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THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE MIDDLE CLASS:
CLASS IDENTIFICATION AND CLASS IMAGES OF YOUNG CANADIANS

A thesis presented to the
Department of Sociology
Lakehead University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Sociology

by
Claude Lapré ©

April 1999

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ABSTRACT

There is a contradiction between some of the theoretical issues regarding class and the results of subjective class identification research in the United States and in Canada. Arguments concerning the decline of the middle class and debates regarding the validity of the concept of class are met by a consistent self-identification of a majority of the population as middle-class.

The aim of this thesis is to help us understand the apparent contradiction by considering how some young Canadians identify as and construct images of the middle class. Two hundred and forty nine undergraduate students from two Ontarian Universities completed a questionnaire comprised of open-ended and multiple-choice questions.

Results indicate that: 1) Participants in this study have vivid and salient images of who is and who is not, in their view, a member of the middle class; 2) Economic criteria are frequently used, but these are most often stated in qualified terms and combined with criteria concerning social and cultural capital or life style and values; 3) Some redundant economic criteria construct what could be seen as the "middle-class cocoon," a composite image of financial well-being, conservative spending patterns, feelings of security, and a strong work ethic; 4) Criteria regarding social and cultural capital or life style and values construct an image of a large and dominant middle class from which, on the other hand most of the population would be excluded,

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according to judgmental criteria; 5) Indications of a relationship between class and other aspects of social identity such as gender and ethnicity were not conclusive, but responses to a few of the questions indicate a need for further investigation.

At the end of this process, we find a three-level class structure in which the middle class distinguishes itself from the upper class on the basis of ascribed criteria and from the lower class on the basis of achieved criteria. The middle class earns its status above the lower class and is not part of the upper class only because of fate. By the combination of a claim to size and inclusion with a set of selective and judgmental criteria, the middle class is socially constructed as an "exclusive majority."

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ______ i

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ______ iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS ______ iv

LIST OF TABLES ______ vi

INTRODUCTION ______ 1

PART A: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter 1: Social Class Theories
Introduction ______ 4

Class struggles:
Karl Marx and Erik Olin Wright
Karl Marx ______ 6
Erik Olin Wright ______ 18

Class in Everyday Life:
Max Weber, Early American Sociology, and Socioeconomic Indexes
Max Weber ______ 22
Early American Sociology ______ 27
Socioeconomic Indexes ______ 32

Class Struggles in Everyday Life:
Pierre Bourdieu ______ 35

Conclusion ______ 41

Chapter 2: Objective and Subjective Class Measures
Introduction ______ 43

Objective Measures of Canadian Class Locations
Relational Canadian Class Measures ______ 43
Gradational Canadian Class Measures ______ 45

Subjective Class Identification Research
Introduction ______ 49
Subjective Class Identification Research in the United States ______ 51
Subjective Class Identification Research in Canada ______ 55

The Social Construction of Class ______ 60

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PART B: METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPANTS
Chapter 3: Methodology
Introduction ____ 64
Administration of the Questionnaires ____ 65
Analyses ____ 66
Chapter 4: Participants ____ 67
PART C: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION
Chapter 5: Is There Class?
Introduction ____ 72
Analysis ____ 75
Conclusion ____ 81
Chapter 6: What is (or is not) Middle-Class?
Introduction ____ 83
Analysis ____ 88
Conclusion ____ 110
Chapter 7: Class and Racial or Ethnic Identity
Introduction ____ 114
Analysis ____ 116
Conclusion ____ 120
PART D
Chapter 8: Conclusion
Introduction ____ 122
Class Images and Class Theories ____ 122
Class Images and Class Measures ____ 128
Class Images and Other Social Identities ____ 129
Limitations/Suggestions for Future Research ____ 131
Conclusion ____ 132
APPENDIX A ____ 134
APPENDIX B ____ 139
REFERENCES ____ 144

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LIST OF TABLES

1. Descriptive Data of Participants _____ 69

2. Academic Majors of Participants _____ 70

3. Participants' Choice of Racial or Ethnic Identity _____ 71

4. Self-Identification and Family Identification as Middle-Class _____ 76

5. Stability or Change of Self-Identification as Middle-Class _____ 77

6. Participants' Responses: Percentage of the Canadian Population in the Middle Class _____ 87

7. Constructing the Middle Class: Responses per Criteria Category _____ 89

8. Cultural and Social Capital: Most Frequently Mentioned Criteria _____ 96

9. Life Style/Values: Most Frequently Mentioned Criteria _____ 101

10. Personal Characteristics and Middle-Class Identity _____ 107

11. Middle-Class Identity and Country of Origin of Recent Immigrants _____ 117

12. Middle-Class Identity and Visible Minority or Aboriginal Identity _____ 119

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INTRODUCTION

Although the concept of social class is widely used, both in sociology and in popular discourse, there is no consensus regarding its meaning. Marx did not define the term explicitly but his writings led to various definitions and theories of class relations. These theories can be grouped under the heading of relational class theories, as they adopt the Marxist view of the existence of a class based on its opposition to another class. Relational theories can be compared to gradational theories of class, mostly inspired by Weber. In this paradigm, members of the population are placed in different groups according to their success in certain aspects of social life, such as income, earnings, wealth, educational attainment, or occupation. On any one of these criteria, or in combination, it is possible to establish that certain segments of the population are more or less privileged than others and social classes are established according to these higher or lower rankings.

These theoretical typologies lead to objective measures of the class structure and the assignment of segments of a population to specific class locations. Such class structure measures, however, ignore the subjective and discursive aspects of class such as the choice or assignment of social class by social actors. In Marxist terms, we can say that while objective measures of the class structure give us an image of a "class-in-itself", subjective class identification is a first and essential element of a "class-for-itself," the self-identification of class conscious and politically active groups.

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The search for class consciousness in Canada and the United States has stumbled upon two significant findings. First, research concerning subjective social class identification has found "middle class" to be the prevalent choice, far beyond a justifiable proportion when considering objective measures of social class. Second, subjective class identification to the working class was not related to predicted choices in terms of voting or support for left/right social policies. These issues demonstrate the need to identify the elements involved in the subjective understanding of the middle class. By considering the criteria by which individuals come to identify themselves or others as members of the middle class, we can analyze the relationship between subjective class identification and the class theories underlying objective measures of class. The contradiction between objective and subjective measures may also indicate that criteria theoretically external to class come into play. Previous research (e.g. Dunk, 1991, 1993, 1996; Roediger, 1991) found an interaction between the social construction of the working class and the social construction of race[1] and ethnicity. It may be that similar processes are at work in the social construction of the middle class. This could explain why mainstream political parties, supporters of neo-conservative politics, and the media like to use the term "middle class" so

---

[1] Although I do not subscribe to a belief in the existence of an essentialist or biological concept of "race," I must recognize that such divisions are socially constructed and that, as unfortunate as it may be, they are commonly used. The term "race" is therefore used in this thesis only in recognition of its socially constructed dimension.

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often, in a vague and all-inclusive way, as in the "silent majority" discourse of the past.

Plan of the Work

Part A of this thesis, a review of the literature, establishes the contextual parameters of this research project. In Chapter One, I review some of the most prominent social class theories, focusing on their proposed class typologies: Marx and the Marxist scheme of Erik Olin Wright; Weber and the gradational schemes of Warner and Lunt, and of socioeconomic indexes, and; the integrative approach of Bourdieu. In Chapter Two, I review some of the recent Canadian class structure research and subjective class identification research in the United States and Canada. This leads to a comparison of Canadian class structure and subjective class identification results; I propose that the apparent contradiction may be explained by considering the social construction of social classes.

In Part B, Chapter Three serves to describe the methodology of the project, while Chapter Four provides a summary description of the participants. In Part C of the thesis, I review and discuss the main research results. Three questions are addressed: Are there social classes? (Chapter Five); What is, and is not, middle-class? (Chapter 6), and; Are social classes related to the social construction of race or ethnicity? (Chapter 7). In conclusion, in Part D (Chapter 8), I review issues raised during the research, consider the limitations of this project, and offer suggestions for future research.

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PART A: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter 1: Social Class Theories

Introduction

I do not pretend to propose a complete review of class theories. Such an endeavour is hardly feasible and would certainly exceed the requirements of this thesis. The intention is rather to provide a summary of some relevant class theories. The selection was based on two factors: the inclusion of Marx and Weber as "classics;" and, a limited selection of subsequent class theories to represent the extension of these two classic strands. Arguments regarding the difference between Marxist and Weberian class schemes are reflected in this selection.

Lee and Turner (1996) contrast "strong" class theories with "weak" class theories. Strong theories are based on Marx and argue that classes can be seen as a fundamental factor of social change. Weak theories are based on Weber and propose classes as empirically identifiable groups of individuals with common social and/or economic characteristics. Wallace Clement (1988) proposes a "relational" versus "gradational" dichotomy of class theories, also related to Marx and Weber respectively. Marxist relational class schemes are based, according to Clement, on the ownership of the means of production and control over the labour of others. Weberian gradational class schemes are based on the distribution of individuals into more or less privileged groups based on access to economic resources and the consequences on life chances and lifestyle. Erik Olin Wright (1997) considers the similarities

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between Marx and Weber to better situate the essential difference. Wright argues that both class theories can be considered "relational" since a class can only exist in comparison to another. Even the simple fact of being classified as more or less privileged implies a relationship. The similarity between Marx and Weber stems from an initial consideration of economic resources which, Wright argues, determine exchange relations. However, Marxist class theories also propose that such initial differences lead to relations of production based on the exploitation of one class by another. This is where we move from differences in opportunity, or life chances, to conflict of interests and, in Marx's terms, hostile opposition.

Wright's class typology is commonly recognized as a faithful, yet contemporary version of Marxist class theory. Warner and Lunt's early American studies represent an interesting operationalization of Weberian class theory; whereas socioeconomic indexes are commonly used in contemporary debates about social inequality and can be related to a simplification of Weberian class theory. Finally, Bourdieu is retained for his relevance to the subjective approach of my research and as an integration of Marxist and Weberian class concepts. Each of the above class theories is briefly presented in the following pages. Particular attention is given to the class typology proposed by each theory.

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Class Struggles: Karl Marx and Erik Olin Wright

Karl Marx

Karl Marx's first and probably most renowned statement is found in the opening lines of The Communist Manifesto: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx & Engels, 1848/1967). It can be argued that an important premise of this statement, the exact nature of social classes, was never properly defined by Marx even though the concept of the struggle between social classes is at the core of Marx's arguments. Because the last chapter of Capital was the aborted start of such a systematic discussion, we are left the task of reconstructing a typology of classes on the basis of the numerous references to and uses of the concept of social classes in Marx's writings. This analysis is based on the following texts: The Communist Manifesto (Marx & Engels, 1848/1967), The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (Marx, 1852/1963), and Capital, Volumes I, II and III (Marx, 1867/1976; 1885/1978; 1894/1981). Each text is considered separately before attempting to draw a picture of Marx's class typology and of his image of the middle class.

The Communist Manifesto

Discussions concerning The Communist Manifesto often revolve around Marx's polarized, two-class typology, defined on the basis of the ownership of the means of production. The bourgeoisie owns the means of production and employs wage-labourers, the proletariat. It is a dichotomous opposition comparable to earlier but similar states of social relations summed up as "oppressor and

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oppressed" (Marx & Engels, 1848/1967, p.79). Polarization is claimed by Marx to be a recent development and a consequence of the changes in the means of production and exchange; as capitalism developed, the bourgeoisie broke free from feudal relations of production and as the new means of production expanded, capitalism created a new class of wage-labourers, the enemy of the bourgeoisie, the proletariat.

However, other participants are introduced. According to Marx, in the early stages of the class struggle proletarians fight the wrong fight, against "the enemies of their enemies, the remnants of absolute monarchy, the landowners, the non-industrial bourgeois, the petty bourgeoisie" (ibid, p.89). The bourgeoisie uses the proletariat in these battles against its own enemies but, by the same token, it allows proletarians to learn about political battles and eventually put this knowledge to work against the bourgeoisie. In these initial battles, the lower strata of the middle class sink into the proletariat. However, they do not go without a fight. In doing so, they cling to past social structures and become conservative or even reactionary (ibid, p.91).

Marx also mentions other social groups often considered in more recent class typologies as a social class or a class fraction. First, there is the lumpenproletariat, depicted as the "dangerous class" and "social scum" (ibid, p.92). It can be bribed by the bourgeoisie and used against the proletariat. The communists are also presented as a specific group equivalent to a revolutionary intelligentsia. Marx defines them as "the resolute section of the

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working-class parties of every country" (ibid, p.95). Finally, the petty bourgeoisie is described as: "fluctuating between proletariat and bourgeoisie and ever renewing itself as a supplementary part of bourgeois society." Eventually, they will "disappear as an independent section of modern society, to be replaced...by overlookers, bailiffs and shopmen" (ibid, p.108). This statement accurately predicts the emergence of many new supervisory and service occupations. However, it does not tell us where Marx would place them in a class typology, if their "fluctuating" would end in the bourgeoisie or the proletariat.

In sum, The Communist Manifesto predicts a polarization into two antagonistic classes: the bourgeoisie, owners of the means of production, and the proletariat, forced to sell their labour for wages. But it also acknowledges the existence of other classes: the lower middle class, fighting for its place in the bourgeoisie; a petty bourgeoisie, fluctuating between bourgeoisie and proletariat, and precursor of new unclassified occupations; and, the lumpenproletariat, a mass of rejected individuals, from one social system to the other, for which Marx proposes no other future than their potential reactionary alliance with the bourgeoisie.

The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte

The Eighteenth Brumaire (Marx, 1852/1963) is an analysis of the events leading to and following the 1848 French Revolution. Through these historical events, Marx discusses the transition of the bourgeoisie from a revolutionary element to a bastion of conservatism and illustrates how the lumpenproletariat can be co-

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opted by reactionary forces. The final result, according to Marx, sees the proletariat isolated in its opposition to the bourgeoisie and its allies. In this case, the proletariat is identified as the Paris working class, the only element still committed to the revolution, whereas the conservative and reactionary forces include the bourgeoisie of finance and industry, supported by the middle class, the petty bourgeoisie and the lumpenproletariat, as well as the intellectuals, the clergy and the rural population (ibid, p.23). Remnants of the monarchy are also present, although Marx argues that the two rival houses (Orleanists and Legitimists) are already better defined as opposing economic interests, capital and landed property.

