Chapter 17

Social Class

Nancy Duncan and Stephen Legg

Introduction

In this chapter we review the question of the relation between class and culture, first making brief reference to key texts in social and cultural theory. We then look at some of the more general statements on class in the geographical literature, with special attention to cultural geography. We end with some questions and remarks about how the issues of class and culture might be further explored by cultural geographers. Despite (some argue because of) the recent explosion of interest in subjectivity and identity formation in geography, class has remained the most neglected and problematic of those "agonizing etceteras": race, gender, sexuality, age, class, etc. (Butler 1990: 143). In cultural geography class is often used uncritically in the popular taxonomic and gradational sense of the term as a category with which to describe the social status or distinction of individuals, or as a variable based on education and income to be employed in statistical analyses. Class in various Marxian and Weberian dynamic and relational senses is too rarely brought under theoretical and empirical scrutiny or elaborated in specific cultural and historical contexts.

When Marxist definitions are invoked they are sometimes based on an overly simple, dichotomous, and essentialist model of capital and labor with little or no reference to self-identification processes, instabilities, hybridities, or multiplicities as these are seen to complicate the matter. When the model *is* refined, intermediate class fractions or contradictory class locations such as the propertyless middle class are often recognized (see Wright 1985, 2000). However, such complications as consciousness, especially its ambiguity, ambivalence, apathy, contingency, or other cultural, affective, experiential, or social-psychological aspects, are often thought to reduce the analytic power of the economic model. The fear, presumably, is that the analyst might come to see the world in all its baffling complexity rather than "cutting to the heart of the matter." We believe that it is possible to understand the nature of classes by using a dynamic and relational approach to the understanding of capitalist class processes which also acknowledges that popular understandings of class (both existential and articulated) refer to very real social differences

(however fragmented and unstable) that enable recognition and subjectivity. These in turn are related in complex, if sometimes tangential, ways to class as political-economic processes. However, there are many problems with combining these different senses of class. Wright (1985: 79), for example, claims that status and class are unrelated and that questions of status have no place in class analysis. Crompton (1998: 118), however, points to the considerable empirical overlap between status (as prestige or lifestyle) and class (as defined in relation to production). Among the many problems is the fact that although class processes are being restructured globally, many of the studies of the social psychology of classes[1] are national or even regional in scope and usually based only on Western countries such as the US, Britain, or France.

Although there is clearly a perceived need to rethink class, recent introductions to cultural geography (Crang 1998[2]; Shurmer-Smith & Hannam 1994, and Shurmer-Smith 2002) still contain no significant consideration of the issue. As Norton (2000: 20) acknowledges, while political-economy remains important, "Class is not, however, central to much of the work in contemporary cultural geography." In fact Sadler (2003) speaks of a "limited engagement with class as an explanatory concept (*even*) within economic geography" (emphasis added). Various explanations have been offered to explain what Cooke (1996: 18) refers to as this "eclipse of class" in contemporary academic study and participatory politics. He states that economic and technological developments associated with a 'post-Fordist' or 'late capitalist' economy are thought to have fragmented traditional class formations while radical politics has given way to market-oriented and identity-based disputes. In the realm of theory, poststructuralist critiques of Marxist metanarratives and essentialism have led to an emphasis on studies that stress the relative autonomy of the cultural realm to the detriment of more materialist research. In this same vein Anderson and Gale (1999) believe that the currency of the concept of culture in geography reflects a "recent phase of economic and social restructuring in the West when old lines of class division are being fractured around new sources of identity and political mobilisation."

Neil Smith (2000) and David Harvey (2001) have been among the most vocal protestors against the decline of class as an object of geographical inquiry. As Smith (2000: 1012–14) points out, there has been unprecedented industrial expansion (especially in Asia) and new global class formations have arisen since the 1970s as globalization dramatically restructures class relations and "recalibrates" class, race, and gender divisions in society and the economy (2000: 1014). An ever-expanding global migration of labor has resulted in an intensified racialization of labor segmentation. Smith admits that while a renewed importance of class discourse is not, in fact, incompatible with an evolving politics of race, gender, and sexuality, it is difficult to "unpack the abstract theoretical categories of 'difference' in specific political context." He acknowledges that the "thuddingly inflexible" notions of class inherited from the seventies and eighties period of Marxist dominance in geography account, in part, for the turn to more nuanced understandings of identities as experienced. He admits that most Marxist work in geography failed to explore class subjectivity, class agency, and changing class structures. Nevertheless, he says, it would be distressingly ironic if at the beginning of the twenty-first century when there is a dramatic upsurge of class and class organizing globally (Sayer & Walker

1992), the concept of class continues to remain relatively undeveloped (Smith 2000: 1028; also see Harvey 2001). Another Marxist geographer, Richard Peet (1997: 46), calls for "a project linking economic with cultural analysis" which would be "supported by an embarrassingly rich array of intellectual resources, which only the blinkers of conventional economic thinking prevent us from fully using."

