

emerge from that inchoate and disorganised state in which they have lain for a century, since professions of this kind today absorb the greater part of the energies of society.<sup>5</sup>

### Notes

1. Waltzing, *Etude historique sur les corporations profession chez les Romains*, vol. I, p. 194.

2. Cf. especially *Année sociologique*, vol. 1, pp. 313 ff.

3. We need not discuss the international organisation which, because of the international character of the market, would necessarily develop at a level above that of the national organisation. For at present the latter alone can constitute a legal entity. In the present state of European law the former can only result from arrangements freely concluded between national corporations.

4. This specialisation could not occur without the help of elected assemblies charged with representing the corporation. In the present state of industry, these assemblies, as well as those tribunals entrusted with the task of applying the regulations of an occupation, should clearly include representatives of employees and employers, as is already the case with the industrial arbitration tribunals. The proportion of each should correspond to the

respective importance attributed by public opinion to these two factors of production. But if it is necessary for both sides to meet on the governing councils of the corporation it is no less indispensable for them to constitute distinct and independent groups at the lower level of corporative organisation, because too often their interests vie with one another and are opposing. To feel that they exist freely, they must be aware of their separate existence. The two bodies so constituted can then appoint their representatives to the common assemblies.

5. Moreover, we do not mean that territorial constitutencies are destined to disappear completely, but only that they will fade into the background. Old institutions never vanish in the face of new ones to such an extent that they leave no trace of themselves. They persist not only by the mere fact of survival, but also because there persists some trace of the needs to which they corresponded. Material proximity will always constitute a link between men. Consequently the political and social organisation based on territory will certainly subsist. But it will no longer enjoy its present predominance, precisely because that link is losing some of its force. What is more, we have shown above that, even at the base of the corporation will still be found geographical divisions. Moreover, between the various corporations from a same locality or region there will necessarily be special relationships of solidarity which will, from time to time, demand an appropriate organisation.

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## *Are There Big Social Classes?*

The study of social class has a volatile history in which waves of creative class analytic scholarship are interspersed with periods of cynicism about the class analytic enterprise. In the present cynical phase, criticisms of both Marxian and non-Marxian class analysis continue to escalate, with many commentators now feeling bold enough to argue that the

concept of class is “ceasing to do any useful work for sociology” (Pahl 1989, p. 710; also, Pakulski and Waters 1996; Clark and Lipset 1991). By way of response, the most ardent defenders of class models have simply reaffirmed the class analytic status quo, albeit sometimes with the concession that class-based formulations now apply in rather weakened form (e.g., Wright 1996; Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1993; Goldthorpe and Marshall 1992). The debate between these two camps has proceeded along stylized lines. Indeed, although the literature is well stocked

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with all manner of defense and critique of conventional class analysis, there have been few, if any, truly constructive efforts to refashion class analysis.

Against this intellectual backdrop, we have recently suggested that critics of class analysis have too quickly dismissed the power of class analytic language, whereas defenders of class analysis have not appreciated that such language, for all its power, yields little insight when applied to conventional, highly aggregate social classes (see Grusky and Sørensen 1998; Grusky 1999; Grusky and Weeden forthcoming). This formulation leads to the prescription that class analysis should be ratcheted down to an analytic level where real social groupings (i.e., "occupations") form around functional niches in the division of labor. The great virtue of disaggregating is that the nominal categories of conventional class analysis can be replaced by *Gemeinschaftlich* groupings that are embedded in the very fabric of society and are thereby meaningful not merely to sociologists but to the lay public as well.

The foregoing line of argument is not entirely without precedent. Indeed, whenever sociologists have turned their attention to the professions (e.g., Abbott 1988), the long-standing tendency has been to emphasize the great heterogeneity and sectional divisiveness within this (putative) new class. The recent commentary of Freidson (1986) is illustrative here: "The range of education, income, and prestige of the professional occupations in question . . . [makes] it hard to imagine them sharing a common culture of any significance, a common set of material interests, or a common inclination to act politically in the same fashion and direction" (p. 57). Although this critique is surely of interest, it falls short of our own position insofar as it pertains only to the professional sector and fails to engage more broadly with contemporary anticlass critiques. In similar fashion, stratification scholars are currently quite interested in "unpacking" conventional class categories (Marshall et al. 1988), yet the ultimate objective

has invariably been to argue for some new and preferred form of *reaggregation*.

