

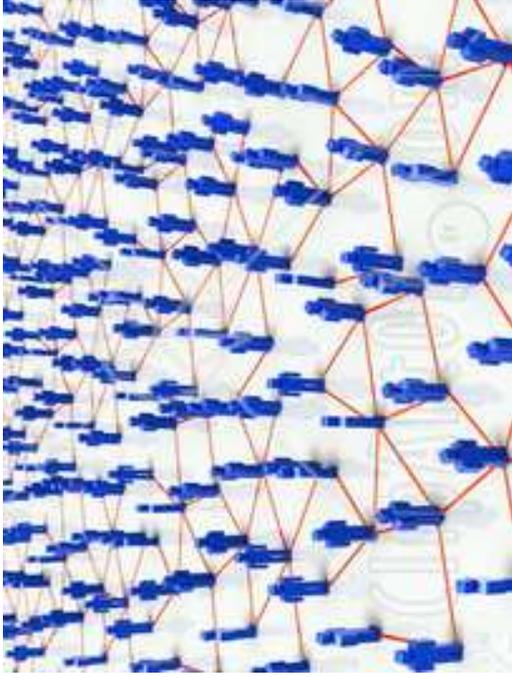
What does 'social structure' mean (and how should we measure it)?

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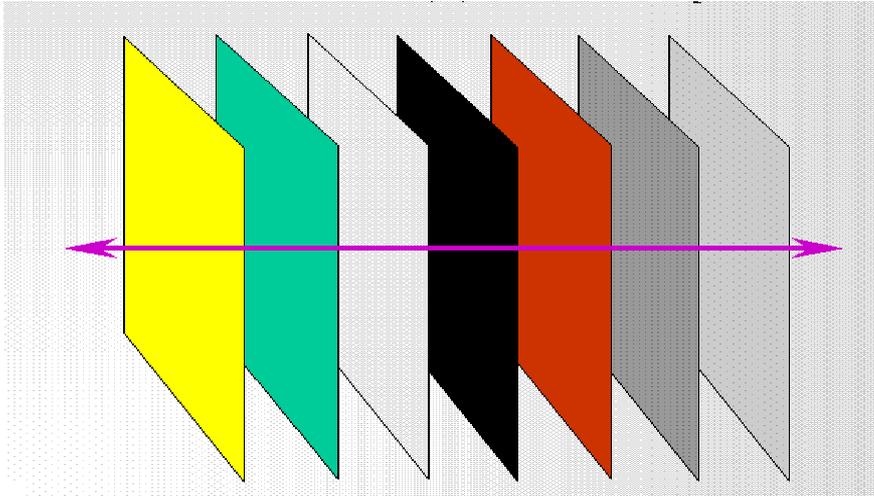
The term 'social structure' is part of the language of geological and spatial metaphor which has strongly influenced accounts of social life. In adopting such metaphors, social analysts have attempted to identify the relative position of individuals within a structure of relationships or resources, and tried to explore the impact of being located in such 'social positions'. But in moving beyond metaphor, how should we theorise and measure 'social structure'?







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What does 'social structure' mean (and how should we measure it)?

- Measurement and structure
- Three approaches to 'social structure'
 - Economic class
 - Space of social positions and lifestyles
 - Social interaction distance
- Social comparison, contextual meaning and meaningful comparisons?

To measure

- to ascertain the extent, dimensions, quantity, capacity, etc., of, esp. by comparison with a standard
- to mark off or deal out by way of measurement
- to adjust or proportion
- to travel over; traverse
- to estimate the relative amount, value, etc., of, by comparison with some standard
- to judge or appraise by comparison with something or someone else
- to bring into comparison or competition

Measuring 'social structure'

- 'Social structures' = enduring patterning of social relations
- 'Social structure' - systematic abstraction and selective emphasis for heuristic purposes
- Many different maps, varying purposes
Can easily identify sets of relations, but how to aggregate and abstract?
- What is the basis of comparison by which relations of equivalence are established?
- Questions of the variable meaning of categories and relations in establishing equivalence – are we making meaningful comparisons?