Marx proposes an interesting image of the petty bourgeoisie's claim to representation. The argument is that by standing at the middle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the petty bourgeoisie can pretend to be detached from any specific class interest and to speak in the interest of all. The petty bourgeoisie places itself "above class antagonism" and, while it admits that it must confront the bourgeoisie, it pretends to do so in the name of all citizens: "What they represent is the people's rights, what interests them is the people's interests" (ibid, p.54). This leads to the rise of a social-democracy, a reformist alliance promoted by the petty bourgeoisie, which abandons revolutionary activity for democracy and parliamentary reform. In sum, Marx describes a society where the struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat is

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blunted by a social-democratic middle group formed around the petty bourgeoisie.

Near the end of The Eighteenth Brumaire (ibid, p.124), Marx comes closest to a definition of class:

> In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class.

Marx goes on to specify that shared conditions are not sufficient. The identity of their interests must also lead to active representation of these class interests against those of other classes. According to Marx, there are therefore three conditions for the existence of a class: 1) a group with shared interests; 2) the recognition of these interests and of their "hostile opposition" to those of other classes, and; 3) political representation of these interests. These elements we now commonly identify as class structure, class consciousness, and class action.

In a letter to a prospective publisher, Marx claims no credit for the discovery of the existence of classes but proposes that his contribution lies in arguing for the relationship of classes to "historical phases in the development of production" and the impending consequences of the class struggle, the transitory dictatorship of the proletariat and the ensuing classless society (ibid, p.139).

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Capital

The issue of social classes may be central to Marx's arguments in Capital but his main concern is an analysis of capitalism. We could say that he takes the concept of social class for granted, although he did plan to define it more specifically in the later part of the work. In the few paragraphs making up Chapter 52 (Marx, 1894/1981, pp.1025-1026) Marx identifies the three "great classes" as wage-labourers, capitalists and landowners. Marx observes that these classes are related to a particular phase of economic development in England and do not appear "in [their] pure form" since we also find "middle and transitional levels." Marx also tells us what classes are not: they cannot be identified on the basis of occupation or source of income, which represent an "infinite fragmentation of interests and positions." The manuscript ends at this point. For more, we must refer back to the previous texts and the occasional inclusion of references to the nature of social classes.

According to Marx, capitalism is born out of historical conditions leading to the coexistence of capitalists, owners of the means of production, and "free labour." Workers are free to dispose of their labour-power but are also "free" in the sense of being dispossessed, owners of no other commodity than their labour (Marx, 1867/1976, pp.272-273). The coexistence of capitalists and free labour provides the economic conditions by which the relations of production of capitalism are developed. Wage-labourers sell their labour-power to capitalists; capitalists supply capital to combine

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labour-power with the means of production; this combination produces commodities which are appropriated by the capitalist. Wage-labourers are paid a wage of subsistence, just enough to reproduce their labour. The unpaid portion of their labour creates surplus-value integrated into the commodity and thus appropriated by the capitalist.

In Chapter 10 (ibid, pp.340-416), Marx illustrates the antagonism between wage-labourers and capitalists through an analysis of the working day. He makes an allusion to capitalist class consciousness when reviewing the debate for work reforms surrounding the Corn Laws. Collective capitalist action seems to be, according to Marx, in the nature of capitalism; the same cannot be said of working class consciousness. Marx places the battle line of class struggles between an isolated working class and the capitalists, supported by a long list of allies in defense of "property, religion, the family and society" (ibid, p.398).

The next chapter includes an important comment concerning the difference between the capitalist and the petty bourgeois, here called "small master." The capitalist invests a sufficient sum to avoid participating in the production process himself. Marx indicates the importance of the distinction between the capitalist and the petty bourgeois by referring to Hegel's argument that "at a certain point merely quantitative differences pass over by a dialectical inversion into qualitative distinctions" (ibid, p.423). This also introduces a new role for the capitalist: supervision of the worker.

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In Chapters 14 and 15, Marx describes different members of the working class. When discussing the division of labour, he introduces a distinction between skilled and unskilled workers (ibid, p.470), although he argues that both groups accomplish more specialized tasks than craftsmen and therefore represent cheaper labour. Unskilled labour becomes the norm, placing most people in the "labouring poor," an expression borrowed from Adam Smith (ibid, p.483). However, the increased use of technology creates the need for a more educated group of workers to maintain or repair the machinery. It also establishes another locus of struggle in which workers resist the new technology (ibid, pp.553-554). Technological innovations also lead to an increase in surplus-value, allowing for an increase in the size of the capitalist class itself and the creation of a large servant class, a service industry for the private needs of the capitalists and their families (ibid, pp.574-575). Finally, the search for reduced costs of production and a disposable work force lead to the use of "piece-workers," a domestic branch of the manufacturing process (ibid, p.591).

Marx makes additional comments, regarding the differing conditions of workers in Chapter 25. He clearly states that better working conditions or remuneration do not change the fundamental aspect of the working class, its dependent and oppositional relationship to the capitalist. Improved conditions only amount to "a change in the length and weight of the golden chain" (ibid, p.769). With the next downturn of the capitalist cycle, improvements come to an end and the industrial "reserve army" is

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created anew. Marx divides the surplus population into three active groups, under which he places three other sub-groups, rejected from the cycle of work and living in poverty: unemployed paupers, orphans and the paupers' children, and those unable to work as a consequence of industrial accidents. These sub-groups he distinguishes from "vagabonds, criminals, prostitutes," or the actual lumpenproletariat (ibid, p.797).

Volume II of Capital (Marx, 1885/1978) does not contribute much in terms of the nature of social classes. It does inform us concerning the nature of certain occupations, an issue we will address further in this text. In Volume III (1894/1981), Marx's discussion of the interaction between rate of profit and competition involves an interesting argument regarding the source of capitalist-class consciousness (ibid, Chapter 10, pp.273-301). By arguing that all capitalists share in the same overall rate of profit, Marx explains why the capitalist class must, by definition, stand united against the workers. This united front is broken only in time of crisis when competition is fierce, capital concentration increases and the smaller capitalists are expropriated. Of course, in those times of restructuring, capitalist-class consciousness is not really necessary since the workers are also at their weakest. Therefore, the structure of capitalism unites capitalists in the exploitation of the working class, whereas workers face the capitalist individually, as sellers of their wage-labour. Only when united in the process of production can the workers eventually develop a working-class consciousness.

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Also in Volume III, Marx introduces other types of capitalists than the industrial capitalist: the commercial capitalist and the money capitalist. The commercial capitalist is needed in the circulation phase of the reproduction of capital, in which the commodity is transformed into money, later to be reinvested as capital. Commercial or merchant capitalists employ "[B]uyers, salesmen, commercial travelers" (ibid, p.403), wage-labourers of a different kind but wage-labourers nonetheless, because they create surplus-value for the commercial capitalist.

It is not clear where the money capitalists fit in. At one point, they are a separate kind of capitalist (ibid, p.475); in other references, bankers, money-lenders and financiers are identified as agents for the capitalist class (ibid, p.528 & p.642). At other times, Marx refers to them as a "class of parasites," dangerous to the industrial capitalists because of their power and their ignorance of production processes (ibid, p.678-679). Commercial and money capitalists share in the profits of the industrial capitalist and are therefore included under this general term when Marx places all capitalist relations of production within three classes, "wage-labourer, industrial capitalist, landowner" (ibid, p.756). This last class lives from ground-rent paid by another type of industrial capitalist, the farmer-capitalist, employer of wage-labouring cultivators.

There is a peripheral issue, addressed at different times in the text, which may be considered important in the development of a class typology. It concerns the definition of productive labour

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and its distinction from unproductive labour which is the domain of service occupations. The issue is first addressed in the Appendix to Volume I. Marx proposes that productive labour is defined by its creation of surplus-value, which would then exclude service occupations. However, in Volume III, he proposes that commercial agents are different from industrial wage-labour in that they are not engaged in productive work. Yet, it is also stated that such commercial occupations create surplus-value for the commercial capitalist, or at least, following an earlier argument, that they ensure the commercial capitalist's share of the previously created surplus-value. Therein, seems to lie the distinction. However, some comments in Volume II illustrate the slippery nature of such a distinction. In this case, Marx argues that commercial agents perform "unproductive functions," that their labour "creates neither value nor products" (Marx, 1885/1978, p.209). Yet, he proposes that the transport industry involves productive occupations as it is an "additional production process" (ibid, p.225-227). What should be remembered, in the end, is that the expansion of capitalism and of the capitalist class is the proposed impetus to the emergence of service occupations and occupations in support of the production process. This diversity remains, whether these new occupations are deemed productive or not.

Karl Marx: Summary and conclusion

This review of some of Marx's writings indicates that Marx's arguments involved a more complex class structure than a simple two-class polarized dichotomy. Although this polarized class

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structure is predicted in The Communist Manifesto, it must be considered along with arguments for the relationship between the class structure and the historical development of economic forces. When analyzing contemporary capitalism, Marx considers a complex class structure with a capitalist or bourgeois class, owners of the means of production, in hostile opposition to a working class of free wage-labourers, who are free to sell their labour but also "free" as dispossessed of the means of production. However, other social participants are present. There is a petty bourgeoisie of residual and emerging independent producers. They are owners of the means of production but are still direct producers themselves, either on their own or with the help of wage-labour. There are also new occupations developing as auxiliary to the exploitation of wage-labour, such as the agents of commercial capital and of money capital, who increase the ranks of those in the "middle strata" of society. The working class itself includes a number of class fractions: the technical workers, skilled and unskilled labour, new service occupations and a reserve army of labour. Finally, there is the lumpenproletariat who either reject or are rejected by the system; the petty criminals of society and the destitute who have fallen from the ranks of the working class.

The growth of the middle class may not be as valid an argument against a Marxist view of social classes as many commentators lead us to believe. It ignores the historical specificity professed by Marx himself. Nor is the lack of impending revolution a valid criticism. If it took centuries for the development of emerging

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modern capitalism, as discussed by Marx, why should we expect this system to mature and unravel in a little more than a century? The actual economic crisis is certainly a reminder of capitalism's fragility or, at least, of its cyclical nature. The eventual demise of the system may still be in the future.

Erik Olin Wright

Erik Olin Wright's Marxist beliefs may have been more a "calling" than a choice of logic, but his choice of quantitative methods and his commitment to Marxism were anything but random occurrences (Wright, 1994). Wright decided that he wanted to do more than draw from Marxism or write about Marxism; he wanted to contribute to the advancement of Marxist thought. Once he decided that sociology was the appropriate field for such an endeavour, Wright chose to engage in quantitative research. He clearly states that this was not based on a rejection of, or lack of respect for qualitative methods (Wright, 1987). There were two determinant factors: the trend in American sociology of the 1970s to consider quantitative research as the core of sociological inquiry and, as a consequence, the increased chances for research grants and professional rewards. The results speak for themselves. Wright's class typology is currently the most commonly used Marxist scheme in the analysis of class structure. This is certainly due, in part, to its validity and logic. But it is also based on the credibility gained, in mainstream American sociology, from an extensive international program of quantitative and comparative empirical studies.

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Wright remains faithful to the basic tenants of Marxism: classes are relational and they exist on the basis of the exploitation of one class by another which places them in direct opposition of interests, and; the ownership of the means of production is the main criterion differentiating exploiters from exploited. He also addresses the most common arguments against Marxist class theories: an increased middle class, contrary to Marx's prediction of a polarization into capitalists and workers, and the creation of intermediate wage labour occupations which are instrumental in the exploitation of workers. In fact, Wright considers the issue of the middle class to be the core point of contention to be reconciled in his project of devising a "theoretically coherent and empirically comprehensive" class structure concept (Wright, 1997, p.270).

While retaining as a key criterion the ownership of the means of production, Wright introduces two other elements of exploitation: authority (organizational assets) and expertise (skill/credential assets). He also proposes that some class locations may be considered as being simultaneously part of more than one class, a situation for which Wright introduces the concept of "contradictory class locations." This leads to twelve "class locations" (Wright, 1985), which can be compared to the traditional schemata of upper, middle and working classes.

The upper class (also called capitalists or bourgeoisie), owns the means of production, hires the workers and does not personally participate in productive work. Wright also considers small

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employers as capitalists since their interests are not in opposition to those of the bourgeoisie. While small employers own the means of production and hire workers, they are involved in productive work. As will be considered when examining specific data in the context of Canadian class structure studies, the inclusion of small employers in the bourgeoisie is not without debate.

The middle class can be divided into the "traditional" and the "new." The traditional middle class is composed of the petty bourgeoisie. Petty bourgeois own the means of production, work for themselves, and do not hire workers. The new middle class, in Wright's typology, consists of seven categories. They do not own the means of production and thus, are wage labourers in one way or another. However, they exercise authority and/or possess expertise. The seven middle-class locations are as follows: expert, semi credentialed and uncredentialed managers; expert, semi credentialed and uncredentialed supervisors, and; non-manager experts. Except for this last category, the new middle class locations are identified by Wright as "contradictory class locations", since the workers are both exploiters and exploited. The working class is comprised of the semi-credentialed workers and the proletarians. These wage labourers have limited or no expertise and no authority.

In order to better understand individual cases of middle-class locations and their relationship to the class structure, Wright (1989) proposes the addition of three contextually related concepts: multiple locations, mediated locations and temporal

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locations. Each of these concepts can help to explain the perceived inclusiveness of middle-class locations.

Multiple locations address two different issues. The first issue is quite simple: since Wright's class locations are assigned on the basis of occupations, we need to consider individuals with two occupations as potential members of multiple class locations. The second case is not as clearly identified, but may be increasingly prevalent and much more important: one may be at the same time a wage-labourer and a capitalist receiving income from some investments. Only by considering the concept of multiple class locations can we really understand the class situation of such an individual.

Mediated class locations consider the interaction between social relations and class. The most obvious examples are in the context of family relations, where the class location of children and spouses can be affected by the class location of one's parents or partner.

Temporal locations refer to an individual's potential career trajectories. Individuals in entry position occupations may be better classified in the class structure if we consider the future positions open to them. In this sense, a lower position on the administrative ladder may be more accurately considered in view of its inherent future higher class location than in its present lower location. Each of these three contextual concepts can be useful in understanding the particular cases of some individuals.

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Wright's class typology proved adequate when empirically verified in the context of several contemporary Western economies. It reiterates the validity of the essential elements of a Marxist concept of class while, faithful to Marx's methods and demands of historical specificity, adapting it to an updated historical context and its contemporary relations of production. It does involve an important limitation, especially when compared to Marx. Since Wright's typology defines class on the basis of occupation, it ignores large segments of the population such as homeworkers, the chronically or temporarily unemployed (Marx's reserve army of labour) and all those economically or socially "disconnected" (Marx's lumpenproletariat).

Class in Everyday Life:
Max Weber, Early American Sociology and Socioeconomic indexes

Max Weber

Contrary to Marx, Weber gave us a specific conceptual analysis of "classes" and "status" in Chapter IV of Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology (Weber, 1922/1968). In Chapter IX, Weber again presents "class" and "status", and places these two concepts in relation to "party." I will review Weber's definitions, as offered in these two chapters, before considering other relevant comments from Economy and Society.