We would be hard-pressed, then, to locate a direct line of intellectual heritage. If forced to identify a partial and approximate one, the principal inspiration would have to be scholars such as Durkheim ([1893] 1933), Bourdieu (1984), and their intellectual descendants (e.g., Lamont 1992; also, Freidson 1994; Van Maanen and Barley 1984). Under the Durkheimian developmental model, occupational associations come to serve as important intermediaries between the modern state and individual, yet they play a largely integrative role and eschew the more partisan behavior of "maintaining or increasing privileges and monopolies" (Durkheim [1893] 1933, p. 10). Likewise, Bourdieu (1984) has argued that sociologists should "rethink Weber's opposition between class and *Stand*" (p. xii), but his recent empirical work emphasizes the cultural rather than economic implications of occupational closure. This work is nonetheless distinguished by its relatively detailed analyses; that is, Bourdieu resorts to disaggregate data in characterizing the habitus and the lifestyles it generates, because the conditions of existence of conventional aggregate classes are assumed to be unacceptably heterogeneous. In our own analysis, we shall similarly insist on extreme disaggregation, yet we regard the resulting occupations as economic and cultural groupings that constitute precisely that unification of "class and *Stand*" that Bourdieu (1984) so ambitiously sought.

### The Case for Disaggregation

The following discussion summarizes the main virtues of disaggregation in understanding patterns of class identification, social closure, collective action, and lifestyles and attitudes. For each of these topics, our summary of the conceptual rationale for disaggregation will be brief, as more comprehensive analyses can be found elsewhere (see Grusky and

Sørensen 1998; Grusky 1999; Grusky and Weeden forthcoming).

### **Class Identification**

We can usefully begin by considering the subjective domain of stratification as revealed in patterns of class identification and awareness. Although some sociologists remain convinced that contemporary identities are strongly shaped by aggregate affiliations (e.g., Marshall et al. 1988), the prevailing post-Marxist position is that conventional classes now have only a weak hold over workers. For example, Emmison and Western (1990) report that only 7 percent of all Australians regard their social class as a "very important" identity, whereas other commentators (e.g., Saunders 1989) have stressed that open-ended queries about class identification tend to yield confused responses, refusals to answer, and even explicit denials that classes exist. This evidence has led many sociologists to conclude that class is now a "passive identity" (Bradley 1996, p. 72) and that the realm of production is no longer the principal locus of identity formation.

We regard such accounts as overreactive to concerns that, although legitimate, surely do not require abandoning class analysis altogether. The Emmison–Western results are again revealing on this point, because they indicate that detailed occupations continue to be one of the main social identities for contemporary workers (see Emmison and Western 1990, pp. 247–48). This result should come as no surprise; after all, occupational categories are deeply embedded in the institutions of advanced industrialism, whereas aggregate classes are highly abstract constructs that are evidently more appealing to academics than to workers, employers, or the state. As Treiman (1977) notes, workers invariably represent their career aspirations in occupational terms, while professional and vocational schools train workers for occupationally defined skills, and employers construct and advertise jobs in terms of corre-

sponding occupational designations. The class analytic fallacy thus amounts to insisting on aggregate categories even when disaggregate ones are more deeply institutionalized and hence subjectively more salient.

### **Social Closure**

If subjectivist models of class were once dominant in sociology (e.g., Warner, Meeker, and Eells 1949), they have now been superseded by analytic approaches that focus on the social processes by which class membership is restricted to qualified eligibles (Freidson 1994, pp. 80–84; Murphy 1988; Collins 1979; Parkin 1979; Weber [1922] 1968). These models emphasize not only the institutionalized means by which closure is secured (e.g., private property, credentials, licenses) but also the efforts of excluded parties to challenge these institutions and the inequality that they maintain. Although closure theory provides, then, a new sociological language for understanding interclass relations, the actual class mappings posited by closure theorists have proven to be standard aggregate fare. The two-class solution proposed, for example, by Parkin (1979, p. 58) features an exclusionary class comprising those who control productive capital and professional services and a subordinate class comprising all those who are excluded from these positions of control.