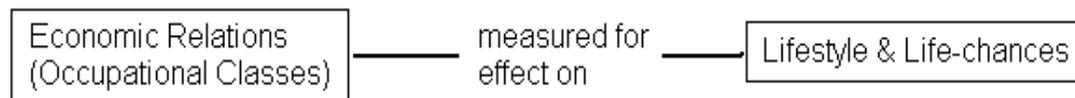
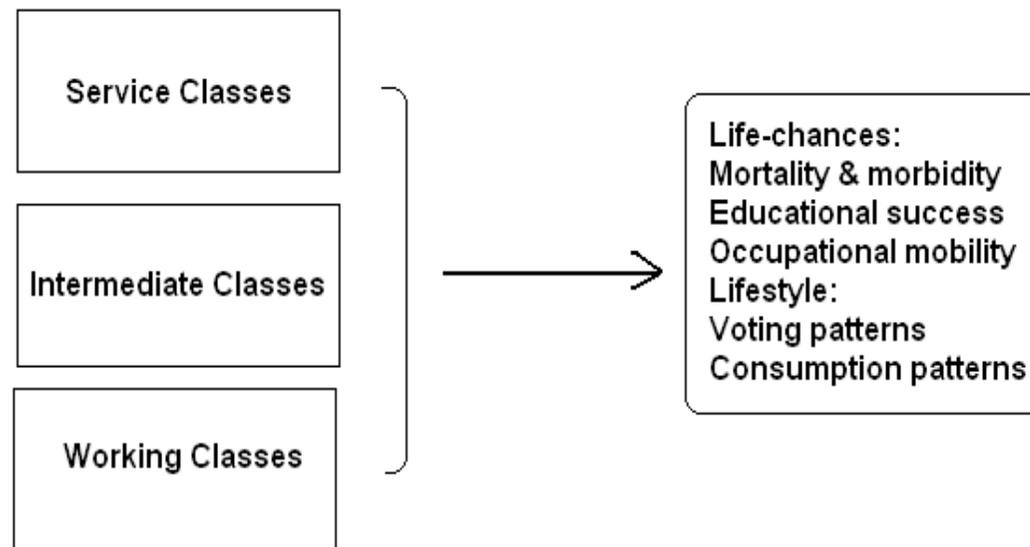
Some different ways of conceptualising
social structure

- **Economic class approaches**
- **‘Culturalist’: space of social positions & lifestyles**
- ***Social interaction distance***

Economic class analysis:

Defines a structure of occupational positions, defined by 'objective' labour market relations