For Weber, the concept of class is essentially economic, referring to an individual's standing in terms of property and economic activity. In both areas, an individual may be positively or negatively privileged, or in the middle group or middle classes.

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Positively privileged members of the property classes accumulate capital, acquire costly consumer goods, and use their influence to affect policies in their favour, control executive business positions and, monopolize educational privileges. Rentiers, receiving income from the ownership of property, are typical positively privileged members of the property classes, while paupers are the negatively privileged. In between stand the small owners who need to combine property and skills to make a living. Positively privileged commercial classes include the entrepreneurs, industrialists, financiers and others with exceptional qualifications. They control enterprises and influence public policy to their advantage. The negatively privileged are labourers, both unskilled and skilled. The commercial middle classes include the self-employed, white collar occupations and others with considerable qualifications or skills.

Social classes are made up of people who share similar class locations along the two dimensions of property and economic activity. That is, they share locations that are similar enough to allow for easy intra or intergenerational mobility from one class location to another. Since class situations vary considerably, class mobility and, its opposite dimension, class stability, are variable. However, Weber proposes that the lower classes, composed of the propertyless and unskilled, may be more stable since less varied. From this juxtaposition of property and commercial class locations, Weber proposes the following typology of social classes: the working class; the petty bourgeoisie; the propertyless

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intelligentsia including experts and white collar workers, and; the upper classes.

Weber also qualifies these class categories in different ways. Most importantly, they are simply aggregates of individuals and are not active, organized groups. Differences between property classes may lead to conflicts, but these will probably center around reformist, rather than revolutionary, claims. Weber does propose certain conditions under which a "class-conscious organization" of the working class may succeed, but it is not a necessary or inherent aspect of a class and conflicts are most probably aimed at the perceived "immediate economic opponent," management and employers, and not toward the holders of power, the stockholders or rentiers. This explains the occasional social democratic alliance between some segments of the upper classes and the proletariat (ibid, p.931). In sum, a class includes persons with similar "life chances," as determined by their position in the commodity and labour market.

In contrast to classes, status groups are essentially based on a common feeling of belonging and a shared "social esteem" on the basis of lifestyle, descent, or political powers. Status may partially rest on class location or be in contradiction with one's class situation. For example, economic gain may not lead to inclusion in a higher status group; however, with time, and maybe with the passing of generations, it can provide access to such a status group. Most of all, a status group distinguishes itself on the basis of life style, of consumption, and on related

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restrictions regarding social intercourse. One is expected to socially interact inside the status group, irrespective of economic considerations. Therefore, status groups exist and act independently from the commodity and labour market and can even act as an impediment to the efficient functioning of the market.

Weber adds a third type of social group, parties aimed at the acquisition of power. They cut across class and status. They may be created to promote the specific interests of a class but, according to Weber, they most often include members from different classes and status groups. Weber adds that all these social groups - classes, status groups and parties - involve the existence of a larger political community; and while they may extend beyond the community, their goals are usually to effect change within existing political boundaries. Weber summarizes the distinctions by stating that (ibid, pp.937-938):

> "classes are stratified according to their relations to the production and acquisition of goods; whereas status groups are stratified according to the principles of their consumption of goods as represented by their special styles of life" and that if "the place of classes is within the economic order, the place of status groups is within the social order, that is, within the sphere of the distribution of honor...[whereas] parties reside in the sphere of power."

Relevant comments on class and status are found in other sections of Economy and Society, such as those concerning the relationship between religion and class (Chapter VI); the relationship between property, law and coercion (Chapter VIII), and; the relationship between imperialism and classes, and between ethnicity and status (Chapter IX). But most relevant to the issue

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of a class typology are the comments made in the second chapter of the "Conceptual Exposition: Sociological Categories of Economic Action." Here, Weber provides some precision concerning those defined as labourers. First, he distinguishes management from labour on the basis of authority. Managerial workers issue instructions and labourers follow them (ibid, p.114). This is reflected in Weber's inclusion of white-collar occupations in the commercial middle classes, whereas labourers are delegated to the negatively privileged lower class. Furthermore, Weber mentions that the appropriation of the means of production by owners involves the expropriation of the workers (ibid, p.131). This, Weber argues, is the dominant feature of modern Western capitalism: "expropriation of the workers from the means of production and appropriation of the enterprises by security owners (ibid, p.166)." This brings us very close to Marx, although the expression "security owners" provides Weber with the opportunity to differentiate the real owners, the rentiers, members of the positively privileged property class, from the entrepreneurs and industrialists, members of the positively privileged commercial classes.

In Chapter X, "Domination and Legitimacy," Weber underlines the importance of economic conditions in establishing and justifying domination. He argues that the privileged believe they deserve their fate while the less privileged owe their position to their own fault. Weber further argues that this ideology of natural superiority is easily maintained when the status order is strong. However, recognition by the negatively privileged strata that

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market relations and class situations are the main cause of their social position can lead to attacks against the most privileged. At first glance, this may look like a recognition of a Marxist "class consciousness" but we must remember that Weber conceives of class conflict in a reformist context and not as a threat of revolution.

In summary, Weber proposes that a community may include three types of social groups. Social classes are based on the de facto market situation of individuals and their associated life chances; social classes are only aggregates of individuals in similar class locations, without feelings of belonging, and their boundaries are determined by the opportunity for mobility. These factors allow Weber to identify groups at the top, bottom and middle of the social order. Status groups involve a shared feeling of belonging based on a common social esteem. They are groups of shared honour and are distinguished by common lifestyle and restrictions to social interactions. Although class considerations may affect inclusion or exclusion, status groups are in a sense autonomous from class and may cut across class. Parties are voluntary association of persons from one or more class or status groups with the goal of acquiring power and promoting the interests of the party members.

Early American Sociology: The Yankee City Project

The early years of American sociology were marked by the ethnographies and case studies conducted by sociologists from the University of Chicago. In the context of industrial organization research, there was an attempt to combine field observations with

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more systematic information collection. These combined methods are best illustrated by the Hawthorne Studies and other related projects conducted by Ivy League researchers. It is this combined methodology that two anthropologists, W. Loyd Warner and Paul S. Lunt, wanted to bring to the study of an American community. They also rested this project on a few basic assumptions: Simmel's premise that a society is based on direct and reciprocal interactions (Warner & Lunt, 1941, p.12); a functionalist view of society, which led them to study the community as a whole; and, an almost Spencerian belief in the evolution of human communities, including its biological analogies, and the concept of an increasing differentiation and complexity accompanied by a stronger integration of each part and function (ibid, pp.15-16). These factors led them to select an older American community seen as "mature" but small enough to consider every member's role. It was assumed that this small New England town, which they gave the pseudonym of Yankee City, could be used as the model to which every American city could be compared, either in the present or in its evolutionary future.

When trying to establish the class structure of Yankee City, Warner and Lunt argued that individual behaviours and thus, the basic structures of society, were based on economic considerations. This was confirmed by the analysis of their first interviews, in which economic criteria seemed to determine position in the social order. Further evidence tempered this conclusion and other factors had to be considered in view of recurrent contradictory

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information. For instance, financial power or assets were not systematically associated with higher rankings. Some persons of limited means were considered to be members of the highest class while some of Yankee City's most affluent citizens were excluded. Nor was occupation sufficient to explain these unexpected results. Guided by their methods and by the ambivalence of purely economic criteria, Warner and Lunt propose a consensual definition of social classes:

> By class is meant two or more orders of people who are believed to be, and are accordingly ranked by the members of the community, in socially superior and inferior positions (ibid, p.82).

The initial consideration of economic criteria when combined with a consensual assignment can be viewed as an attempt to operationalize in one construct Weber's concepts of class and status. This is further supported by Warner and Lunt's consideration of behaviour and lifestyle factors such as marriage patterns, participation in social activities or groups, housing types and location, and by their insistence on the opportunity for social mobility with a contrast between class and caste (ibid, pp. 90-91). In later writings, Warner (1949) also offers a clear rejection of any Marxist concept of class.

The combination of class and status is reflected in Warner and Lunt's difficulty in moving from one concept to the other. The proposed statuses are based on a lateral extension of the vertical hierarchy of classes (Warner & Lunt, 1942). In devising the status system of Yankee City, they consider the personal associations of each member of the community. However, since these social

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activities are analyzed in terms of class relationships, the status system amounts to little more than an empirical and more complex view of the same social relations. In the end, we are left with the impression that the deck was reshuffled, but the cards are all the same since their values have not changed and are still based on the concept of class as initially defined.

Warner and Lunt propose a class structure divided into six classes, which are actually presented as three classes, each with an upper and lower fraction: the upper-upper and lower-upper classes; the upper-middle and lower-middle classes, and; the upper-lower and lower-lower classes (Warner & Lunt, 1941, p.88). As expected, the lower class is the most numerous (58% of the population), the middle class is quite large (38%) and the upper class includes only three percent of the population. Their structure does not completely conform to the hypothetical pyramid since the upper-lower category includes more cases than the lower-lower category.

This six-level class structure is used throughout the project's analysis of the relationship of class to a variety of factors such as ethnicity, geographical mobility, marital status, employment, housing, participation in social groups, education, reading choices, and consumption patterns. However, Warner and Lunt do mention another possible, less sophisticated view of the class structure which was apparent in their interviews but ignored in their analyses. In discussing the expression "Riverbrookers," an image of lower class participants based as much on housing location

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as on assumed moral and behavioral characteristics, they observed a tendency to classify people into two broad categories: the "classes" and the "masses" (ibid, pp.84-85). When joined with the distinction of an upper class, a three class system emerges: the restricted upper class, a large and socially mobile group in the "classes," and an isolated, socially and economically rejected group in the "masses," remindful of Marx's lumpenproletariat. This underlying three class system is supported by Warner and Lunt's stated difficulty in establishing a clear distinction between the lower-middle and the upper-lower classes, whereas the upper-lower is easily distinguished from the lower-lower.

This three-class scheme is not used in Warner and Lunt's analyses and is modified in Warner's later summary of the Yankee City project. The two upper classes and the upper-middle are lumped together and described as the economic and moral force of the community. They include the "old families," the industrialists, the small and large proprietors, professionals, and upper management. Together they stand, "at a considerable distance socially," above the "Common Man" (Warner, 1949, p.13), which includes the lower-middle and upper-lower classes. The former is composed of white-collar workers, small tradesmen and some skilled workers; the later of semi-skilled or unskilled workers. Both groups are defined by their work ethic and honesty (ibid, pp.14-15). Finally, we find the underclass, the lower-lower, for which Warner retains the expression "Riverbrookers" with all it's negative connotations. The distinction is amplified by Warner's mildly apologetic but

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condescending description, in which the lower-lowers are distinguished from all other classes on the basis of their lack of desire and ambition (ibid, p.15). The broad three-class structure is thus modified by a more inclusive upper class and the introduction of moral justifications of class locations.

The Yankee City project was replicated in a small Southern community by Davis, Gardner and Gardner (1941). The importance of caste-like exclusions, remnants of the era of slavery and indicative of the strength of segregation, led to an interesting integration of social class and racial identification. It was also argued that the more recent history of the community accounted for a weaker differentiation between the two upper class categories. This was indicative of the absence of established and recognized "old families," and can be said to be expected according to Warner and Lunt's evolutionary view of the development of a community.

In summary, Warner and Lunt used a Weberian construct of class based on a combination of Weber's concept of class and status, to arrive at a hierarchical and gradational class system composed of six classes. They also mentioned a possible conflation into three groups; a restricted upper class, a large middle class, and a lower class, mostly defined as an underclass, in terms reminiscent of Marx's lumpenproletariat.

Socioeconomic Indexes

Socioeconomic indexes lead a double life. They are often used almost common-sensically in discussions of class, yet their creators specify that these indexes do not represent real classes.

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This may be motivated by a desire to distance these classification schemes from Marxist class typologies. The conceptual clarification does not prevent the ensuing use of class terminology, mostly in broad terms such as: upper, middle and lower classes, or; the rich and the poor, with the middle class in between.

The Blishen socioeconomic index for occupations is specifically designed for Canada. Its authors mention that "socioeconomic strata cannot be considered proxies for class categorizations" (Blishen, Carroll & Moore, 1987, p.472). Based on Erik Olin Wright's definition of social classes, it is argued that socioeconomic scores ignore relations of production as an essential element for the delineation of classes. However, they do propose that the indexes can be used to describe, but cannot explain, inequality.

Income, education, and occupational prestige, the criteria used in constructing the Blishen scale, can be related to Weber's concepts of class and status. Income can be seen as an outcome of economic class position while, for Weber, educational privileges are related to property class, and economic and property class positions combine to determine social class and one's life chances. Occupational prestige refers to the social recognition attached to an occupation and is an important component of status.

Dennis Forcese (1986, pp.16-17) proposes that occupational rankings are an interesting heuristic device for researchers, enabling them to apply to larger communities an approach similar to Warner and Lunt's. Although identifying proposed categories as

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"class-like strata," Forcese moves on without any apparent reservation to the use of class language, thus hiding the importance of the nuance. There is only one limitation identified by Forcese: the exclusion of upper class participants since they are not necessarily captured by an occupation. Other limitations of the scale include income and occupational prestige variations in relation to gender, region and ethnicity (Blishen, Carroll & Moore, 1987, pp.467-468; Pineo & Porter, 1979). Finally, the focus on occupation excludes other unmentioned participants such as homeworkers, the unemployed and the "socially disconnected." These omissions are similar to those of Wright's class typology, as previously discussed.

There is apparently only a small step from occupational scales to the representation of classes on the basis of income. The search for simplicity seems to overshadow the fact that income can hardly be both a cause and an effect of class at the same time. But as an outcome of class location, albeit arbitrary and incomplete, it becomes an easy way to establish strata which, in turn, become expressed in class terms. Forcese illustrates the profound and unchanging social inequalities in Canada by comparing 1951 and 1981 income quintiles, the income share of each twenty percent of the population, from top to bottom (Forcese, 1986, p.65-67). The same method is used by Beach and Slotsve (1996) to argue for the stable situation of the middle class and the small number of poor Canadians; whereas income distributions lead Duffy and Mandell (1994) to call for immediate measures to combat the increasing

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poverty of Canadians. These contradictory arguments illustrate the weakness of class typologies based on arbitrary strata of income or wealth. The cut-offs for categories of rich, middle class and poor are subject to different arguments and interpretations and the reliance on income or wealth, outcomes of class locations, displaces the attention from causal factors.

In sum, socioeconomic indexes such as occupational indexes or income quintiles propose an efficient operationalization of Weberian class and status. On the basis of statistical procedures, they divide the population in gradational strata which, in turn, become expressed in the class terms such as: upper, middle and lower classes, or; rich, middle class and poor. Although the complexity of their methods hide the simplicity of their logic, their heuristic appeal leads to common use in political and public discourse.

