Cultivating
SYMBOLIC BOUNDARIES
Differences
AND THE MAKING
OF INEQUALITY

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Viewed at the surface, the cultural objects of this world have no apparent order to them. They appear everywhere, diverse, often in a jumble. Similarly, to look at how each individual acts is to see cultural practices that form a unique and shifting array. Nevertheless, the dazzling variety and endless differences of culture obtain surprising coherence when we look at them through the lens of social stratification. People prepare and consume food in distinctive ways. Some people are quite concerned with becoming culturally accomplished—learning to quilt, to dance, to ride horses, or to surf. For others, indifference to distinction is itself a badge of honor. Such stances toward culture differ by social position and group, there can be no doubt. Yet how are they to be explained? This question is the fulcrum on which an Archimedes could rearrange core social theory about the connections among social stratification, socialization, group processes of inclusion and exclusion, and cultural meaning.

Pierre Bourdieu can lay a claim to the Archimedean role: his theory of cultural capital provocatively appropriates and synthesizes selected themes from the discipline of sociology's classic triumvirate—Marx, Durkheim, and Weber (Brubaker 1985). Moreover, he has effectively linked issues that too often had become appropriated as the exclusive domains of sociology's subdisciplines.1 But the power of Bourdieu's vision and the importance of his work should not obscure central difficulties of his theory. By now a number of scholars who generally praise Bourdieu's work nevertheless have voiced criticisms of various aspects of his approach. In this essay, I argue that these criticisms, when consolidated and elaborated, require a retheorization of the basic model of cultural capital. Specifically, I suggest that many of Bourdieu's difficulties noted by critics stem from a single feature, his positing of a holistic
and objective field of social distinctions. As an alternative, I propose a theoretical framework of cultural structuralism that recognizes heterologous (cf. de Certeau 1986) markets, currencies, and grounds of legitimation of multiple kinds of cultural capital. The alternative framework resolves the difficulties of Bourdieu's approach stemming from its holism, at the same time allowing a more robust theorization of the interplay among diverse forms of cultural capital.

Many of the problems noted by appreciative critics of Bourdieu seem to stem from holism as a general theoretical presupposition, if holism is defined as the thesis that a social order has an overall systemic (in this case, cultural) pattern that gives definition to its parts and their interrelations. Essentially, Bourdieu posits cultural capital as a general medium of accumulation and recognition. The array of social distinctions that he describes thus obtains the quality of an objective structure (e.g., Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu 1985b, 725–26, 730; Bourdieu 1989). This feature of Bourdieu's account of distinction may stem from a residue of French structuralism in his work, from his Durkheimian epistemological objectivism, and from the specific empirical character of the French and especially Parisian social field (Brubaker 1985, 754; Garnham and Williams 1986, 119; Lamont and Lareau 1988, 158, n. 5). True, Bourdieu claimed to have begun from Weber, and his Outline of a Theory of Practice ([1972] 1977) offered a phenomenological critique of French structuralist theory, albeit within the comparatively coherent symbolic world of Kabylia, Algeria. But despite these moves, Bourdieu's account remains deeply infused with ideas from the long tradition of French structuralism that emphasizes public culture as socially definitive for individuals subjected to its claims, even if those individuals do not inwardly share its aesthetics or meaningful content.

To be sure, a structuralist approach is well suited to describing the ritual power of culture in the museum, the symphony, the soap opera, the sporting event, and civic symbolic politics (Alexander 1988). As with Emile Durkheim's case of religion (and this as an analogue of "mechanical" solidarity in society), ritual practice establishes boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, thereby forging a group out of diverse individuals, maintaining and sanctifying cultural difference, and, potentially, establishing the outsider as scapegoat (Hall 1987, chap. 12). Yet structuralism is ill-prepared to deal with the complexities of multicultural situations tied to complex, market-oriented social formations, except by the holistic device of positing a single matrix or grid of objectively meaningful social location. It is this device that Bourdieu uses to amend the structuralist narrative, defining cultural capital as a medium of cultural affirmation that does not depend on public ritual, by invoking Weber's class-based status groups as the purveyors of the most fundamental distinctions, and by emphasizing the importance of concrete practices of habitus in the framing of distinctions.

Whatever its intellectual origins, whatever its validity as a secular theory of France, the positing of an objective field of distinction as a general theoretical model seems problematic, as Lamont and Lareau (1988) have argued. The difficulties manifest themselves on a number of fronts noted by various analysts. In the first place, for Lamont and Lareau, the grounds of high-status distinction are themselves diverse and potentially incommensurate. Second, as Lamont (1992) has shown empirically, the class-fraction source of putatively legitimate standards of distinction may not have the elite provenance that Bourdieu has described. Third, although Bourdieu's Distinction (1984) recognizes the existence of divergent standards of distinction among different social classes (see also Bourdieu 1976; cf. Gans 1974), this observation remains theoretically undeveloped in his own work, which primarily addresses the importance of a posited hegemonic, dominant, and legitimate culture (Garnham and Williams 1986, 126–30; Lamont and Lareau 1988, 157). Fourth, the considerable gap between Bourdieu's theoretical claims and his quantitative analyses of empirical evidence (Brubaker 1985, 767) has raised concerns about objectivist measurement realism (Schatzki 1987). Fifth, even if Bourdieu has professed an interest in transcending the subjective/objective binary, both his theory and his statistical studies seem to tilt the analysis in the objectivist direction. Yet Lamont and Lareau (1988, 158, 164–65) have questioned any "zero-sum" model of cultural capital that presumes all specific distinctions to be defined "relationally" within an objective field of distinction. Sixth, Garnham and Williams (1986, 129) have similarly commented on "a functionalist/determinist residue in Bourdieu's concept of reproduction [of class structure] which leads him to place less emphasis on the possibilities of real change and innovation than either his theory or his empirical research makes necessary."

Finally, Bourdieu's theory of distinction is an effort to subsume other status distinctions within a class framework or, better put, to enlarge the concept of class to incorporate the entire range of possible distinctions within a single objective field. But there is reason to wonder whether such a move renders analytically inaccessible heterologous and incommensurate processes and interplayings of distinction that obtain on grounds such as ethnicity, gender, religion, and life-style (Brubaker 1985, 763ff.; Lamont and Lareau 1988, 161).
Taken individually, the criticisms seem to require minor emendation of Bourdieu's theory, a more refined methodology, or other remedial practices. Taken together, however, they raise the question of whether a theory of distinction might be formulated on different grounds that could resolve the difficulties tout à fait. In the present essay, I explore this possibility in two steps. First, in order to draw out the issues empirically, I review (for purposes of discussion, and not exhaustively) research on processes of distinction outside the realm of cultural capital as "institutionalized, i.e., widely shared, high-status culture signals" (Lamont and Lareau 1988, 156). Specifically, I consider distinction processes based on what Lamont and Lareau call "marginal high-status signals," in class, gender, and ethnic (and, more generally, status group) situations.