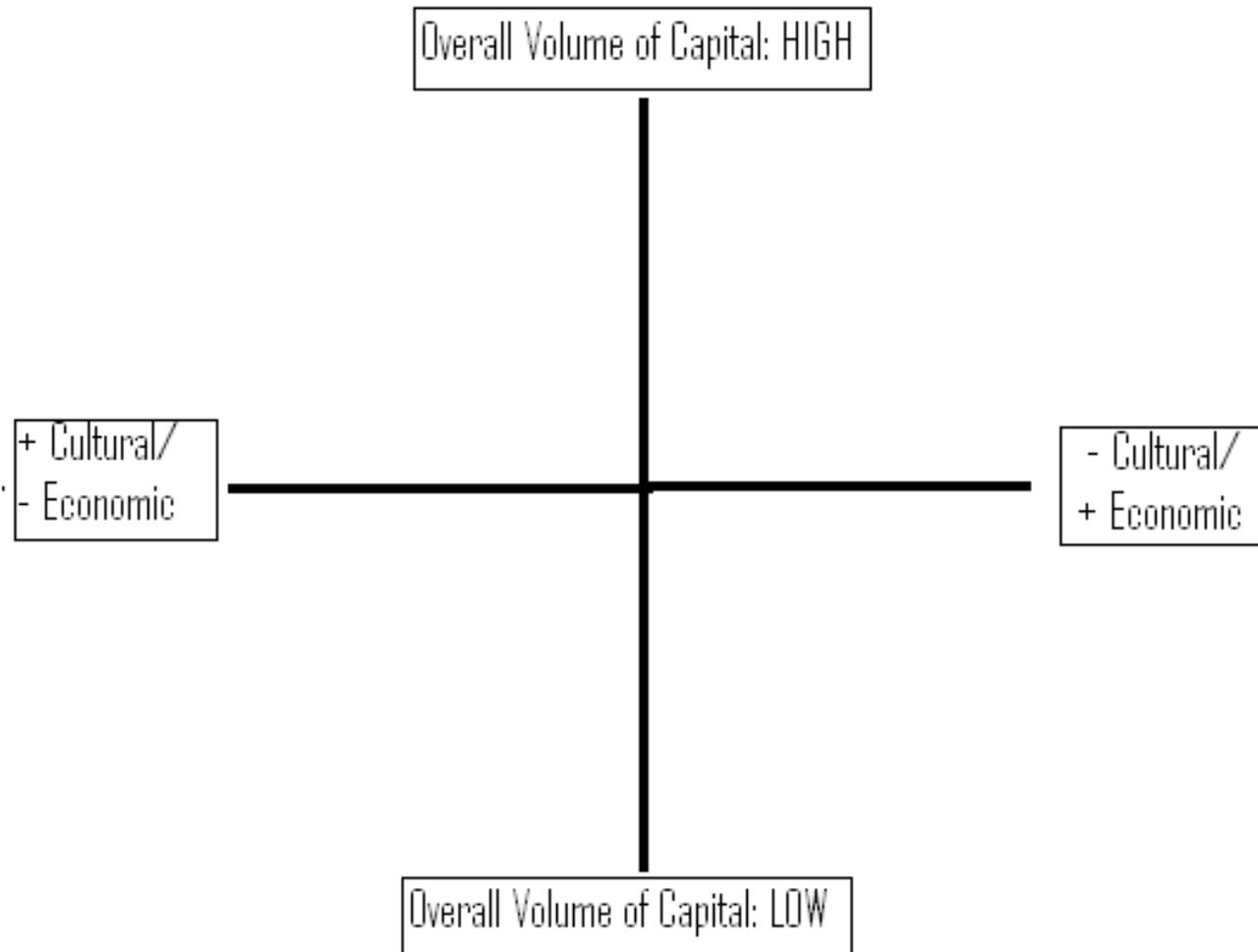
Then looks at impact on health, education, social relationships etc.



ONS-SEC classes
1 Higher managerial and professional occupations Large employers and higher managerial occupations Higher professional occupations
2 Lower managerial and professional occupations
3 Intermediate occupations
4 Small employers and own account workers
5 Lower supervisory and technical occupations
6 Semi-routine occupations
7 Routine occupations
8 Never worked and long-term unemployed

Source: ONS/HMSO 2002: 10, table 3

Pierre Bourdieu's model of social space:
position results from relations to **both** economic **and** cultural resources



Groups placed by relations to economic **and** cultural capital

3 'class' schema but 'regions' in space composed of many (occupational/educational) fractions

'Dominant' class (high overall levels of capital):

- the *bourgeoisie* (business owners and financiers) - high economic capital, lower cultural capital,
- *Intellectuals* (writers, artists, university professors) - high levels of cultural capital, lower economic capital;
- *professionals and senior managers* - more balanced levels of cultural and economic capital.

'Middle class' (more modest overall levels of capital):

- primary teachers (more cultural capital than economic capital)
- shopkeepers (more economic capital than cultural capital),
- or technicians (balanced levels of cultural and economic capital)

'Working class'

- defined by relative lack of cultural and economic assets

'Class structure' and the variable meaning of occupations, and classes

- *A priori* theoretical schemes (categories explanatory not just descriptive)
- Equivalence classes on basis of economic relations (to employment, etc.)
- Classification creates inevitable allocation, boundary and composition issues
- Cross-national comparisons: are classes equivalent? (cadres, peasant farmers etc)
- Historical change: shifting social referents of occupational titles

Table 4.2 Collapsed versions of ONS-SEC

Eight classes	Five classes	Three classes
1 Higher managerial and professional occupations Large employers and higher managerial occupations Higher professional occupations	1 Managerial and professional occupations	1 Managerial and professional occupations
2 Lower managerial and professional occupations		
3 Intermediate occupations	2 Intermediate occupations	2 Intermediate occupations
4 Small employers and own account workers	3 Small employers and own account workers	
5 Lower supervisory and technical occupations	4 Lower supervisory and technical occupations	3 Routine and manual occupations
6 Semi-routine occupations	5 Semi-routine and routine occupations	
7 Routine occupations		
8 Never worked and long-term unemployed	Never worked and long-term unemployed	Never worked and long-term unemployed

