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# Changing Structures of Inequality – A Comparative Perspective

## Inequality: The Structuring Effect of Social Class in Four Societies

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Social class, a classic sociological concept, has become the topic of ever more vigorous debates. Classes are dying though inequality lives, some argue (*Pakulski* 1993; *Kingston* 2000). These claims counter the remarkable resurgence of class theory in the last fifteen years, with scholars insisting on the ongoing relevance of the concept (*Wright* 1985; *Wright* 1997, *Erikson and Goldthorpe* 1992; *Esping-Andersen* 1993, *Hout, Brooks and Manza* 1993; *Goldthorpe and Marshall* 1992; *Marshall* 1997; *Hall* 1997). Goldthorpe maintains that social class is a viable and important 'problematik' mainly because "the general 'withering away' of class is also a historical outcome that, while often scheduled, has yet to be observed". He continues, "Regularities, expressing salient features of the class stratification of modern societies, have been empirically demonstrated" (*Goldthorpe* 1996: 483-484). Others argue that social classes, though continuing to exist, have a less clear structuring effect. This is the thesis of *Clark and Lipset's* (1991) often quoted paper, which is misinterpreted by some readers. They observe a fragmentation within social classes, noting in particular a declining impact of class location on political attitudes and behavior, social mobility, and family relations, with the emergence of new social differences. In a critical comment to this paper, *Hout, Brooks and Manza* (1993: 270) state that "the birth of new sources of inequality does not imply the death of old ones". Clark and Lipset replied to their critics, "Social class has declined in its ability to explain social and especially political process. But it still lives" (*Clark and Lipset* 1991: 293).

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In this chapter, we address the question of the structuring effects of social classes and assess the degree to which distinctions among social classes are apparent in four countries in the CCSC program: France, Germany, Quebec/Canada, and the United States. Obviously the discussion critically hinges on how key terms are defined, especially the problematic and ideologically charged *class*. Following the distinction between "class theory" and "class analysis" (Goldthorpe and Marshall 1992; Pakulski and Waters 1996), our focus is clearly on "class analysis". According to Goldthorpe and Marshall (1992: 382) class analysis "has as its central concerns the study of relationships among class structures, class mobility, class-based inequalities and class-based action, but entails no theory of history, no theory of class exploitation" and neither takes class-based collective action for granted nor even entails an "assumption on the pre-eminence of class" as a structuring mechanism. Beyond that, we simply use the definitions and empirical indicators as they have been proposed by different analysts. We do not, a priori, try to evaluate the theoretical adequacy of their arguments. Rather, we simply assess whether their empirical depictions of the class structure point to substantial group differences.

Our enterprise faces three difficulties. The first one involves the definition of social class. Which approach should be used? Do we limit ourselves to examining explicit class schemes or class-like schemes? This problem will be discussed in the first part of this contribution. Second question: What aspects of social life are theoretically pertinent for analyzing the structuring of social class? This problem will also be examined in the next section.

The third problem is more difficult and is central to the proposed analysis in this text: How can we compare class structuration in different countries, if the comparability of relevant studies is often problematic. Some aspects of class structuration have been studied in one society, but not in another one; others have been measured differently. However, the problem is less significant than it might appear at first glance. We do not rigorously compare the measurement of different aspects of class in each society; instead, we compare the relations between social class schemes (or class-like schemes) and different aspects of social life, as they are measured and studied in different contexts. What matters is the degree to which these relations appear high or low.

## CLASSES AND CLASS SCHEMES

The defining dimensions of social stratification have been identified in disparate ways. In addition to class schemes, other approaches attempt to build continuous scales of socioeconomic standing (like the *Blishen index* in Canada or the *Duncan index* in the USA) or prestige (like the *Wegener scale* in Germany). These latter approaches, some of them examined in the first part of this volume, have obvious utility; however, our focus is on schemes that are explicitly *class*-based, though we also consider typologies that do not refer explicitly to the term *class* but can be considered proxies for explicit class-schemes (e.g., the French PCS or the socioprofessional indices proposed in Canada: see first part of this book). A class system most fundamentally consists of a small set of distinct groups defined and ordered by their economic position, a position that is often linked to distinctive levels of power and cultural commitments. By invoking the centrality of economic position, we endorse a meaning that is consistent with both Marx and Weber (Wright 1996). Class theorists varyingly emphasize differences in ownership, authority and control, material rewards, terms of employment, culture, and skill. Further, class theorists all contend, these divisions are socially consequential, affecting crucial realms of life. Even if Marxists, Weberians, and various hybrid theorists disagree about fundamental issues related to class analysis, they should all agree with this basic claim if they are willing to take a realistic approach to class. In this light, classes exist to the extent that class location - an objective position within the economic order, primarily indicated by occupation-related indicators - does in fact shape the fundamental content of social lives.

A number of class schemes are presented in the appendix to this chapter (see Appendix Table 1)<sup>1</sup>. The most notable common feature is that the majority of the maps

<sup>1</sup> National traditions as well as the particularities of history could explain why some of these prominent class schemes are not systematically applied to all the four countries under review here. See the country-specific chapters reviewing research on class and stratification in the first part of this volume.

make a fundamental three-class division, even if most of the theorists make finer distinctions as well. At least since Marx, the division between the working class and the capitalist owners has held a central place in virtually all class schemes, but with increasing industrialization, most observers have added a middle class, itself often subdivided further.

At the top is a relatively small upper class, varying defined by substantial ownership or some combination of ownership, high managerial/professional position, and high income. *Wright's* (1985) and *Bourdieu's* (1984) analyses also introduce the educational system as a defining component. Below the small elite stands a substantial middle class, in almost all schemes roughly equal in size to the working class below it. Even if Marxists have not conceptually resolved the problem of the middle class, they recognize the significance of intermediate-level people, at least those aspiring to comprehend a world including more than factory owners and machine-tending wage workers. In all the theories, this middle class is largely identified as white-collar workers who lack elite levels of ownership, authority or labour market capacity. To varying degrees, these theories recognize distinctions within the middle class – upper- and lower-level employees and small owners – but these differences appear much less fundamental than differences separating the broad middle class from the upper and working classes. At the bottom, all theories recognize a large working class. No one claims that it has withered away or has been fully ‘bourgeoisified’ into some middle mass. The core of this working class is the (non-owner) manual worker, even if the inclusion of routine white-collar workers in this class is contested. In rough and ready operational terms, the distinction between the middle and working class has long meant the divide between blue-collar manual workers and white-collar non-manual workers. Consensus on this matter is now less firm. In some formulations the distinction between skilled and other blue-collar workers is portrayed as a class divide (*Form* 1985), though one seemingly less fundamental than the middle/working class cleavage. Some theorists insisted on the ongoing relevance of the traditional model (e.g., *Giddens* 1973); others contend that the working class consists of blue-collar workers and lower-level (‘proletarianized’) white-collar workers (e.g., *Wright* 1985).

The main points of contention are these: (1) *The composition of the upper class.* Some theorists strictly consider only substantial owners as upper class; they rele-

gate high-level managers and professionals to a supportive, upper-middle class position because they lack the prerogatives of property (*Wright* 1985; *Gilbert and Kahl* 1993). Others locate owners and high-level managers in a single class, at least implicitly suggesting that ownership per se is not the bedrock stratifying force (e.g., *Goldthorpe* 1987; *Kerbo* 1991 and even a neo-marxist *Poulantzas* 1974); (2) *The class location of lower-level white-collar workers, particularly clerks, salespeople, technicians, and semi-professionals.* As noted, some theorists maintain the long-standing shirt collar distinction in separating the middle and working classes (e.g., *Rossides* 1990; *Giddens* 1973). Others believe that the conditions of much lower-level white-collar work have been sufficiently *proletarianized* to warrant placing many of these workers in the working class (*Bourdieu* 1984; *Wright* 1985; *Mendras* 1988, *Gilbert and Kahl* 1993); (3) *The existence of a lower class.* We have suggested that all theories employ a basic three-class model, though some also identify a separate lower (under) class. If employment conditions define class position, this group is largely outside the class system. However, some theorists view the large numbers of poor people with a common experience of chronic unemployment or marginal labour force attachment as a distinct class – in effect, Weberians resurrecting the Marxist notion of the ‘Lumpenproletariat’. This group of individuals is often defined as being excluded from the rest of the society, thus an underclass.

For all the analytical and conceptual joustings involved in recent developments of class theory, then, there are remarkable similarities in how theorists have depicted the class structure. Is exploitation, labour market capacity, or ownership/authority the underlying basis of class distinctions? In some theoretical lights, these concerns may be important, but the very similarity of these schemes justifies using all of them to assess and compare the *extent* of class structuration. Instead of resolving theoretical differences about the basis of class, we have a straightforward concern: ‘how pronounced is class structuration’, as revealed by available empirical material?<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, one qualification is necessary here. The answer to the question raised may depend in part on the historical period the class structure is intended to cover as well as on the schemes adopted. Almost all the principal class maps were produced during the 1980s (*Giddens* apart). Unfortunately, their authors don't indicate the span of time for which their classifications were

## ORGANIZING AN ASSESSMENT OF CLASS STRUCTURATION

We start with the related premises that the stratifying force of class can be variable over time and across societies, and that its reality can be discerned only in how people carry out their lives. The question, then, is: how to organize such an assessment? In other words, what dimensions of social life should be examined?

In order to answer these questions, Giddens' class structuration theory provides a useful point of departure. The concept of structuration suggests that classes affect how people carry out their lives. He refers to structuration as "the modes in which economic relationships become translated into 'non-economic' social structures" (Giddens 1973: 105) and believes this "translation" is apparent in matters like intergenerational mobility, social networks, and group orientations in politics. Because groups with roughly similar economic positions have distinctive experiences in these and other matters, he argues, classes exist as social entities. These groups are "structured" in class terms. Drawing on the broad legacy of class theory, Giddens indicates that this structuration has multiple dimensions, so that each class is marked by economic, social, cultural, and political similarities. Even if his conclusions about the degree of structuration are open to question, this perspective valuably suggests 'class-ness' is a variable. The analyst's task is to specify how much structuration exists. Not only can societies differ in their level of structuration, but the amount of structuration may also change over time. This perspective also alerts analysts to the possibility that "class-ness" may be more pronounced in some dimensions than others.