Second, on the basis of these empirical considerations, I propose a parallel but alternative model of distinction. Whereas Bourdieu has exported Max Weber's theory of status and status groups into a domain of epistemological objectivism and holism, the alternative model—of cultural structuralism—suggests a theory of distinction based on nominalism and methodological individualism. Such a model recognizes the existence of heterologous, relatively coherent cultural objects, texts, and audiences external to any individual whose actions may be structured in terms of them. However, the multiple and overlapping institutionalized cultures described as cultural structures do not have the character of a single, encompassing objective field of distinction, and heterologous "markets" and "currencies" of cultural capital interfigure with one another in ways that do not reduce to a single calculus of distinction.

In an era of postmodern criticism, it will seem unfashionable to assess a theory on the basis of empirical description, for such description is (rightly, in my view) held to be infused with theoretical presuppositions. Even under such a regimen, however, it may be useful to explore the degree of compatibility of various theoretical and empirical discourses, the better to identify the fault lines between them. In this vein, it may be that I have misread Bourdieu completely—as he (1989, 1990) claims about so many others. Perhaps my Bourdieu is only a straw man and his apparent holism of objective social space only an illusion, while the real Bourdieu comes close to approximating the theoretical position I advance. If this is so, then it is my hope that confronting the straw man will help clarify our common understanding of culture and status.

Status Groups, Markets, and Cultural Structures

Theories about culture and stratification cannot be reduced to any tidy typology. However, even if nuances remain elusive, we can identify two main axes of theoretical controversy. One controversy concerns the significance of bounded cultural groups, a second the centrality of market dynamics. The thought that groups have distinctive cultural boundaries was classically formulated by Emile Durkheim, in his studies on the division of labor and on religion (1947, [1893] 1964); by Simmel (1950, 37); and by Weber (1978, 305–7, 932–33), in his treatment of "status groups." As for the market axis, Weber held that, in a market-oriented economy, people may claim esteem in ways that do not depend on group membership (1978, 305–7, 932–33). This thought was also explored by Thorstein Veblen (1912) 1953 in his classic study of "conspicuous consumption" by the "leisure class," and it was developed further by Gans (1974). Thus, the fact that people of one class can partake of another class's culture has suggested to Gans that the boundaries of class-based social groups cannot be too strict. Classes lack sufficient organization or power to monopolize "their" culture. Why? They lack sufficient solidarity to maintain their boundaries (i.e., they are ineffect as social groups), and culture is available through nonclass channels, primarily, the marketplace.

What Bourdieu (e.g., 1984, 165; 1985b, 731) has done is to push Weber's approach into a new resolution of the relation between market and group, by treating class as the fundamental and encompassing basis of status group distinctions and integrating group and market phenomena through the medium of cultural capital. Like Gans, Bourdieu has argued for cultural boundaries between classes. Both the acceptance of these boundaries and the efforts made to cross them concretize classes as cultural groups, lending legitimacy to the social order.

As a secular theory of French struggles over legitimate distinction, Bourdieu's Distinction (1984) surely is a tour de force. However, there are central absences in the French markets of cultural capital described by Bourdieu—the cultural others who live in the midst of the world of de facto white, male, elite-class distinction that Bourdieu paints. In their absence, Bourdieu can offer no account of how their status situations interfigure with the calculus that he paints as publicly legitimate, and he is reduced to treating them by caveat, noting parenthetically, "It is in the intermediate positions of social space, especially in the
United States, that the indeterminacy and objective uncertainty of relations between practices and positions is at a maximum, and also, consequently, the intensity of symbolic strategies. It is easy to understand why it is this universe which provides the favorite site of the interactionists and of Goffman in particular" (1989, 20). But Bourdieu has an analytic commitment to a holistic structuralist account that identifies a putatively dominant culture as the source of a hegemonic objective field of distinction. For this reason, Bourdieu's acknowledgment of "intermediate positions" does not become an important theme of his discussions.

The empirical task, then, is to examine how distinctions work in practice both to exclude others and to constitute collective identity within groups. To consider the full range of possibilities would amount to writing a genealogy of status in political and economic terms. My present, more modest purpose is simply to show that the success of such a project depends on specifying a theoretical framework for the analysis of distinction that does not privilege any of its particular historically concrete forms. A brief survey of issues related to class, gender, ethnicity, and status groups can offer reference points by which to assess the utility of Bourdieu's approach as compared to an alternative theorization of "cultural structuralism."

Class

As Lamont and Lareau (1988) observed, Bourdieu wants to assert a single, overarching objective space of distinction. But he also acknowledges that specific groups produce their own distinctive forms of cultural capital, such that different fields exist "that are relatively autonomous, i.e., more or less strongly and directly subordinated" (1985b, 736; cf. Bourdieu 1985a, 43). Similarly, he sometimes discusses the existence of specific markets, and he holds that, under certain conditions, action will be oriented to "the search for culturally pertinent features endowed with value in the field's own economy" (1985a, 19). As Michel Grossetti (1986) has suggested, Bourdieu's work is characterized by an "unfinished" economic metaphor (cf. Honneth 1986, 59). Yet perhaps the metaphor remains unfinished for good reason. If we follow conventional neoclassical economic theory as an analogy, then separate markets exist for particular cultural "commodities," and individuals (and groups) participate in different markets on the basis of diverse values. In neoclassical economics, these diversities do not imply discontinuities. Instead, with money as a generalized medium of exchange, all value can be reduced to a common denominator, and differences in price can in principle be explained on the basis of such calculable considerations as local scarcity and the like. However, neoclassical economics posits a holistic matrix subject to the same difficulties as those of Bourdieu's objective field. A long line of sociological approaches to economics holds that markets are intertwined with culturally structured forms and patterns of social organization (e.g., Parsons 1937; Hamilton and Biggart 1988; Biggart 1989; Hall 1991). The cultural structuration of markets would seem all the more salient for situations where value is measured in distinctions, rather than being expressed in terms of a generalized monetary system. Even for classes, a putatively objective field of distinction does not yield generally translatable forms of cultural capital. Indeed, Bourdieu's own analysis is predicated on this assumption, for example, in his differentiation of the middle class from higher classes on the basis of the former group's shortfall of panache that results in "pretension." But pretension obtains currency among its practitioners, and this contradicts the idea that cultural capital offers a general basis for social ranking and the formulation of distinctions. Simply put, the forms of cultural capital in play in various class situations are likely to be incommensurate with one another. Bourdieu acknowledges this possibility but explains it away because of what amounts to cultural hegemony, in which the lower classes are excluded from the habitus of higher distinctions by their lack of access to them in the family and in education. The working class is subjected to a "dominated 'aesthetic,'" defined from the outside, even though that aesthetic may contradict personal preferences: "Yes, it's beautiful, but you have to like it, it's not my cup of tea" (Bourdieu 1984, 41).