Class Struggles in Everyday Life: Pierre Bourdieu

In the Preface to the English edition of Distinctions, Pierre Bourdieu presents his objective as a reexamination and an integration of Weber's class/status dichotomy (1984, p.xi). Bourdieu observes daily lifestyle choices to analyze how people establish, signal and reproduce their social similarities and differences. His apparent dispute with Marx (Bourdieu, 1987, p.7) is better interpreted as an interesting insistence on agency and a rejection of a deterministic position regarding the rise of working class consciousness. Marx's essential arguments are always present. At any point in time, according to Bourdieu, the actual statistical

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distribution or the "balance sheet" of social groups results from "power relations between classes" (1984, p.245). The social mobility of individuals is the basis of the overall stability and reproduction of class relations (ibid, p.164). In consequence, the recognition by the dominated classes that their objective conditions cannot enable them to reach their subjective aspirations is the potential cause for revolutionary engagement (ibid, p.168). Finally, relations of production are proposed as the underlying cause of lifestyle and consumption patterns (ibid, p.483). Bourdieu's concept of class can be conceived as an integration of Weberian class and status and of Marxist class struggle and economic preponderance.

Bourdieu argues that social classes and class fractions can be identified on the basis of taste or daily cultural choices. These choices also reproduce classes in as much as: "Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier" (ibid, p.6). Three social classes are proposed, corresponding to three "zones of taste" (ibid, p.16): the dominant bourgeoisie and its "legitimate" taste; the middle classes (new and petite bourgeoisie) with its "middle-brow" taste, and; the working class identified with "popular" taste. The dominant class has the luxury of choice, over and above economic necessity. Distance and detachment make its cultural choices appear to originate from pure disposition. The ability to legitimate cultural practices becomes perceived as natural and uninterested. Real differences, based on choices, become natural differences and standards by which to classify. The relation to the external world

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extends to a relation to others. Tastes and distastes become likes and dislikes, association to and intolerance of others. Bourgeois insistence on generosity and detachment is opposed to a view of middle-class obsession with thrift. Middle class fixation on cleanliness and discipline speaks to the working class's presumed immoderate lifestyle (ibid, p.246). For Bourdieu, cultural practices classify oneself and others in social space.

Relative social positions and objective social classes or class fractions are established in terms of economic, educational and social capital. Economic, educational (or cultural), and social capital combine to create a three-dimensional social space. Volume and composition of capital interact to establish a position in social space while trajectory relates to the struggle in the legitimation of capital and its effect on dispositions. These relative but objective social positions of individuals create and are created by individual dispositions and classificatory schemes, the habitus, in turn influenced by the recent history of an individual's upward or downward trajectory in the social space.

Bourdieu proposes that occupation can be used as an adequate indicator of position in social space and, in turn, inform us about occupational effects which may relate to cultural practices (1987, p.4) and provide information concerning trajectory. Bourdieu offers a class typology which resembles and explains the gradational class structure of Warner and Lunt; but by considering occupations and their relationship to the types of capital, he also provides an explanation for the structure. Each class is determined by volume

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of capital and class fractions are established on the basis of capital composition. The higher ranks of the bourgeoisie possess economic and cultural capital. Economic capital alone may give access to the bourgeoisie but the industrial owner, without sufficient cultural capital, will not be accepted into its highest ranks. As in Warner and Lunt's study, the recent fortune is too salient and central to the newly successful. Only time, detachment from commercial success, and access to educational and cultural privileges, will confirm entry into the upper echelon of the bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the artist may also be part of the lower bourgeoisie, rich in cultural capital even if poor in economic terms.

This interplay of economic and cultural capital repeats itself in the middle class. Highly educated professions are occupied, in most cases, by descendants of the dominant classes. At this level engineers and professionals stand beside small employers. Further down, as in Warner and Lunt's lower-middle, the white-collar workers stand along side the petite bourgeoisie of the old or new small business. In these middle categories, Bourdieu also places the new service professions (social workers, personal consultants, etc.), which Bourdieu calls "semi-bourgeois positions," created in an effort to reward educational capital in an era of increased access to education by all the children of the bourgeoisie and some of the other classes (1984, p.134 & p.147). By their dispositions and aspiration to higher positions, the middle classes are said by Bourdieu to "tend and pre-tend" (ibid, p.123). Those with higher

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economic capital "do not always have the taste to match their means" while those with higher cultural capital "hardly ever have the means to match their tastes" (ibid, p.287). The working class has no economic capital, except for the small farmer and craftsperson, its cultural capital is limited and devalued while its consumption choices are guided by necessity. Bourdieu insists on the importance of a three-dimensional social space, compared to Warner and Lunt's image of a one-dimensional hierarchy. Only by considering both composition of capital and trajectory can we understand how individuals so close in social space can differ in terms of lifestyle and political choices.

In all classes we find the opposition between owners and non-owners interacting with cultural capital; but the value of cultural capital is itself a site of constant class struggles. The dominant classes use economic capital and their past educational privileges to impose their cultural practices as the standard by which all others can be judged as more or less legitimate. This struggle is reproduced at every level of the social order and in every area of the social space. Cultural practices are considered legitimate by their association with certain social positions but these practices also become the tools by which social positions are interchanged. Individuals can also make gains in terms of volume of capital, economic or cultural. They can also transform capital from one form to the other to access more valued social positions or to adapt to changing circumstances and protect their position. In all cases,

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the social position is always relative to others in the three-dimensional social space.

Class locations are therefore real and negotiated, always in transformation yet stable in their systemic relationship. Classes and class fractions are real in the sense of daily practices and of "normality" as defined by statistical probability (ibid, p.372). A class or class fraction is defined by proximity in social space and by similar cultural practices, based on the guidance of the habitus, described by Bourdieu as a "structured and structuring structure" (ibid, p.171). Similar positions in social space accessed through similar trajectories will lead to a similarity of habitus. Capital volume and composition, and social trajectory inform the habitus and lead to common cultural practices.

In sum, classes are analytical constructs but they are grounded in reality (1987, p.5). They are not necessarily, in Marxist terms, a "class-for-itself" or a politically active group on the basis of class consciousness. While political action can occur on the basis of shared dispositions and historical struggles, it is not an inherent aspect of the identified class or of class fractions. Bourdieu points to the elderly, a recently recognized socially active group, as an example of the making of an active class fraction; just as the working class, in a literal application of E. P. Thompson's book title The Making of the English Working Class, is seen as the result of past struggles (ibid, p.8-9). Furthermore, there is never a clear boundary between classes or between class fractions. Bourdieu borrows an image from Anatol

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Rapoport (1984, p.258-259; 1987, p.13) to compare class boundaries to those of a cloud or a forest. It is not a clear delineation but rather the density of cases that determines the identification of clusters in space.

In sum, Bourdieu argues for a class typology based on the observation of cultural practices. These manifestations of taste are seen as indicative of economic, educational (or cultural), and social capital and of the dialectical process between objective factors and the habitus, a subjective scheme of interpretation. The main classes are identified as: the bourgeoisie or dominant class; the middle classes comprised of the old and the new petite bourgeoisie, and; the working class. Each of these can be divided into class fractions on the basis of capital volume and composition and trajectory. Positions in social space are the result of past historical and ongoing struggles, mostly based on the ownership of economic resources. The insistence on class struggles, agency and the preponderance of the economic are shared with Marx. While the interplay of objective factors and of social classification, as well as attention to consumption and lifestyle, can be related to Weber's concepts of class and status. It can therefore be argued that Bourdieu offers an integration of the essential elements of these two major traditional class theories.

Conclusion

This chapter offered a review of Marx's and Weber's class theories and of a few subsequent and related theories. Wright's class scheme was proposed as a contemporary version of Marxist

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relational theory specifically designed to address the issue of the middle class; Warner and Lunt's studies were presented as an operationalization of a gradational Weberian class concept; socioeconomic indexes were proposed as a commonly used extension of the Weberian approach, and; Bourdieu's concept of class was proposed as an integration of both schools of thought and a reconciliation of relational and gradational theories.

In the next chapter, I will: review some results of Canadian class analysis research conducted on the basis of relational and gradational class schemes; review American and Canadian subjective class identification research; compare objective and subjective measures of the Canadian class structure, and; propose some issues to consider in view of the apparent contradiction between objective and subjective measures of class.

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Chapter 2: Objective and Subjective Class Measures

Introduction

Wright and Cho (1992) propose that the structural analysis of classes involves two questions: locations and permeability. An analysis of locations determines where individuals are in a class scheme and in what groups the population can be divided. An analysis of permeability would consider the question of class mobility; how and to what extent do individuals change class location. This research project is concerned with subjective social class identification and the elements considered by individuals when choosing or assigning a class location. In this chapter, I will consider information concerning: objective measures of Canadian class locations; subjective class identification research in the United States and in Canada, and; the social construction of class and the need to reconcile contradictory objective and subjective class measures.

Objective Measures of Canadian Class Locations

Relational Canadian Class Measures

Veltmeyer (1986), Black and Myles (1986) and Clement (1990) base their analyses of the Canadian class structure on Wright's theoretical scheme. Veltmeyer's data is from the 1981 census conducted by Statistics Canada. Black and Myles base their analysis on surveys conducted in 1982 for a cross cultural comparison of Canada, Sweden and the United States, under the International Class Structure Project. Clement's data is from a similar cross cultural survey conducted in 1986, the Comparative Class Structure Project.

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This survey included Canada, the United States and three Scandinavian countries, Sweden, Norway and Finland. I will only present the Canadian data, making comparisons between the three sources and transforming Wright's class locations into the more commonly used social class terms: upper class, middle class and working class.

Veltmeyer works from 1981 Canadian census data. When placing cases into locations, he includes top managers in the bourgeoisie. He does not discuss specifically the situation of small employers; but he does use the term "small business" for self-employed persons considered members of the middle class. We can only assume that he is faithful to Wright's inclusion in the bourgeoisie of any small employer with two or more employees. These allocations lead Veltmeyer to divide the Canadian work force as follows: upper class: 2.5%; middle class: 38.2%, and; working class: 59.2% of the population.

Black and Myles (1986) base their analysis on survey data from 1982. Managers are excluded from the bourgeoisie. Small employers are considered part of the bourgeoisie and identified as "large employers" if they have at least ten employees; otherwise, they are identified as "small employers" and considered part of the middle class. Since Wright and Veltmeyer classify all of these employers as capitalists, we can merge Black and Myles figures for comparison. With this modification, their data divides the Canadian work force as follows: upper class: 3.7%; middle class: 36.9%, and; working class: 60.4% of the population.

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Clement's analysis (1990) is based on survey data from 1986. The bourgeoisie is defined in terms much closer to Wright's class location, as it includes small employers with three employees or more. As in Veltmeyer, it also includes top management. Clement's study divides the Canadian work force as follows: upper class: 6.2%; middle class: 36.2%, and; working class: 57.6%.

Therefore, in all three studies the range of percentages for each social class are: upper class, from 2.5% to 6.2%; middle class, 36.2% to 38.9%, and; working class, from 57.6% to 60.4%. The larger variation in the upper class is to be expected since it involves most of the debate regarding the assignment of cases. Most striking is the similarity in percentages assigned to the middle and working classes. Considering that these studies used different sets of data with different methods and years, it can be argued that they offer a reliable numerical picture of the Canadian class structure for the 1980s.

Gradational Canadian Class Measures

Gradational class schemes are based on outcomes, which Clement considers "key indicators of underlying processes" (Clement, 1988, p.9). Members of the population are placed in different groups according to their success in a certain aspect of social life, such as income, earnings, wealth, educational attainment, or occupation. On any one of these criteria, or in combination, it is possible to establish that certain segments of the population are more or less privileged than others. This often leads to the expression of results in broad class terms such as: the upper, middle, and lower

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class, or; the rich, the middle class, and the poor. I will review two types of gradational schemes: income stratification and occupational categories.

Income stratification can be presented in many ways. Two of these will be considered: shares of total income by quintile and poverty lines. Income quintiles tell us how income is distributed throughout the population and are often used in discussions about the middle class. The poverty line can be considered as the lowest line of demarcation between the "have" and "have not" segments of the population.

With continuous discussions concerning how better or how worse Canadians from each income group are doing, one would expect to find some significant differences in shares of income from year to year. Yet, stability and the reproduction of inequality are the rule, even after income tax and social program transfers. Forcese (1986) compares figures for each decade, from 1951 to 1981. Beach and Slotsve (1996) use 1987 and 1992 figures and Sarlo (1996) provides yearly figures from Statistics Canada for 1971 to 1993. In all these studies, the reported income share of the lowest quintile of families and individuals varies from 3.6 to 4.8 percent of the total Canadian income. Variations for the intermediate quintiles are similar: the share of income of the second quintile varies from 10% to 12%; for the middle quintile, it moves between 16.5% and 18.3%; for the fourth quintile, from 23.3% to 25.5%. Income for the top quintile varies between 41.1% and 43.9%

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The disparity between the top and bottom quintile is considerable and consistent, which certainly raises questions concerning the myth of a Canadian egalitarian society. However, Beach and Slotsve (1996) point to the stability of the economy. With this in mind, their arguments seek to dispel what they call the "myth of the declining middle class", stating that income polarization is only significant in times of economic crisis, such as a recession. They admit that from 1974 to 1992, fourteen of these eighteen years did involve such economic turmoil. Yet, Beach and Slotsve discard these "exceptions" and consider the better years as the rule. Irrelevant of the interpretation, we can safely conclude that the distribution of total Canadian income has not changed much through recent years. The top 20% of the population receives over 40% of the income while the bottom 20% receives less than 5%. The middle strata also tend to remain in the same bracket, providing a very stable pattern of income stratification.

Beach and Slotsve (1996) are also quite creative when defining poverty and, at the same time, the middle class. Without any other justification than a comment stating that any measure is arbitrary, they chose 25% of the median income of Canadians as a poverty line and 175% of the median income as the cut-off between the middle and the upper class. Using 1992 figures for family income, their poverty line would be a $12,000 yearly income. One could argue that this is a measure of "absolute poverty," a minimum for subsistence. With this criterion, Beach and Slotsve conclude that only 3.9% of Canadian families were poor in 1992. Sarlo uses different

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procedures and even more restrictive income criteria but arrives at a similar conclusion concerning the incidence of poverty. When considering "relative poverty," defined as a "minimal standard of living for a family within a given community" (Hiller, 1996, p.132), it is clear that the issue goes beyond mere statistical debate. Based on Statistics Canada norms, 13.3% of families are poor; based on the norms from the Canadian Council on Social Development, 20.4% of families should be considered poor (Hiller, 1996). More restrictive criteria and a low incidence of poverty can allow for individualistic explanations of poverty. More inclusive criteria and a higher incidence make these explanations less credible and point to systemic problems. Whatever the income criteria or the definition of poverty, these studies imply a large "residual" middle class, situated beyond poverty lines and below the top income quintile.