We use six dimensions to study class structuration: patterns of intergenerational mobility, patterns of social interaction, cultural orientations, class sentiment, political actions, and ways of living. Here are short descriptions of these dimensions:

*The pattern of inter-generational social mobility.* This is perhaps the most important criterion, and the most often studied. We will therefore focus most intensely

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valid. We can suppose that these class-schemes are applicable for the last fifty years. Goldthorpe's class division, for instance, is used to describe fathers' class position for adults in the sixties, so that we can expect that it is a suitable description of British society from 1930 to 1980. Rossides (1990) titles a table, "The American class system in the twentieth century" (406-407).

on this dimension. Obviously, class position is significant to the degree it delimits occupational opportunities and careers, thereby reproducing the stratification system across generations. Classes have real structuring effects if mobility within certain large occupational / class categories is easy and regular, and mobility across these categories is difficult and infrequent. Mobility patterns also have important implications for the socio-cultural effects of class. Any class effects on individual consciousness and activity are more likely if people are stable within the class structure - that is, if they are raised in the same class as they later arrive at themselves. For all the same reasons, we should add, intra-generational mobility patterns are consequential for structuration, but we do not consider them here because good comparable data are unavailable.

*Patterns of interaction.* Are people in particular classes distinctly inclined to interact socially with each other in their out-of-work lives? If so, classes exist as communal groups. Thus classes have a structuring effect to the extent that members live near each other, choose friends from the same class, belong to voluntary groups with others of their class, and marry within their class.

*Cultural Orientations.* In a similar way, to the extent that class categories distinguish distinctive patterns of social behavior and attitudes, class structuration is more fully established. Especially relevant are claims about distinctive class cultures in family life. Class theorists often argue that the lessons of common socialization are a key social mechanism furthering class reproduction.

*Class-sentiment.* Class consciousness and subjective class identification broadly refer to the extent that class members - defined by common, objective location - share a feeling of 'we-ness' with other class members and have a corresponding sense of 'they-ness' about others. However a theorist may specify the relationship between objective and subjective factors in the definition of class, all should agree that society is more structured in class terms if objective and subjective cleavages reinforce each other. Class-rooted action seems likely only if individuals have a sense of collective fate with those in similar economic circumstances.

*Political action.* To what extent do proposed class cleavages correspond to patterns of political activity? Class-rooted political action is central to all class theory, and in some views (e.g., Przeworski 1977) the formation of a politically coherent collectivity is part of the definition of a class.

*Ways of living, consumption and quality of life.* For the last thirty years, the debate about the consequences of economic growth has been central to the analysis of social class, in particular raising the question of whether the increasingly affluent working class has become more fully integrated into some middle mass. The so-called embourgeoisement thesis suggested, *inter alia*, that because the working class no longer had distinctive consumption patterns, it has lost its identity as a class. Goldthorpe's 'The Affluent Worker' (1969) for Britain and Mallet's 'La Nouvelle Classe Ouvrière' (1963) for France are prominent contributions to this debate. Whatever the validity of the embourgeoisement thesis, it suggests that material aspects of lives are important in shaping the distinctiveness of classes. Thus, to examine the degree of class structuration, we also consider levels of living, consumption patterns and quality of life.

#### DATA AND ANALYTICAL PROCEDURES

The following analysis is based on reviews of the empirical literature available for the societies included into this study. Compared to analyzing strictly comparable microdata for each case, this approach certainly has some disadvantages. We can only report the results of previous studies as published; all comparisons must therefore be rough because of variations in definitions of variables, measurement techniques, samples, model specifications, and the like. Consequently, the numerical values of statistical measures like regression coefficients (e.g., between class location and class sentiment) must be treated cautiously in cross-society comparisons. On the other hand, our approach does have the advantage of covering a broad range of different topics that cannot be adequately considered by analysing a single dataset.

The most basic and straightforward way to study class structuration is to simply look at the bivariate relationships between class location - the independent variable - and dependent variables such as political attitudes, subjective class identification, career opportunities, etc. If it turns out that there is no or only a very weak correlation, we can readily conclude that there is no or only a small structuring effect of classes. More difficult, however, is the question whether the existence of a positive bivariate correlation should be considered a sufficient indicator of the existence of a

structuring effect of classes. To put the question differently: Do we need to study gross or net effects of the class variable to test the hypothesis of class structuration? Whereas a significant bivariate relationship indicates a gross effect, a net effect exists only if a significant correlation remains when other indicators of socioeconomic status like income or education are controlled for. The answer obviously depends not only on the meaning of *structuration* but also on the concept of class used. Because there are considerable correlations between class location and these other dimensions of status, the crucial question is whether education and income are considered indicators of class location or whether class location is considered a distinct variable measuring something beyond these (more or less) continuous indicators of socioeconomic status. To study the structuring effect of class in the latter sense, we obviously have to look for net effects, that is to say, additional effects of class controlling for various indicators of socioeconomic status.

In our following analysis we are going to look at both kinds of effects if at all possible. Unfortunately, however, information on net effects is not always available. According to the kind of effect identified - no effect, gross effect, or net effect - we'll be able to address the issue of class structuration in a more differentiated way.

One last remark is in order: conclusions about the degree of structuration are dependent upon the class scheme used. Especially relevant is the degree of detail included in the scheme. The higher the number of categories, the higher the probability that the class variable explains a large part of the variance and suggests a high degree of structuration. As we must rely on the studies as they are, we can only be sensitive to this methodological difficulty and qualify our conclusions by the information we have about the details of the class scheme.

Members of all classes, with the relatively inconsequential exception of farmers, have diverse origins. At the same time, some cross-national variations are notable.

Class reproduction tends to be lower in the U.S. and in Canada than in France and Germany. The rates of self-recruitment are lowest in the U.S. and Canada for the following groups: upper white-collar, small owners (the largest deviation), farmers, skilled blue-collar workers, and farm workers. On the other hand, the rate of self-recruitment among unskilled blue-collar workers is highest in the U.S. The single most notable deviant class is German skilled blue-collar workers (VI). Just less than half of this class had origins in that class - by far the highest level of class self-recruitment among the non-farm classes in any of the four countries. This case undoubtedly reflects the impact of the distinctive German educational system with its strong emphasis on apprenticeships for skilled manual work. Structuration here appears fairly significant, but this group, representing more than a third of the German male work force, also stands out for its distinctiveness.

Table 1: Class Self-Recruitment Rates in percent (Inflows - Based on the seven-category version of Goldthorpe's class scheme)

	Service Class	Routine Manual	Non-Petty Bourgeoisie	Farmers	Skilled Workers	Non-Skilled Workers	Agricultural Workers
	(I, II)	(IIIa, b)	(IVa, b)	(IV c)	(V, VI)	(VIIa)	(VIIb)
Canada	26	8	22	90	29	25	16
France	33	14	39	90	31	21	30
Germany	31	7	37	93	48	28	30
USA	26	13	23	80	24	32	22

Source: CASMIN Files, own calculations. For Canada: *De Sève* 1998.

In order to compare the different countries, we have calculated the variation coefficient (delta) between each of the societies by adding all the absolute values of differences and dividing the result by 2 (Table 2).

Table 2: Variation Coefficients - Inflows (Self-Recruitment)

	Canada	France	Germany	United States
Canada		26	30	17
France			19	30
Germany				36
United States				

France and Germany are relatively close on the self-recruitment dimension and almost equally different from the USA; the United States and Canada are also relatively close, and almost equally different from France and Germany. Class structuration as measured by self-recruitment rates is thus more pronounced in the two European societies than in the North American ones.

Now we use the results of outflow analyses - indicators of the intergenerational continuity of class location (Table 3). In all four countries, a substantial majority ended up belonging to a different class from the one they were born into. In general, class inheritance is more unusual than the rule, even if mobility, as well as the separate dimensions of mobility, is somewhat greater in the U.S. and Canada than in France and Germany (though Erikson and Goldthorpe caution that some of the apparent mobility in the U.S. may be artifactual). If the American pattern is "exceptionalist", as is commonly supposed, then it is a muted exception.

Table 3 further indicates that in all four countries mobility out of all classes is common. The sons of upper white-collar workers had notable class inheritance, but nonetheless, about four tenths of the French and Germans and almost half of the Americans and the Canadians raised in this class were downwardly mobile. Skilled blue-collar workers (VI) in Germany also had distinctly high class inheritance (49%), but the respective rates were lower in France (39%), and much lower in the U.S. (30%), and Canada (30%).

Table 3: Summary Measures of Outflows: France, Germany, U.S. and Canada (based on the seven-category-version of Goldthorpe's class scheme)

	Total Mobility Rate <sup>1</sup>	Total Vertical	Total Non-Vertical	Total Upward <sup>2</sup>	Total Downward
Canada	71	50	21	30	20
France	65	44	21	32	12
Germany	62	47	15	33	15
U.S.	73	55	18	40	15

<sup>1</sup> The percentage "off the diagonal" in a seven-category matrix.

<sup>2</sup> Total vertical mobility (column 2) is divided into upward and downward mobility

Source: CASMIN Files, own calculations. For Canada: *De Sève* 1998.

In all four countries the odds of attaining a higher class position clearly favor those advantaged by family circumstances, but their chances are just relatively good, never a matter that they can count on. Relatedly, in all four countries substantial proportions of sons from the lower classes attained higher class positions; intergenerational class mobility was common. And because most of this mobility was upward, reflecting the structural transformation of the workforce, many men could say that they did "better" than their fathers.

As for the inflows, we computed the variation coefficient for the measures of outflow (Table 4). France and Germany are closer to each other than the North American countries and are almost equally different from the latter.

In addition to the CASMIN results, it is worth summarizing the results of some other studies to show that structuration is apparent in light of other class schemes besides Goldthorpe's and that the results hold in more recent years.

Table 4: Variation Coefficients - Outflows

	Canada	France	Germany	United States
Canada		11	13	13
France			8	17
Germany				15
United States				

#### Wright's Perspective

Wright's Comparative Class Analysis Project allows for a direct comparison of the U.S. and Canadian cases based on a slightly collapsed version of his neo-Marxist class scheme, but not, unfortunately, the French and German cases. The simple origins by destination matrices for the two countries clearly indicate that Wright's classes in the early eighties are not socially closed, nor are class privileges or disadvantages routinely or even commonly transmitted across generations (*Western* 1994, *Kingston* 1996). The seven classes considered are: employer, petty bourgeois, farmer, expert manager, manager, expert, and worker.

Not surprisingly, the overwhelming number of farmers were raised in farming families (67% in the U.S., 94% in Canada). More crucially, among the other classes in this scheme, workers had the highest level of self-recruitment (45% in the U.S., 40% in Canada), but that, of course, also means that in both cases Wright's expansively-defined working class (including blue-collar and routine white-collar workers) is composed primarily of men with *non*-working class backgrounds. In Canada and the U.S., the classes with productive/exploitative assets - either ownership, skills, or organisational position - are marked by even more social diversity. Within the employer class, self-recruitment rates are 29 percent in Canada and 18 percent in the U.S. In both countries, not even a fifth of the petty bourgeois, expert managers, managers, or non-managerial experts were "recruited" from their own class. And, indeed, in both cases, more members of all the "exploiting" classes had

working class or farming origins than were "born into" their class - always by a wide margin.