The source and significance of any external aesthetic are key issues, in need of further exploration. Michèle Lamont and Annette Lareau, for example, have suggested that, in the United States, we should look to the upper middle class, rather than the upper class, for the source of the lower middle class's dominated aesthetic (1988). David Halle (1989) questions whether the aesthetics of social classes differ so much as the practices of cultural commodities by which aesthetics are expressed. And Lamont's (1992) research inevitably raises doubts about the significance of high culture distinctions for the upper middle class, the coherence of which is itself undermined by cross-regional and cross-national differences in the relative importance of cultural, moral, and social distinctions.

Even for classes that lack dominant power, aesthetic value may not be defined solely from the outside. In an Italian-American community,
Herbert Gans (1962) found that manual workers can traffic in their own forms of class honor in a positive way and in contradistinction to the standards of higher classes or the mass-produced consumer badges of status. More generally, workers may maintain a respect for craft abilities—for being able to do things with one’s hands and to work collectively in physical ways. By these standards, many middle- and upper-class people will seem bumbling, inept, and alienated from the material conditions of their lives. As Bourdieu (1985b) recognizes, the source of aesthetic value of cultural capital is a struggle. Yet quite apart from the struggle to legitimate a particular taxonomy, there may coexist multiple and incongruous values and distinctions that cannot be reduced to one another.

The problem deepens for Bourdieu because he knows that not all culture is economically determined: “As the objective distance from necessity grows, life-style increasingly becomes the product of what Weber calls a ‘stylization of life,’ a systematic commitment which orients and organizes the most diverse practices—the choice of a vintage or a cheese or the decoration of a holiday home in the country” (1984, 55–56). This suggests that other criteria than social class badges come into play in distinctions of pure leisure and consumption, which is to say, in activities tied either to what Tom Wolfe (1968) has called “status spheres” (such as the social worlds of surfing and of foreign-film screenings) or to actual status groups. Much leisure consumption can be located in class differences—of bowling versus handball or horseshoes versus golf. Yet the opposite possibility also warrants consideration: distinctions of life-style may form cultural boundaries that do not depend on social class.

Even if we simply look at the cultures of social class groups whose lives would seem quite likely to be dictated by economic “necessity”—the urban poor and homeless—it is questionable whether the cultural capital approach adequately explains these cultures. The poor will find themselves exposed to the cheapest of petty commercial culture—“divé” restaurants, secondhand stores, tabloids, and cheap movie theaters. And they will be the targets of culturally distinctive state- and religiously organized welfare and charity programs. These realities would suggest that the poor partake of what Bourdieu calls a “dominated” cultural aesthetic. Yet the poor do not engage in commercial consumption in the same way that more monied popular and elite classes do. This means that their culture will lie outside the realm of mass popular culture, and it likely will be considered “deviant” on this basis. Paradoxically, the relatively greater distance of the poor from commercial culture will leave room for the greater importance of “quasi-folk” cultures made in the ongoing practices of the people who live socially marginal lives (Gans 1974). The interplay of such cultures with dominated culture has been described in novels like George Orwell’s Down and Out in Paris and London (1933), autobiographies by hoboes Jack Black ([1926] 1988) and Boxcar Bertha (Reitman 1988), and ethnographies of the streets such as Tally’s Corner (Lewis 1967) and Carnival Strippers (Meiselas 1976).

Such texts testify to the importance of socially situated distinctions. Carnival Strippers, for example, details the lives of women working on the New England girlie show circuit. A good deal of what is known about them can be translated into Bourdieu’s terms: the women position themselves in relation to one another by distinguishing their sexual mores and career trajectories, and sociologists could map an objective field of distinction, both within the occupational world and in relation to the originary worlds of the women and other career opportunities (waitressing, go-go dancing, and prostitution, e.g.). Yet two things are striking about the testimony of the carnival strippers. First, even within the occupational world, different strippers have their own distinctions that they use in affirming their status and dignity in relation to each other. As one of them put it, “Lena thinks she’s better than Tami and Tami thinks she’s better than Lena . . . If you’re in my dressing room you’re as good as me, you’re no better than me” (quoted in Meiselas 1976, 48). Incommensurate values yield standards of distinction that are individual, rather than collective. The situation is made only more complex by the quite different distinctions made by the men who work with and oft exploit the women and by others who come into their worlds, including the men (and occasionally women) in the audience. The strippers pay a high price of status loss in terms of their interactions with men, but those costs do not figure equally or even have the same basis for all men. Second, the cultural capital that the strippers struggle to maintain in their occupational arena often counts for very little in other domains, certainly, for example, in their (typically small) hometowns as well as in the higher netherworlds of urban nightclubs. Even in an occupational social world, then, the idea of an objective field of distinctions measured in legitimate cultural capital of general tender seems to mask the reality of incommensurate cultural standards. If this is the case in a world organized in terms of market activity, presumably it will be found in other situations, more distant from economic “necessity.”

Other ethnographic accounts have underscored what Herbert Gans
(1974, 70) recognized, that class distinctions of culture are mediated by other socially constructed boundaries, for example, those of age, ethnicity, gender, and geographic locale. But these are not simply alternative axes of objective stratification: they are interfigured aspects of concrete status situations. The carnival strippers are women workers in enterprises owned by men. Boxcar Bertha was a woman making it in a predominantly male world of hoboes. The Italian-American workers were predominantly men, perhaps maintaining gender honor as well as class honor. George Orwell described men on the road, who inhabit a different social world than those of us who have a more settled existence—in a city, suburb, town, or farm community. And Talley's Corner is a hangout for black men who form a status group with its own moral code about their relations with the women who live beyond their group boundary.

The possible concatenations of distinctions as they come into play in situations will exceed any attempt to reduce them to logical alternatives or the priority of one analytic dimension over another. Nevertheless, briefly considering the social significance of gender, ethnicity, and status groups more generally can at least bring to light the diverse dynamics of distinction that often interfigure in status situations.