Source: ONS/HMSO 2002: 10, table 3

Table 5.2 The Nuffield class scheme

Classes	Collapsed seven-class scheme	Employment relations	Collapsed three-class scheme
I + II	<p><i>Service class</i></p> <p>1. large proprietors, professionals, administrators, and managers</p> <p>2. higher-grade technicians, supervisors of non-manual workers</p>	Employer or service relationship	Service class
IIIa + b	<p><i>Routine non-manual workers</i></p> <p>3. routine non-manual workers in administration and commerce</p> <p>4. sales personnel, other rank-and-file service workers</p>	Intermediate	
IVa + b	<p><i>Petty bourgeoisie</i></p> <p>5. small proprietors and artisans with employees</p> <p>6. small proprietors and artisans without employees</p>	Employer or self-employed	Intermediate class
IVc	<p><i>Farmers</i></p> <p>7. farmers and smallholders and other self-employed workers in primary production</p>	Employer or self-employed	
V + VI	<p><i>Skilled workers</i></p> <p>8. lower-grade technicians, supervisors of manual workers</p> <p>9. skilled manual workers</p>	Intermediate or labour contract	
VIIa	<p><i>Non-skilled workers</i></p> <p>10. semi- and unskilled manual workers</p>	Labour contract	Working class
VIIb	<p><i>Agricultural labourers</i></p> <p>11. agricultural and other workers in primary production</p>	Labour contract	

Source: Adapted from Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992, Table 2.1, pp. 38-9

Assessing the Meaning and Social Position of Nineteenth Century Titles

- Cottager
- Cowkeeper
- Excise officer
- Engineer
- Factory hand
- Hand loom weaver
- Ag lab
- FWK
- Gentleman
- Higgler
- Fat packer
- Dope maker
- Hind
- Tenter
- Straining boy
- Saggar maker's
bottom knocker
- Mrs Shifter
- Shifting Mistress
- Ash bank fairy