The corresponding outflows make evident the de-structuring prevalence of intergenerational class inheritance. Overall, 70% of the U.S. men were mobile, as were 69% of Canadian men. How this gross rate is divided between upward and downward mobility is difficult to say because the different bases of exploitation are not hierarchically ranked, but what is clear is that the exploiting classes do not typically, or even commonly, pass on their particular class advantage to their offspring. Here are the fates of those raised in employer families, supposedly the beneficiaries of the most fundamental asset, ownership, in a capitalist society: in both countries a much higher proportion ended up as Workers (37% U.S., 28% Canada) than Employers (15% U.S., 14% Canada). A similar pattern holds for the offspring of Expert Managers, those presumably most advantaged by skill and organisational assets.

Nor is movement out of the working class some unusual accomplishment. Just under half of Canadian and U.S. working-class sons become some kind of "exploiter" in their own work life. Whether these mobility patterns indicate high or low rates cannot be answered on a priori theoretical grounds, but in remarkably similar ways, in both the U.S. and Canada class origins are by no means destiny.

#### *More on Canada / Quebec*

Inflow analysis of a 1986 Canadian national survey, relying on an eight-category scheme (see Chapter 5) showed that three quarters of all positions were filled with mobile people in Quebec, as well as in Canada (*Creese, Guppy and Meissner* 1991). No group can be described as an intergenerationally reproduced social class, except the farmers. Most notably, half of the upper white-collar class came from the two blue-collar working classes. On the other hand, a substantial majority of the upper blue-collar class came from that class (43%) or from the lower blue-collar class (33%). Thus, we again see that social reproduction is *relatively* high within the (manual) working class, but as Wright's data also showed, it is far from pronounced at any point in the hierarchy. This diversity in the social composition of the classes reflects the fact that almost eight out of ten men were intergenerationally mobile (the outflow). Much of this mobility was substantial: about half of the up-

wardly mobile crossed at least three "class" boundaries, and a third of the downwardly mobile did the same. This study confirmed what has been already observed in previous study (*Garon-Audy et. al.* 1979).

According to a 1994 survey, there was little change since 1986 (*Gauthier et. alii* 1997). This survey revealed that almost 80% of Canadians were mobile according to an eight-category scheme (identical proportions for Canada and Quebec). Self-reproduction is modest at the highest level (18% in the upper service class in 1986 and 20% in 1994) but higher in the lower service class (35% in 1986 and 38% in 1994), and much higher in the blue-collar (skilled and unskilled) class (46% in 1986 and 41% in 1994).

#### *More on France*

Our main conclusions about absolute rates of mobility in the 1970s are confirmed by more recent studies (for instance, *Goux and Maurin* 1996) relying on the six-category version of the French scheme PCS (see Chapter 1). The PCS categories are: farmers, self-employed and employers, higher service class, lower service class, white-collar employees, and blue-collar workers (skilled and unskilled together).

With the exception of farmers (86% self-recruitment), no category could be considered a closed group. The agricultural sector apart, only the blue-collar workers category had notable self-recruitment, 56%. Not even a quarter of the members of the higher service class ("cadres") were raised in this class, and more than a fifth were the sons of workers.

Inheritance of class position, as indicated by analyzing outflows, is most pronounced among the *cadres'* sons (53%) and workers' sons (45%). Nevertheless, even in these cases, these rates also imply that about half of the blue-collar workers' sons are upwardly mobile and about half of *cadres'* sons are downwardly mobile. In all other classes, even if long distance mobility is fairly unusual, a very substantial majority are mobile across generations. In short, gross mobility in light of the PCS scheme is high, even if net mobility is less important.

*More on Germany*

More recent analyses, relying on the 1986 wave of the German Socioeconomic Panel and a ten-category classification of classes (Geißler 1996: 235-239), support the conclusion that the German case only partially fits a general pattern of low structuration. As we saw with the CASMIN data and the Goldthorpe class-scheme, farmers (95%) and skilled blue-collar workers (43%) have the highest self-reproduction: no other class had rates that reached even a third. In light of the ten-category scheme, more than two thirds of German men were mobile, though this overall rate obscures some notable class specific variations and, moreover, does not reveal the predictable class variations in the odds of attaining particular positions (see 'Fluidity'). To an extent, however, this rather low structuration is a function of using a class scheme with many distinctions. A case in point is the self-employed with ten or more employees. While only 30 percent were raised in this class, another 30 percent had family origins within the class of self-employed with fewer employees. Similarly, the ranks of the skilled blue-collar workers are predominantly filled by men with some type of blue-collar background (67%). Thus, both broadly defined entrepreneurial and working classes are marked by considerable intergenerational continuity.

In an even more recent study, based on the data of the cumulated German Social Survey (ALLBUS) and a 6-category class-scheme, Hartmann (1998: 49) reports the following self-reproduction rates: upper service class, 31%; lower service class, 20%; skilled blue-collar workers / technicians, 53%; other blue-collar workers, 25%; self-employed, 41%; farmers and farm workers, 83%.

*More on the U.S.*

The somewhat dated "reference point" analyses -- Blau, Duncan and Tyree (1967: 1962 data) and Featherman and Hauser (1978: 1973 data) - show, in light of a five-category scheme, substantial mobility. Updates of these analyses using the U.S. General Social Survey for the 1970s and 1980s show remarkable stability. While overall mobility stayed essentially constant (about two-thirds), the rate of upward mobility appears to have declined slightly while the rate of downward mobility cor-

respondingly increased slightly (Gilbert and Kahl 1993). The *drop* in the retention rate within the upper white-collar class among younger workers is especially notable because that class has had the highest rate.

*Fluidity*

It is well-recognized that mobility is largely attributable to structural transformation of the economy, especially the constriction of employment in the agricultural sector and the increase of employees in the service sector and white-collar positions. The frequency of upward mobility in all industrialised nations does not represent, then, the triumph of some modern commitment to social openness so much as the technical need to meet new labour demands. As we previously argued, all this mobility in itself undermines class structuration, but analysis of social fluidity - the pattern of association between categories of origins and destination *net* of the effects of the marginal distributions of these categories (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992: 56) - is revealing of the operating mechanisms within the stratification system.

Much of the debate about social fluidity has hinged on two matters: (1) whether it has increased, as proponents of liberal industrial theory have believed, and (2) whether relative rates vary across societies or are basically similar, the so-called Featherman, Jones and Hauser hypothesis. The topic is highly technical and debates are important. The answer to the first question is that there is no obvious general important trend to increasing fluidity within advanced industrial nations, even if there may be slight increases in France (Vallet 1999), in Canada (H. Gauthier *et alii* 1997), and the U.S. (Hout 1988). In West Germany social fluidity has remained essentially unchanged except for a slight decrease of reproduction rates for the higher service class (A. Hall 1997: 132). That means that any de-structuring effects of fluidity, over and above that attributable to total mobility, have stayed modest or constant.

The most convincing answer to the second question is that the advanced industrial nations share a largely similar, though not fully identical, pattern of "core social fluidity" (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992). According to Erikson and Goldthorpe, France, Germany, and the U.S. fit this common pattern; indeed, the patterns in France (and England) provide the basis for this model. Commonality not divergence, argues 'The Constant Flux', is most remarkable, but some deviations from

core social fluidity may be relevant to variations in class structuration. In particular, in Germany, although *immobility* within the service class is actually relatively low, *mobility* from all non-skilled manual origins to all white-collar classes is also relatively low, and inheritance effects are unusually pronounced among the petty bourgeoisie. Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992: 151) conclude that fluidity in Germany "deviates from core expectations not so much in being generally greater or less, but rather in showing in various respects a more differentiated pattern".

In Germany intergenerational retention of class position is highest among the upper service class (45%), a far higher "success" rate in achieving such a privileged position than that of the sons of unskilled workers (10%), skilled workers (14%), or the workers' elite (19%). Hartmann (1998: 61) concludes that the chances of becoming upper service class for the son of a father in the upper service class are ten times greater than the chances of a son of an unskilled or semi-skilled blue-collar worker, even controlling for changes in the occupational structure.

Nevertheless, a measure of overall fluidity is essentially the same for Germany and France, both somewhat less than that for the U.S. (and for Canada according to the data analyzed by de Sève 1998). The U.S. also exhibits some distinctive tendencies, particularly a greater tendency for mobility (downward and upward) between the service class and both routine non-manual and non-skilled manual workers. As for absolute rates, then, there seems to be some evidence of a "continental divide" - that is to say, less similarity across than on both sides of the Atlantic.

These briefly summarized analyses of social fluidity suggest that some cross-national differences exist. Analysis of both absolute and relative mobility indicate that the U.S. and Canada may have slightly lower overall structuration in mobility terms than the two European nations, and German skilled blue-collar workers appear relatively "class-like" in mobility terms. However, the fact that the offspring of higher classes enjoy *relatively* good chances of economic success themselves does not negate the demographic diversity of classes in all four societies. On the one hand, the very reality of mobility in so many lives undermines structuration; on the other, there is also clear indication that opportunities to get access to the most favourable status positions are far from equally distributed across classes.

## Interaction

Does class substantially shape patterns of social association? In other words, do classes exist as communal groups?

Relevant studies suggest the answer is "no" in the United States. To illustrate this, consider the relationship between individuals' class and their three best friends' class (including relatives who are not in the immediate family and excluding all friends not in the labour force) (Kingston 1994). For both the respondents and their friends, the class categories are Wright's own slightly collapsed version of his recent class scheme. The most important point is that cross-class friendships are commonplace: 62% of the friendships are off the diagonal in a cross-tabular analysis. Only among the working class are a majority of friendships within class. Yet the working class is by no means socially isolated. At least a quarter of the members of all other classes have a very close working-class friend. Indeed, the capitalists, managers, and supervisors report *more* working-class friendships than friendships within their own class - more a sign of porous than impermeable boundaries. Residential boundaries appear quite permeable as well, though there may be an increasing tendency for upper white-collar workers to live in certain suburban areas as a group (Simkus 1978).

Studies of the class positions of friends in Germany only partially replicate the results for the U.S. (Clar 1986)<sup>4</sup>. Crosstabulations of respondents' class and their friends' class show that, with the exception of routine non-manuals, a majority of the respondents' friends are in a class position different from their own. However, a majority of the respondents' friends are either in the same or in a neighbouring class. The probability that people choose friends from their own or neighbouring classes is much higher than choosing their friends from distant classes; thus there is a positive correlation between respondents' class and friends' class.