Gender

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Georg Simmel described feminine culture as tied to the specific form of "female nature," and he argued that, "with the exception of a very few areas, our objective [i.e., public] culture is thoroughly male" ([1911] 1984, 67). Feminist theorists may chafe at the assertion of biological difference and at the public/private distinction—both binary oppositions that reinforce essentialist ideologies (cf. Rosaldo 1980). Such binaries deny the many public—yet not "Public"—cultural accomplishments of women artists, novelists, composers, and others whose work has not been incorporated into the male-defined canon of legitimate cultural accomplishment. But feminists sometimes share Simmel's account of patriarchal society: namely, that the dominant culture—religion, art, music, legal institutions, and so on—is culture created and maintained for the most part by men as the dominant gender. Some feminists have explained cultural patterns of gender relations at the consequence of social differentials of power between male and female that cannot be reduced to class in a patriarchal society (O'Brien 1981; Polatnick 1983).

Because Bourdieu deals in distinctions, his theory might seem well suited to addressing the issue of patriarchy, particularly on the basis of his analyses of struggles over symbolic myths (1985b, 1989). However, Bourdieu has given short shrift to distinctions other than those of class. He tends to see gender in class terms, for example, by pointing to class differences in women's attitudes toward the "working wife" (1984, 178). This approach stems from his argument that other bases of social division—such as age, sex, and ethnicity—are "secondary" to class: "The secondary principles of division . . . indicate potential lines of division along which a group socially perceived as unitary may split, more or less deeply and permanently. . . . groups mobilized on the basis of a secondary criterion (such as age or sex) are likely to be bound together less permanently and less deeply than those mobilized on the basis of the fundamental [i.e., class] determinants of their condition" (1984, 107). In this vein, Bourdieu argued that "there are as many ways of realizing femininity [sic] as there are classes and class factions," and he interpreted statistical data about the photographic tastes of men versus women in class terms (1984, 39–40). Yet even Bourdieu's own data reveal the limits of his approach: neither class nor gender fully explains the range of statistical variation in his survey; some 30 percent of industrial-employee wives fail to regard as ugly what their gendered class sensibilities would dictate as ugly. And so it goes.

Relations between class and gender should not be discounted, but their character suggests a more complex analysis. Historical studies of ongoing industrialization, for example, show changes in gender identities with the emergence of new social classes, and they suggest the subordination of other social classes to the bourgeois classes' public definitions of gender (e.g., Douglas 1977; Peiss 1986; Lynn and Lynn, cited in Bell 1976, 67; Doane and Hodges 1987). Yet various theories of patriarchy turn the tables on the class structuration thesis. Emergent nineteenth-century industrial capitalism can be regarded as a reconstruction of patriarchy under new conditions of production, which maintains patriarchal relations across the entire range of social classes. In such terms, class differences in gender identities and relations become variations on a resilient calculus of patriarchy, in a world where gender always figures in the construction of social difference. This is not to claim gender as the "fundamental" axis of social organization but to reject the reductionist claim of any dominant axis of difference and propose a comparative historical sociology of shifting, multiply configured status situations.7

How are we to explain the distinctiveness of male versus female cultures, within and beyond classes? Bourdieu's model might suggest that different sorts of resources and sensibilities—auto mechanics, sew-
ing, nurturing, beauty, authority—would give individuals the cultural capital for maintaining social positions within an overall class system of distinction. For a dominated cultural group—women in a patriarchal society—cultural resources such as a dowry, production of offspring, and the ability to entertain would offer the basis for survival in a “man’s world.” On these grounds, a woman’s cultural capital would be explained by its value to men within a particular class fraction. However, women’s culture may also establish an alternative realm to the world dominated by men. In exploring the social worlds of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women, Smith-Rosenberg has argued that “women who had little status or power in the larger world of male concerns, possessed status and power in the lives and worlds of other women”: “Entire days, even weeks, might be spent almost exclusively with other women. Urban and town women could devote virtually every day to visits, teas, or shopping trips with other women. Rural women developed a pattern of more extended visits that lasted weeks and sometimes months, at times even dislodging husbands from their beds and bedrooms so that dear friends might spend every hour of every day together” (Smith-Rosenberg 1975, 10). Far from concluding that women’s cultural capital helped women survive in man’s world, Smith-Rosenberg suggested the opposite—that the extent of sex-segregated life in the nineteenth century may have left both women and men culturally unprepared for the shared world of marriage and thus contributed to the reputed formality of marriages in the Victorian era.

Today, the construction of patriarchal society has shifted ground. Yet the reconstructed gender differences do not function solely to maintain distinctions within class cultures dominated by men. A study of contemporary women and the popular culture of romance novels suggests considerably more complexity. In Reading the Romance, Radway (1984) recognizes dual and somewhat contradictory practices at work. Like other genres that construct realistic plots, the romance narratives about women and their love lives unfold with the twists and turns based on protagonists’ dilemmas and choices. For women, reading romances may thus suggest that they have the power to shape their lives. Yet the plots are actually “formulaic” in that they follow prescriptions about “the essential ingredients to be included in each new version of the form.” In this respect, “each romance is, in fact a mythic account of how women must achieve fulfillment in patriarchal society” (Radway 1984, 29, 17). Romance novels thus balance women’s freedom to choose with women’s conformity to mythic prescription. They thereby perpetuate male dominance by focusing women’s exercise of power within constraints of a patriarchally organized society. All the same, the romance readers whom Radway interviewed often reported experiences of empowerment. The novels helped readers establish their own personal realms—separate from their worlds of work, of children, and of husbands. In addition, sorting through the issues confronted by heroines in the romances sharpened readers’ skills at negotiating the trials of a patriarchal world.

The women’s cultures described by Smith-Rosenberg and Radway differ radically from each other. One suggests that women’s culture has value because it sustains an alternative domain altogether; the other sketches a power in the world of men that cannot be reduced to the cultural values of men. In Bourdieu’s terms, both cases show that some cultural capital of women is in a currency traded on different markets than one completely defined by women’s class situations. There are multiple markets defined by diverse interests of women and men in their situations with others of the same and different gender identities.

Ethnicity

Despite Bourdieu’s emphasis on status groups, in Distinction (1984) he is strikingly silent on the question of ethnicity. Elsewhere (Bourdieu 1985b, 744, n. 14), he notes in passing that his analysis of the relation of classes “on paper” to real class practices is analogous to his earlier “analysis of the relation between the kinship group ‘on paper’ and the practical kinship of ‘will and representation’” treated in Outline of a Theory of Practice (1972) 1977). Fragmentary comments indicate that he thinks that ethnicity can be reduced to class. Groupings “constructed in terms of capital distribution,” he argues, “are more likely to be stable and durable, while other forms of groupings are always threatened by the splits and oppositions linked to distances in social space”: “But this never entirely excludes the possibility of organizing agents in accordance with other principles of division—ethnic or national ones, for example—even though it has to be remembered that these are generally linked to the fundamental [i.e., capital distribution] principles, with ethnic groups themselves being at least roughly hierarchized in the social space, in the USA for example (through seniority in immigration)” (1985b, 726). Again, “The most objective differences may be marked by more immediately visible differences (e.g., those between ethnic groups)” (1985b, 730). Empirically, this view is often correct. Caste systems, apartheid, and, in the United States, slavery and “legal” segregation of blacks before the civil rights reforms of the
mid-twentieth century are extreme examples of predominantly class-
contained ethnic groups.