Such income disparities also raise questions concerning the relationship between income and the previously discussed relational class structure. If the top quintile of the population earns over 40% of all income, approximately twice as much as the next quintile and ten times more than the lowest quintile, how is it that the capitalist class is reduced to about 4% of the population? Moreover, how is it that the middle class is estimated at less than 40% of the population? This means that the bottom three quintiles would all be members of the working class. Such broad variations of income can hardly foster a common social class identification.

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Forcese proposes that the Blishen socioeconomic scale, based on occupational rankings, can be used to "approximate class-like strata" (1986, p.17). He provides an example in which Blishen's rankings are used to establish middle class and lower class categories, each of which are again divided into three class fractions. Forcese explains the absence of an upper class category by the reliance on occupations, excluding propertied wealth. This argument is ignored by Livingstone and Mangan (1996) as they compare Forcese's upper middle class (70 or more on the Blishen scale) to the capitalist class or the bourgeoisie of other class typologies. In either case, there is no explanation provided for the arbitrary cut-offs in the rankings or, in the case of Forcese, for the division of each class into three fractions. This is a good example of the risk involved in expressing gradational data in class language, as the categories are not based on any empirical or theoretical criteria but rather on an aesthetic of proportional representation.

Subjective Class Identification Research

Introduction

Gradational social class schemes are content with identifying groups in the population and discussing inequality or social mobility. Relational class schemes go beyond the question of class structure. In Wright's (1985) terms, class structure is a first step leading to class formation. In a traditional Marxist view, we can state the difference between a "class-in-itself" and a "class-for-itself." The existence of separate groups on the basis of

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ownership of the means of production and the relations of production involve the existence of a class structure, of a working class or middle class "in-itself." A class "for-itself" exists only when members of a social class develop a common consciousness of their situation and engage in social action to promote their interests against those of other social classes. Subjective class identification is commonly considered the first stage of class formation, while class conscious discourse and class action can be seen as the enactment of class identity and the next stages in the process of class formation (Fantasia, 1995; Livingstone & Mangan, 1996). Research concerning subjective social class identification seeks to identify elements of this process. As a first step, such research tries to assess if individuals identify with a specific social class. Social class identification can then be compared to political behaviours, such as voting patterns, or to opinions about contentious social issues.

I will review American and Canadian subjective class identification studies. Such research is not exclusive to these two countries but Canadian research, my primary interest, is largely inspired by previous American studies. In conclusion, I will compare objective measures of the Canadian class structure and Canadian subjective class identification results. It should be noted that, in both cases, there is an obliviousness to gender. Objective measures of class are based on class typologies which do not consider gender differences. Early subjective class identification was also ignorant of gender issues. Recently, this

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deficiency has been addressed, but mostly in the context of dual-earning couples, in view of determining the effect of a disparity in class locations on each partner's class identification. Since my research considers only individual responses, out of the context of any relationship, I will exclude from my review recent studies aimed at addressing the effect of gender or gender relations.

Subjective Class Identification Research in the United States

Richard Centers' Psychology of Social Classes (1949) provided results from the first extensive study of subjective class identification in North America. Centers was doubtful of previous results obtained by the Cantril study, a Gallup poll, and Fortune magazine (1943; 1940; and 1940, in Centers, 1949). These surveys reported that 79% to 88% of respondents chose to identify themselves as members of the middle class. Centers identified some possible sources of error. In the Fortune survey, for example, an open-ended question resulted in close to 25% of respondents identifying as members of the working class. This result was discarded in favour of responses to a close-ended question which only offered the choices of upper, middle, or lower class. Only the results of the second question, with 88% of respondents identifying as "middle class", were retained.

Centers designed an ambitious project. Not only did he seek to obtain valid data regarding subjective social class identification but he also attempted to assess the relationship of class identification with a variety of factors such as: occupation, religious and political affiliation, and opinions about social

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issues, later analyzed and categorized as "conservative" or "radical." Centers also included two questions related to discrimination against Negroes and Jews and two questions concerning the criteria used to select or assign a social class. This extensive survey was however limited in its sample as it only included white males.

In two surveys conducted in July 1945 and February 1946, Centers' respondents were offered four choices of subjective class identification, in the following order: middle class, lower class, working class and, upper class. Results were fairly consistent. In both surveys, more than 50% of the respondents identified themselves as working class and only 43% and 36% of subjects chose the middle class identification. Few respondents identified as upper class or lower class.

Questions concerning the preferred criterion to select or assign a social class identification were designed to exclude responses related to occupations, to avoid what Centers believed to be the obvious choice and to allow the identification of other criteria. Responses to a close-ended question identified "beliefs and attitudes" as the main criterion used to select or assign a social class identification. However, responses to a subsequent open-ended question indicated that "wealth and income" was the overwhelming choice as the main criterion.

Responses concerning discrimination indicated resentment toward perceived Jewish power and influence (79% of respondents) and widespread prejudice toward Negroes (over 64% of respondents).

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Centers pointed to the slightly higher rates of prejudicial responses from working class respondents than from middle class respondents, whereas he offers no comment regarding the overall high proportion of prejudicial responses.

The following American studies pursued specific issues related to subjective class identification. Gross (1953) compared the effect of question wording. Results supported Centers' suspicion of an avoidance effect for the "lower class" category. When Gross used only three response choices (upper, middle, and lower class), 76% of respondents identified as middle class and only 10% as lower class. Given four choices with the addition of a working class category, 42% chose the middle class and 45% chose the working class. Gross also compared this with an open-ended question. This method produced a wide range of answers and only 14% of respondents indicated that they believed there were no social classes. Hamilton (1966) was concerned with the changing work force and focused on the growing number of white-collar workers, which he termed "the marginal middle class." Tucker (1966, 1968) responded to Centers and Hamilton's research. He reported an increased identification as middle class (66%) and a decreased identification as working class (31%). He proposed that it was mainly due to a change in identification by blue-collar workers, from overwhelmingly working class to a division between middle and working class. However, Tucker's question wording had three sub-categories for middle class: upper-middle, middle, and lower-middle. The same categories were used by Hodge and Treiman (1968) and similar results were

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obtained with 61% of respondents identifying as middle class and 34% as working class. These results are attacked by Schreiber and Nygreen (1970) on the basis of wording and order of presentation of response choices. Basing their analysis on surveys conducted during election periods, between 1952 and 1968, they conclude that Centers' results were more acceptable.

In the 1970s, more sophisticated statistical analyses were used to consider factors related to social class identification and research was guided by theoretical frameworks. Jackman and Jackman (1973) considered the relationship of objective measures of social class to subjective social class identification. They sought to determine which model of American society was validated by this relationship: a pluralist model or a Marxist model. They found moderate support for a Marxist model of American class structure. They also identified differences in factors leading to subjective class identification when comparing White and Black respondents. The low prestige related to racial status was found to have an overwhelming effect compared to achieved criteria such as education and occupation. Mary R. Jackman (1979) also found support for a Marxist approach, although cultural factors were again identified as an important criterion for social class identification. Jackman also concluded that social classes are still an important concept in American society. Kluegel, Singleton, and Starnes (1977) used causal modeling to consider a tri-dimensional model of class identification, based on Weber's concepts of class, status, and power, and to test the relationship between objective class and

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subjective class identification. They concluded that the uni-dimensional measure was as reliable as a tri-dimensional measure, thus finding no support for their theoretical approach. However, they also concluded that there was a weak relationship between objective social class and subjective social class identification.

Subjective Class Identification Research in Canada

The first Canadian research articles regarding subjective class identification were published in the '70s. Goyder and Pineo (1979) summarize early Canadian efforts and provide interesting insights into the effects of question wording. They use unpublished and published Canadian data from 1965 to 1974 and focus on the wording of the categories and the use of key words in the preamble or in previous questions. They identified two important factors which accounted for most of the variation in results. The use of the terms "working class" previous to the subjective class identification question was found to increase this choice significantly. They also considered the number of choices offered and the inclusion of working class and/or lower class categories. Statistical analyses enabled them to measure the effect of each variation. By adjusting the results according to the predicted effects, they conclude that results are more consistent than they first appear. In both Canada and the Unites States, it is probably more realistic to consider that only 30% of respondents identify themselves as working class and that a majority of respondents identify with the middle class.

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In later years, a number of Canadian studies used objective social class to look at correlates such as voting behaviour, opinions related to left/right ideologies and other factors associated with class. Most of these studies used a blue-collar/white-collar criterion to distinguish the working class from the middle class (Grabb, 1975; Grabb & Lambert, 1982; Leggett, 1979; Myles, 1979, Lambert et al, 1987). Zipp and Smith (1982) used a modified version of Erik Olin Wright's class locations to look at class voting in Canada, whereas Lambert and colleagues (1987) used a composite measure based on occupation, income and education.

Grabb (1975) found that Canadian respondents from all classes were comparably dissatisfied with the government and felt a lack of political influence. Leggett (1979) analyzed a local sample of Vancouver blue-collar workers and found that union membership and foreign ethnic origins were both related to slightly higher levels of class consciousness, which in turn led to higher rates of vote for the New Democratic Party (NDP) candidates. However, the differences in class consciousness and in voting behaviour were very limited and Leggett made no comparisons to respondents from other social classes.

Myles (1979) compared American and Canadian voting behaviour. Working class status was determined by blue-collar occupation. Political parties were classified as "left" or "right" on the basis of perceived support of working-class interests; as a result, the left-right division in each country was established as Democrat versus Republican in the United States and as "third parties" (NDP

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and Social Credit) versus "major parties" (Liberal and Conservative) in Canada. Myles' results show that class voting is limited in both countries and is only present in Canada if we accept the inclusion of the Social Credit vote in the "left," based on its supposed nature as a vote of protest. When considering only the NDP vote, Myles concludes that there is no class vote at all in Canada. It must be noted that voting implies at least a limited belief in one's social or political efficacy and a minimal level of confidence in the legitimacy of the electoral process. Myles' study of voting behaviour ignores non-voters, which are potentially the most disaffected and dissatisfied segment of the population.

Zipp and Smith (1982) used a modified version of Wright's class typology to consider working class voting behaviour in Canada. Their results are also inconclusive as the only clear relationship was between their proposed "new working class" and voting preference for the NDP or the Liberal Party compared to the Conservative Party. Grabb and Lambert (1982) argue against the conclusion of an absence of class consciousness based on voting behaviour research. They propose, based on their own subjective class identification research, that Canadians are conscious of class distinctions but that the problem may lie in the lack of distinctiveness between parties in regards to class-related issues. Their argument may be valid but somewhat beside the point as it is remarkable that all of these studies used objective class measures as dependent variables and did not consider the importance of subjective class identification.

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Lambert and colleagues (1987) conducted a national study and compared voting behaviour in federal and provincial elections. They found a strong relationship between voting choices at both levels, in terms of the voters' perceived class orientation of parties. However, there was also a large variance between provinces. In fact, regional differences can be considered the main results of this study. This study also considered the contribution of subjective class identification and left/right orientation in the explanation of voting behaviour. When added to objective measures of social class, these two subjective variables did improve the predicted variance in voting. When considered separately, left/right orientation was a more effective predictor. Its effect was stronger than subjective class identification and was significant nationally and in most provinces; whereas subjective class identification was found to be significant nationally but only in two provinces. In the discussion, Lambert and colleagues argue that sociology is mostly concerned with social class, whereas subjective intervening variables may be more of the domain of political science. They conclude that sociologists should broaden their theoretical scope.

Pammett (1987) returned to the question of subjective class identification and investigated the criteria used to select or assign social class. Only 42% of respondents spontaneously thought of themselves as members of a social class. This led Pammett to conclude that there was a low level of class identification. A second conclusion was the middle class nature of the Canadian

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subjective class identification. In the spontaneous answers, 25% chose the middle class identification (only 42% answered; therefore, the middle class choice accounts for almost 60% of responses). In a forced choice, 63.6% chose middle class, compared to 32.6% choosing working class. One's own class selection was mostly based on occupation, while income and personal characteristics (e.g. nice, honest) were also found to be important. However, income was the main factor in assigning social class, with occupation and personal characteristics declining in importance.

Johnston and Baer (1993) provided a cross-cultural view by comparing class locations, according to Wright's scheme, and subjective class identification in Canada, the United States and Sweden. Overall, only 32% of Canadian respondents identified themselves as working class. This was comparable to the United States but much lower than in Sweden. The authors propose that higher feelings of empowerment and collective efficacy of Swedish workers account for a higher working class identification.

Recent figures seem to offer a stable image of Canadian subjective class identification in terms of the proportion of respondents choosing the categories of middle class or working class. Working class identification is the choice of approximately thirty percent of Canadian respondents while a majority, from 50% to over 60%, choose to identify as members of the middle class. The perception of a large middle class is also reflected in the arbitrary categories established in gradational class measures.

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This contrasts with Canadian relational class measures, in which the middle class never exceeded 38% and the working class was established as a majority (57% to 60%). These results indicate an incongruity between class theories and the perception of social classes. An explanation may be found by analyzing the process by which individuals come to identify themselves or others as members of a social class and how this social construction of class may interact with the social construction of other social identities.

The Social Construction of Class

Discrepancies between objective social class measures and subjective social class identification remain to be explained. The relationship between class identification and different values or opinions, such as voting behaviour or support for left/right policies, was found to be inconsistent. When analyzing criteria used to select or assign a subjective social class, the preponderance of a few objective measures (occupation, income, and education) seems to satisfy researchers and prevents them from looking further. Yet, the occasional inclusion of other criteria (e.g personal characteristics) attracts an interesting sampling of responses (Grabb & Lambert, 1982; Lambert et al, 1987). Furthermore, the inconsistent relationship between social classes and predicted values and behaviours should direct efforts toward the identification of mediating and/or interacting factors. The only attempt in this direction, based on survey data and statistical procedures, was inconclusive (Lambert et al, 1987). Lambert and colleagues argue for an open mind in terms of

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theoretical approaches but they clearly favour a quantitative methodology as indicated by their stated preference for close-ended survey questions.

Porter's Vertical Mosaic (1965) brought Canadians' attention to the relationship between race or ethnicity and socioeconomic attainment. This was the start of a strong Canadian tradition in sociology. More recently, B. Singh Bolaria and Peter S. Li (Bolaria & Li, 1988; Li, 1988) provided more insight into the question by discussing the social construction of race and the relationship between racism and capitalism, whereas Stafford (1992) offers an interesting comment on the relationship between the changing immigration patterns in Canada, economic restructuring and class images. Without ignoring other factors, such as gender and regional disparity, it may be important to consider more closely the relationship between subjective class identification and the social construction of race or ethnicity.