We might usefully ask whether an aggregate formulation is fundamental to closure theory or merely superfluous adjunct. The latter interpretation strikes us as more plausible; that is, if closure theory could somehow be reinvented without the coloration of class analytic convention, its authors would likely emphasize that the real working institutions of closure (i.e., professional associations, craft unions) are largely local associations "representing the credential-holders themselves" (Murphy 1988, p. 174). These associations establish and enforce local jurisdictional settlements that prevent other occupations from providing competing services. In most cases,

the associated closure devices (e.g., licensing, credentialling, apprenticeships) do not govern entry to aggregate classes, but instead serve only to control entry (and exit) at the more detailed occupational level. By contrast, there are no analogous organizations that represent aggregate classes, nor are there jurisdictional settlements or closure devices that are truly aggregate in scope. This conclusion implies that conventional aggregate mappings of "exploitation classes" (e.g., Wright 1985) conceal the highly disaggregate level at which rent is extracted and interests are formed (see Sørensen 1996; 1994). Indeed, given that unions and associations establish local rather than classwide restrictions on labor supply, the "rent" that is thereby generated should create interests principally at the disaggregate level.

### Collective Action

For most neo-Marxists, social closure is of interest not because it provides a vehicle for pursuing purely local concerns (i.e., "trade union consciousness"), but rather because it allegedly facilitates the development of classwide interests and grander forms of interclass conflict. The aggregate classes identified by contemporary sociologists have so far shown a decided reluctance to act in accord with such theorizing. This quiescence at the aggregate level has led to considerable neo-Marxian handwringing as well as more radical claims that postmodern interests are increasingly defined and established outside the realm of production (e.g., Laraña, Johnston, and Gusfield 1994). The latter form of postmodernism, popular as it is, overlooks the simple fact that much collective action flows unproblematically out of structurally defined groupings, albeit only when those groupings are defined in less aggregate terms than is conventionally the case. The three principal types of collective action at the level of unit occupations are (a) downwardly directed closure strategies designed to restrict access to occupational positions, (b) lateral competitive struggles between occupational associations

over functional niches in the division of labor, and (c) upwardly directed collective action oriented toward securing occupation-specific benefits (e.g., monopoly protection) from the state and from employers. We thus concur with Krause (1971, p. 87) that "there has historically been more occupation-specific consciousness and action than cross-occupational combination" (also, see Freidson 1994, pp. 75-91).

This is not to suggest that local conflict at the unit occupational level drives the course of human history. To the contrary, local associations typically pursue sectional objectives, and the wider systemic effects of such micro-level conflict are neither obvious nor necessarily profound (cf. Durkheim [1893] 1933). We might conclude, then, that our disaggregate class analysis is an intellectually modest project, but it bears noting that aggregate class analysts have likewise scaled back their ambitions and effectively discarded comprehensive class-based theories of history (e.g., Goldthorpe and Marshall 1992, p. 385).

### Class Outcomes

In this sense, the class analytic project is becoming gradually more limited in its objectives, with many contemporary scholars now satisfied to merely document that class membership conditions individual-level outcomes of all kinds (e.g., attitudes, voting behavior, lifestyles). The resulting analyses typically examine either the categorical effects of aggregate classes or the gradational effects of variables that represent the many dimensions (e.g., socioeconomic status, substantive complexity) underlying disaggregate occupations. Although these approaches have yielded new and important results, it is nonetheless troubling that they typically conceal or ignore the *Gemeinschaftlich* character of (some) disaggregate occupations. If modern closure is indeed secured principally at the detailed occupational level, then the reresulting restriction of social interaction will generate and maintain occupational subcultures that are correspondingly disaggregate. These local

cultures are initially forged through intensive secondary socialization of the kind provided in apprenticeships, police and military academies, and graduate and professional schools. As Caplow (1954) noted long ago, many occupations require prolonged training that serves to inculcate explicit codes of behavior, whereas aggregate classes have no comparable influence or authority over secondary patterns of socialization. The occupational habitus is further strengthened insofar as workers choose occupations receptive to their values and employers choose workers with values that are (putatively) compatible with occupational demands. The great failing of conventional analyses of lifestyles, dispositions, and attitudes is that *Gemeinschaftlich* occupations are regarded as nominal categories and are therefore blithely aggregated or dimensionalized.