<sup>4</sup> The data used by Clar (1986) are from the German Social Survey (ALLBUS) 1980. Respondents were asked for their three best friends, but the analysis only used the information on the first mentioned one. Class position was coded using the Goldthorpe classification.

A majority of the best friends of French people are in a class position (coded using PCS-6 categories) different from their own: 57% (Godechot 1996)<sup>5</sup>. Classes at the top and the bottom of the social ladder are more homogeneous than others (46% of *cadres*' best friends are themselves *cadres* and 52% of workers' best friends are themselves workers). There is a positive correlation between respondents' class and friends' class: the greater the social distance between classes, the lesser the odds of friendship. This is the usual pattern observed for homogamy or social mobility, but it seems a bit less marked in this case. It leaves room for cross-class friendship: 15% of workers' best friends are 'cadres' and 17% 'profession intermédiaire' (roughly equivalent to lower service class).

Recent studies of marriage patterns in Germany document continuing class-related selectivity that has at most slightly diminished over time (Müller and Noll 1997; Wirth and Lüttinger 1998; Teckenberg 2000). The most remarkable changes occurred in the upper service class as well as among the un- or semi-skilled blue-collar workers: while the former became more open in relation to the lower service class, the latter became more closed and separated in terms of marriage relations. This tendency has been interpreted as a trend towards an increasing marginalization of this class (Wirth and Lüttinger 1998). In France, recent studies do not show similar results. Class homogeneity in mating is decreasing, but educational homogeneity is increasing (Forsé and Chauvel 1995). There are no comparable studies on this aspect for Canada or Quebec.

### Cultural Orientations

Class structuration implies that classes have distinctive patterns of attitudes, values, and social behaviours, what have been called class cultures. Hoggart's (1957) classic book illustrates this approach. Again, do current empirical studies support the thesis of a class structuration? Comparative evidence on these topics is surprisingly difficult to obtain, despite the widespread availability of opinion polls and value surveys.

<sup>5</sup> Data from a 1982 survey about social relationship. Respondents were asked for their three best friends.

In the United States, there is little support for the reality of separate class cultures, at least when we look at such rough distinctions as embedded in a three-class-scheme. Middle-class (i.e., white-collar) families may be slightly more inclined than working-class families to value self-direction in their children (Kohn and Schooler 1983), but other important aspects of domestic life (including marital relations) appear remarkably similar from top to bottom in the class hierarchy (Locksley 1982). Moreover, class doesn't significantly affect a whole host of attitudes on social issues, values and lifestyle tastes, and communal attachments and socializing.

Perhaps the most simple way to indicate the wide range of cultural matters that are unrelated to class is to underscore all the no-effects and small effects in James Davis' "Achievement Variables and Class Cultures". Davis (1982) conducted a simple and usefully destructive analysis - destructive, that is, of widely held beliefs about the decisive impact of occupation on attitudes and beliefs. He grouped 49 items from the General Social Survey into five groups that can only be illustrated here: (1) morale (satisfaction with various dimensions of life); (2) attachment (memberships in community organizations, religious sentiments, socialising patterns); (3) politics (party identification, spending policies); (4) values and tastes (after job characteristics, t.v.-watching, newspaper reading); and (5) social issues (sexual relations, crime policy, the role of women).

Following Census Bureau classifications, Davis coded occupations into five categories: (1) Professional, Technical and Kindred, Managers and Administrators; (2) Clerical and Sales; (3) Craftsmen and Kindred; (4) Operatives, Labourers, Service Workers, and (5) Farm. Then, he found that occupation, net of education and fathers' occupation, had a substantive effect on only 18 of 49 items. Moreover, these effects are narrowly clustered and small. Here are some of the details leading Davis to conclude that his findings "cast considerable doubt on the class culture notion that occupational strata have vast and diffuse effects on the texture of our lives": (1) only one of eleven social issues, attitude toward the death penalty, is related to occupation; (2) the widest class spread on any of the eight items relating to values and tastes is for newspaper reading: the difference between professional/managers and operatives in daily reading rates is 15%; (3) the effects are concentrated on items that tap cynicism (trust of others, optimism about the future, attitudes toward public officials) and items related to jobs and economic security; they

are totally absent for other social orientations like free speech, race relations, gender roles, drugs, sexual behaviour, divorce, marital and general happiness, and socialising patterns; (4) of the minority of items that did show differences by occupational strata, no particular "class break" (blue-collar vs. white collar, upper white-collar vs. lower strata, or skilled vs. unskilled manual workers) is generally most pronounced. Davis' findings about the impact of fathers' occupation and occupational mobility also cast doubt on the significance of class cultures. Within the non-farm population, fathers' occupation had no net effect on any of the 49 items, nor did intergenerational occupational mobility.

In Canada, *Baer, Grabh and Johnston* (1993) studied a range of attitudes and perceptions based on data gathered in the Class Structure and Class Consciousness Study (ICPSR), using Wright's early measure of social classes. They found fairly large differences between classes in attitudes about corporations, labour and inequality, net of education, income, age, gender, and community size effects. "Predictably, workers are more likely to oppose power and inequality, to favour alternative views of society, and to support labour. Managers and owners are at the opposite extreme on all of these issues, with semi-autonomous workers and supervisors falling in between" (p. 25). But these differences did not extend to attitudes about gender inequality or the family. On these later issues, patterns of regional culture were more discriminant, with left-liberal Quebec on one side and a more conservative southern United States on the other<sup>6</sup>.

In Germany, the empirical studies of gross and net effects of social class present a divergent view. Social class is notably correlated with many culture-related attitudes, although the existence of separate class cultures may still be questionable. Subjective class identification and the Goldthorpe class variable are related to life satisfaction and satisfaction with several life domains, net of age and sex. The direct effects of the class variables are usually stronger than those for age or sex. The correlations with either subjective class identification or the Goldthorpe variable turned out to be particularly strong for satisfaction with the standard of living, satisfaction

<sup>6</sup> According to these authors, this study challenges the well-known Lipset thesis about a continental divide or about the differences between Canada and the USA, the differences being in fact between regions inside the two countries.

with household income, work satisfaction, satisfaction with leisure time (only Goldthorpe), and life satisfaction.

In addition, class is related to other matters like value orientations, importance of life domains, life goals, reading, and interest in the news. For 49 relevant survey items, in 33 cases there is a significant bivariate effect of the Goldthorpe variable (7 categories). In 34 cases in a multivariate analysis (MCA) the beta of the Goldthorpe variable is larger than the beta of education (5 cases equal); and in 33 cases the beta of the Goldthorpe variable is larger than the beta of the income variable (3 cases equal)<sup>7</sup>. More specifically, the class variable has significant effects on future optimism and political interest. For political interest, the bivariate correlation is 0,41 (eta), and net of education and income, the beta coefficient is ,32.

In France, the significance of class position for attitudes, social behaviour and values is considered self-evident by French social scientists. Almost all studies of any social behavior or attitudes present bivariate differences, primarily by using the PCS coding scheme, a proxy measure of class (*Lemel* 1991: 141). The various issues of the tri-annual handbook 'Données Sociales' are good examples.

Whether class has net effects, however, is not so clear. No large and systematic study following Davis' approach of evaluating the effects of class position net of education and other stratification measures is available for a comprehensive panel of attitudes, values and opinions. Such an assessment might look strange in the home country of 'La Distinction's' author, but Bourdieu himself has not tried to evaluate net effects, instead focusing on gross effects. French intellectual traditions incline scholars to look at class position as a more significant indicator of place in the social stratification system than income or any other continuous measure of status, so that the question of net effects, even the question of the magnitude of the gross effect, is not generally considered (for a recent example, *Riffault's* 1994 analysis of values).

For domestic life in France, there is nevertheless equivocal evidence for the existence of distinct class cultures. *Percheron* (1993, data 1975) analyzed the home

<sup>7</sup> Analyses by Noll, using data from the German Welfare Survey (N=3062). The analyses are restricted to the population of the former Federal Republic of Germany (N=2046). Similar results have been obtained in an earlier study using data from the German Socioeconomic Panel Study (*Noll and Habich* 1990).

life and values of both parents and children. She summarized the answers by constructing ten scales and a family typology of eight groups, and then compared the degree to which different demographic and social groups are over- or under-represented in each type. Percheron concluded that "the choice of a particular educational style and family life style [...] is not the consequence of the educational level of parents, social origin or area of living alone" (Percheron 1993: 109). Class membership matters, but it is not the main or the only factor to have effects. Identifying distinctive class styles in domestic life or educational practices is difficult because part of the upper class acts as the middle class does, and a significant part of the working class adopts middle-class patterns, not the 'laissez-faire' style that is often imputed to the working class. Menahem (1979) reached very similar conclusions: his 'sociation' model more frequently applies among the middle classes and the intellectual professions but not exclusively so, and the 'conjugal' model applies to some degree in all strata of wage-earning people. A possible explanation of these findings could be that the social structure was in a process of change so that new and old class distinctions overlap, but the important point here for the purpose of our paper is that no clear-cut division along a simple three-class scheme is apparent in France.

### Class Sentiment

Pakulski (1993) characterized the decline of class as the loss of imagined community. He refers to the decline of a social construction of a "we-ness" which had characterized the working class at the beginning of the century. Do manual workers still identify themselves as a working class? Can we see a class identification in other groups of salaried individuals?

E. O. Wright's work (1985) - perhaps the most celebrated in the resurgence of class theory - provides some of the most compelling evidence of low structuration in respect of class sentiment for the USA. He finds that all of the following seven classes within his twelve-class scheme (see Appendix) reported a working class identification of about 30 percent: proletarians, semi-credentialled workers, uncredentialled supervisors, semi-credentialled supervisors, uncredentialled managers, petty bourgeoisie, and small employers. Thus, those in the core of the working class

are generally disinclined to call themselves working class; they are no more likely to do so than putatively middle-class groups and even smaller capitalists. Furthermore, Wright's measure of class interest consciousness - essentially related to the desirable balance of power between labour and management - was not notably related to his measure of objective class location. The latter accounts for 6 percent of the variance in this scale for men - and none for women.

In Germany, class sentiment in terms of subjective class identification is a frequently used variable in social surveys (Noll 1999). The German Welfare Survey, for example, uses the following question: "Today there is much talk about social classes. To which class do you belong to - the working class, the middle class, the upper middle class, the upper class, other categories?" (The additional categories are: "none of these classes", "don't know", "classification rejected"). In 1993, 29% of the adult population in West-Germany saw their own position as being in the working class, 58% as being in the middle class, and 14% as being in the upper-middle or upper classes. Only 1% did not identify themselves with any of these classes.