Thus, as cultural geography emerges from the limelight of the "cultural turn," there are growing calls for what Crang (1997: 9) describes as a renewed "political-economic return." Such a development should in theory turn the attention of cultural geographers to the concept of class. Jackson (2000: 13) has urged the "rematerialization of social and cultural geography," by which he means (in part) the need for culture to be "reconnected to a critical understanding of cultural materialism as practiced in the tradition of political economy, without simply 'reading off' symbolic meanings from the mode of production." At the same time Barnes and Hannah (2001) call for a more empirically grounded approach to geographical work through the use of quantitative methodologies. These, we agree, are appropriate (in conjunction with other methodologies) to the examination of class as a complex, large-scale political-economic phenomenon stretching well beyond the horizon of individuals' identities or quests for recognition. Statistical analyses of profound inequalities measured at various scales including the global also may be necessary to counter popular rhetoric about the disappearance of class as a structured political-economic phenomenon.

Ray and Sayer (1999) bemoan the fact that the so-called "cultural turn" in geography has not only neglected class as it relates to production, but that it has also resulted in a more general turning away from political economy as an important focus of research. They believe there "are many positive effects of the 'cultural turn' – both in taking culture, discourse, and subjectivity more seriously and in escaping from reductionist treatments of culture as a mere reflection of material situation" (Ray & Sayer 1999: 2). However, they see no good reason why the growing prominence of cultural geography should have resulted in (what they see as) a neglect of economic analyses rather than an enrichment of both. They make it clear, however, that theirs is not a call for the collapsing of culture and the economy or subsuming the economy under culture defined as a whole way of life. They see cultural and economic processes as internally related, but distinguishable and based in different logics. They argue further (1999: 13) that the emphasis in geography on cultural identity politics as a politics of recognition "endorses neo-liberal values and is convergent with the latter's defence of markets, especially where identity depends on consumption and images . . ." (On this see also Skeggs 2000; Brown 1995.)

Theorizing Class

Under the influence of various poststructural theories of subjectivity, cultural geographers have tended to reject the idea of a structurally defined, unified subject, let alone an idea of classes that are sufficiently homogenous and self-conscious to be politically effective. Gender, race, and sexuality are currently understood as fragmented, fluid, and ambiguous sets of relations, practices, and performances. But what about class? Is it an analogous concept? Class affiliations may be multiple, hybrid, or even contradictory; nevertheless people perform, embody, practice, and

produce class as a project, albeit incomplete and never fully constituted. We have sophisticated analyses of the performance of class as lifestyle or consumption patterns that establish social distinction, but few that look at class structured through production or property relations in ways that are comparably nuanced.[3] Marx's famous distinction between "class in itself" and "class for itself" remains relatively undeveloped and unrefined compared to the sophisticated investigation and theoretical elaboration of similar relationships between structurings (albeit often fractured structurings) and group performances and self-understandings with respect to gender or sexuality, for example.

As we have suggested, in cultural geography and other cultural fields the term 'class' is most often used as a descriptive term referring to status, occupation group, or lifestyle and consumption patterns without sufficient critical attention to questions of ontology or to questions of class as exploitative, structured relationships, as lived and experienced, as an aspect of identity, or as regionally and historically variable. Should class be seen as a taxonomic, gradational category as it is often used in everyday speech? Or is it a (more or less) unified, reflexive social group that acts (or could potentially act) collectively? The latter is an empirical question. It depends, in part, on subjectivity or class consciousness.[4] It also depends on whether the concept of "act" is seen to include loosely structured, but largely uncoordinated, actions which have far-flung, unintended consequences and unacknowledged conditions. By using class in an unexamined, "commonsense," descriptive way geographers may be losing an opportunity to connect issues of class agency, subjectivity, and consciousness to political-economic structures.

If one conceives of class in a relational, interactional sense as a cluster of practices, is it potentially a force that can act in its own interest? Might classes be best understood as complex, heterogeneous networks of relations, institutions, and other resources structured, but unintended and undirected – possibly even having emergent and coherent properties? Must classes be classes for themselves in order to be classes in themselves? Taking a broad, non-individualistic notion of agency as found for example in Latour's (1999a, 1999b) actor-network theory, in Clegg's (1989) theorization of circuits of power, or Law's (1994) relational materialism, in which the social is seen as heterogeneously material, agency is not restricted to humans and need not be understood as intentional.

Resnick and Wolff (1987) see class as an adjective describing a set of processes. Gibson-Graham, Resnick, and Wolff (2000: 11) say that their "task is to open up new discursive spaces where a language of process rather than of social structure suggests the possibility of energetic and unconfined class identities." This perhaps suggests more fluidity and less structure than in fact exists: a triumph of hope over experience perhaps? But to oppose structure to process seems to undo some of the important theoretical developments over the last twenty or so years in overcoming such dualisms. We think that by acknowledging structured inequalities or structuration processes, one need not necessarily lose sight of changing, open, and multiple class positions; rather such acknowledgment serves to remind one also of the dangers of liberal individualism in assuming more choice, freedom, and mobility than in fact exists. However, we do wholeheartedly agree with Gibson-Graham, Resnick, and Wolff (2000: 9) when they say, "How class processes relate to individual and collective identities, the formation of social groups, and to other

complexities such as power and property becomes an open question, something to be theorized rather than assumed."