The moral to our story, then, is that sociologists have searched for structuration at the wrong level of analysis. Ironically, class analysts have sought realist solutions at the aggregate level when only nominal ones were viable, whereas occupational analysts have settled on nominal solutions (e.g., socioeconomic scales) when in fact realist ones were feasible. Among Marxian and non-Marxian scholars alike, the division of labor is typically represented as purely "technical" in character (see, esp., Wright 1980; Abercrombie and Urry 1983, p. 109), even though nominal task-based groupings are often converted into real social collectivities with a shared culture and set of interests. We think that sociological research stands to benefit from taking such local organization more explicitly into account.

### Issues of Trend

Although disaggregate structuration has been largely overlooked by contemporary class analysts, it is nonetheless possible that such structuration, strong though it may be, is growing gradually weaker in ways that are consistent with a standard poststructuralist

vision. The prevailing view, especially among European commentators, is that the site of production is indeed of diminishing relevance in understanding stratification systems. The virtues of poststructuralism may be "taken for granted among contemporary social and cultural analysts" (Casey 1995, p. 8), but the lack of substantiating evidence for this position is quite striking; and it is accordingly premature to foreclose on all further debate about the principal forces of change.

The available literature on such matters can be readily simplified by classifying theories in terms of the institutional domains that they reference. We shall thus proceed by distinguishing between (a) the types of technical tasks embodied in the division of labor, (b) the organizational settings in which these tasks are carried out, and (c) the associational forms that characteristically develop at the site of production (e.g., trade unions, professional associations). As shall be evident, the foregoing domains do not evolve in isolation from one another, but it is still analytically useful to distinguish between them.

### Sociotechnical Change

The current fashion is to approach longstanding debates about sociotechnical change from a post-Fordist perspective (Piore and Sabel 1984). As Amin (1994) notes, post-Fordists suggest that early industrialism brought about much craft deskilling and homogenization, yet this process is alleged to be reversing itself as "Fordist" factories are gradually supplanted by small-scale production, flexible specialization, and a rejuvenated artisanal sector, all of which serve to reintroduce those distinctions of manual labor that Marx ([1894] 1964) promised would ultimately disappear. This account may therefore be seen as a freshened form of postindustrial theory in which the forces of upgrading and reskilling are presumed to play out not merely in the professional, technical, and service categories but in the craft sector as well. In this context, one might expect postmodernists to view post-Fordism with some antipathy, yet in fact

these two accounts are often conflated in the literature. For example, the "new times" post-Fordism of Hall (1988) and his colleagues (e.g., Hall and Jacques 1989) becomes virtually indistinguishable from conventional post-modernism, as it emphasizes that sociotechnical changes weaken aggregate solidarities and generate a new stratification order based on "lifestyle, taste, and culture rather than categories of social class" (Hall 1988, p. 24). This account rests on the characteristic postmodernist assumption that an "increasingly fragmented" productive realm (Hall 1988, p. 24) necessarily weakens *all* forms of solidarity within the division of labor.

The pathbreaking work of Piore and Sabel (1984) clearly has merit, but we would necessarily take issue with these more elaborated accounts that attempt to smuggle in post-structuralism under a post-Fordist banner. If one accepts the core post-Fordist claim that flexible specialization breathes new life into artisanal production (e.g., Piore and Sabel 1984), the appropriate implication is not that all production-based solidarities shall wither away but rather that such solidarities are increasingly localistic. In any standard post-Fordist account, the new and emerging forms of craft production are assumed to require worker "solidarity and communitarianism" (Piore and Sabel 1984, p. 278), and the rejuvenated artisanal sector therefore brings early-industrial "craft communities into the twenty-first century on the basis of a newly decentralized production process" (Aronowitz and DiFazio 1994, p. 98). The end result, then, is a manifestly prostructuralist account whereby modern craftworkers are increasingly "bound to an often familial community [that] promotes both greater control and a sense of belonging" (Aronowitz and DiFazio 1994, p. 97).