The correlation between subjective class identification and socioeconomic status or objective class variables is rather strong. In terms of the Goldthorpe classification, 40% of the upper service class identify themselves with the upper middle/upper class and 54% with the middle class. Within the lower service class, 20% see their class position in the upper middle/upper class and 74% in the middle class. On the other hand, 58% of all workers, including elite workers, identify with the working class; excluding the elite workers, two thirds of blue-collar workers identify with working class. Among blue-collar workers, the working-class affiliation is strongest within the ranks of the unskilled. Middle-class affiliation among blue-collar workers is not only a matter of skill, but is also more likely if workers are house-owners, not employed in big industry and not members of trade unions. Overall, the correlation between class (Goldthorpe's scheme) and subjective class identification (3 x 7 table) is .26 (Lamda)<sup>8</sup>. Using an 11 category classification of

<sup>8</sup> H.-H. Noll, own calculations based on 'German Welfare Survey 1993'.

socioeconomic status, the association with subjective class identification ( $\eta = .48$ ) is even stronger (Noll 1998: 66).

Other survey results indicate that Germans widely perceive the significance of class differences. A majority (57%) of people in West Germany agreed with the statement: "In Germany there still exist large differences between the social strata. What one achieves in life depends primarily on the family you come from". Moreover, 63 percent of West Germans agreed with the statement: "In Germany there are still the old contrasts ("Gegensätze") between owners and workers. One's personal status depends primarily on belonging to the upper or lower social class" (Noll 1996: 492-494).

In France, according to surveys available from 1966 to 1994, a stable proportion of the respondents, around 60%, profess belonging to a social class. This proportion held roughly constant for thirty years with little fluctuation, except for a slight increase at the end of the eighties. So, a considerable minority of the population do not consider themselves as members of a social class. Nevertheless, it must be underlined that answers seem rather sensitive to the exact wording of the question. The question was generally limited to the sense of belonging, and no list of classes was presented to people that answered negatively. In some other surveys respondents were presented first with a large list of social classes but were not questioned directly about their sense of belonging. In these surveys, the proportion of people that refused to select a social class which they thought they belonged to was very small: around 3 or 4 percent.

Among people who had a personal sense of belonging to a social class, an important change took place. In 1966, people most commonly identified with the working class (39%), but this proportion declined to 22% in 1994. The sense of belonging to the middle class increased from 20% in the sixties to roughly 40% in the nineties. These results could be linked to the fact that during the same period the Communist Party decreased in power and the traditional opposition between the working class and employers diminished. More generally, some scholars connect these changes to a general weakening during this period of the traditional institutions organizing French society; thus the French population, in this view, became more interested in what happened locally and less interested in general national de-

velopments (Dirn 1990; Forsé, Jaslin, Lemel, Mendras, Stoclet and Déchaux 1993).

In terms of net effects, logistic regression analysis of a 1993 survey reveals that the most important factor structuring the feeling of belonging to a social class among different objective indicators of social position (such as occupation, educational level, age, gender, income of household) was not class or any other objective indicator of social status but the age of respondents. After age, the next most important variables are levels of education and income. Net of these variables, objective class position does not account for additional variance<sup>9</sup>. The age effect suggests some generational change. Older people are more inclined to identify themselves with a class than the younger. These changes could be related to more general changes in the value system between different generations born before, during, and after the Second World War (Drouin 1995).

It is well-documented that class consciousness is weak in Canada as well as in Quebec (Marchak 1975; Hunter 1981; Pammatt 1987). According to a 1979 survey, less than half (42%) of the Canadians think spontaneously of themselves as belonging to a social class, as indicated by answers to the question, "One hears a lot about different social class. Do you even think of yourself belonging to a social class?" (Pammatt 1987). This proportion is lower than the proportions observed in comparable surveys made in European countries.

When forced to choose an answer, the majority of people identify themselves with the middle class. According to the 1984 Canadian National Election Survey, 55% of the Canadian population (68,1% in Quebec) identify themselves with the middle class, 35,3% with the lower class (20,2% in Quebec), and 9,7% with the upper class (11,7% in Quebec) (Lambert, Curtis, Brown and Kay 1987: 541). These figures are close to observations made in Germany, France, and the U.S.: self-identification with the middle is now dominant in comparable developed countries. Moreover, Pammatt (1987) observed that a majority of Canadian respondents used, in defining their own class, an occupational definition; however, for assigning others to a social class, income was twice as important as occupation. In Canada,

<sup>9</sup> Y. Lemel, own calculations based on Centre d'Etudes de la Vie Politique Française's post-electoral survey 1993.

people tend to perceive other social classes primarily in terms of consumption levels rather than structural characteristics; inequality is at stake more than class.

In a comparative study between Canada and the USA, *Johnston and Baer* (1993) analysed the relationship between objective social class, as measured by the Wright class scheme, and three subjective indicators – class consciousness, subjective class identification and oppositional consciousness. They found weak direct links in Canada as well as in the United States.

Moreover, the relationship between class position and indicators of class consciousness appear even weaker in Quebec than in Canada as a whole (*Pammelt 1987; Nakhaie and Arnold 1996*).

It seems clear that for all countries it is no longer possible to speak of a clear class sentiment or class identification, especially among blue-collar workers and among the young. Workers identify themselves more with the middle class; this process seems most visible in North America. The labour market has changed; it is now more heterogeneous, so that the process of identification with one class is not so evident. The increase in income and wealth as well as the development of the educational system, among other factors, has also likely played a role in the changing self-identification.

### Political Action

In some views, classes exist only insofar as economically defined groups are politically engaged in pursuit of collective interests; thus politics defines class and is not one of its variable effects. To the contrary, others like E. O. Wright argue that class position has a historically contingent relation to political action; classes are real even if they are not political actors. We don't venture into this conceptual dispute and simply assess whether class positions are associated with political orientations – a matter that directly bears on the issue of structuration. Analysts have commonly examined voting behavior as well as political attitudes and opinions to assess the effect of social class in the political realm. The literature on the subject is vast<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> See among others the recently published volume "The End of Class Politics" (*Evans 1999*).

Common to all class theories is the statement or at least the implication that class position creates interests – that is, a systematic stake in maintaining or changing the political-economic status quo. Class theory is inherently political in this sense, and its general prediction is clear: the lower class(es) should be distinctly oppositional and the higher class(es) distinctly supportive of the prevailing political order. Even if class theorists diverge in analyzing the fundamental objective interests of various classes, they commonly suppose a natural order of events in the calculation of short-term interests. The working and lower classes should be attracted to the programs and ideologies of the left, and the upper and middle classes to the right – especially as these terms distinguish orientations to the welfare state. The most obvious matter to consider is whether people from different class locations have distinctive voting patterns. One approach to address this issue is by constructing class-voting indices, measures of the extent the working class votes for its party, the party of the left, and the middle class votes for its party, one on the right. Without detailing the debates about how best to construct such a measure and the election-to-election changes in results, it is fair to say that class voting appears low and perhaps in general decline.

To document this point, consider scores on the widely used Alford Index for party-class voting. The data for the four societies under study here can be seen from Table 5.

Table 5: Measures of Class Voting

	1945-1960		1961-1970		1971-1980		1981-1990	
	Alford Index	Thom-sen Index	Alford Index	Thom-sen Index	Alford Index	Thom-sen Index	Alford Index	Thom-sen Index
Canada	7,0	0,30	7,7	0,31	-	-	4,0	0,27
France	24,4	1,01	18,03	0,76	17,0	0,72	11,7	0,48
Germany	36,0	1,55	24,8	1,06	14,9	0,61	13,4	0,55
United States	16,2	0,67	7,7	0,36	10,9	0,46	8,1	0,34

Source: *Nieuwbeerta 1995: Table 3.1, Table 3.5*

While there have been year-to-year fluctuations, these scores have been generally downward in all the western democracies. By the eighties, according to the Alford Index, class voting is most pronounced in Germany, followed by France and the U.S. and lowest in Canada. *Franklin, Mackie and Valen* (1992) even contend that all so-called cleavage politics appears to be on the wane. They regressed "left vote" on a (roughly) standard set of socio-demographic variables, including working-class position, for sixteen countries. The class coefficients for the U.S. and Canada were trivial; for France the working class was about 11 points higher than others in left vote, for Germany 18 points higher. The full models for all four of our countries accounted for modest variation: 16% in Germany and substantially less in the others. They conclude: "This breakdown of traditional linkages [i.e., between particular social groups and political parties] involves nothing less than the disintegration of cleavage politics..."

However, this view is not undisputed. For one, critics of the Alford Index raise some valid objections: (1) that its values are sensitive to the marginals or in other words changes in the popularity of the political parties; (2) that its dichotomous measure of class is too simplistic; (3) that it doesn't account for the structural change from manual to non-manual jobs (*Therborn* 1995: 285), and (4) that the complexity of multiparty politics is not adequately represented. Accordingly, some analysts have turned to measures of "relative class voting", i.e., using log-odds ratios.

Using the Thomsen Index<sup>11</sup> (see Table 5) leads to somewhat different interpretations, although the ranking of the four societies under comparison turns out to be the same with either the Alford or the Thomsen Index, and both point to a decline in class voting. *Therborn* (1995: 286) concludes, "Class voting is still a distinctive characteristic of Europe in the 1980s"<sup>12</sup>. And *Nieuwebeerta* (1995: 195), although observing substantial declines in levels of class voting in many countries, con-

<sup>11</sup> Contrary to the Alford Index, the Thomsen Index is a relative measure: the natural logarithm of the odds-ratio for manual workers of voting left-wing rather than right-wing divided by the odds for non-manual workers of doing the same (*Nieuwebeerta* 1995: 39f).

<sup>12</sup> See also *G. Evans* (2000), who – based on a review of respective comparative research – argues for the continued significance of class voting and class politics in contemporary democracies.

cludes, "... substantial differences in levels of relative class voting existed between industrial countries in the post-war period. Of all countries under investigation, the Scandinavian countries and Britain had the highest level of class voting, and the United States and Canada the lowest". France and Germany had intermediate levels of class voting. Given this apparent variability, separate attention to each country is warranted.

At least for Germany, *Franklin, Mackie and Valen's* conclusion may be extreme if not misleading in light of a more finely gradated sense of class. According to several studies, class differences remain consequential for electoral outcomes. Class position, as measured by occupational status, is still among the most important determinants of voting behaviour (*Jung and Roth* 1994: 10), although there may have been a decline in the importance of class-membership across time. *Schnell and Kohler* (1995: 647) similarly conclude, "indicators of class membership have been and still are the best socio-structural predictors of voting intentions"; but they also observe "a rather strong decline of the explanatory power of these variables over time looking at data from 1953 to 1992". However, their finding of a decline in class voting is not undisputed. *Müller* (1993: 114) concludes: "...as far as the question of realignment of political preferences with particular classes is concerned the present analysis presents no straightforward support of such a hypothesis [...]. The SPD is still the party of the working classes. The self-employed vote for the CDU or FDP. The new middle classes were not as clearly affiliated in the party system as the working classes and the old middle class. But they continue to vote less for the SPD than the other wage-dependent classes".