Embourgeoisement theories are largely out of favor, as they are seen (like culture of poverty theories) to blame the victim (see Goldthorpe et al. 1969). But might it not be possible through in-depth, multifaceted study, including both social-psychological and political-economic approaches, to refine these types of explanation of class consciousness and alienation? Many theorists today refuse a distinction between objective and subjective bases of class, arguing that class includes practices, consciousness, and structures which are all mutually constitutive. The notion of false consciousness is widely thought to be too crude, unnuanced, and too wedded to a simplistic dichotomy between subjective and objective states of being. However, one might ask if there is a way to understand the complex and contingent structuration of inequalities, systematic disadvantaging, differential access to resources, and exploitation practices which exist (relatively) independently of class consciousness? If so what can be said about the relation of these structures to the understanding of class as experienced. Are there more accurate or subtle ways to understand the relation between common interests and class consciousness however defined?

As Wright (2000) points out, there are two distinct uses of the term 'class consciousness.' One sees it as a characteristic of classes as collective entities while the other sees it an attribute of individuals. He argues that imputing consciousness to a class is an "elliptic and rather awkward way of theorizing this emergent tendency" which runs the risk of teleology. Wright (2000: 193) argues that classes are not the kind of entity that can have minds or preferences. This is undoubtedly true, but what about class identification, class "feelings,"[5] romantic longings, or striving on the part of individuals who identify with a particular class and their understandings of its practices and cultural attributes? What is the relation between these "structures of feeling" and processes of production, exploitation, distribution, or domination? And does this relation not vary considerably cross-culturally? Awareness of class varies widely across cultures and through time. There are geographies of class processes which show how space "hides the consequences" (Soja 1989). For example, in the case of the most privileged and powerful, one might argue that residential separation and an aestheticization of lifestyles often obscures the social consequences of privilege, further reinforcing the status quo by naturalizing and supporting the bases of such privilege (see Duncan & Duncan 2003). Awareness of class clearly varies depending on how those in similar economic situations are fragmented ethnically and racially. Class processes are cross-cut by gender, ethnicity, race, language, citizenship, and immigration status within countries. Furthermore as class structures are increasingly globalized, then it is increasingly unlikely that the structures of class feeling will coincide with the geographical reality of class processes. If classes are in fact now global in scale, then do national boundaries and other separations obscure globally restructured class-based inequalities?

The inability to understand the links between class structure (class-in-itself) and consciousness (class-for-itself) have, in fact, stymied Marxist thought for well over a century now. One of the major theorists who have addressed this problem is Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci, and subsequent Gramscian cultural theorists, envisage class relations as maintained through a double helix of force and consent. Coercion and control are exerted through the institutions of 'political society' while consent

is manufactured through cultural and moral norms in 'civil society' (Femia 1981; Guha 1997). As such, the sociocultural consent of the working classes is seen to explain the lack of a revolution in the face of exploitation in twentieth-century Europe. Raymond Williams's (1977) theory of cultural hegemony, similarly, sees class cultures as lived forms and cultural hegemony as articulated through "structures of feeling" that induce particular ways of acting which conform to an ideal of how society should operate. This hegemony then supports ruling class interests (Williams 1977: 131). In the US the classic work of Sennett and Cobb (1973) on the "hidden injuries of class" provides still useful insight into the workings of class hegemony at the level of "structures of feeling." They show through both intensive and extensive empirical research how the ideologies of individualism and class mobility supported class privilege and lead to the poor blaming themselves for their poverty rather than recognizing larger class processes. In Britain a classic cultural study of the development of class experience and consciousness and the "not so hidden" injuries of class is Willis's (1977) study of working-class boys. Both these studies point to the failure of individuals to recognize their own interests and to the ways their beliefs and actions reinforce the structures of inequality. They manage to perceptively explore these structures of class feeling and the failure of class militancy, without falling into the trap of cultural determinism. In fact, they manage to effectively counter "cultures of poverty" and underclass[6] type arguments which themselves blame the victim, failing to recognize the material force of the larger class structures of exploitation and failures of distribution at the root of poverty. The recent trend in social, cultural and geographical theory tends to emphasize instead resistance, knowingness, fragmentation, and incoherence in social relations and to downplay the coherence and power of dominant ideologies. This trend may unfortunately be more theoretically sophisticated than it is empirically substantiated.