The same conclusion holds with respect to older sociotechnical models of differentiation (e.g., Parsons 1970; Dahrendorf 1959). When such models were initially formulated, there was little interest in elaborating a positive theory of local structuration, because the principal objective was merely to counter

Marxian approaches by calling attention to the class-decomposing effects of differentiation. If a positive theory of local solidarities *were* attempted, it would likely emphasize that (a) the process of differentiation generates local collective action as emergent occupational groupings vie with one another for jurisdiction over new functional niches, and (b) the resulting occupations become meaningful communities not only because of the "mechanical solidarity" spawned by functional similarities (Durkheim [1893] 1933, p. 16) but also because of the affiliative ties forged in the originating jurisdictional struggles (see Abbott 1988).

The above considerations suggest that differentiation creates solidarities that are increasingly localistic. At the same time, one must bear in mind that the newly differentiated occupations are, by virtue of their newness, hampered in developing stereotypical behavioral expectations that can then be enforced by the outside public. The subcultures of these occupations may therefore be less binding; for instance, the occupations of "systems analyst," "day trader," or "Web site designer" may not evoke stereotypical expectations that are as well formed as those characterizing more established occupations, such as professor (absentminded), cook (excitable), or reporter (cynical). In his seminal work, Caplow (1954, pp. 134–35) makes much of this liability of newness, as he regarded the "public stereotype as itself the most important agent for the conditioning of roles." The latter argument fails, however, to appreciate that newness can itself be an asset; indeed, just as religious cults generate solidarity by capitalizing on missionary zeal, so too one suspects that new occupations can impose behavioral expectations on incumbents without these expectations being well known or appreciated by outsiders. Under this formulation, rapid differentiation prevents the public from understanding the increasingly complex mosaic of occupational subcultures and communities, but it may not greatly weaken the hold of these local communities over their members.

## **Organizational Change**

As sociologists so frequently point out, the division of labor is not intrinsic to the structure of tasks, but rather is a social construction that reflects organizational constraints as well as the interests of relevant parties (e.g., Edwards 1979). The rise of industrialism in the eighteenth century can be attributed, for example, to the spread of vertical strategies of coordination that fragmented tasks into increasingly simple jobs and thus rendered them amenable to purely administrative or bureaucratic oversight (Weber [1922] 1968). By contrast, preindustrial craft workers defined and organized the production process themselves, and the division of labor was accordingly controlled by self-regulating occupational experts rather than organizationally empowered administrators (Zabusky and Barley 1996, pp. 188–92). The obvious question that then arises is whether vertical methods of control will continue to encroach on occupationally defined labor as postindustrialism evolves.

This question cannot be as easily answered as some postmodernists seemingly suggest. In fact, one can identify incipient organizational theories on either side of this debate, with the contemporary literature thus encompassing both (a) postoccupational theories describing the gradual withering away of functionally defined positions, and (b) revisionist theories suggesting that a new occupationally oriented logic of production is on the rise. The former literature, which is clearly dominant, rests on the claim that contemporary organizations are relying increasingly on teamwork, cross-training, and multiactivity jobs that break down conventional skill-based distinctions (e.g., Casey 1995). These new polyvalent jobs are created either by combining formerly distinct skills or by appending managerial and coordinative functions to production positions. The resulting story thus privileges the forces of integration over those of differentiation; that is, whereas many early industrial craft occupations (e.g., shoemaker) were dissolved through task simplification, the postindustrial organizations described by

Casey (1995) putatively eliminate occupations through task fusion, elaboration, and complication.

The preceding account, popular though it may be, is not without its critics, some of whom have argued that “pressures for an occupational logic of organizing may in fact be rising” (Barley 1995, p. 40). This revisionist argument rests on the twofold claim that (a) the occupationally organized sectors of the labor force (e.g., professionals) are rapidly expanding in size, and (b) the remaining vertically organized sectors of the labor force (e.g., management) are increasingly differentiating into functional areas and therefore becoming “occupationalized” (Freidson 1994). In developing these claims, Barley (1995) suggests that the seeds of the future have been sown in the burgeoning technical sector, where the work process is dominated by experts who have so far rigorously defended their occupational jurisdictions and have accordingly resisted cross-training, job mergers, and all forms of hierarchy. The resulting “technicist archetype” (Barley 1995) thus rests on the collaboration of experts who control knowledge through extended training within a community of practice. Under the latter formulation, teams and work groups figure no less prominently than in the postoccupationalist archetype (e.g., Casey 1995), but of course the constituent experts now control mutually exclusive bodies of knowledge. The resulting team solidarity may be seen, then, as organic rather than mechanical.