In addition, members of previously coherent ethnic groups may find
themselves distanced from one another across class lines. Thus, William
J. Wilson suggests that the expansion of the black middle class after the
civil rights movement of the 1960s resulted in a "deepening economic
schism," "with the black poor falling further and further behind
middle- and upper-income blacks" (1980, 151–52). These changes are
underscored culturally by the distinctive leisure pursuits of middle-class
blacks, who are likely to engage in activities economically inaccessible
to the poor (Woodard 1988). Here, class mobility can foster new status
group identity.

As with gender, however, a class analysis of ethnicity seems incom-
plete. Let us consider a classic study, John Dollard's analysis of a small
town in the southern United States during the Great Depression. Dool-
ard detailed an elaborate racist ideology and strict mores of public
behavior, defined by the dominant white culture. The public culture
maintained white solidarity concerning segregation in part by branding
any white who deviated as a "nigger lover." Dollard comments, "The
tendency among students of culture to consider such acts as tipping
the hat, shaking hands, or using 'Mr.' as empty formalism is rebuked
by experience in the South. When we see how severely Negroes may
be punished for omitting these signs of deference, we realize that they
are anything but petrified customs" ([1937] 1987, 178–79). Long
before Wilson's study, Dollard had already found class differences
among blacks, with middle-class blacks often going to great lengths to
avoid invoking the whites' cultural stereotypes about poor blacks—the
"mammy" image, sexual promiscuity, and emotionalistic religion, for
example. Here, members of an externally defined caste used class dis-
tinction to counteract the negatively privileged ethnicity. Among
poorer blacks, Dollard painted a picture of two roles—one to conform
to mores enforced ultimately by white violence, the other roles that
maintained blacks' own identities beyond the public world dominated
by whites. The dualistic posture of blacks in the town, as Dollard
saw it, was to accommodate to their inferior position, as defined and
maintained by the white caste ([1937] 1987, 255).

A question persists about the potential for political resistance within
the world of the black status group hidden from public view. Dollard
may have missed the "inside" of southern black culture because he was
an outsider. But, whatever the explanation, as with gender, a domi-
nated ethnic group may use one form of cultural capital with a currency
in the wider world, while a separate kind of cultural capital establishes
status within the group itself. Thus, ethnic cultural capital does not
always reduce to class cultural capital by any straightforward "currency
exchange."

To be sure, as Bourdieu would expect, there is a "cultural division
of labor." But the relations to class are not the hierarchy that he de-
scribes. In the now classic view of Fredrik Barth (1969), the internal
values and external signals that bound ethnicity may have other bases
than economic ones and remain sharper and more fixed than bound-
aries that derive from distinctions such as those of social class. Analyti-
cally, ethnic groups cannot be reduced to occupational niches and social
classes. The contrast between relatively sharp ethnic group boundaries
and the more graded class distinctions has been explored by Michael
Hechter (1978). Analyzing the 1970 U.S. census, he found that certain
ethnic groups (e.g., Asians, Yiddish speaking) have a much higher
territorial concentration than others. Groups also differ as to their
average and diversity of occupational prestige and the degree of
occupational specialization of group members (Greek-Americans, e.g.,
were twice as concentrated in similar occupations as were Irish-
Americans). These patterns suggest that some ethnic subcultures (and,
by extension, religion, gender, and other subcultural status groups)
may have relatively little to do with occupational stratification while
others offer bases for attempting to monopolize resources (jobs), some-
times within a class level, sometimes cutting across class levels in an
economic sector (e.g., construction or banking). How might occupa-
tional concentration occur?

Given a cultural (as opposed to a biological) definition of ethnicity, a
habitus infused with an ethnic group's culture may provide an individ-
ual with cultural capital that counts within the ethnic group but means
very little outside it. Such an ethnic group may become internally strati-
fied, for solidarity and the relative clarity of ethnic membership offer a
basis of economic action, and any ethnic group is likely to encompass
people with a range of skills and talents. Thus, members of a solidary
ethnic group may take collective economic action by "capturing" enter-
prises that typically will require personnel of different occupational
strata. Under such conditions, class distribution within the ethnic
group is manifested on other bases than any generalized currency of
cultural capital.

Status Groups

Ethnic groups may be construed as special cases of status group phe-
nomena (cf. Molohon, Paton, and Lambert 1979). It would be possible
to explore other status axes along which sociologists and people in
general map distinctions and boundaries that offer templates for practical communal and associational life—age, religion, community, social club memberships, cultural space, and diffuse social categories such as ski bums, cowboys, and hippies. We would find, it seems likely, a lack of symmetry in the various ways that cultural associations, boundaries, and distinctions affect the status situations of individuals. Social classes, as status groups, are likely to have only graded boundaries, and they may therefore not be as successful at collective action as more clearly bounded status groups. Other kinds of status groups may establish "currencies" of cultural capital that do not align in a simple and direct way with class distinctions. Such cultural distinctions cannot be understood simply as surviving ethnic practices from the old country (used to rank them within a multicultural society), the class-based practices of a gendered status group, or the leisure choices of people who are all seeking distinction within a single class-based system of status hierarchies.

Generalizing in a speculative way, status groups potentially offer alternative bases of individual identity that are complexly interfigured with class. As Bendix (1974) argued, prestige and education—among the very phenomena that interest Bourdieu—are the province of status groups that operate outside market conditions and in ways that cannot be traded on some general market of cultural capital. Such groups sometimes control significant economic resources that make group solidarity an attractive proposition for the individual, even if the group controls only "poor" resources (lower-level government jobs, e.g.). Moreover, the relations of status groups to economic markets do not depend simply on cultural markers of inclusion or exclusion. In addition, the cultural ethos of a group may establish affinities with specific forms of economic activity. To translate, in Weber's (1958) analysis of the Protestant ethic, status groups infusion individuals with new forms of meaningful conduct (cf. Barth 1969, 14). By the opposite token, as Weber showed for the Protestant ethic, the cultural ethos, the shared sense of honor, and the group life they inform cannot be reduced to matters of economic rationality or objective distinction. Status groups may participate in, but they are not of, the market. To add to the complexity, in market societies, people typically participate in more than one status group, and each individual thus works with incommensurate kinds of cultural capital, entering into social relationships with others whose status situations, and concomitant forms of cultural capital, may be quite different. Even if we assumed, with Bourdieu, that classes as status groups predominate, the lifeworldly play of distinction transpires in specific situations subject to diverse forms of cultural capital, such that the dynamics cannot be reduced to the predominant condition. These complexities can be understood only if we maintain an analytic distinction between status group and class and recognize that cultural distinctions may be incommensurate, rather than ordered by an objective hierarchy.