The cultural work of Raymond Williams was also taken up by Stuart Hall and his colleagues at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University which throughout the 1980s developed its own brand of cultural studies and identity politics simultaneously considering race, gender, sexuality, and class. Although this work had its basis in Marxian critique (Hall 1996, 1997), it unfortunately tended to give the least attention to class. More recently, however, cultural studies has begun to recognize the need for a return to class as a decentered, relationally defined, aspect of identity. As Chen (1996a: 400) states, "[So] those terms that were excluded from cultural studies, in what I would call the middle period, when we were trying to get rid of the baggage of class reductionism, of class essentialism, now need to be reintegrated; not as dominant explanatory forms, but as very serious forms of social and cultural structural division, inequality, unevenness in the production of culture." Chen has further argued that revised forms of Marxisms (or 'post-Marxist' theories) emerging within poststructuralism and class-based analyses of cultural studies can be compatible. Both share, he claims, an emphasis on strategic alliances based on similar political concerns, framed within local studies of concrete struggles (Chen 1996b: 320).

Such theories maintain certain Marxist notions, such as "the perception that the organization of systems of ideas and the mode of their social operation can be satisfactorily understood only if primary consideration is given to their connections

to the prevailing system of class relations" (Bennett 1990: 18). Other Marxian concepts including the mode of production and the dialectic are qualified. For example, any notion of 'being' prior to 'consciousness,' the 'real' prior to the 'ideology' that represents it, or 'society' prior to the 'discursive relations' which attribute meaning, are all called into question and seen as constitutive rather than separate.

Pierre Bourdieu has attempted to theorize class within a Marxist frame. He employs a notion of cultural "habitus" to articulate those spatially defined embodied rituals of everydayness by which a culture "reproduces and sustains the belief in its own 'obviousness'" (Butler 1999: 113). Although noncausal, habitus (or culture[7]) can inspire dispositions that incline people to act in certain ways. Habitus is, ultimately, thought to be determined by the social 'fields' from which it emerges, the most important of which is the market. Although Bourdieu devotes much of his attention to how class as status is expressed through taste, knowledge, and lifestyle and formed by cultural as well as economic capital, some sympathetic critics such as Judith Butler remain uneasy with the lingering primacy of the market in his work. Butler believes that where there should be opportunities for resistance within the improvisation and ambivalence that result from the imbrications of field and habitus, Bourdieu tends to see only conformity (Butler 1999: 118). On the other hand, we would argue that the question of whether to place emphasis on stability or instability, hegemony or strife should be resolved through empirical inquiry and should not be decided by theoretical debate. In fact there is evidence that Bourdieu shared this view and that he places more emphasis on contingency than many of his detractors suggest.

Post-Marxist theorists Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 70) question the assumption that the hegemony is necessarily based in class. Drawing upon Gramsci's work, they question the preexistence of fully constituted class identity, suggesting rather that people enter into political struggles in an attempt to shape their identities as well as their destinies. Just as biological sex does not preexist socially constructed gender, so the economy should not be seen to predate and determine politics or culture (Smith, 1998:151). Although class is identified as a subject position, it remains fragile and unfinished. Political discourses must promise to overcome the 'lack' (Laclau 1994: 2) between one's identity and one's subjectivity while forming links with residual, enduring and emerging institutions thus achieving a new, temporary, and partial hegemony (Smith 1998: 170).

However, while Laclau and Mouffe argue for an increased emphasis on class, what has occurred has been in fact is a radical devaluation. As Fraser (1995: 68) characterized contemporary debates:

> In these 'post-socialist' conflicts, group identity supplants class interest as the chief medium of political mobilisation. Cultural domination supplants exploitation as the fundamental injustice. And cultural recognition displaces socio-economic redistribution as the remedy for injustice and the goal of political struggle.

While income inequality continues to rise (see Martin 2001), academics remain stuck in what Fraser (1995: 70) terms the "redistribution–recognition dilemma." Research tends to focus on cultural domination, nonrecognition and disrespect rather than exploitation, marginalization and deprivation. Important as the former

cultural-symbolic issues are, they should not be considered without giving central consideration to socio-economic injustices.

Following Nancy Fraser's (1995, 1997, 1999) line of argument, Linda McDowell (2000) argues for a politics of social justice whose goal is recognition of cultural difference and economic redistribution. This as she explains raises many difficult issues concerning the relation between culture and the economy and the various competing definitions of class. McDowell (2000) argues that any combining of the politics of recognition with a politics of redistribution in which relations of production are radically restructured will necessarily "translate" binary distinctions into "networks of multiple intersecting differences that are demassified and shifting" (McDowell here quoting Fraser 1997: 31). Such translation (rearticulation, recontextualization) she says would require changes in the cultural definitions of various identities based on gender and ethnic as well as class. As economic inequalities are resolved there will be consequences in the realm of cultural differences that must be accommodated. Sayer (1999: 65) says cultural relations such as patriarchy and racism structure social relations within the economy and the "inequalities they generate are routinely taken advantage of by capitalist interests, whether in the super-exploitation of oppressed groups or the conversion of symbolic capital into economic capital." The interrelations between the cultural and the economic are highly complex; thus we can see that any truly significant change in economic relations will have cultural repercussions.