Although most expert teams are presently formed within the confines of firms, one might anticipate that production will increasingly be contracted out to independent workers who are brought together by managers or brokers. The construction industry serves as the conventional exemplar here both because of its extreme occupationalism and characteristic reliance on outsourcing. In fact, the emerging fashion among organizational theorists is to represent the construction industry not as a historical remnant that “God forgot and the industrial revolution overlooked” (Lawrence and Dyer 1983, p. 599), but rather

as a heroic survivor that will in the end supersede mass production, thereby shaping the future of work more generally. For our purposes, it suffices to stress that these revisionist theories are inconsistent with those of postoccupationalism, and not merely because they rest explicitly on a well-developed (and intensifying) division of labor. We would further emphasize that the concomitant growth of outsourcing and externalization increases pressures to identify and affiliate with occupations rather than organizations.

### Associational Change

The final institutions of interest to us are the various intermediary associations (e.g., trade unions, professional associations) that characteristically develop at the site of production. Within the Marxian framework, the long-standing concern has been that "trade union consciousness" is intrinsically sectional, thus requiring intellectuals and party functionaries to carry out supplementary ideological work that presumably cultivates more encompassing class-based interests (esp. Lenin 1927). This Marxian concern appears now to have been well founded. If the history of guilds, unions, and related production-based associations is reevaluated from the long view, it is evident that true classwide organization emerged for only a brief historical moment and that postmodern forms are reverting back to localism and sectionalism. The widely documented difficulties facing contemporary unions should be interpreted accordingly; namely, despite an evident weakening in the "encompassiveness of union movements" (Visser 1988, p. 167), there is much evidence suggesting that purely local unions and associations have by no means lost their hold over workers (e.g., the American Federation of Teachers). In many countries, centralized bargaining between national unions and employers is indeed on the decline, yet decentralized negotiations have taken their place as "instrumental collectivism, based on sectional self-interest, becomes the order of the day" (Marshall et al. 1988, p. 7). This interpreta-

tion, if borne out, does not speak to deconstruction per se but rather to increasing disaggregation and differentiation of associational forms.

The professional sector has given rise to organizational forms that are yet more localistic. As Parkin (1979) points out, professionals eschew all types of interoccupational confederation, whereas they typically seek out sectional associations that can defend jurisdictional claims and thereby protect against incursions by neighboring occupations. In assessing the future of professionalization, one must consider not only the ongoing growth of traditional professional occupations (e.g., lawyer) and the consequent increase in the number of workers who find themselves in classlike groupings, but also the emergence of new high-skill sectors that may allow further occupations to undertake professionalization projects. To be sure, oppositional movements may possibly emerge and stall these closure projects, yet there is relatively little in the contemporary political arena that might now be interpreted as incipient antiprofessionalism. This conclusion serves to emphasize our larger point that the future of local solidarities is more ambiguous than standard poststructuralist formulas allow.

### Conclusions

In his celebrated preface to *The Division of Labor*, Durkheim ([1893] 1933, p. 28) predicted that occupational associations would gradually become "intercalated between the state and the individual," thereby providing an organizational counterbalance to the threat of class formation on one hand and state tyranny on the other. This account is ritually rehearsed by Durkheimian scholars but has never been treated as a credible developmental model. As the Marxian project falls out of favor, scholars have therefore settled into some version of Weberianism or postmodernism, neither of which pays much attention to occupation-level structuration. We have outlined above a quasi-Durkheimian third road that re-



focuses attention on local forms of structuration within the division of labor.

In laying out this case for disaggregation, we have largely ignored cross-national variability in local structuration, but not because we believe such variability to be either trivial or inconsequential. To the contrary, we suspect that convergence theories (e.g., Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992) may be rather less appealing when disaggregate analyses are attempted, because national idiosyncrasies are necessarily concealed through the abstracting and aggregating operations of class analysis. The case of Germany, for example, provides a revealing example of the extent to which local institutional forms can support and sustain disaggregate structuration. As class analysts have long stressed, Germany has a well-developed system of vocational training and apprenticeship, both of which serve to encourage occupation-specific investments and promote professional commitment and craftsmanship (e.g., Blossfeld 1992). In systems of this sort, workers must invest in a single trade early in their careers, and the correspondingly high costs of retraining produce relatively closed occupational groupings.