Status Groups and Cultural Structures

Insofar as Bourdieu's theory of classes and cultural capital depends on the holistic assumption of an objective field of distinction, it does not offer a basis to account for divergent and incommensurate forms of cultural capital that interfigure with "legitimate" distinctions; perhaps it is because of this limitation that Distinction (1984) gives such short shrift to gender and ethnicity. But there is no reason why an alternative theory cannot incorporate the interplay of multiple forms of cultural capital and group identifications (cf. Bentley 1987). The metaphor of cultural capital offers a way to understand struggles over status group boundaries and prestige. But classes are not the only kinds of status groups that may be understood in these terms. Although Bourdieu (1989) leaves intellectual room for this possibility, he does not pursue it, and with good reason. Such pursuit would undermine any class-based objective field of distinction. The difficulty, then, derives from the core assumption of holism. Without this assumption as a basis for class as the grand field of societal distinction, Bourdieu's theorization of classes as objectively ordered status groups would break down, as would his elaboration of an overarching market in cultural capital. But, as we have seen, the assumption is inadequate to the interplay among multiple class and other bases of cultural capital. Hard as Bourdieu works against its tendency, the holistic assumption gives rise to a class-reductionist analysis that objectifies and hypostatizes the flux of cultural distinctions and obscures the heterologous interplay of various kinds of cultural capital.

The difficulties of this position can be mapped in terms of a dilemma faced by Max Weber. As is well known, Weber analyzed structural features of social formations, including their cultures, in a macro-comparative fashion that still maintained the centrality of subjective meaning. Thus, the dilemma that, because Weber repudiated organicism, he needed to reconcile a methodologically individualist (or non-holistic) ontology with nominalist yet "objective" description. The topic of social stratification raised the dilemma in a particularly acute
way. To discuss "stratification" in systemic terms would seem tantamount to assuming the existence of a whole that structures the orientations of individuals and groups—thus exceeding the bounds of Weber's antiorganisicant ontology. The dilemma is most obvious in Weber's treatment of class. Late in his career, he modified his earlier, more situational conceptualization to include an objective classification.

The earlier approach, contained in part 2 of *Economy and Society*, hinges class on the joint economic interests of individuals who share common circumstances in a particular market, whether that market be concerned with commodities or labor. "Class situation," Weber emphasized, "is ultimately market situation" (1978, 929). This early discussion suggests (1) that a given person may orient action toward more than one market and hence individually face incongruent class situations; (2) that shared class situation does not translate directly into common interest, much less action, and thus "to treat 'class' conceptually as being equivalent to 'group' leads to distortion"; and (3) that cultural conditions rather than objective circumstances alone affect whether individuals jointly perceive their situations as deriving from a common external cause (Weber 1978, 927–82). 9

Toward the end of his life, in what is now part 1 of *Economy and Society*, Weber undertook a recasting of certain concepts, streamlining his treatment of classes. 10 He retained "situation" as the basis of class, and, contra Marx, he refused to theorize a holistic dynamic of class conflicts and their long-term developmental directions. But Weber did present a new, objective categorization of property classes, commercial classes, and social classes. "Social classes" represented the most substantial departure from Weber's earlier formulation, for they effectively amounted to class-based status groups (Weber 1978, 307). Weber defined a class of this type as "making up the totality of those class situations within which individual and generational mobility is easy and typical" (1978, 302).

Essentially, Bourdieu has elaborated Weber's later conceptualization of social classes, inserting the concept of cultural capital as a way of accounting such class-based status groups' struggles over distinctions through socialization, education, and cultural practice (Brubaker 1985, 747). Although Bourdieu claimed to "rethink Max Weber's opposition between class and Status" (1984, xii; emphasis added), in fact, he drew directly on Weber's formulation of social classes as status groups, enlarging their compass and relocating them within an objective field of social distinctions.

Bourdieu's usage, then, raises the question of how Weber handled the conceptualization of status. Here Weber was even more cautious than with the concept of class: in the earlier text (pt. 2 of *Economy and Society*), he described a status order as "the way in which social honor is distributed in a community between typical groups participating in this distribution" (1978, 927; emphasis added). His later recasting of definitions, in part 1 of *Economy and Society*, did not revise this approach to status groups even in the direction of listing typical status situations—as he had long with class—much less positing any holistic calculus of status (1978, 305–7). 11 Given that Weber did not substantially revise his early formulation, the overall contrast between Weber and Bourdieu on class and status is significant, despite Bourdieu's borrowing. Where Weber refused, Bourdieu is intent on showing that there is an objective field of cultural distinctions and that individuals are left largely to struggle for distinction within the domain as it has been defined and to struggle with and against objectively imposed distinctions.

Bourdieu well recognizes that cultural distinctions do not represent some generalized currency of "legal tender" among all individuals and status groups, yet he builds his account as though they do. He says regarding class, "Because capital is a social relation, i.e., an energy which only exists and only produces its effects in the field in which it is produced and reproduced, each of the properties attached to class is given its value and efficacy by the specific laws of each field" (1984, 113). Such incomplete interchangeability is even more pronounced for culture than for money. A corporate executive cannot expect her art collection to impress a butcher, any more than a factory worker wears clothes to gain distinction with people beyond a certain social circle. Similarly, wearing diamonds will carry different currencies at a debutante's ball than in a truckstop café. Cultural capital, after all, is good only (if at all) in the social worlds where a person lives and acts, and the value that it has depends on sometimes ephemeral distinctions of currency in those particular social worlds.