Class and Cultural Geography

As we have indicated above, within geography as a whole, analyses of class came to prominence in the late 1970s with the rise of a radical, generally Marxist approach. Yet, as with studies of class more generally, this prominence declined in the 1980s. Smith attributes this to causes both external and internal to geography. Externally, cultural studies focusing on feminism, racism, and sexuality tended to downplay class. Internally, the class categories used by geographers were often inadequate and inflexible (Smith 2000: 1020). Class structures were theorized abstractly and not always connected empirically to local class practices and formations. However, there have been some attempts over the past 20 years to rectify some of these problems and to revitalize the notion, as well as explore the distinctive contributions geographers may be in a position to make.

Thrift and Williams, for example, attempt to focus the analysis of class on the issue of space. They (Thrift & Williams 1987: xiii) state that "classes are organised (or disorganised) over space at a variety of scales and the degree and form of this spatial organisation will affect their integrity in myriad ways." They adopt an explicitly relational approach suggesting that class structure refers to the way in which people's capacity for action is limited by the institutionally mediated social relations of production. They supplement this politico-economic focus with attention to class formation, the process by which people are recruited to class politics. This formation is understood in relation to the three concepts of conflict, capacity, and consciousness. 'Capacity' refers to the ability of a class to reproduce itself and organize its members into a social force, which could lead to 'conflict' between class alliances. The result and source of these capacities and conflicts is 'consciousness,' the

awareness of class membership. However, they too have found that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to empirically determine when a class becomes "for-itself."

Many geographical analyses of class structure have been theoretical and abstract in focus, such as those of Wallerstein or Harvey; capitalist structures are less often studied empirically or located within place differentiated relations of production and reproduction (but see Massey 1984). Thrift and Williams (1987: 15, 35), however, argued that the regional scale should be used to look at class conflict and capacity, while class-consciousness is best studied at the community scale. Some geographical work began at that time to explore class practices and processes in particular localities, localities being seen as the result of historically contingent clusterings of heterogeneous processes and institutions (see Cooke 1989).

More recently geographical studies of urban form and processes have come to examine class relationally and localities as networked into other spatial scales. Kearns and Withers (1991) offer a critique of the sterility of urban ecological approaches to class as a mappable variable. They (1991: 9) propose that studies of class and community should be animated by explorations of the cultural, experiential aspects of the relations between classes. Relational studies of class should thus emphasize the perceptions of class inequalities which they say are "invariably framed by cultural factors" (1991: 10). They (p. 11) state that, "the study of how society is structured by class relations leads us to explore a range of cultural phenomena that express the way individuals signified to people of similar standing and to others the meanings they attributed to economic, political or demographic processes."

The emergence of "new cultural geography" in the mid to late 1980s brought mixed fortunes for studies of class. Earlier attacks on traditional cultural geography had criticized the reification of culture as an autonomous force and the consequent lack of attention to social process and social relations (Duncan 1980) as well as the virtual non-existence of a "radical cultural geography" (Cosgrove 1983). It promised an increased emphasis on social interaction especially power relations, politics and contestation. However, a strong poststructural influence on much of the later work, which was often based on an inherent critique of structural Marxism as essentialist and totalizing, tended to lose the constitution of class as a primary focus of research.

However, there is some work on landscape that does include significant contributions to class studies in cultural geography. Cosgrove and Daniels (1988) and Cosgrove (1984) linked the emergence of capitalist class structures with the reformulation of the landscape "way of seeing" as both a mode of representation and a practical means for appropriating space. The bourgeois class sponsored the emergence of the linear perspective; it was used to represent their power and prestige while erasing the laboring class whose exploitation created and maintained both physical and representational landscapes (Cosgrove 1984: 27). Don Mitchell (2000: 99–100) shows how the landscape as a physical phenomena reproduces class relations. Like a commodity, the landscape embodies the labor and social struggle that reproduces it. Likewise, Zukin (1991) views landscape as a product of social contestation. Duncan and Duncan (2003) analyze the aestheticization (mystification) of the class and labor relations that are constitutive of suburban American landscapes focusing attention on the tensions between Anglo elites whose identities are per-

formed through their landscape tastes and Latino workers whose labor maintains those landscapes. This and other cultural geographic work on consumption and cultural expressions of class,[8] much of it influenced by Bourdieu's (1984) in-depth study of social distinction, sees styles of life and cultural production as reinforcing and maintaining class structures.

Landscape is one of the principal themes in this recent work. Distinction and cultural capital in the form of taste are enacted in places; again the landscape is a principal medium along with housing and travel (Duncan & Duncan 2003; Philo & Kearns 1993). Some of these studies look at the production of new spaces in which capitalism operates and class identities and relations are formed as in studies of shopping malls (Crawford 1992; Shields 1992).

