas in other cases this might well not be appropriate.

7 Conclusion: Where Does This Leave Us?

I began this essay by arguing for the necessity of producing a repertoire of Marxist class structure concepts capable of effective deployment in concrete, micro-level analysis. The task was somehow to do this while

98. A similar point can be made about the treatment of domestic production as simply the domestic sphere of capitalist production. This characterization suggests that households follow an internal logic of organization of production that is strictly derivable from the logic of capitalism. While there are certainly effects of capitalist production on domestic production—particularly the progressive erosion of the scope of the latter—nevertheless domestic production does not seem reducible to simply a function of capitalism as such.

99. For a specific critique of Marxian versions of functionalism, see Jon Elster, *Making Sense of Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), and “Marxism, Functionalism and Game Theory,” in J. Roemer, (ed.), *Analytical Marxism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

remaining consistent with the abstract understanding of class relations in terms of interests, lived experience and collective capacity. The most effective way of doing this, I argued, was to try to generate more concrete, micro concepts of class structure on the basis of material interests and exploitation.

Let me try to summarize the various lessons that can be drawn from this attempt:

1. *Contradictory locations* The “middle class” in capitalist society should primarily be understood in terms of the concept of contradictory locations within class relations. Above all, then, the middle class *within capitalism* is constituted by those locations which are simultaneously in the capitalist class and the working class.

2. *Secondary exploitations* Skill exploitation and organization exploitation (or, equivalently, skill-generated scarcity rents and organization-generated loyalty rents) are probably best viewed as the basis for *strata* within classes rather than for class divisions as such. Such strata, however, can constitute the material basis for the emergence of distinct class trajectories as individuals turn the surplus appropriated through credential and loyalty rents into capitalist investment.

3. *Mediated locations and temporal trajectories* In elaborating a micro-level concept of class structure—that is, a concept capable of understanding the ways in which individual lives are organized through class relations—class locations should not be understood simply in terms of the *direct* class relations within which *jobs* are immediately embedded. Class locations are also structured to a variable extent by mediated relations and temporal trajectories.

4. *Professionals and experts* Temporal trajectories are particularly salient for understanding the class location of professionals, experts and other categories of credentialed labor power since the careers of such occupations frequently involve (1) movement into management, (2) the increasing capacity to capitalize employment rents, and (3) viable options of full-time or secondary self-employment. Such temporal trajectories, therefore, generally place professionals and experts into contradictory class locations (the “middle class”) even if at a particular point in time they have not capitalized any of their income and are neither part of the managerial hierarchy itself nor self-employed. However, given the relatively underdetermined character of such trajectories for any given individual, professionals and experts may have, to a greater or lesser degree, what can be called objectively ambiguous class locations. In terms of the lived experience dimension of class

relations, professionals and experts generally experience work in a much less alienated way than workers, and this contributes to the general perception that they are "middle class."

5. *State employees* Mediated relations are particularly salient for understanding the class location of state employees. While their direct class location can be seen as constituted within postcapitalist statist relations of production, to the extent that the conditions of production within the state are dominated by capitalist relations, their class location may be more fundamentally determined by their mediated locations than by their direct locations.

At the core of Marxist theory is an elegant and simple abstract picture of classes in capitalist societies: a fundamentally polarized class structure which constitutes the basis for the formation of two collectively organized classes engaged in struggle over the future of the class structure itself. We have now journeyed far from that simple core. Instead of only two, polarized classes, we have contradictory locations within class relations, mediated class locations, temporally structured class locations, objectively ambiguous class locations, dualistic class locations. Instead of a simple historical vision of the epochal confrontation of two class actors, there is a picture of multiple possible coalitions of greater or lesser likelihood, stability, and power contending over a variety of possible futures. The question, then, is whether this repertoire of new complexities actually enriches the theory or simply adds confusion.

This potential confusion can be reduced if these new complexities are seen as appropriate to different levels of abstraction in the analysis of classes. The appropriate level of abstraction depends upon the nature of the questions being asked. Thus, if one wishes to analyze the implications of epochal differences in class structures, the broad comparisons between feudal class structures and capitalist class structures might be appropriate. A simple two-class model of classes in capitalism—capitalists and workers—might provide the most powerful class map for such an investigation. If, however, one wished to embark on a more fine-grained analysis of the development of class structures within capitalist societies or the variations in such structures across capitalist societies, then invoking some of the complexities we have discussed would become necessary. And if one wanted to attempt a nuanced examination of the effects of location in a class structure on individual consciousness and action, then it would probably be desirable to introduce the full range of complexities that structure the class interests of individuals in time and place.

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