Jackman and Jackman (1973) gave us an early indication of such interaction when reporting that racial self-identification mediated the effect of social attainment variables. In his widely acclaimed work, David R. Roediger (1991) traced the historical relationship of racism and the social construction of working class identification in the United States. A similar process may be involved in the contemporary social construction of the middle class. Aronowitz (1992) proposes that the Republican party's resurgence, starting with Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign, is largely based on an appeal to the middle class which includes an

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attack on perceived favoritism for visible minorities. In fact, Aronowitz uses the terms "veiled racism" (p.213) to describe the phenomenon.

"Middle class power" is hardly limited to the United States. Canadian conservative interests are just as active in promoting this image, as shown by Garth Turner's (1997) and Beach and Slotsve's (1996) "race to the barricades". With a title that speaks for itself, Garth Turner tells us about "The vanishing middle class and other leftist myths." Beach and Slotsve contend that the Canadian middle class is alive and well, contrary to popular beliefs of a decline in numbers and wealth. They ask us to accept the validity of their arguments while making exceptions for the data pertaining to recessions which, according to their own calculations, include fourteen of the eighteen years they considered! Beyond their dubious arguments, most remarkable is the importance they attach to the defense of the image of a broadly inclusive and striving middle class. Paul Martin, Canadian Minister of Finance, also proposes an all-inclusive image of the middle class. In his budget speech of February 1998, Martin spoke about "thirteen million middle-income Canadians" (Canada, 1998); quite remarkable when considering the size of the Canadian labour force. Martin also indicated that there are slightly more than fifteen million taxpayers in Canada, which would lead us to believe that, according to the Minister, more than eighty percent of Canadian taxpayers belong in a "middle" category.

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In sum, there is a need to consider the criteria used in the choice or assignment of a social class. The prevalence of a middle-class identification and the importance of this category in popular and political language indicate that this is an appropriate starting point. The lack of success in identifying such criteria in previous research based on quantitative methods and the limited amount of past research suggests the need for a more exploratory approach and the inclusion of qualitative methods.

It is tempting to assign the understanding of a subjective process such as social class identification to the realm of social psychology. In fact, a variety of social psychology theories, such as relative deprivation theory or Tajfel and Turner's minimal group theory (1979), address issues related to identity, prejudice and discrimination. However, these do not consider specific manifestations of social identification. They may be used to study specific issues, but they are aimed at analyzing and describing processes, irrelevant of social or historical circumstances. In Simmel's terms, these social psychology theories are concerned with the geometry, the form of social relations, and not with their content. This contradicts the historical specificity of social class theories and the "localized," participant-oriented basis of a social constructivist approach.

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PART B: METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPANTS

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The following questions are at the core of this investigation:

1) Is the concept of social class still useful?

2) What are the criteria used in the social construction of the middle class?

3) Do these criteria include personal characteristics related to other social identities such as race or ethnicity?

Methodological choices were made in consideration of these research objectives, of the limitations of previous research, and of practical considerations related to the time lines, requirements and resources of a M. A. thesis project. Previous research was based on surveys, which can efficiently provide a considerable amount of data. However, surveys limit the possible choices of responses and tend to "frame" responses according to the researcher's assumptions. An open-ended question format was retained as a compromise between surveys and a more extensive, time-consuming qualitative approach. This could provide a sufficient quantity of data under manageable time lines and costs while producing more spontaneous and personalized responses. A large enough sample was considered essential due to the exploratory nature of the research. A survey-format section of the questionnaire could then be used to gather complementary information. A draft questionnaire was designed and, after a first

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trial, modifications were made to arrive at the final questionnaire (see Appendixes A and B).

Administration of the Questionnaires

The questionnaire was administered early in the first term of a new academic year to avoid the potential effect of recent instruction or discussions in class. At Lakehead University, it was administered in the first week of class to an Introduction to Sociology class. At York University, it was administered in the fourth week of class to an Introduction to Anthropology class.

In both cases, the procedures were found to be sufficiently clear and effective. One hundred and twelve (112) participants completed the questionnaire at Lakehead; one hundred and fifty one (151) students participated at York. At Lakehead, there was only one case in which an identification number was not recorded on Form B, which allowed for the forms to be matched anyway. There were a few more identification omissions by York participants and fourteen (14) questionnaires were rejected since it was impossible to insure a correct assignment of Forms B and C to the appropriate Form A. The questionnaires from Lakehead participants were most complete. Eighteen (18) had one or two missing responses and another had no responses for the last five questions of Form B. Omissions of response were more frequent from the York participants. Fifty seven participants did not respond to at least one question. Ten of these were not considered in calculating the rates of response in the section "B6" concerning the association of a middle class identification to personal characteristics as they failed to answer

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more than one of these questions. Another participant did not offer any answer to the qualitative questions. Although other answers in this section may have been brief, it is noteworthy that only one participant did not offer an answer. In all, the rate of responses was quite satisfactory and the omissions did not pose a significant problem for any of the analyses. The higher rate of omissions at York may be due to some confusion in the presentation of administration procedures or a lack of attention to instructions by the participants. But it may also be a reflection of a lower level of interest of the participants when the researcher is not present and the request comes from a another University.

Analyses

Responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed to assess and discuss: the importance of the concept of class; the most common criteria used in choosing or assigning social class; and, the reference to characteristics related to other social identities such as race or ethnicity. The analysis and discussion of responses was guided by the following questions: 1) Are there social classes?; 2) What is, and is not, middle-class?; 3) Are social classes related to the social construction of race or ethnicity? The Conclusion will consider the relationship between responses and social class theories.

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Chapter 4: Participants

The participants were undergraduate students from Lakehead University, a small Northern University, and York University, a large Metropolitan University. Beyond the argument of availability, undergraduate students were chosen as participants because of their probable overwhelming self-identification as middle-class. The two institutions were retained for reasons of convenience and because it was felt that they may offer a different clientele. More specifically, it was believed that the more diverse student population of York University may lead to a more frequent spontaneous identification to a racial or ethnic group, increasing the chances of obtaining relevant information regarding the potential relationship between class and racial or ethnic identity. Introductory classes in social sciences were chosen for a few reasons: access to a sufficient number of participants in one session; access to a large number of students at the start of their undergraduate experience, and; access to students from a variety of academic majors. Overall, the goal was to obtain a sufficiently large sample on the basis of two relatively comparable groups evolving in different social contexts and offering a diversity of individual participants.

The choice of groups was found appropriate on all counts. Table 1 provides descriptive information concerning the participants. Both groups were found to be comparable in many ways. Females clearly outnumbered males, most participants were young and in the first years of undergraduate studies, the respondents'

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family most often earned above $30,000 annually, owned the house they lived in, and in most cases at least one parent had reached College or University.

Table 2 provides information concerning the choice of academic majors by participants from each group. Although some of the variation is due to the differences in programmes offered at each University, there is also a variety of majors represented in each group. A large number of participants are from Social Science programmes but only a few of the Lakehead students are Sociology majors, and even fewer of the York students are Anthropology majors.

Finally, as shown in Table 3, there was more diversity, in terms of a chosen racial or ethnic identity, among participants from York than among those from Lakehead. However, the difference was not as strong as expected and, in both groups, an overwhelming number of participants identified as either Canadian, British or French. As predicted, both groups were comparable in terms of demographic characteristics and the variety of academic orientations, and the York University group helped to increase the diversity of racial or ethnic identity among participants.

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Table 1

Descriptive Data of Participants

	Lakehead U.	York U.
Total number of participants	112	151
Completed and retained questionnaires	112	137
Sex		
Male	40	43
Female	72	94
Age		
20 and under	70	87
21 to 23	18	40
24 to 29	17	7
30 or more	9	3
Family annual income ($)		
Less than 10,000	0	1
From 10,000 to 20,000	5	6
From 20,000 to 30,000	11	10
From 30,000 to 50,000	33	30
From 50,000 to 100,000	43	55
More than 100,000	14	22
Family housing		
Apt. in rural comm.	1	0
Apt. in the city	8	9
Apt. in the suburb	0	8
Rented house in rural comm.	0	2
Rented house in the city	5	4
Rented house in the suburb	1	4
Own house in rural comm.	34	21
Own house in the city	39	29
Own house in the suburb	24	57
Other	0	1
Highest educational attainment of parents		
Grade 9 or less	8	11
Some High School	6	8
Completed High School	23	16
Some College/University	13	16
Completed College	17	26
Completed University	30	32
Complete Grad. Studies	15	28

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Table 2

Academic Majors of Participants

	Lakehead U.	York U.	Total
Sociology	15	8	23
Anthropology	1	18	19
Psychology	19	19	38
Kinesiology	11	9	20
Undeclared	6	14	20
Biology	0	15	15
Outdoor Recreation	12	0	12
Social Work	9	0	9
Business Administration	2	5	7
English	3	4	7
Environmental Studies	2	5	7
Nursing	7	0	7
Computer Science	0	6	6
Education	6	0	6
History	0	6	6
Mass Communications	0	5	5
Political Science	2	2	4
General Arts	3	0	3
Geography	1	2	3
Fine Arts	0	3	3
Visual Arts	0	3	3
Accounting	1	1	2
Film and Video	0	2	2
Forestry	2	0	2
French	0	2	2
Music	0	2	2
Theater	0	2	2
Chemical Engineering	1	0	1
Chemistry	1	1	1
Cross-cultural Communications	0	1	1
Economics	1	0	1
Indigenous Learning	1	0	1
Philosophy	1	0	1
No answer	5	3	8
Total	112	137	249

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Table 3

Participants' Choice of Racial or Ethnic Identity

	Lakehead U. (n=112)	York U. (n=137)	Total (n=249)
If you had to choose from the following, to which racial group(s) do you feel you belong? You may choose more than one.			
White	95	86	181
Black	2	11	13
Oriental	2	15	17
Other	17	28	35
If you had to choose from the following, to which ethnic group(s) do you feel you belong? You may choose more than one.			
Canadian	92	86	178
British	18	12	30
French	12	3	15
Asian	2	22	24
Aboriginal	14	1	15
European	23	32	55
African	1	7	8
Other	8	24	32

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PART C: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter 5: Is There Class?

Introduction

Gilbert and Kahl's The American Class Structure (1993, p.2) starts with an anecdote regarding the sinking of the Titanic. The authors establish a relationship between social class and the rate of survival: only three percent of first-class passengers drowned compared to forty-five percent of third-class passengers. First-class passengers were offered the choice to abandon ship and only one refused; third-class passengers were ordered and forced to stay below deck. In a very practical way, class mattered. Yet, there is an ongoing academic and political polemic regarding the concept of class. Attacks on the validity or usefulness of social class language focus on two fronts: 1) a lack of relevance, and; 2) various conceptual and methodological problems.

It is argued that social classes are irrelevant compared to more important and more salient aspects of social identity such as gender, ethnicity or even geographic location. It may be the case that saliency is confused with importance. Class may be more difficult to define and not as easy to identify, either objectively or subjectively. Saliency may also become an argument for a primary effect of these other aspects of social identity compared to class. As proposed by Clement (1988), it may be more appropriate to keep in mind the interaction and imbeddedness of gender, ethnicity and class. In fact, the arguments for the irrelevance of class are often based on a belief in an egalitarian society, including a

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substantial opportunity for social mobility. These arguments ignore or, at least, downplay the existing social inequalities which are reproduced on the basis of class or of the other factors proposed as more relevant than class. Once social inequalities are ignored, the status quo even becomes an argument for the existence of sufficient equality and for the opportunity for social mobility (e.g. Beach and Slotsve, 1996). These social mobility arguments, which seek to deny the importance of social classes, are often based on empirical evidence regarding the ongoing or increased importance of a specific class, the middle class. It is ironic that class is invoked in an argument against class.

The conceptual arguments focus on the vague and shifting definition of the term and, consequently, its difficult operationalization. This may be a better indication of the importance of social class language than the contrary. There is an inherent contradiction between technical, conceptual precision and the use of a term in common language. When relegated to a specific domain of expertise, the meaning and applications of a term can maintain precise and well defined boundaries. If introduced in common language, a term will gain in breadth of application while becoming associated with more varied and vaguer definitions. The difficulty in defining the concept of social class may be an argument for, and not against, the importance of the concept, an indication of its pervasiveness in common language and a reminder of the need to contextualize studies of social class.

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The argument of vagueness or changing definition could be held against many other terms. Society, the core of sociological inquiry itself, may be the best example. Social issues are inevitably discussed in the context of groups defined according to specific social boundaries, a society of study. The difficulty in establishing the meaning of the term society leads us to be more precise regarding these social boundaries and to establish more precisely the context of our discussion.

The increasing vagueness attached to a more common use can be observed in other cases. Introducing qualifying terms, which can become imprecise themselves, does not necessarily solve the problem, as in the case of the Canadian debate regarding Quebec's claim to be a "distinct society" or the more recent example of a proposed federal-provincial "social union." Other examples come to mind in the context of the recent socioeconomic discourse. For example, the terms "global economy" and "sustainable development" were introduced as precise terms to be used in specific contexts. Used more commonly, in varied contexts, they become increasingly vague and difficult to define. However, this common use can also be indicative of their importance in shaping or influencing popular discourse. The "global economy" may be vague in meaning, yet it is used as an argument in a multitude of discussions, as when justifying the introduction of new technology, the restructuring of companies and the reduction of the work force.

The use of social class language in varied ways and contexts is therefore proposed as an indication of the continued importance

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of class. To paraphrase W. I. Thomas, the perception of social classes as real indicates that social classes have real consequences. The participants in this research project indicated in many ways that the concept of class is still active and salient in their life. This conclusion was supported by the stability of their subjective class identification, by the extensive responses to open-ended questions and by the frequent association of individual characteristics with social class.

Analysis

In the first two questions of the questionnaire, participants were asked if they identified themselves and their family as belonging to the middle class. These questions were asked first to avoid introducing any class language other than the expression "middle class" before the participants completed the open-ended part of the questionnaire. If participants refused to identify themselves as belonging to any social class, logic would dictate that they respond by answering "no" and refuse to identify themselves as middle-class. Thirty-two (32) participants answered negatively to the self-identification question, and twenty-one did not identify their family as middle-class. This represents less than fifteen percent (14.5%) of the participants in the case of the self-identification responses and less than nine percent (8.4%) for the family class identification. In both cases and for both groups, most participants identified themselves and their family as belonging to the middle class (Table 4).