In cultural geography as elsewhere in the academy, poststructural conceptions of identity have had a significant impact. Identities are seen as fragmented, fluid, and relationally constituted, rather than essential. In response, Pred and Watts (1992) raise the question of how identities and identity politics that rest on internal fragmentation, difference and division can produce a common political ground with respect to class. The answer, they believe, requires "not a retreat from class, but a desperate need to re-theorize where class has gone and to rethink class in non-essentialist terms" (1992: 198). Non-essentialist conceptions of identity, however, have tended to focus on the performance of gender and sexuality, more than class. Among the few geographical works that truly take up the challenge of producing a non-essentialist definition of class as a heterogeneous social process is the highly innovative work of J. K. Gibson-Graham (1996, 1997). They argue that "a full or complex conception of class takes into account the ways in which groups are formed and subjective bases of group identification." Gibson-Graham quotes Massey (1984: 43), who states:

> Production relations indicate the sites of class relations in the economic structure, but those sites do not designate whole classes as integral, empirical groups of men and women. The fact that people occupy similar places in the relations of production does not in itself imply any other empirical level of coherence, still less any kind of necessary political unity about pre-given common interests . . . All of which means that "whole classes" are rarely actual subjects.

Gibson-Graham's work on class addresses challenging questions concerning the successes and, especially, the failures and partial failures, of the cultural constitution of capitalist hegemony. In their work the complexity, fragility, and disarray of "actually existing" class processes and identities seems to have struck them more urgently than the fixity of traditional class structurings. They have attempted to re-generate a rich, historicized conception of class as fluid, fragmentary, and articulated with other equally important aspects of social existence and subject positions. As they put it elsewhere (Gibson-Graham et al. 2000: ix), "Its never *just* the economy, stupid!" The economy is not a rarified realm separated from culture. They call this mutual constitution of social positionings "overdetermination." Class according to Gibson-Graham is "overdetermined," by which they mean that it is constituted by every other aspect of social life. Cultural geography can potentially contribute to the understanding of these intersecting processes that constitute class relations.

Gibson-Graham (1996: 52) defines classes not as social groupings, but as processes and experiences of 'exploitation' – the producing, appropriating, and the distributing of surplus labor. In this they endorse a dynamic and relational approach defining classes in terms of ongoing, antagonistic, and mutually constitutive relations. They wish to simultaneously examine the large-scale political-economic structures of exploitation and intense feelings attached to the experience of exploitation. The emotional life of classes is clearly more than psychological in nature; there is a cultural dimension to be explored. There are cultural narratives of exploitation and appropriation that organize and stabilize emotional responses to class exploitation (Gibson-Graham et al. 2000: 1–22). Although they place perhaps undue emphasis on the power of these cultural discourses, they nevertheless present a beguiling thesis on the necessity of imagining beyond the hegemony of capitalism. They refuse to see capitalism as an all-powerful, all-encompassing totality; instead they seek out not only the contradictions of capitalism, but noncapitalist processes (including importantly unpaid domestic labor). They believe that such noncapitalist processes are far more prevalent and varied than those on either the right or the left tend to believe. They seek to examine various processes of exploitation through empirical investigation, rather than presuming the relations among exploitation, property ownership, domination and consciousness.

Analyses such as Gibson-Graham's productively question and complicate questions of consciousness, intentionality and complicity. We see cultural geographers as particularly well placed to continue the empirical research necessary to more fully understand the cultural and place-based dimensions of the lived and emotional experience of class – not to consider the cultural and discursive dimension as primary – but to see the investigation of these dimensions of class as important to the task of doing cultural geography. Although we assume that they are unstable, contradictory, fragmented, and porous, we nevertheless think that it makes sense to talk in terms of classes and perhaps most importantly to investigate how they are restructuring globally. A principal challenge then, is first to discover if we are correct in assuming that there is sufficient coherence to the notion of class for it to be a useful explanatory concept and second how the idea of culture may be of use in this pursuit.

Once various conceptual problems of defining class in empirically based, nonessentialist terms have been confronted and at least tentatively resolved, a revamped cultural geographic perspective on class and related processes could prove useful in the search for richer understandings of day-to-day practices and material conditions of power, exploitation, and oppression as they work out in particular places and as they participate in the production of particular places and relationships between places. Such class processes would include loosely structured, but largely uncoordinated actions which have unintended consequences and unacknowledged conditions. This perspective would entail a non-individualistic, relational perspective. Nevertheless it would have to connect to issues of agency, subjectivity, and consciousness to political-economic structurings. Understanding of the contingent, fluid, and complex, but nonetheless structured, relations among class, gender, nationality, and race can be broadened through studies of their interdependent constitution in (and through) particular places, types of spaces, and relations between places at a variety of spatial scales, including the global.