Meaning of categories derives from social relations

Clerk

Secretary

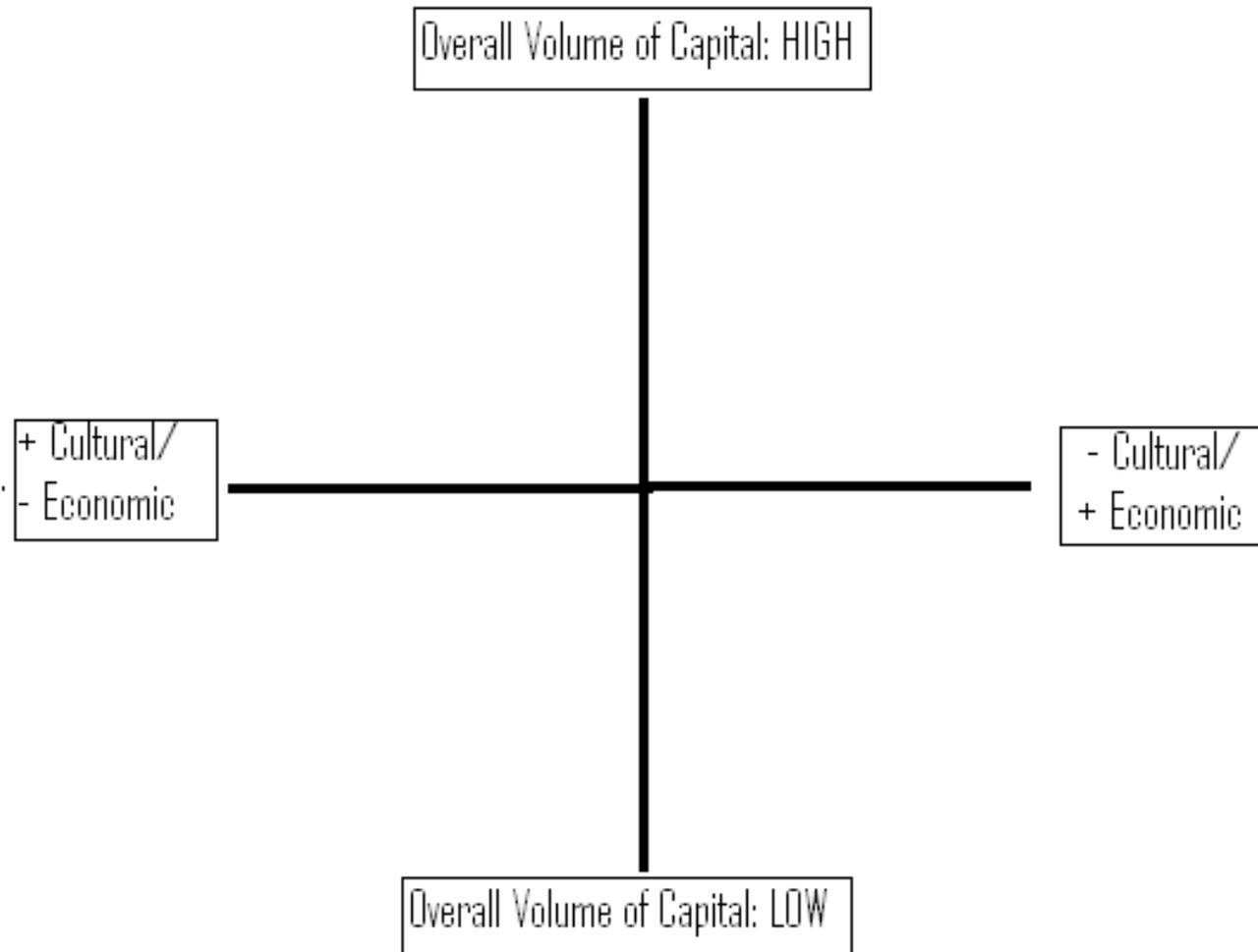
Shop assistant

Shoe maker

Labourer

‘If we follow the usual practice of defining classes by constant sets of occupations we are faced with a steady drift upwards in the class structure; the top class has been growing and the bottom one shrinking...However, it is questionable whether treating class as fixed sets of occupations is theoretically meaningful. At the very least the social meaning of membership of a greatly enlarged top class must be different. More fundamentally, with the general upward movement of class membership there cannot be a corresponding rise in the relative social advantage bestowed by higher class membership’ (Blackburn and Marsh, 1991:203-4).