Bourdieu emphasizes the importance of action in his depiction of the social struggle to impose a collective definition of the world, yet he presumes the actor confronting an objective social field. This "symbolic system" or "space of life-styles," however, derives from a form of measurement realism: having measured cultural variation in a way that shows coherent patterns, and his own claims to the contrary, Bourdieu takes the patterns discerned through the measurement to illustrate an objective reality. Postmodernist theorists would question the validity of such a demonstration. Another measurement perspective presumably would yield another set of patterns, equally coherent. As
Schatzki (1987) has argued, if Bourdieu's (1972, 1977) basic thesis about subjective strategic use of symbols is correct, then the objective intelligibility of an array of symbols cannot be mistaken for the subjective structures of intelligibility that give rise to action (cf. de Certeau [1974] 1984, 58). In short, there is a contradiction between Bourdieu's objectivist holism and his emphasis on concrete practices in matters of distinction. Bourdieu (1989) would prefer to characterize this contradiction as a dialectical relation, in which any social action to construct meaningful categories and distinctions takes place within an actor's objective position, and succeeds to the extent that the actor's worldview aligns with objective reality. This claim is revealing of Bourdieu's problem: even if he emphasizes that practices establish and sustain distinctions, his secular theory of elite domination through legitimation of its cultural standards requires the positing of a socially objective "symbolic system," and his survey research methodology gives the appearance of mapping one, whether it is real or not.

The difficulties of reconciling holistic structuralism and measurement realism with cultural heterogeneity and the actual practices of distinction disappear if we formulate a theory of distinction on the basis of a different presupposition. Let us assume that there is no socially constructed objective reality and offer a treatment of status that mirrors Weber's treatment of class defined on the basis of potentially multiple situations. This is not to deny that there are socially constructed real conditions and distinctions, but these conditions and distinctions are manifold and situational and cannot necessarily be reduced to a single, ordered objective matrix. Under this assumption, a "social order" may exist empirically and define "the way in which social honor is distributed in a community between typical groups participating in this distribution" (Weber 1978, 927). Two points about any such social order seem relevant. First, within a given community, not all groups or individuals necessarily participate in any socially legitimated distribution of honor. Second, the boundaries of any community and the effective range of any ordered distribution of honor have empirical limits, not only in relation to a larger population, but also for community participants. This is especially the case in societies organized by markets, as opposed to Weber's "status societies." In market societies, communities interpenetrate one another (or, put differently, individuals typically participate in more than one community and with varying degrees of commitment). Compared to status societies, in market societies the enforcement of an overarching status order becomes both more problematic and less relevant to the issue of societal order. As Durkheim worried in The Division of Labor ([1893] 1964); in an "organic" social formation no inherent societal community can establish its moral boundaries in a conscience collective. For much the same reasons that Durkheim identified, societies integrated via markets inherently operate in ways that undercut any overall hierarchalization of status, instead producing a multiplicity of sometimes parallel, sometimes autonomous, sometimes conflicting plays of distinction.

Of course, the difference between a market society and a status society is an ideal typical one, and, empirically, any given contemporary social formation is likely to have both group boundaries and market accumulation of cultural capital at work. The question then becomes, What is the interaction between markets and groups, between class and status, between economic formations and cultural formations? There is no simple theoretical answer to this puzzle: it represents perhaps the key issue of post-Marxist sociology today. Any answer seemingly will amount to a political economy of class, status, and culture. Empirically, there are multiple economic markets and, by analogy, multiple cultural markets of distinction as well as interpenetrating communities with varying degrees of integration and status groups of all descriptions. For issues of economic class, specific coalitions and oppositions of interest will depend on concrete market situations in relation to commodities, real property, capital, services, and labor. But the people in any specific class situation are not a random sample of the population. Rather, their market situations are structured in part by their associations with various social groups. Among these groups, what Weber called social classes (i.e., class status groups) figure prominently, as considerable research (e.g., Blau and Duncan 1967; Aldrich 1988) shows. However, because social classes are subject to the vicissitudes of market society, their memberships are not very homogeneous in terms of social origins, and their badges of difference, as described by Bourdieu, for example, do not preclude status mobility. Especially beyond the boundaries of any putative aristocracy—in the American moyen bourgeoisie, for example—the distinctions of membership may be fairly easy for newcomers to assimilate.

By contrast to class distinctions, other cultural distinctions, although hardly immutable, are often somewhat more fixed in their social construction, and the boundaries of inclusion/exclusion may thus be comparatively more effectively maintained. At the least, the nuances of how habitus may be figured by gender, by ethnicity, by religious identity, are as strongly formed as class distinctions. If schooling may partially compensate for class traits gained in a habitus, it probably can do less
in the way of changing certain of an individual’s gender, ethnic, or religious cultural dispositions. Perhaps most important, such traits do not vary independently; they form configurations of individual and group life-styles.

In the postindustrial/postmodern/post–Cold War era, we have to be struck by the salience of multiple boundaries, many of them based on nonclass axes of difference. Enduring and even multiplying cleavages have awakened us from both the liberal dream of a universalistic social order and the Marxist account of a class society, much less the dream of a classless society. The obvious complexity of contemporary social conflict means that putative objective standards of cultural judgment are the sites of public contention in and of themselves and from diverse sources (witness the parallel struggles along different lines of cleavage over collegiate literary canons, children’s textbooks, abortion, pornography, art, and freedom of speech). But the public struggles described by French structuralist approaches (e.g., in Alexander 1988) do not exhaust the play of difference. They are only the visible, which fails to represent the iceberg below. Beyond public discourse, in nonsocietal communities—both subcultural and countercultural—individuals deal in admixtures of ethos and the most divergent badges of honor. In everyday life, distinctions are invoked within particular social situations and by individuals and groups who draw culture and conditions into conjunctive relevance (cf. de Certeau [1974] 1984; Swidler 1986).

How are such empirical processes to be theorized? Whereas Bourdieu (1989, p. 14) would “speak of constructivist structuralism or of structuralist constructivism” (and by structure he means objectively real symbolic ones), I propose a model of cultural structuralism, in which social “structural” arrangements of power and of practices are infused with cultural bases, if culture is understood, not as necessarily holistic, but as diverse configurations of institutionalized meanings, recipes, and material objects that may be differently drawn on by various actors within the same social arena or society (Hall 1988, 1990).

A theory of cultural structuralism does not specify a homology between cultural structures, groups, and social action, nor does it portray a grid of binary distinctions along which action becomes ordered in its significance. Instead, it opens up exploration of the dynamics among these phenomena amid concrete cultural struggles. Conventionally, stratification is mapped by sociologists with concepts like class, gender, ethnicity, and status group. However, an approach of cultural structuralism suggests that institutionalized social situations are concatenations of these and diverse other characteristics in unique meaningful configurations that exist only as the array of practices, not as objective “stratification.” Significant cultural struggles—for example, the Protestant Reformation and subsequent revivals (Weber 1958; Thompson 1963) or the hippie counterculture (Hall 1978)—reorganize the webs of interaction and group affiliation and promote distinctive ethics of action. Within historically dynamic societies, a multiplicity of overlapping and sometimes contradictory distinctions and boundaries persist as the residues of previous struggles to order the world culturally as a meaningful totality. In diverse, sometimes purely situational, and potentially conflicting ways, these cultural structures may find their ways both into any individual’s habitus and into the criteria of distinction used by individuals and groups. But stratification in the typical objectivist sense is a misnomer that obscures the concrete practices of status situations, just as it obscures the dynamics of economic class situations.