NOTES

1. An example of such studies is Argyle's (1994) *The Psychology of Social Class*, based on large-scale social surveys of attitudes such as attitudes toward work, lifestyles, neighboring, and child-rearing patterns, and psychological variables such as self-esteem, happiness, and mental health.
2. Crang 1998 includes an interesting chapter on "cultures of production," but class as a concept is barely addressed.
3. Exceptions include Charlesworth (2000), who attempts to convey "a phenomenology of the working class experience" – an in-depth sociological study of alienation in a deindustrializing town where unemployment is high and the sense of dignity and distinctive class culture is rapidly being lost.
4. Some theorists such as Giddens (1981) distinguish between class consciousness as antagonistic and class awareness as politically neutral. We use class consciousness here in the more general sense of class awareness.
5. An example of class feelings was recently reported in a Mori Social Values Survey (AOL Aug. 16, 2002). It showed that 68 percent of the British public claim to be "working class and proud of it," This is compared to 52 percent as recently as 1999. Furthermore of those who identified themselves as middle class 55 percent said they had "working class feelings". Richard Scase, a sociologist from Kent University, believes that job insecurity and disillusionment among professionals as well as a fashion he calls "working class chic" may explain these feelings. Whatever the reason it seems clear that people have class feelings which are very real and meaningful to them.
6. The term "underclass" was popularized by Myrdal (1962) and "culture of poverty" by Oscar Lewis (1969); these have been appropriated by the American right to blame the victims of poverty for their perpetuation of poverty through the generations and their dependence on welfare. These theoretical positions also tend to lay the blame on welfare programs. (For a critique see Philo 1995.)
7. Bourdieu (1968: 706) says that he would prefer to use the term culture if he were not afraid of being misunderstood because the term is "overdetermined."
8. See Jackson and Crang (2001).

REFERENCES

Anderson, K. and Gale, F. 1999: *Inventing Places: Studies in Cultural Geography*. Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.

Argyle, M. 1994: *The Psychology of Social Class*. London: Routledge.

Barnes, T. J. and Hannah, M. 2001: Guest editorial: The place of numbers: histories, geographies, and theories of quantification. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* A 19, 379–83.

Bennett, T. 1990: *Outside Literature*. London: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. 1968: Structuralism and the theory of sociological knowledge. *Social Research*, 35, 681–706.

Bourdieu, P. 1984: *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brown W. 1995: Wounded attachments: late modern oppositional political formations. In J. Rajchman, ed., *The Identity in Question*. New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. 1990: *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge.

Butler, J. 1999: Performativity's social magic. In E. Shusterman, ed., *Bourdieu: A Critical Review*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Charlesworth, S. 2000: *A Phenomenology of Working Class Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chen, K.-C. 1996a: Cultural studies and the politic of internationalisation: an interview with Stuart Hall by Kuan-Hsing Chen. In D. Morley and K.-C. Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge.

Chen, K.-C. 1996b: Post-Marxism: between/beyond critical postmodernism and cultural studies. In D. Morley and K.-C. Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge.

Clegg, S. 1989: *Frameworks of Power*. London: Sage.

Cooke, D. 1996: Is class a difference that makes a difference? *Radical Philosophy* 773, 17–26.

Cooke, P. 1989: *Localities: The Changing Face of Urban Britain*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Cosgrove, D. 1983: Towards a radical cultural geography. *Antipode* 15, 1–11.

Cosgrove, D. 1984: *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*. London: Croom Helm.

Cosgrove, D. and Daniels, S., eds. 1988: *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crang, M. 1997: Cultural turns and the (re)constitution of economic geography. In R. Lee and J. Wills, eds., *Geographies of Economies*. London: Arnold.

Crang, M. 1998: *Cultural Geography*. London: Routledge.

Crawford, M. 1992: The world is a shopping mall. In M. Sorkin, ed., *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of the Public Sphere*. New York: Hill and Wang.

Crompton, R. 1998: *Class and Stratification: An Introduction to Current Debates*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Duncan, J. 1980: The superorganic in American cultural geography. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 70, 181–98.

Duncan, J. S. and Duncan, N. G. 2003: *Landscapes of Privilege: The Politics of the Aesthetic in Suburban America*. New York: Routledge.

Femia, J. V. 1981: *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Fraser, N. 1995: From redistribution to recognition? Dilemmas of justice in a post-Socialist age. *New Left Review* 212, 68–94.

Fraser, N. 1997: *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the Postsocialist Condition*. London: Routledge.

Fraser, N. 1999: Social justice in the age of identity politics: redistribution, recognition and participation. In L. Ray, and A. Sayer, eds., *Culture and the Economy After the Cultural Turn*. London: Sage, 25–52.

Gibson-Graham, J. K. 1996: *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Gibson-Graham, J. K. 1997: Re-placing class in economic geographies: possibilities for a new class politics. In R. Lee and J. Wills, eds., *Geographies of Economies*. London: Arnold.