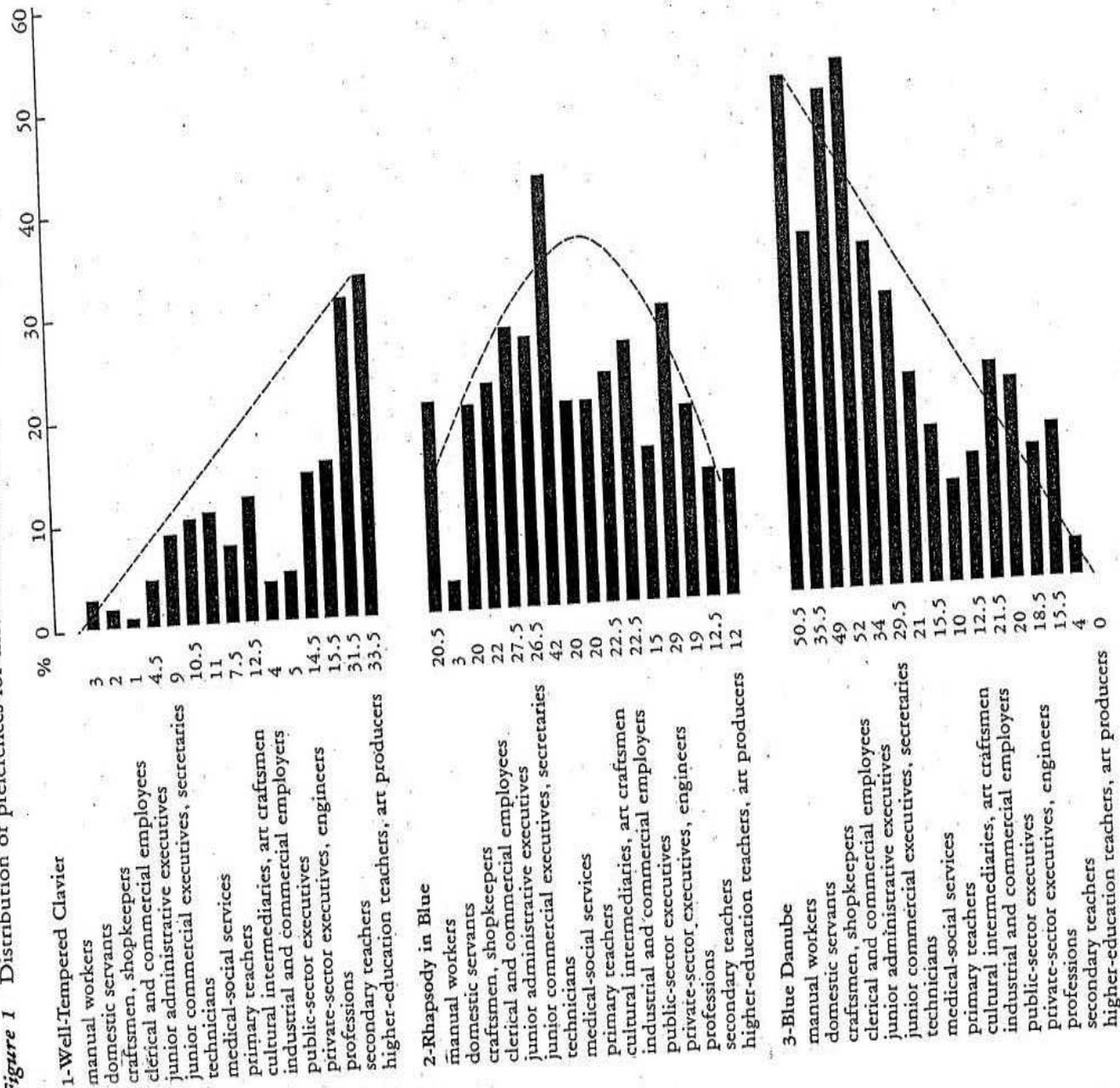
Pierre Bourdieu's model of social space:
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