This means that Bourdieu’s approach to cultural capital must be reversed. Instead of reducing status to class, social classes must be recognized as one among myriad kinds of status groups. Sometimes status groups are based on class, sometimes on other cultural criteria. Their kinds of cultural capital sometimes interpenetrate, sometimes conflict, sometimes subsume other marketable distinctions. Thus, people may face objective conditions in their lives—conditions that they cannot simply will away—but any attempt to construct an objective space of social relations either represents an interpretive sociological act or is an attempt at symbolic domination by a social group bent on imposing its meaningful interpretation of the world. To accept the sociological account as real is to engage in a misplaced concreteness; to describe any one social group’s calculus as the effective one is to confer legitimacy to a calculus that, as Bourdieu recognizes, remains in play with others.

A holistic assumption about an objective social space obscures the potentially polymorphous character of status group dynamics that may be relatively autonomous from one another and that may gear into or conflict with one another in ways that cannot be reduced to class dynamics of cultural capital. The holistic assumption of an objective social space adds nothing to the explanation of distinction. Worse, it distorts the capacity of a cultural capital model to theorize the diverse formations where cultural distinctions come into play. If the holistic assumption is abandoned, sociological analysis need not be concerned with offering an objective realism; instead, it can pursue a “sociological realism” by trying to understand the cultural structures of meaning that
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actors take to be real, act out, and attempt to enforce as real in the play of everyday life.

Notes

This essay is based on a talk presented at the Twelfth World Congress of Sociology, Madrid, 10 July 1990. I wish to thank Michèle Lamont, Guenther Roth, and Judith Stacey for their comments on earlier drafts and to take responsibility myself for what is written.

1. For example, Bourdieu has examined the relationship between the maintenance of class distinctions and the restricted vs. large-scale character of cultural production (1985a), and he has applied his model to topics such as religion (1982).

2. It would be interesting to explore how Bourdieu came to his approach. A strategic methodological resource and secular theory for such an investigation would be Michel Lamont's (1987) account of Derrick's ascendency to fame. Interestingly, Bourdieu's overall account of distinction, transformed for intellectual matters, well describes the French academic world dominated by the Paris scene out of which he operates. It is a world where formal theorizing often counts less than rhetorical performance and where scholars seem predisposed to found their own schools—ignoring the work of their closest intellectual adversaries—as the route to prestige. Thus, Bourdieu's model may work well for the milieu of his own intellectual community and for the view from there to the rest of France. Indeed, Bourdieu necessarily is in the business of amassing cultural capital within this milieu, and his model thus has a reflexive existence both as a sociological theory and as the strategy for advancing this theory in the intellectual world. Not only is Bourdieu intellectually brilliant, but he is also adept at intellectual combat, so much so that his rhetorical postures—such as the denial of formal theory and the indifference to ambiguity and contradiction—become conflated with his actual argument in ways that both make it difficult to evaluate his argument and concurrently "protect" his academic prestige against pretenders to the throne of French intellectual life.

3. I use social class in both Weber's and Bourdieu's sense and in a way conceptually distinct from Weber's (1978, 302–5) various economic classes.


5. A better metaphor might be that of language, which—unlike capital—cannot be saved but can be used again and again and not exhausted. Neither saved nor spent, language nevertheless is a resource that individuals may possess and bring into play. It therefore amounts to more than simply a badge, yet it also operates as a badge, for in its usage it offers the listener instant clues to the speaker's cultural facility. But even if it might seem a more appropriate metaphor, language would not work well for Bourdieu's approach. Unlike the concept of capital and the economic metaphor, which assume a single objective matrix or value, a poststructuralist approach would eschew the claim of a single, objective language in favor of recognizing representations of language in organs of legitimation such as dictionaries and a wide range of dialects and personal usages among communities of speakers who may themselves speak more than one language. These are the characteristics of a nonholistic model, not of one that posit an objective field of distinction.

6. For much the same reason, efforts to push Bourdieu's schema into a conventional Marxist analysis (namely, of the circulation of capital) are theoretically problematic, despite their interesting substantive insights. For an example of such an effort, see Zukin (1990). For a valuable Marxist reading and appreciation of Bourdieu (which, for all its virtues, is undercut by the use of an economic metaphor pushed in a reductionist direction toward treating culture as "investment" and "return"), see Garnham and Williams (1986).

7. For a discussion of approaches, see Scott (1988).

8. One of Weber's solutions to this dilemma was the ideal type, or sociological model (Roth 1971, 1976), used to depict salient features of a social reality, without claiming to represent, or otherwise wholly capture, that reality. By this device, Weber could discuss cultural objects (called cultural structures here) and social complexes without acceding either to holism or to a correspondent approach to concept formation.

9. Weber was ready to grant that the distribution of property is the central defining fact of class situations, but he argued that the kind of property (or service)—e.g., commodity, capital, factory, livestock, land, slaves, labor, etc.—distinguishes heterogeneous class situations that might arise in distinct markets (cf. Giddens 1971, 165). Thus, the long-term historical shifts in predominant forms of class struggle (in Weber's day, "toward wage disputes on the labor market") could be discussed only "at a cost of some precision" (1978, 930). For concrete analyses, Weber saw as indispensable the consideration of specific market situations.

10. The reasons for this shift are open to debate. Wolfgang Schluchter argues that the two parts of Economy and Society represent "stages in the realization of one project. One could characterize them as two mutually independent drafts" (1989, 462). Yet Schluchter does not discuss Weber's reasons for making significant emendations. Roth (1988–89, 145) has argued that the shift represented a turn to the "new objectivity" popular at the time but that, for Weber, it was a "continuation of his political war with other means."


12. It is worth remembering that Weber originated his concept of community (Gemeinheit) in the analysis of religion and later borrowed the formulation for political analysis (Roth 1979). Within close-knit religious communities, the question of a status order would amount to an issue of legitimation for the
group as a whole, and the character of group solidarity may be affected by the specific character of the status order (Hall 1988). If, on the other hand, a community is to define a status order among more diffuse groups effectively, it must operate through the auspices of the state, a mediated or public culture such as television, or the panoptic gaze described by Michel Foucault ([1975] 1977).

References