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Table 4

Self-identification and Family Identification as Middle-Class

	Lakehead U. (n=112)	York U. (n=137)	Total (n=249)
Self-identification			
Middle-class	96	121	217
Not middle-class	16	16	32
Family identification			
Middle-class	103	125	228
Not middle-class	9	12	21

There was another opportunity for participants to choose a class identification for themselves and their family. Part B of the questionnaire started with four class identification questions offering multiple choices. Five responses were offered, in the following order: on the first line, the choices "lower class" and "capitalist class"; on the second line, the choices "middle class," "upper class" and "working class." These responses were offered to include social class language which can be referred to Weberian class images and concepts as well as to Marxist class images and concepts. The order of responses offered was intended to avoid inducing a middle-class identification.

The introduction of new choices and the opportunity for multiple responses was considered a test of the stability or the strength of the participants' class identification. If social classes did not matter or if they referred only vaguely to any social identification, there might be a frequent change and fluctuation in responses from one question to another. Furthermore, the opportunity for changing responses may have been increased by

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the separate administration of Part A and Part B of the questionnaire. Yet, in both groups, class identification remained remarkably stable (Table 5). The most common change was from a middle-class to a working-class identification, with a combination of both these choices when allowed. Only a small proportion of respondents (18 in total) completely rejected a middle-class identification when presented with a variety of other choices.

Table 5

Stability or Change of Self-identification as Middle-Class

	Lakehead U. (n=112)	York U. (n=137)	Total (n=249)
Original middle-class identification	96	121	217
Middle class only in both responses single and multiple choice)	19	18	37
Middle class as first response; middle and working class as second response	32	46	78
Working class as first response; middle and working class as second	18	18	36
Other responses including middle class	19	29	48
Responses excluding middle class	8	10	18

Both the persistence of a middle-class identification, and the association of middle-class with working-class identifications raise interesting issues. The initial choice of a middle-class identification in the initial question of Part A of the

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questionnaire may be considered by respondents as a commitment to an identification. They may feel that it would be illogical or embarrassing to deny this choice completely in the following responses, in Part B. However, the opportunity to change was offered, including numerous alternatives and in two different questions. Yet, most respondents limit their choices to the middle class or to a middle class-working class combination (69 of the 96 Lakehead participants; 82 of the 121 York participants). Whatever it may mean to self-identify as middle-class, it seems to be a clear choice for these participants as it remains a consistent response in the face of numerous and repeated alternatives.

There is a significant number of respondents that seem to equate the middle class with the working class. In fact, in both groups, respondents combining these two responses when multiple choices were allowed (and only these two) represent a slight majority of the participants. About two thirds of these respondents choose the middle class as their single identification response but then include the working class in their multiple choice response. The other third of these respondents choose the working class as their single identification response but then include the middle class in their multiple choice response. For most participants, it seems that the middle class is a broad category that includes those identified primarily or secondarily as part of the working class. Although the variety of combinations does not indicate a complete equivalence between the middle class and the working class, there seems to be a "slippage" from one class identification to the other

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that indicates that these classes share, in the participants' images of class, some common ground. Considering the frequency of these responses, it can be said that for the participants in this study, there are certainly more similarities than differences between the middle class and the working class. It should also be noted that there is a much less frequent association "upward" from the middle class to the capitalist or upper class. Only a few participants (15) moved from a middle-class identification in their initial choice to a capitalist or upper class identification in the single response question; and only twelve (12) participants combine a middle-class and an upper-class or capitalist-class identification in their response to the multiple choice question, compared to the hundred and fourteen (114) combining a middle-class and a working-class identification. Although this may be an effect of the class location of the participants, it may also indicate their perception of a much stronger difference between the middle class and the upper or capitalist class than between the middle class and the working class.

The importance of the concept of class was also supported by the participants' responses to the initial open-ended questions and to questions concerning the relationship between specific personal characteristics and social class. In this chapter, I will discuss the issue of rates of responses; the nature of these responses will be discussed in the following chapter of this thesis.

In Part A of the questionnaire, in an open-ended question and before receiving any implicit information from more specific

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questions, the participants were asked to identify the criteria by which they would include themselves or others in the middle class and, in a subsequent question, the criteria by which they would exclude themselves or others from the middle class. All but one of the participants offered some criteria for the inclusion and/or exclusion of themselves or others in the middle class. Some of the responses were limited and focused on a single issue. However, even the few participants stating their objection to the use of class language or categories then moved on to offer some criteria they would use to assign a class identification. Most respondents offered the criteria without stating any objection.

In Part B of the questionnaire, participants were offered a specific personal characteristic and asked if such information would lead them to assign a person as "most probably middle class" or "most probably not middle class." They could also choose the answer "don't know." There were twenty five (25) such questions. Given the limited and sketchy information provided, a single characteristic for each response, it can be argued that the "don't know" choice would always be the most logical answer. Any other answer could be considered as an indication of the participant's belief in a relationship between social class and the proposed characteristic. Overall, participants most often expressed an opinion regarding class location based on these single pieces of information. As a percentage of all responses, participants from Lakehead University assigned a class identification in sixty-nine percent (69%) of the responses while York University participants

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did so in sixty percent (60%) of the cases. If we exclude questions concerning religion, which an overwhelming majority of participants systematically rejected as a criterion, the percentage of class assignment based on a single characteristic raises to almost seventy-six percent (76%) for the Lakehead group and over sixty-eight percent (68%) for the York participants. Overall, with the exclusion of religion as a criterion, these responses indicate a perceived relationship between a single personal characteristic and a class identification in almost seventy-two percent (72%) of the cases.

Conclusion

Considering the persistence of the middle-class identification of the participants and their frequent answers regarding the criteria or personal characteristics related to a middle-class identification, it is reasonable to conclude that these participants have vivid and salient images of who is and who is not, in their view, a member of the middle class. But is the existence of an image of class sufficient to claim the importance of the concept or is there a need for a clearly defined and commonly agreed image?

In Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's Le Petit Prince (1946), the story begins with the stranded pilot's first encounter with the Prince, in which the Prince asks him to draw a lamb. Unfortunately, the pilot is not a very skillful artist. The first drawing, a boa with a lump, is rejected as representing a boa with an elephant in its stomach. The second and third drawings are rejected because

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they don't quite represent what the Prince considers an adequate drawing of a lamb: the first is too skinny and the second has horns and is classified as a ram.

Finally, the pilot draws a box with air holes and tells the Prince that the lamb is in the box. Although the Prince cannot see the lamb, he is satisfied. The pilot and the Prince both agree that lambs exist. They cannot agree on an explicit representation of lambs but they are satisfied with a solution that validates their belief while keeping their own images of lambs intact. As in the case of the Prince's lamb, the vagueness of the concept may play an instrumental part in a shared belief in social classes.

It can then be objected that people do not act upon vague and imprecise concepts, as they can hardly be considered as real. In response to such an objection, I offer a well-known popular image: Santa Claus. We all agree that Santa Claus does not exist. It is a product of popular beliefs and practices. Yet, it engenders real, practical behaviours. In certain cases, it even becomes a contested economic commodity, as when an association of downtown Montreal merchants sought to restrict the use of a Santa Claus character to their own Christmas parade. The claim was first supported but then rejected by City Hall and an alternative parade organized by charity groups was also allowed a Santa Claus.

Participants in this study indicated that they have vivid and salient images of social classes. Again paraphrasing W. I. Thomas, if these participants believe that social classes are real, social classes have real consequences for these participants.

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Chapter 6: What is (or is not) Middle-Class?

Introduction

Early consideration was given to a different title for this thesis. Moving from Old McDonald's farm to the postmodern economy, the thesis proposal was presented as: "Middle class here, middle class there, middle class everywhere: The social construction of the middle class in the Age of McDonald(ization)." After reflection, it was decided that going from McDonald's animals or hamburgers to global capitalism may be too much of a leap and that it introduces economic issues that are not central to this thesis. Nonetheless, maintaining an emphasis on the middle class deserves explanation. It could be argued that this is the only social class that can be discussed, considering the participants' overwhelming self-identification as middle-class and that, in this sense, the sample dictates the appropriate analysis. I will argue the contrary: the research emphasis on the middle class dictated the sample.

The emphasis on the middle class is motivated by the recurring use of a middle-class discourse in political and social debates, and by its necessary, yet apparently contradictory, correlates: 1) the inclusive nature of the concept of the middle class; and, 2) the tendency to think of the membership in the middle class as selective. As proposed by Bourdieu (1991), political discourse can serve to identify and even to create social groups. While Bourdieu's arguments referred to a recurring working class discourse in France, the same process comes to play in North

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America. On this side of the Atlantic, however, the middle class is the social battle ground of the political discourse. This is reflected in, but goes beyond, the issue of an overwhelming tendency to self-identify as middle-class in previous subjective class identification research.

Political appeals to the middle class are nothing new. Dror Wahrman (1995) writes about the changing definition of the middle class in England from the post-French Revolution years to the mid-nineteenth century Corn Law debates. During these years, politicians from every allegiance occasionally claimed to speak in the name of an ever expanding middle class. This leads Wahrman to argue that the emphasis of the discourse was mostly on "middle" rather than on "class." Yet, the debates he recalls unfold around issues of economic and political representation which are central to any class identification or class struggle. In early 19th century England, changes in the definition of the middle-class were dictated by attempts to include a broader base of support for the claim of each group to representation. In the process, the middle class became increasingly seen as an adequate conceptual representation for the majority of citizens, as defined at the time by the limited franchise, and was identified as a source of stability.

The process has changed very little since then. The major difference lies in the expansion of the political franchise and the almost universal right to vote. Thus the need for a broadly inclusive image of the middle class and the cultivation of the

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current myths of a striving North American middle class. Appeals to the middle class and the claim of a special interest for its concerns are to be heard at every level of the current political discourse. In the United States, Aronowitz (1992) proposes that the Republican Party's resurgence, starting with Richard Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign, is largely based on an appeal to the middle class. He also argues that this included an attack on perceived favoritism for minorities. The Democrats were soon to follow. In the 1992 campaign, Bill Clinton proposed to enact, if elected, policies that would amount to a "Middle Class Bill of Rights."

A similar middle-class discourse can be heard in Canada, in the context of federal and provincial politics. In his 1998 Budget speech, Paul Martin, Canada's Minister of Finance, mentioned that eighty-five percent of Canadian taxpayers would be affected by a measure aimed at the middle class (Canada, 1998). The specific mention of the middle class in itself deserves to be noticed; the proposed broad inclusiveness of the category makes this comment more noteworthy. Provincial politicians also employ a middle class discourse. During Quebec's electoral campaign, Lucien Bouchard (Radio-Canada, 1998) proposed that any budget surplus in the next few years should be directed towards tax reductions for the middle class, arguing that these citizens are the most in need of governmental help. Near the end of 1998, commenting on his administration's performance, Ontario Premier's Mike Harris declared that he wanted to make 1999 "the year of the middle class" (CBLFT, 1998). An interesting statement when considering

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that 1999 will most probably be an electoral year in Ontario. All these statements are made in the hope of appealing to a broad base of constituents. However, most of these appeals also involve an implicit need for selection. Most governmental policies are based on prioritizing the needs of some citizens. In this sense, a middle class appeal can only be effective if, at the same time that it gives an impression of inclusiveness, it allows specific groups to believe that they are the "chosen" and that their needs are at the top of the list. As argued in the previous chapter, concerning class language in general, we are again faced with an intrinsic need for vagueness. For each person, however, the middle class must correspond to a specific image and to clearly defined boundaries in which they can feel either included or excluded.

Answers provided by the participants in this research project indicate an ambivalence between all-inclusiveness and selection. Most participants identify themselves or others as middle-class (as shown in the previous chapter), and from this, we could expect most participants to assign a large proportion of the Canadian population to the middle class. Seen from their middle-class perspective, the image of an overwhelming Canadian middle class would only be natural. Yet, when asked what percentage of the Canadian population belongs to the middle class, most participants offer responses that indicate a process of selection when compared to their own identification and their immediate reference group of university students (Table 6). Based on their own class identification, we would expect a large number of the participants

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to assign seventy percent or more of the Canadian population to the middle class yet this response was chosen by only thirteen (13) participants. Overall, the participants assigned more Canadians to the middle class than objective class measures (Black & Myles, 1986; Veltmeyer, 1986; Clement, 1990), and a similar percentage to that found in subjective class identification research (Goyder & Pineo, 1979; Pammett, 1987; Johnston & Baer, 1993).

Table 6

Participants' Responses: Percentage of the Canadian Population in the Middle Class

	Lakehead U. (n=112)	York U. (n=137)	Total (n=249)
10 to 20%	0	1	1
20 to 30%	7	15	22
30 to 40%	28	26	54
40 to 50%	23	30	53
50 to 60%	27	28	55
60 to 70%	23	24	47
70 to 80%	1	7	8
Over 80%	2	3	5

Responses show that participants in this research project considered themselves middle-class in a larger proportion than the percentage of the Canadian population that they would assign to this class. This sample of participants provides a good example of the possible co-existence of an overwhelming feeling of inclusion with a process of selectivity. It also indicates a need to consider

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both processes, inclusion and exclusion, in the definition of the social boundaries of the middle class. This is why the open-ended questions in Part A of the questionnaire were formulated in an apparently repetitive manner. Not only did this force respondents to think twice about the same issue, it also allowed for each process, inclusion and exclusion, to come into play. The following analysis reviews the content of the open-ended responses and the criteria by which participants identify themselves or others as being or not being middle-class. I will also reconsider the responses to the multiple choice questions in Part B of the questionnaire, concerning the relationship between a middle-class identity and a specific personal characteristic.

Analysis

Responses to open-ended questions were often brief yet informative. Only two participants did not respond while one responded according to a Marxist theoretical dichotomy of ownership/non-ownership of the means of production. All other participants offered a few criteria by which they would choose or assign a middle class identification and their responses varied between descriptive statements and point-form answers.

The challenge of the analysis was to make sense of these chaotic bits of information without imposing a preconceived interpretation. A coding key was developed to classify responses into categories that allowed for the discovery of any underlying class scheme. Four coding categories were used: 1) economic or financial criteria, which can be stated in relation to any class

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theory; 2) cultural and social capital criteria, referring mostly to Bourdieu's theoretical scheme and to Weber's concept of status; 3) criteria of life style and values, which may be more directly related to Bourdieu but can be considered in other theoretical schemes; and, 4) social identity criteria, which may lead to alternative social categories other than social classes. The frequency of responses for each category can be found in Table 7.