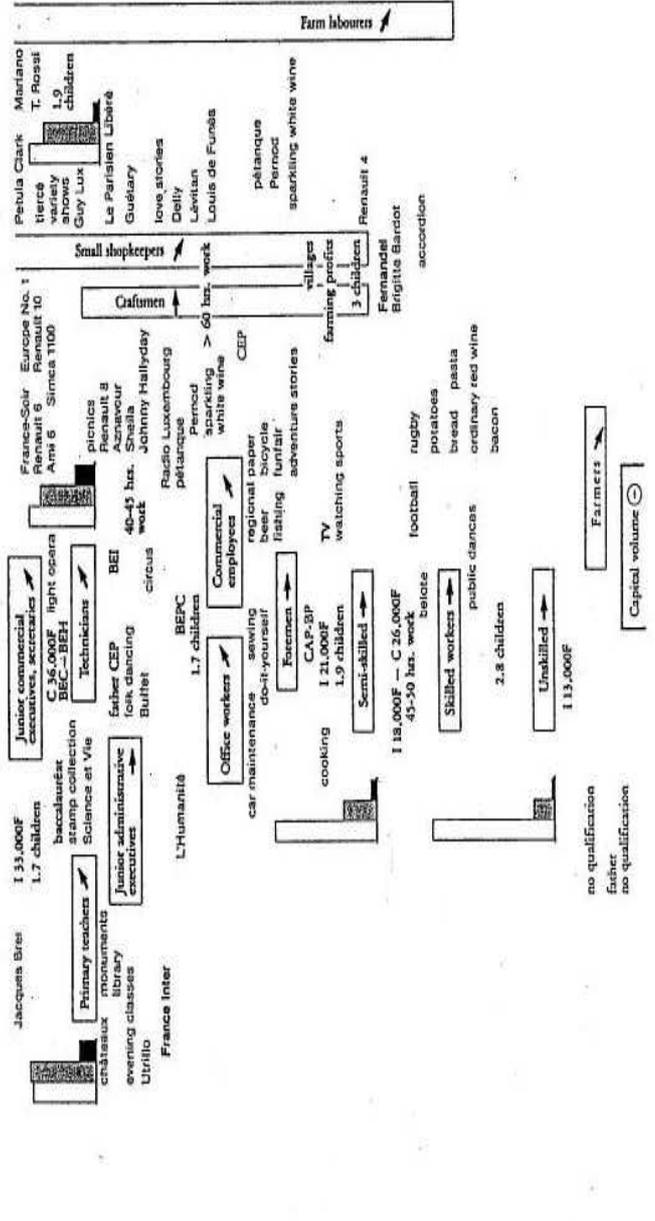
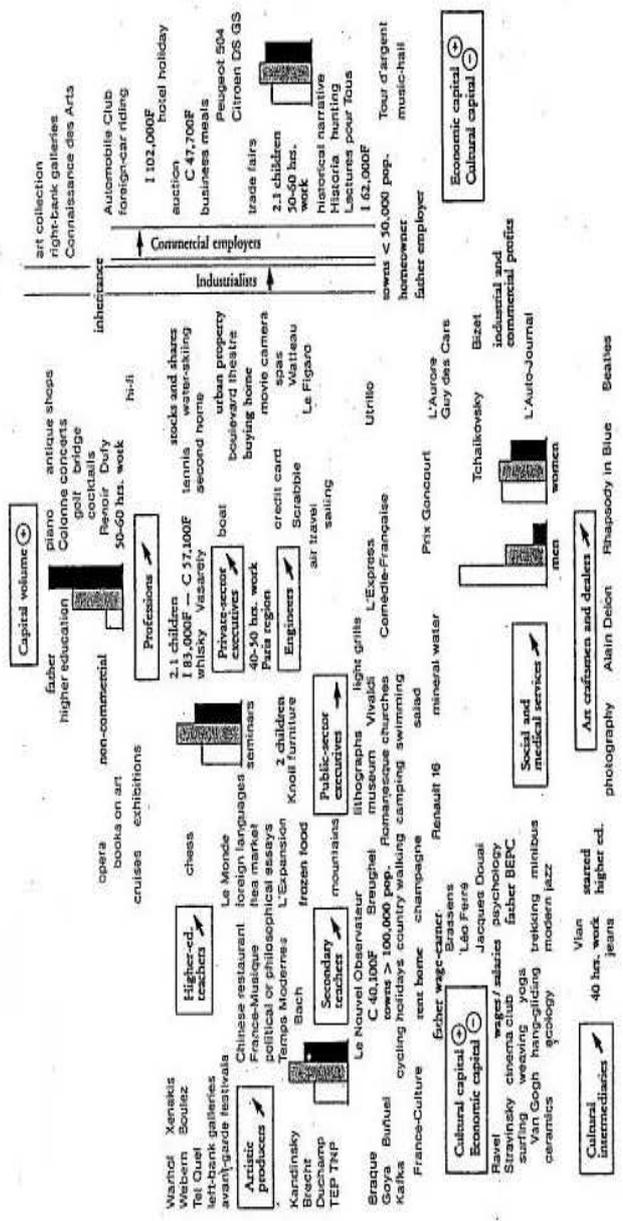