In another recent analysis, using a more differentiated classification of the service classes, which are rather diverse in their collective political interests, *Müller* (1998) found that tendencies of diminishing traditional class cleavages have been accompanied by the emergence of new class cleavages rooted in the growing service classes: "The traditional class cleavage has slightly declined between the cohorts. However, the class-based voting pattern for the Greens shows that with this party a new class-based dimension emerged in the social bases of the party system".

In France, the Alford Index was higher than in Germany for the period 1971-1980, and lower in the eighties, but much higher than in the USA and Canada. The decline in the Alford Index illustrates the weakening relationship between social

class and vote. As elsewhere in Europe, in the 1970s there were distinct political parties of the left (a strong socialist party and a strong communist party) and right (UDF). In the seventies, the working classes and lower level white-collar employees tended to give their support to the left, while higher level white-collar employees and the self-employed voted to the right. During the eighties, however, the identification of political parties with specific social classes became less evident, especially with the continuous decline of the Communist Party. In the nineties, a new right-wing extremist party - the Front National - succeeded in attracting cross-class support, thus further undermining the class structuration of politics. Part of the former Communist vote went to this party in the nineties. It then became even less evident that social class was clearly related to vote.

Adopting the Michigan approach, *Boy and Mayer* (1990) showed also that other factors affected the votes of the French, especially religion and wealth, in interaction with social class. The title of a well-known book illustrates this fact: 'France de gauche vote à droite' (Left France votes for the Right). This research showed that lower-class voters, presumably oriented to the left, actually gave their support to the right if they owned their house or apartment.

Many analyses of Canadian voting confirm the low level of class structuration in politics (e.g., *Johnston and Ornstein* 1982; *Chi* 1973; *Lambert, Curtis, Brown and Kay* 1988; *Pammatt* 1987; and *Fletcher and Forbes* 1990). These analyses indicate the strong impact of regional and linguistic group influences on political life. Indeed, with the disappearance of the NDP at the federal level in the 1990s and the growing importance of two major regional parties - the Bloc Québécois in Quebec and the Reform Party in the Western provinces - the structuration of classes in political terms appears to be ever weaker.

Although most analysts see, at most, modest indications of class voting throughout the western democracies, this view is still contentious, even for the United States. On the one hand, *de Graaf, Nieuwebeerta and Heath's* (1995) analysis of U.S. voting patterns shows that in *all* classes (a modified version of Goldthorpe's scheme) a minority (33-46%) voted "left" (Democratic). Moreover, class differences are small even among voters whose class origins and destinations were the same, i.e., the "stable" members of each class. On the other hand, *Hout, Brooks and Manza* (1995) employ a six-class scheme and look at third party votes and non-

voting as significant political behaviours in addition to the main two-party split. Their measure of "total class voting" fluctuates quite widely across elections from 1948 to 1992 without any clear trend. Their analysis also shows some realignments in class voting, most notably the greater tendency, post 1968, of non-managerial white-collar workers and professionals to support the Democratic Party. At the same time, the commitment of skilled workers to this party has varied significantly from election to election. What is critical to emphasise here is that classes are not persistently committed in their electoral support. A comparison of the 1988 and 1992 elections shows that, at the extremes of volatility, skilled workers moved from a large Republican majority (72%) to a substantial Democratic majority (60%), as did professionals (56% Republican to 61% Democratic). If there is class voting in particular elections, it is not enduring. Contrasts between the most partisan classes in any election are notable; in both of these recent elections the difference in Democratic vote between "capitalists" and "workers" was about 30 percent. Yet in 1992 no other class differed from the overall Democratic total by even ten points. The critics' own conclusion is apt, "Although the United States has had *low* but significant class voting throughout the post-war period, class politics has *never* grown from it (our emphases, 806)".

Overall, then, the voting booth no longer registers class conflict to any substantial degree in our two North American countries. Its impact in our two European countries is greater, in Germany even more so than in France. To be sure, political identity is not fully indicated by voting choices, but it is fair to say that today the political party system does not give institutional form to classes and class conflict to the same degree as it used to. Counter to *Lipset's* famous early argument in 'Political Man' (1981), class conflict is not now institutionalized in the political arena, transformed into an electoral contest among competing political parties - what he called the democratic class struggle. Political identities are increasingly the product of life-style choices, value commitments, cultural identities (ascribed and other), and narrow, often local economic concerns that crosscut each other and are less frequently aligned with class divisions.

## Ways of Living, Consumption, and Quality of Life

Has economic growth and wider economic affluence undermined class differences in lifestyles and the like? We consider this sixth dimension of structuration mainly by studying family budgets, a key indicator of class distinctions, but we also consider differences in objective living conditions and perceived quality of life.

Our comments about the class structuration of ways of living and consumption patterns in the U.S. can be very brief. The topic has received little attention because there is so little evidence of distinctive class-based behaviours. To be sure, richer people buy *more* consumer items (televisions, appliances, cars) and *more expensive* items, but no particular type of possession marks the person as belonging to a specific class. Homes, as an important instance, range enormously in size and quality, but homeownership (now almost two thirds of households) is widespread and is not restricted, as either the dream or the reality, to the lives of the middle or higher classes. As Americans acquire the money to buy a home, they generally prefer to do so, and when they get enough money to buy an even better house, they often do that, too.

What's in these homes? Halle offers an unusual perspective on the connection between class and art. He visited homes in neighbourhoods across the class hierarchy, and contrary to the "Bourdieuian" notion that classes consume different sorts of art, he found that depopulated landscapes most commonly hang on the walls in the homes of all classes. Abstract art - often taken as the sign of sophisticated taste - was relatively prevalent but still not common in the most affluent neighbourhoods. Halle cautions against "decoding" some cultural meaning in this art: "...the urge to decorate plain white walls, a central factor underlying the liking for abstract art, is widespread" (Halle 1993: 197). What Halle finds for art also holds for other tastes and related behaviors. Reviewing the literature, DiMaggio (1994: 459) writes, "Although taste is 'differentiated' by social status, there is no sign of discrete taste classes with sharply 'segmented' preferences". That means little class structuration in this realm. DiMaggio adds, "Moreover, although all researchers report positive associations between measures of socioeconomic status and taste, the proportion of variance that these measures explain is low."

Finally, we may note that U.S. marketing experts do not target broad classes in their promotional effects, but instead identify much narrower "lifestyle enclaves" that are not defined by class location. For example, one widely used analysis has identified, through cluster analysis techniques, some *forty* different neighbourhood types (Weiss 1988). That sort of fine differentiation seems to better characterize the American condition than the larger categorizations of class theory.

In Germany scholars have not frequently studied the links between family budgets and class. However, much German research on social indicators suggests that objective living conditions and subjective well-being are correlated with class position. Housing conditions, working conditions, and educational opportunities of children, for example, are all related to occupational status, income, and education. Similar associations have been found for indicators of subjective well-being. Noll and Habich (1990), for example, document that living conditions and quality of life, as measured by numerous objective as well as subjective indicators, are linked to class position. They first showed bivariate associations between many indicators and class position (Goldthorpe classification); and in multivariate models incorporating gender, age and nationality as additional independent variables, they also found "net" effects of class. Overall, living conditions and the subjective quality of life in Germany are still considerably linked to social-class membership; broadly speaking, people in the same social class have significantly similar living conditions. However, this summary conclusion must be qualified in several respects, because the relationships are more or less pronounced depending upon life domain, and the differences between class positions are sometimes small. While differences between those at the top and bottom of the class hierarchy are particularly sharp, differences between classes in the middle of the hierarchy are less pronounced, and their distinctiveness varies with the indicators under examination. Moreover, the inequalities of living conditions and quality of life are not reducible solely to class membership. The explanatory power of variables like age, gender and nationality indicates that social inequality is not only vertically but also horizontally structured. The principal of structuration that dominates varies across life domains.

The French sociological tradition has always attached great importance to social class in explaining consumption and life style (Halbwachs 1913, 1933; Goblots 1933; Baudelot and Establet 1994). In his well-known book about social classes

and ways of living, *Halbwachs* (1913) analyzed family budgets of manual workers and white-collar employees, and tried to show that the structure of consumption, net of any income effect, revealed the specific orientations and habits of these classes. To distinguish the classes, he underlined their distinctive budgets for housing, food and clothes.

Such a line of reasoning can be traced from Halbwachs to contemporary French writers. On this matter, it is difficult if not impossible to find a study without some reference to differences among socio-professional groupings (PCS) (as long as the whole population is being considered). Most prominently, Bourdieu's class scheme is in part a by-product of life-style and consumption analysis, based on statistical comparison of mean practices among members of various professional groupings (PCS classification). Food consumption of blue-collar workers is still a topic of special concern (*Grignon and Grignon* 1980).

In some respects, nevertheless, such emphasis can be questioned. The question is Halbwachs' question: how much of the differences in household consumption can be imputed to class membership net of differences in income? This point can be considered from a longitudinal as well as a cross-sectional contemporary point of view. For the cross-sectional contemporary scene, conclusions are straightforward. Class membership hardly matters in explaining households' consumption if consumption is not considered in very fine detail. Income and household composition alone adequately explain households' differences in consumption patterns. It is only for matters of more subtle differences - choices among brands, for example - that class membership appears to be consequential. In fact, the more detailed the consumption budget, the greater the explanatory power of class membership (*Lemel and Verger* 1986).

In a longitudinal perspective Halbwachs' question implies the need to analyze changes over time in the income-elasticities of consumption for different classes. Scholars generally agree that convergence has occurred for some aspects of consumption, but differences still persist for other aspects. Looking at the 1956-1979 period, *Herpin and Verger* (1988) arrived at two important conclusions: first, tastes are not really socially heterogeneous, and second, there were no radical taste changes during this time. Class differences in consumption are present, but are not very important, a result that strongly qualifies Bourdieu's distinction hypothesis.