Gibson-Graham, J. K., Resnick, S. T., and Wolff, R. D. 2000: Introduction: class in a post-structuralist frame. In J. K. Gibson-Graham, S. T. Resnick, R. Wolff, and D. Class, eds., *Class and its Others*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Giddens, A. 1981: *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*. London: Macmillan.

Goldthorpe, J., et al. 1969: *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Guha, R. 1997: *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*. London: Harvard University Press.

Hall, S. 1996: Gramsci's relevance for the study of race and ethnicity. In D. Morley and K.-H. Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues*. New York: Routledge.
Hall, S., ed. 1997: *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage.
Harvey, D. 2001: *Spaces of Capital: Toward a Critical Geography*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
Jackson, P. 2000: Rematerializing social and cultural geography. *Social and Cultural Geography* 1, 9–14
Jackson, P. and Crang, P. 2001: Consuming geographies. In *British Cultural Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 327–42.
Kearns, G. and Withers, C. W. J. 1991: *Urbanising Britain: Essays on Class and Community in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. 1985: *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.
Laclau, E. 1994: Introduction. In E. Laclau, ed., *The Making of Political Identities*. London: Verso.
Latour, B. 1999a: *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Latour, B. 1999b: On recalling ANT. In J. Law and J. Hassard, eds., *Actor Network Theory and After*. Oxford: Blackwell, 15–25.
Law, J. 1994: *Organizing Modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Lewis, O. 1969: The possessions of the poor. *Scientific American* 221, 114–24.
Martin, R. 2001: The geographer as a social critic: getting indignant about income inequality. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 26, 267–72
Massey, D. 1984: *Spatial Divisions of Labour: Social Structures and the Geography of Production*. London: Macmillan.
McDowell, L. 2000: Economy, culture, difference and justice. In I. Cook et al., eds., *Cultural Turns/Geographical Turns*. London: Longman, 166–81.
Mitchell, D. 1996: *The Lie of the Land: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Mitchell, D. 2000: *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Mori Social Values Survey, AOL, Aug. 16, 2002.
Myrdal, G. 1962: *Challenge to Affluence*. New York: Pantheon.
Norton, W. 2000: *Cultural Geography: Themes, Concepts, Analyses*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Peet, R. 1997: The cultural production of economic forms. In R. Lee and J. Wills, eds., *Geographies of Economies*. London: Arnold, 28–46.
Philo, C. 1995: Where is poverty? The hidden geography of poverty in the United Kingdom. In C. Philo, ed., *Off the Map: The Geography of Poverty in the UK*. London: Child Poverty Action Group.
Philo, C. and Kearns, G. 1993: *Selling Places: The City as Cultural Capital Past and Present*. Oxford: Pergamon.
Pred, A. and Watts, M. 1992: *Reworking Modernity: Capitalism and Symbolic Discontent*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
Ray, L. and Sayer, A., eds. 1999: *Culture and the Economy After the Cultural Turn*. London: Sage.
Resnick, S. and Wolff, R. 1987: *Knowledge and Class: A Marxian Critique of Political Economy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Sadler, D. 2003: Concepts of class in contemporary economic geography. In E. Shepard and T. Barnes, eds., *A Companion to Economic Geography*. Oxford: Blackwell, 325–40.
Sayer, A. 1999: Valuing culture and economy. In L. Ray and A. Sayer, eds., *Culture and the Economy After the Cultural Turn*. London: Sage, 53–75.

Sayer, A. and Walker, R. 1992: *The New Social Economy: Reworking the Division of Labour*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Sennett, R. and Cobb, J. 1973: *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. New York: Vintage.
Shields, R. 1992: *Lifestyle Shopping: The Subject of Consumption*. London: Routledge.
Shurmer-Smith, P. 2002: *Doing Cultural Geography*. London: Sage.
Shurmer-Smith P. and Hannam, K. 1994: *Worlds of Desire, Realms of Power: A Cultural Geography*. London: Edward Arnold.
Skeggs, B. 2000: The appearance of class: challenges in gay space. In S. Munt, ed., *Cultural Studies and the Working Class*. London: Cassell.
Smith, A.-M. 1998: *Laclau and Mouffe: The Radical Democratic Imaginary*. London: Routledge.
Smith, N. 2000: What happened to class? *Environment and Planning A* 32, 1011–32.
Soja, E. 1989: *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London: Verso.
Thrift, N. and Williams, P. 1987: The geography of class formation. In N. Thrift and P. Williams, eds., *Class and Space: The Making of Urban Society*. London: Routledge.
Williams, R. 1977: *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Willis, P. 1977: *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Wright, E. O. 1979: *Class Structure and Income Determination*. London: Academic Press.
Wright, E. O. 1985: *Classes*. London: Verso.
Wright, E. O. 1989: *The Debate on Classes*. London: Verso.
Wright, E. O. 2000: *Class Counts: Student Edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Zukin, S. 1991: *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World*. Berkeley: University of California Press.