If the German system reveals, then, the limits of disaggregate structuration, the case of Japan conversely reveals the extent to which such structuration can be institutionally suppressed. The standard characterization of Japan emphasizes such distinguishing features as (a) an educational curriculum that is generalist in orientation rather than functionally differentiated, (b) a vocational training system that cultivates firm-specific "*nenko* skills" (Dore 1973) through teamwork and continuous job rotation, (c) an organizational commitment to "lifetime employment" that further strengthens firm-specific ties at the expense of more purely occupational ones, and (d) a weakly developed system of enterprise unions that cuts across functional specializations and thereby eliminates any residual craft-based loyalties. This conjunction of forces produces a postoccupational system that some commentators might well regard as prototypically postmodern.

Although further cross-national comparisons of the preceding sort would surely be instructive, we think that comparative analysis becomes especially powerful when local and aggregate forms of structuration are considered in tandem. In the past, structuration has been treated as a unidimensional concept, and scholars accordingly sought to characterize countries on a simple continuum representing the extent to which their stratification systems were well formed (cf. Giddens 1973). The two cases discussed above suggest that such practice may not be altogether misleading; after all, Japan is well known for its attenuated class structure as well as its postoccupationalism (Nakane 1970), while Germany likewise combines strong vocationalism with a deeply class-based labor market and political system. We would nonetheless caution against assuming that such cross-level consistency is the norm. In fact, low-level structuration is often assumed to *undermine* the development of class-based organization, with the United States serving as the typical case in point. The scholarly literature on American exceptionalism is obviously wide ranging, but one of the continuing themes is that class formation was inhibited in the American case not so much by simple individualism as by low-level structuration in the form of craft unions and professionalism (e.g., Dahrendorf 1959). The zero-sum imagery underlying such analyses suggests that aggregate and disaggregate structuration may sometimes work at cross-purposes.

It is also worth considering the obverse case in which class-based organization flourishes in the absence of competing local structuration. This is clearly the stuff of textbook Marxism, yet ironically it comes closest to empirical realization within countries, such as Sweden, that opted for the social democratic road quite early. In standard analyses of Swedish exceptionalism (e.g., Therborn 1988), the well-known solidarism of labor is attributed not merely to the historic weakness of guild organization and craft unionism, but also to party negotiating tactics that privileged classwide collective bargaining over

purely sectional wage demands. At the same time, the "active labor market" programs embodied in the Rehn-Meidner model (Esping-Andersen 1988, pp. 47–53) provide extensive state assistance for worker retraining and relocation, thereby blurring interoccupational boundaries and further undermining local sectionalism and closure. In this context, unit-level occupations are still defined by functional positions in the Swedish division of labor, but the social trappings (e.g., associations, closure) that usually emerge around such technical distinctions have been partly repressed. Although Sweden appears, then, to be properly characterized by the neo-Marxian formula that "technical features do not entail social features" (Abercrombie and Urry 1983, p. 109), it is unclear whether this form of structuration extends much beyond Sweden and Scandinavia more generally. If it is more widespread than we suspect, then our preferred line of argumentation is admittedly weakened.

The larger conclusion to be drawn is that sociologists in all countries have typically been too quick to fall back on purely nominal categories and the descriptive models that they imply. The longstanding Marxian distinction between *klasse an sich* and *klasse für sich* only reinforces such nominalist tendencies, as it legitimates the claim that conventional aggregate categories, although presently latent or quiescent, may someday become meaningful and activated. This approach is of course peculiarly modern. In characterizing stratification systems of the past, sociologists have typically relied on categories that were embedded in the fabric of society (e.g., estates, castes), thereby rendering them sensible and meaningful to intellectuals and the lay public alike.

The modern analogues to such realist categories are the unit occupational groups that emerge around functional positions in the division of labor. If analyses are ratcheted down to this level, we can construct models that rely on real institutional forces and assume more nearly structural form. The proof of our approach rests, then, on the additional explana-

tory power and understanding that accrues from referencing the real institutional processes that create classes, constrain mobility chances, generate earnings, and define lifestyles. The task of mapping disaggregate stratification is hardly trivial, but the intellectual payoff to so proceeding is likely to be greater than that secured by carrying out yet another study at the aggregate level.

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