For Quebec, following Halbwachs' approach, *Tremblay and Fortin* (1964) conducted the first study of the budgets and consumption patterns of salaried families. They examined the effect of three different factors on the structure of consumption: income, rural-urban milieu, and social class as measured by a four-category classification - white-collar workers (clerks and sales people), and three levels of blue-collar workers (skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers). The gross effect of social class on the structure of family budgets was important, but this effect was due mainly to differences of income. Class differences strongly diminished when income was controlled; income was the most important factor in determining patterns of consumption. Tremblay and Fortin also studied living conditions as measured by subjective evaluations and material aspirations. Class per se, net of income and rural-urban location, had an effect. In particular, skilled workers (employees and skilled blue-collar) differed from semi-skilled/unskilled blue-collar workers, the former having higher aspirations than the latter due to better working conditions. In two replications of the original study conducted in 1977 and 1988, *Langlois* (1982, 1989) found a significant effect of income, which was the main predictor of aspirations, though Blishen scores (used to characterise the occupation of husbands in households) had a somewhat lesser effect. More generally, Canadian researchers have shown that social differentiation and differences in consumption patterns and behaviour are more and more 'within' classes - and not mainly between classes as it was the case in the fifties and the sixties (*Myles, Picot and Wannell* 1993; *Gardes, Gaubert and Langlois* 2000). Occupational hierarchies and class schemes - familiar positional approaches - are less significant in explaining consumption, which is strongly related to income and factors which affect employment.

In summary, social class no longer affects consumption as clearly as when T. Veblen has elaborated his theory of conspicuous consumption or when Halbwachs conducted his surveys. Factors which affect consumption are now more complex; disposable family income, age or life-cycle, and life-styles all play an important role. We should add, however, that the situation is less clear when we consider subjective indicators or social representation of well-being. It seems that social class continues to play some role in evaluating the situation, especially in Germany.

## CONCLUSIONS: CONTEMPORARY CLEAVAGES AND CONFLICTS

Consistent with our view of *class-ness* as a multi-dimensional variable, it is not our intention to make a single summary judgement that class has died or remains an encompassing structural force in advanced capitalist society. As we previously indicated, our approach suggests that class structuration may be relatively pronounced in some dimensions - and that it may be variable across societies and over time. Classes are therefore 'more real' to the extent that economic, cultural and political similarities reinforce group solidarity. Yet strong structuration across all dimensions does *not* represent the criterion by which the reality of classes should be assessed. Even with relatively low structuration in some dimensions, there still can be very significant social divisions in class terms.

Given this perspective, we should consider the question: to what extent do groups of people having a common economic position share distinct, life-defining experiences? For all the research that we cited, however, that question is not easy to answer. For one matter, as evident in the preceding pages, we lack fully suitable analyses for each dimension of structuration in all four countries. Moreover, neither we nor others have developed a theoretical case for "weighting" the various dimensions of structuration in an overall assessment. Still another difficulty is that the distinction between what we called gross effects and net effects creates significant ambiguities. For example, if modest class differences on some attitudinal measures are "accounted for" wholly or largely by class differences in education, should one conclude that there is evidence of class structuration or that education itself is the stratifying force? And, finally, there is no theoretically developed "metric" by which to judge the magnitude of structuration - what is low or high? Considered together, these points counsel caution and provisional conclusions. Yet these cautionary concerns must be balanced against the strong claims of class analysis perspective, namely, that class is a fundamental stratifying force - if not the most fundamental force. If that is so, fairly consistent evidence for structuration should appear for at least some of its dimensions.

In the following we shall summarize our findings country by country.

## Canada/Quebec

In Canada, class structuration appears to be fairly modest along the dimensions examined, especially so at the end of the period under examination. In Quebec as well as in the rest of Canada, there is a clear decline of the influence of social class, be it direct or indirect as measured by gross or net effect. This is evident when we consider subjective indicators, like class identification or class consciousness, as well as attitudes and opinions about a variety of items like family or gender inequality. Class identification is weak and views on a large number of subjective indicators are not aligned with class position, but there are some exceptions. For example, there are differences among classes on attitudes toward corporations, labour and inequalities. Class voting and class politics have declined in importance, from an already low level. There are important lifestyle differences among groups, but these differences are not defined along class lines. New sources of differences exist: gender, age, dual- versus single-income families, region, and education. It seems that exclusion from the consumption society is now a more important issue than class differences.

Canada is another example of the misleading, one-side-of-the-story diagnosis of social mobility that *Ringen* (1987, 1997) said applied to Great Britain. Canadian sociologists who analyzed social mobility in the seventies and eighties focused on the differences in life chances associated with different origins and largely neglected the high level of total mobility from all social origins (outflow mobility) and the related diversity of class backgrounds among the members of all classes (inflow mobility). Important changes in both the occupational structure and the educational system contributed, among other factors, to reduce the influence of class origins.

## France

The French case resists general summary because conclusions from the survey differ from one dimension to the other. They also differ whether gross effects or net effects are analysed.

From a gross perspective and for behaviours and attitudes, class structuration exists to a certain extent, even if the magnitude of gross differences are more important for some matters and more modest for others. Some structuration is undoubtedly present for consumption, cultural orientations, and patterns of interactions and the possibility of ascertaining someone's class position on the basis of behaviours in such realms of everyday activity is significant, though not consistently high. Class sentiment and political action are dimensions for which class structuration appears less important, particularly at the end of the period under examination.

From the "net" perspective, however, class structuration in all these dimensions is rather low, if not absent. Class differences largely vanish when level of income, level of education, and demographic factors such as age and size of the households are taken into account. Some instances of "net" effects of class affiliation exist, but, overall, they are the exception rather than the rule.

For the dimension of social mobility, the pattern of class structuration appears here rather different. From a "gross" perspective, class structuration is low, but it is high from a "net" perspective. The "net" perspective in the context of social mobility analysis refers to so-called "fluidity analysis", the degree to which the relative odds for moving from different origins to the same destinations changed with time. In France, changes in the occupational structure explain nearly all of the changes in these odds. So, the structural pattern did not change. Nevertheless, the level of overall mobility was high throughout the period, and correspondingly the origins of the different social classes were diverse.

As noted before, French sociologists have tended to emphasize the high level of class structuration in the dimension of social mobility that is apparent from a "net" perspective rather than the low level of structuration in light of a "gross" one. Conversely, the "gross" perspective has held sociologist's attention when they analyse the determinants of everyday life. By making these choices, French social scientists have lent support to the popular representation of French society as a class society. Even though some have strongly disagreed with the idea that France is a "class" society, the longstanding pre-eminence of Marxist orientations among French "intelligentsia" has buttressed this view. However, class structuration is certainly less evident in objective terms than French people often suppose it to be. Indeed, social

mobility in a "net" perspective is the only dimension for which high degree of class structuration is certain.

### Germany

Class still structures German society to a larger degree than the other societies under examination here. The impact of class structuration can be observed for all the dimensions studied, though varyingly so. Although all classes, including the working classes, took advantage of the expansion of white collar and service class jobs, access to these privileged occupational positions in relative terms is still far from equally distributed across all social classes. Moreover, although there are not clear-cut and easily visible class barriers in everyday social life, the likelihood of having a friend belonging to one's own class or a class close to one's own is still much higher than having friends belonging to distant classes. Even the extent of class homogamy did not decrease considerably during the last quarter of the century. Although there was a slight tendency towards more openness in the upper service class, there was a slight tendency to more closure within the working class. Class position is also still associated with many attitudes and beliefs, even if sharply delineated separate class cultures are not evident. Few Germans decline any subjective class identification, and there is a remarkable correlation between subjective class identification and socioeconomic status. In addition, class images still play an important role in the political thinking of the population, particularly in the east of Germany. Even for political action, class position did not lose its significance and importance. Although some studies indicate that the traditional class cleavage has slightly declined across age cohorts, there is also evidence that, connected to the growth of the service classes, new class cleavages have emerged. And finally the available data clearly show that there are still considerable differences in the standard of living and the quality of life among social classes, even if there has been a tremendous improvement in both across the whole of the population, thus perhaps undercutting the significance of the remaining differences.

Is all this to say that today's Germany is thus still a class society like that of the early twentieth century, a society driven by class conflicts in which class divisions were readily visible and the dominant principle of structuration? Has Germany

changed less than the other societies? The answer to both of these questions is certainly no. Obviously the German society has undergone far-reaching changes in many realms of life, as did the other societies considered here. Not only did the economic and occupational structure undergo radical changes from an industrial to a postindustrial society, but living standards, social security, educational opportunities, extent of free time, and the role of women also all changed so that people across all classes had more opportunities and options. These changes in Germany have been part of a general trend towards individualization and a more differentiated and pluralistic social structure (Beck 1986). Moreover, other forms of inequality like gender inequality, age inequality and ethnic inequality have gained in importance compared to the traditional class divisions. These changes do not necessarily imply, however, that traditional structures have disappeared and that class position has lost its impact. New forms of inequality coexist with older forms. Yet if traditional group-based and the new individualized structures do coexist at least to some extent, we are led to ask why is it that the impact of class position is more pronounced in Germany than in the other societies examined here, especially the two North American ones? We do not have a satisfactory answer as yet, but Germany's tri-partite school system, dual-system of professional education, and work-based welfare state regulations are surely relevant factors. In addition, the reunification process also seems to have reinforced the traditional elements of the social structure.

## United States

Our conclusions about the U.S. are based on a wide range of data, reviewed more extensively in Kingston (2000). It is not a matter of adjudicating among the merits of competing class maps. None points to basic fissures that define the contours of social life in this society. We find that classes are not demographically well-formed groups. The "members" of all classes have diverse class origins – to the point, indeed, that substantial majorities of conventionally defined classes were raised in a different class from their own. Individuals do not usually, much less routinely, inherit their class position: a large majority move out of their family's class, and a good part of this mobility is long distance, crossing more than one class boundary.

While the overall correlation between class origins and destinations is quite modest, intergenerational mobility may be somewhat more regular within both blue-collar and white-collar categories than across them. The analyses on this point are not fully consistent, however, and because this divide is so frequently traversed, it cannot be portrayed as a fundamental barrier delimiting life chances.

Class does not substantially shape patterns of social association. To the extent structuration occurs, it may be most evident among an upper-middle class of professionals and managers, but because cross-class friendships and neighbours are generally so common, the class system is not socially reinforced as a set of distinct cultural groups. Furthermore, there is little support for the reality of separate class cultures. Middle class (i.e., white-collar) families may be slightly more inclined than working-class families to value self-direction in their children, but other important aspects of domestic life (including marital relations) appear remarkably similar from top to bottom in the class hierarchy. Class also does not significantly affect a whole host of attitudes on social issues, values and lifestyle tastes, and communal attachments and socializing.

The connection between objective class position and class consciousness is weak. And if large numbers cannot place themselves in the "right" class, other indications of class members having common class consciousness are even less discernible. As a predictive variable for political orientations, class position generally accounts for little, and in many respects verges on the irrelevant. At the individual level, class cleavages do not express political cleavages. A caveat is in order here that applies to our other cases as well. We do not systematically examine structuration as it may bear on the reality of a very elite upper class or of (largely unemployed) lower class, what is often called the underclass. Both groups largely escape the gaze of sociologists using representative samples of the general population.