Social positions and lifestyles

- In *Distinction* (1984) Pierre Bourdieu found different 'occupational fractions' had consistently different cultural tastes in music, food, art and entertainment.
- Using statistical analysis, Bourdieu used the relationship between occupational groups and lifestyle items to establish a social space - a space of relations - placing groups with similar tastes close to each other in the space, whilst groups with very different tastes were placed as more distant.
- Social space derived from patterning of cultural tastes of 'occupational fractions'

Figure 1 Distribution of preferences for three musical works by class fraction.





Cultural particularism?

- Kantian aesthetic as peculiarly French?
- Collapse of high culture? Depends upon a defunct vision of 'a hierarchically organised, symbolically consensual prestige structure in society, one in which all groups, classes and coteries looked in the same direction for cues for what was to be thought beautiful, acceptable, and fashionable' (Davis quoted in Miles, 1998:171).
- And how significant and meaningful are the cultural items used in such mappings?

Social interaction distance approaches

- if social structure is *reflected* and *reproduced* in our choice of friends and marriage partners...
- can use marriage and/or friendship patterns to *map* and *measure* the social order...
- social ordering of occupations as it is *concretely embedded in social practice*
- *Equivalence (and not) of categories as this is reflected in everyday social relations*

Social Interaction scales

- One-dimensional summary of a ‘structure’ of *social distance* between occupations that is interpreted as a measure of *social stratification*
- Calculated according to empirical patterns of social interaction between the incumbents of occupations, using data on friendship or marriage
- Family of scales for different countries, time periods, men and women
- Relative position within a hierarchical ordering
- Objective features of occupations (potentially) irrelevant
- Occupational restructuring - tags have potential to change over time and between countries in their relative positions

Social Interaction Distance Scale(s)

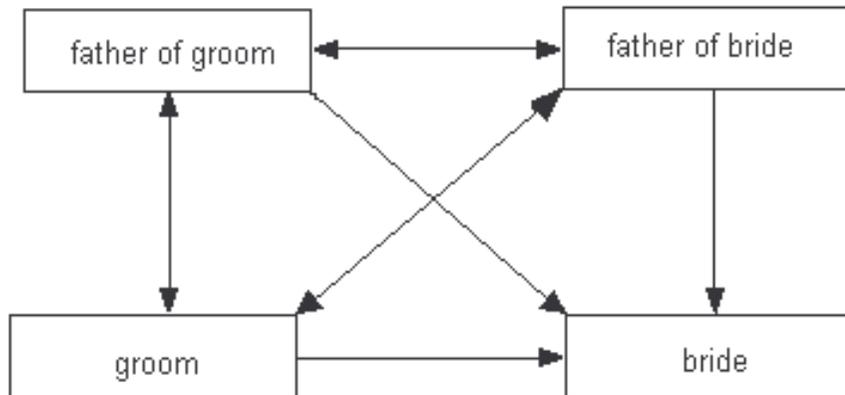
- Occupations ordered by interaction patterns alone
- Measures relative position within social hierarchy
- British historical versions, 2 occupational scales of SID based on marriages 1777-1864 (period 1), 1865-1913 (period 2)
- Scores of some occupations change
- Separate scales for men and women

Mapping interaction distance – how it works

- if people from different social categories are *highly likely* to befriend or marry each other, we can say that they occupy the same area of social space - they are socially close
- if people from those two categories *very rarely* marry or befriend each other, we can say that they are socially distant
- Occupational categories the ‘tags’ used in this mapping process, but the ranking of occupational categories is **given solely by their interaction patterns**
- Simple logic: by investigating social relationships of social *closeness* - patterns of friendship and partnership - we can identify which (occupational) groups interact at a *distance* or in terms of

“ ” “ ”

Historical Social Interaction Distance Scale



- Cross-tabulate the occupations of the parties to a marriage to find which occupational groups are more likely to inter-marry ('socially close')
- The extent of inter-marriage indicates the degree of 'social distance' between jobs
- CA used to produce hierarchical ordering of the occupations, given solely by the patterns of marriage between the occupational groups

An example: Women's occupations, SID scale (1867-1913)

Professionals	99	Garment trades	43
Farmers	98	Factoryhands (n. textile)	40
Farmers' wives	92	Housemaids	39
Independents	86	Cooks	36
Governesses	85	Spinners	36
Music teachers	83	Maids	33
Clerks	82	Weavers	32
Teachers	81	Textile finishers	30
Milliners	75	Combers	29
Shops	71	Winders/piecers	28
Other crafts	68	Knitters	28
Nurses	67	Textile workers	27
Barmaids	67	Farm workers	27
Waitresses	65	Servants	26
Innkeepers	65	Parlourmaids	25
Non-food shopkeepers	62	Shoe/leather workers	24
Dealers	62	Laundrywomen	21
Food shopkeepers	58	Metal trades	21
Book binders	56	Farm servants	21
Tailoresses	54	Miscellaneous unskilled	19
Childrens' nurses	52	Labourers	14
Housekeepers	51	Lace workers	8
Miliners/food workers	51	Agricultural labourers	5
Dressmakers	51	Straw plaiters	1
Seamstresses	51		
Ladies' maids	48		

Social Interaction Distance

- Highly disaggregated occupational categories, and the sets of relations between the incumbents of those occupations
- Use social interaction patterns to order occupations
- Social ordering of occupations derived from the **typical patterns of social relationships** within which such occupations are located.
- If differences in the pay, skill or employment status of occupations are not reflected in typical patterns of social interaction they receive the same position in the social ordering
- Orders occupations in terms of the **differences regarded as social meaningful by the participants of stratification processes (as these emerge in interaction)**