## Cleavages and Inequalities

Our general conclusion is that class structuration is not wholly absent in the examined societies, but this structuration is at most modest, varying according to the dimension of structuration under consideration and whether gross or net effects are considered. At the same time the extent of structuration is not uniform across socie-

ties. On all dimensions, it appears low in the United States and Quebec. Although we find some indications of an "Atlantic divide", there is certainly no simple and overall contrast between an "open" New World and a "class-ridden" Old World. Indicators of structuration generally are lower in France than the impression created by Bourdieu, though somewhat more pronounced than in our North American societies (especially in the political realm). Structuration appears more notable in Germany, and even there, only certain parts of the class structure, most significantly the self-employed and the upper working class (i.e., skilled blue-collar workers), appear distinctive.

Perhaps the most consequential uniformity across all four societies is that classes, with the strong exception of farmers, are not demographically well-formed groups. It is well-established that advanced industrial societies differ in their rates of absolute mobility because of variations in occupational structure. However, there is sufficient uniformity in these four cases so that the "members" of all classes have diverse origins; large majorities of most classes were raised in a class different from their own. Relatedly, in all four countries, individuals generally do not inherit their class position, and much of this mobility is substantial, crossing more than one class boundary. This is not to deny the 'relatively' high demographic coherence of some segments of the class structure, the (blue-collar) working classes in particular by comparison to the middle-classes. Nor is to deny that the relative odds of mobility are notably related to class origins. Yet the high rates of mobility, caused by dramatic changes in the occupational structure, are an inescapable and consequential fact for the fate of classes. As Goldthorpe and others have argued, some persisting socio-demographic coherence seems to be the bedrock condition for class formation in other respects. *Because* so many people have themselves been mobile, they would seem less likely to develop a sense of common fate with others in similar economic circumstances or to share political commitments and cultural practices.

Indeed, on the political front, it is impossible to say that electoral competition represents the democratic institutionalization of the class struggle. Especially in Germany, classes do still "lean" in predictable ideological directions in particular elections, but political parties are not defined by distinctive class bases and thus can do little to create the trans-local imagined communities of class. Increasingly, class

cleavages have less salience in the political realm than cleavages based on, 'inter alia', race, gender, citizenship, and environmental attitudes.

In terms of the other dimensions of structuration, it seems fair to conclude that there are not clear-cut, visible class barriers in everyday life. In none of our four societies could one say that particular behaviors or attitudes represent "middle-class culture" or "working-class culture" because cultural practices so readily traverse class lines. At the same time, even if distinctive class divisions are not evident, it should be recognized that class location is correlated with a wide range of attitudes, and in some cases these correlations are moderately substantial. Given this pattern, the advocates of a sociology of distinction faces a quandary: how can distinct cultural dispositions reproduce the class system if there are not clear class-rooted distinctions to activate? Lifestyles and cultural commitments proliferate, but they are linked to many social identities -- diverse, cross-cutting, and often impermanent. Culture thus has a life of its own that is neither derivative of class nor epiphenomenal. *Myles and Turegun* (1994: 120) point to another factor promoting class de-structuration: "For the most part, wage polarization and growing labour market insecurity have grown within, not between classes, during the 1980s. As a result, the familiar positional approach has lost some of its analytical power for explaining much that is consequential to class theory, whether Marxian or Weberian".

Our comparative analysis establishes important similarities and some modest differences in structuration. This variation makes one point clear: advanced capitalism per se does not impose a uniformly low level of structuration. *Generally* low structuration may be the result in economies marked by a complex, highly differentiated division of labour and the widespread availability of transportation and information technologies that break down local work-based solidarities; but the logic of advanced industrialism is not fully determinative.

Yet, by the same token, the existing variation cannot be accounted for by any simple theoretical model. Our four-country comparison suggests the value of attending to historical particularities and political contingencies. Here is not the place to account for any German "exceptionalism", but to repeat our earlier point, the tripartite school system, dual system of professional education, and system of work-based welfare state provisions have to be considered relevant factors. That is, the institutional practices of the state do not simply reflect class pressures; these prac-

tices also reinforce class cleavages. And, we might speculate, the reunification may reinforce the traditional elements of the social structure.

One of the defining themes of post-modern thought is that the Grand Narratives are no longer compelling. Much of class theory, especially its Marxian variants, embodies some kind of Grand Narrative - suggesting, as an extreme example, that human emancipation will be realized through class conflict and by its eventual transcendence. But class theory does not fail just because its Grand Narratives have not been played out. As noted in the introduction, *class analysis* does not entail a theory of history. Rather, it makes a more modest but still substantial claim: that class is the main axis, or at least one of the main axes, of differentiation. Even in this analytical perspective, our review suggests that class structuration is no longer as important as frequently assumed. Some indications of structuration by class are apparent, but they are hardly prominent or pervasive. Debates about the impact of class in shaping the future of advanced capitalist societies are therefore largely moot.

Jencks' (1991: 97) insight is apt here: "We use class labels precisely because we want to make the world tidier than it is". The shorthand of class analysis conveniently places the complexities of many lives in comprehensible terms. At the macro-level, this shorthand also promises to explain the underlying foundations of political life - struggles among a few, relatively permanent and cohesive "blocs" of contestants. Yet however rhetorically convenient or ideologically appealing this shorthand may be, it comes at the cost of misrepresenting society. Class analysis is a blunt tool in an increasingly complex world. It is not a tool to be totally discarded, but its limited value must be acknowledged. The challenge ahead is to develop an integrated understanding of social organization that reflects the impact of multiple hierarchies, including continuous dimensions of economic status, categorical distinctions based on gender, ethnicity and citizenship, the mini-solidarities of some work situations and localities, and many cultural groupings.

As a final point, this argument does not point to the end of ideology, inequality, conflict, or history. New social identities can and do come to the fore even as class-rooted experiences have become less life-defining. With structural differentiation, then, other hierarchies critically shape identities. People can find common cause along divisions such as gender, race, age, and type of households. Other divisions can be socially consequential as well: between those differentially favoured in the

realm of consumption (e.g., homeowners vs. renters vs. the homeless), between those with different stakes in governmental largesse, and between those in different localities. And cross-cutting the impact of these hierarchies, the social divisions of those with competing moral-cultural visions have a potent force of their own. All these fissures do not align to create just a few antagonistic "alliances", but they are socially consequential because many groups - the aggrieved and the favoured - have the technical and economic resources to create these social identities and mobilize effectively on their basis. There is potential for social conflict on many fronts.

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Appendix

Table 1: Class Maps

CLASS DIVISIONS	Relation to Occupation/ Property Categories	Est. Size* (Percentage)	Conceptual Basis
<b>1. Giddens (1973)</b>			
Upper	Large property owners/ top executives	1	Shared market capacity shaped by ownership, skill and manual labour power – reinforced as distributive and socio- cultural groupings
Middle old upper lower	White-collar position small proprietors managers, professionals routine office, sales	54,59	
Working upper lower	Blue-collar positions skilled unskilled	40-45	

2. Goldthorpe

Service Class (Class I)	Higher-grade profession- als, high-level managers (I & II)	28	Broadly shared market and work situations: sources and amount of income, job security, and location with- in systems of authority and control
«Cadet» Service Class (Class II)	Lower-grade professionals and administrators, higher- grade technicians, small business managers, super- visors of non-manual workers		
Routine Non-Manual (Class III)	Routine administration; routine sales, service	11	
Petty Bourgeoisie (Class IV)	Small proprietors, self- employed artisans	7	
Farmers (Class Ivc)	Farmers and other self- employed in primary edu- cation	3	
Skilled Workers (Class V, VI)	Skilled manual, lower technicians, supervisors, supervisors manual workers	24	
Non-Skilled Workers (Class VIIa)	Semi- and unskilled manual workers	26	
Agricultural labourers (Class VIIb)	Agricultural and other workers in primary pro- duction	1	

3. Gilbert and Kahl (1993)			
Capitalist Upper Middle	Large owners High-level managers, professionals, medium owners	14	Clusters of shared status defined by source of income, occupation, and education, plus related processes of symbolization
Middle	Lower managers, semi- professionals } sales (non- retail), craftsmen, fore- men }	60	
Working	Operatives, low-paid craftsmen } clerical, retail sales }		
Working Poor	Service, labourers, low- paid operatives }	25	
Underclass	Unemployed, welfare receptients }		
4. Rossides (1990)			
Upper	Large owners	1-3	Shared levels of benefits across dimensions of eco- nomic standing, prestige, and power
Upper Middle	Suibstantial proprietors, upper-level managers and professionals	10-25	
Lower Middle	Smaller proprietorsmarinal and semi-professionals, middle management, sales clerical	30-35	
Working	All blue-collar	40-45	
Lower	Economic marginality/ poverty	20-25	

5. Kerbo (1996)			
Upper Corporate	Large owners Very high-level mana- gers (non-owners)	.5 .5	Groups with common in- terests with respect to oc- cupational, bureaucratic and property structures
Middle upper lower	All other non-manual positions unspecified distinctions of income and authority	43	
Working upper lower	Manual positions skilled blue-collar unskilled blue-collar	43	
Lower	Poverty	13	
6. Poulantzas (1975)			
Bourgeoisie	Owners, upper and middle managers	6	Grouping of social agents defined mostly by place in the productive process, but also by political and ideo- logical considerations
Traditional petit bourgeoisie	Small owners	14	
New petit bourgeoisie	All other white-collar and «unproductive» workers	53	
Working class	Blue-collar (material «productive» work)	27	

## Changing Structures of Inequality

7. Wright (1997)			
1. Capitalist	(1-3) Owners distingusihed by size	1,8	Location determined by relations of exploitation - i. e., ownership, and secondarily by expertise (education) and organizational assets (authority)
2. Small Employer		6,0	
3. Petit Bourgeoisie		6,8	
4. Expert Manager	(4-11) Primarily managers and professionals with varying levels of education and authority	5,5	
5. Expert Supervisor		3,1	
6. Expert (Non-manager)		2,9	
7. Skilled Manager		3,7	
8. Skilled Supervisor		6,3	
9. Skilled Worker		13,1	
10. Non-skilled Manager		2,8	
11. Non-skilled Supervisor		7,2	
12. Non-skilled Worker		40,6	

Note: \*Estimated sizes taken from the cited sources, except Poulantzas from *Johnston and Ornstein* (1985) (Canadian data), Giddens (my estimates), and Goldthorpe (*Erikson and Goldthorpe* 1992).