Table 7

Constructing the Middle Class: Responses per Criteria Category

Criteria Category	Lakehead U. (n=112)	York U. (n=137)	Total (n=249)
"Pure" economic	99	122	221
"Qualified" economic	97	109	206
Cultural/Social Capital	49	53	102
Life style/Values	54	62	116
Social Identity	4	3	7

Almost all of the respondents offered some economic or financial criteria and a minority of participants limited their responses only to economic issues (thirty-two participants from Lakehead and fifty-one from York). All others included criteria coded under the various categories. Furthermore, as reflected in Table 6, economic or financial responses were considered under two sub-categories: "pure" economic criteria and "qualified" economic criteria. Pure criteria are essentially and clearly financial. They refer mostly to income and to the direct consequences of income,

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such as the ability to afford all the necessities of life. Very few of the respondents limited their answers to this type of criteria (three from Lakehead and eleven from York). Qualified economic criteria include direct or indirect reference to financial aspects related to income. Even though the answer may not clearly indicate how it would relate to a class scheme, it does go beyond income. For example, this sub-category would include statements related to the possession of a home, a car, or the ability to purchase luxury items. These examples indicate the difficulty in establishing and imposing strict categories. If the possessions were stated as a consequence of income they were considered under the category of qualified income criteria. However, if they were stated in terms of life style they were classified in the third category of criteria, referring to life style and values. For example, disposable income in itself may be coded as an economic criteria whereas the use of disposable income for holidays abroad becomes a life style issue. Alternative interpretations are considered in the analysis.

Criteria related to cultural or social capital, and to life style or values were frequently expressed, with about half of the respondents using one or the other category. Social identity criteria were rarely used. This category intended to capture references to criteria such as age, gender, geographical location or ethnicity. Although only a few responses were classified in this category, it will be useful to reconsider this issue in light of some of the responses classified in previous categories and of the responses to multiple choice questions.

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Each category of responses to the open-ended questions is reviewed before considering the responses to multiple choice questions. In the conclusion, I will attempt to capture a composite image of the middle class, as reflected in the responses.

Economic or financial criteria

The criteria coded as "purely" economic are delimited by this coding classification. As such, they are not expected to hold any surprises. The issues of income or wealth can only be expressed in so many ways. The most common expressions used to describe the middle-class persons or families were "average income" and "not rich or poor." An income range was occasionally offered but, more frequently, a middle-class income was described in relation to income levels or standards of living. A middle-class income was described as "average," "above the poverty line" and "sufficient to purchase all the necessities of life," often identified as food, shelter and clothes. You were not considered as part of the middle class if you "struggle to put food on the table" or "have problems paying bills."

The concern with minimal living standards is reflected in the "qualified" economic criteria. A few redundant criteria construct what could be seen as a middle-class cocoon, a composite image of financial well-being, conservative spending patterns, feelings of security, and a strong work ethic. The most common expressions relate to the term "comfort." To be middle-class is to "have a comfortable life style," to "feel comfortable," to "live in the comfort of a warm house." This is sometimes related to the

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possession of limited luxuries stated, for example, as cars or leisure activities. The previously expressed comfortable income level is often qualified by allowing for the access to some luxuries by the middle class, while the presence of excessive luxury items is offered as a criterion for exclusion from the middle class and inclusion in the upper or "high" class. The complete inability to access luxury items is a lower class identification criterion. Relative financial comfort is also expressed as the ability to purchase all "needs" and a few "wants" or in the fact that you are not "living from paycheck to paycheck" and are able to "pay all the bills." You are not middle-class if you are "constantly in debt," although having a mortgage is a definite sign of middle-class identity.

Conservative spending habits are expressed in relation to short term financial security. To be middle-class is to be able to purchase all the necessities and some luxuries without too much concern, but not without thinking about prices or cost. If you struggle for necessities or are worried about not being able to afford them tomorrow, you are below the middle class. If you either don't have to or do not think about the cost of purchasing luxury items, then you belong to a higher class. Middle-class security is also related to long term financial security. Middle class persons are able to put some money aside for the future, in savings, or in RRSPs, stocks or mutual funds. But, as was often clearly expressed, this relative security is based on hard work. To be middle-class is to "have to work for what you have" compared to upper class persons

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who "don't have to work." The following statement well illustrates the middle class cocoon:

> Middle class people are those who's income exceed that of the poverty line but yet are not so well off that money is not a problem. These people including myself are able to live comfortably while working steadily to maintain their financial status. (L421)

There are few comments on specific occupations. Some respondents mention that working in a fast food chain disqualifies you from the middle class, while a few other respondents clearly state that the middle class is, in their view, the working class. This, however, seems to refer to the previously mentioned middle class work ethic: if you work and if you have to work to maintain your life style, you are in the middle class.

The criteria concerning work most often evolve around the type of employment. To be middle-class is to have "a steady job," or to "work full-time." For others, the family is middle-class if both parents work. You may have a "good job" although this seems to be a question of income level: a good job pays enough to meet all necessities and more. Only one respondent proposes that owning a small business is a criterion. It could be argued, in an optimistic way, that these respondents understand the difference between the middle class and the petty bourgeoisie better than most sociologists. It would be more realistic to propose that the petty bourgeoisie is simply forgotten in their responses. Except for a single respondent, the independent worker, owner of the means of production but directly involved in productive work, is not a part of the occupational images of the middle class.

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On the issue of work, the most redundant presentation separates the employed middle class from the unemployed. The middle class works and can "take care of themselves." You are below the middle class if you "work part-time" or if you "need financial assistance," "receive social assistance," "need help from the government" or, most often mentioned, if you are "on welfare." When considering these comments and those regarding the need to work, we are left with a classification placing the middle class as self-reliant, employed and having to work between a lavish and irresponsible upper class that does not need to work, and a dependent and unemployed lower class.

A similar representation emerges concerning the issue of housing. To own a house is a commonly stated middle-class identity criterion. It also becomes an element of relative class location. Owning a larger home places the person above the middle class while renting, being without proper shelter or, most clearly and frequently stated, being homeless places one below the middle class. These two classification schemes, concerning employment and housing, combine in defining an image of the lower class as unemployed, probably receiving some form of social assistance, and either living in poor conditions or homeless. I will return to this depiction when considering the issue of social identities.

Another classification process is based on possessions. I have already mentioned the issue of relative access to luxuries. This is also expressed, at times, in regards to the amount of possessions, luxuries, or "objects," as coined by a respondent. The most common

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object used as a criterion for class identity is the car or, as more broadly expressed by many respondents, vehicles. Middle-class persons have cars, but not too many and they are not too expensive. Other "objects" mentioned include television sets ("TVs"), computers, and cell phones. But there seems to be an obsession with cars. This may be related to the participants' age. Young university students may be at a stage in their life when owning a car is a priority. It may also be a reflection of our North American lifestyle. The explanation of this automotive fixation is beyond this research project but it deserves to be underlined.

Cultural capital and social capital criteria

Criteria coded in this category are based on Bourdieu's concepts of cultural and social capital. Cultural capital includes mostly knowledge and skills. Social capital refers to advantages based on one's social status. Social capital rests upon social recognition and is very closely related to Weber's concept of status. The relative value of cultural capital is also an issue of public recognition and some of its most important components, such as educational credentials, eventually become recognized and supported by social institutions. Both cultural and social capital come into play in class struggles and can determine the class location of an individual or a group. As indicated in Table 7, about forty percent of the participants (102 of 249) used at least one criterion coded in this category. Table 8 indicates the distribution of responses related to the most frequently mentioned criteria in this category.

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Table 8

Cultural and Social Capital: Most Frequently Mentioned Criteria

Criteria	Lakehead U. (n=49)	York U. (n=53)	Total (n=102)
Cultural capital			
Education	40	38	78
Appropriate language/demeanour	4	6	10
Social capital			
Individual/Family prestige	11	9	20
Social esteem	13	11	24
Power	8	8	16
Family structure	3	7	10

Criteria concerning cultural capital center around two issues: education and appropriate language or demeanor. Other than economic or financial criteria, the issue of education is the most often mentioned. And the education criterion is often related to sufficient financial resources, as clearly stated in the responses: "able to fork over thousands of dollars a year for university" (Y257) and "I believe anyone who can afford university is middle-class" (Y286).

The obstacles to higher education are not always as explicitly stated and it is often difficult to establish if there are issues other than financial resources. Education is also associated with future economic well-being, mostly in terms of careers or the

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opportunity for a "good job." There also seems to be an issue of cultural capital reproduction, as the criterion for a middle-class identity is often the higher education of the parents. This type of response is to be expected from these respondents. Not only are all the participants currently at university but a large proportion of them come from families where at least one parent had some form of post-secondary education (71% of all respondents had at least one parent with some college or university education). In these circumstances, it is not surprising that access to higher education is often stated as a criterion, a cut-off between the middle class and a lower class identity: "A person or group not belonging to the middle class usually have [sic] a maximum of a high school diploma" (L417).

You are not in the middle class if you are "uneducated," if you only have a "low level of education," or, quite ironically, if you have an "inadequete [sic] education" (Y110; original spelling by a participant with a middle-class self-identification). Although the sample of respondents may explain such a criterion, this does not make it more logical. Its use as a criterion implies that the respondents consider that it is a discerning factor. Yet, by this criterion alone, most of the Canadian population would be excluded from the middle class. The education criterion is an example of extreme selectivity in the face of a belief in a broad and inclusive middle class.

A few other cultural capital criteria are mentioned. There is distinction made between "good" and "bad" schools. In a system of

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public education and standardized credentials such as ours, this probably refers to the informal, or "hidden" curriculum. One respondent makes a direct connection between the "type of education" and "the personality traits of an individual" (L503). Other responses express this issue in terms of ability to communicate effectively citing "language skills," "communication skills," the ability to "represent themselves well," and "generosity in her vocabulary." Other criteria mention "esteem and confidence" and "knowledge of current events." These social skills and their perceived importance are expressed in this respondent's criterion: "the ability and social skills to lead a promising life with many possibilities" (L478).

Social capital involves the concepts of individual or family prestige, social esteem and the perception of potential power attached to such status. The use of social status as a criterion is often a result of circular logic: to be middle class is to have a middle status. In theoretical terms, we are not much further ahead, being left with the task of defining status instead of class. However, some respondents offer more descriptive images of a middle-class status including information about its proposed origin. On occasion, status may be derived from the type of employment, the "work status." But most often, it is an issue of social recognition, social affiliation, or feelings of belonging. In terms of social recognition, people are middle class because of "how others rank them," or "because of the way they are looked upon in society." Issues of social affiliation are expressed in terms

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related to Weber's concept of social intercourse or in the simple criterion of popularity. However, to be a celebrity or "in the public eye a great deal" would place you above the middle class. Feelings of belonging can be expressed either as a criterion for inclusion or exclusion, or as an issue of inner-class agreement:

> Middle class is determined by the socio/economic circle one feels most comfortable with. (L443)

> the feeling a person may have because they have been marginalized and feel like they don't belong. (Y103)

> A person cannot belong to a class if their classification does not match those of the society. (Y136)

Social status criteria are closely related to issues of power. Power may be an indication of a middle-class identity or a criterion to distinguish the socially recognized middle class person from the upper class. To have power derived from status places you above the middle class and allows you to "determine how society functions." To have no power whatsoever becomes a criterion for exclusion from the middle class, obviously in the other direction:

> he or she has little or no influence in the community aside from the right to vote which is probably meaningless for most due to the political structure that keeps the rich, rich and the poor, poor. (L542)

Other criteria refer to the family structure. A few respondents mention children as a criterion. A few others propose that a middle class family includes two parents. This may be an economic issue based on the need for two incomes more than a question of social structure, although one participant uses the expression "family education" (Y248) as a criterion for the middle

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class. This issue will be revisited when analyzing the next category of criteria.

In the face of all these rather selective criteria, there are still some respondents who clearly indicate that being part of the middle class involves an aspect of social inclusion in the mainstream of society. These statements again illustrate a belief in inclusiveness that seems to persist above all exclusionary criteria. Status is viewed as "a way to exclude others from the majority" (Y103) and middle class people are "part of the majority" (Y284) or, stated even more succinctly, "The majority of the population is here" (Y250).

Life style/values criteria

This category was developed to capture criteria related to life style and values. By their nature, these criteria are judgmental and value-laden. This may not be explicit in the life style criteria, but it must be remembered that these life-style choices contain an underlying judgement about what is appropriate or preferable. In the case of criteria related to values, the judgmental aspect is obvious. More than forty-six percent of the participants (116 of 249) used at least one criterion coded in this category. Table 9 indicates the distribution of responses related to the most frequently mentioned criteria in this category.

The issues of family structure and social behaviours were previously addressed as cultural and social capital criteria but they also deserve to be noted here, considering the related value-judgements. In this case, the nuclear family is upheld as a norm

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Table 9

Life Style/Values: Most Frequently Mentioned Criteria

Criteria	Lakehead U. (n=54)	York U. (n=62)	Total (n=116)
Life Style			
Family structure	7	6	13
Appropriate social behaviours	13	12	25
Residence area/type	16	28	44
Travel and leisure	5	11	16
Health care	4	6	10
Clothing	6	7	13
Values			
Work ethic	15	7	22
Values, beliefs or morals	18	12	30

and "fitting the norm" becomes a middle-class criterion. Another respondent mentions being "family oriented" as a criterion. In a few cases the term "family" is mentioned in relation to an appropriate life style, such as living "normal lives."

Appropriate social behaviours were previously proposed as an asset or a requirement for economic success. In other cases, they are mentioned in a more critical way. To be middle-class refers to "being polite and having manners in public" and your "social graces are evident." You are not middle-class if you have "no manners," a

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"bad attitude" or if you are "vulgar." A person needs to be "brought up right:"

> Their upbringing may exclude them [from the middle class] as well as their attitudes and the way they carry themselves. (Y333)

Life style issues include the residential area, travel and leisure, health care, and clothing. The most often stated of these issues is the area of residence. Living in the suburbs is often mentioned, but there is also a broader issue: the perceived quality of the residential area or "what part of town" you live in. Middle-class people live in a "safe neighbourhood" or in a "friendly community" or, more vaguely, in a "middle-class area" which is "habited by others of the same social level" (Y289).

These residential areas are occasionally contrasted against the "elite neighbourhood" of the higher class, who live in "huge mansions with hired hands." Most often, the comparison is to lower class housing locations. The middle class does not live "in a poor area," or "in the wrong side of town." The type of accommodations is also used as a criterion. Cleanliness and appearance is a sign of the middle class. You are not middle-class if you are a "bum on the streets," or if you are "living in a box" or "in a van down by the river" (L543). These depictions go beyond a concern with an average setting. Clean, safe and proper housing is considered to be middle-class. This excludes extravagant life styles but rejects and looks down upon any sign of misery.

The opportunity for travel and leisure are proposed as middle-class criteria. The middle class has some time and money for

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leisure and both traveling and vacations abroad are accessible to the middle class. These may also entail educational benefits such as "experiencing a different culture." Excessive indulgence is again proposed as a criterion for exclusion; you are not part of the middle class if you "vacation out of country for more than a month" (Y143).

Considering the state health care system, access to health care should not be a social class issue in Canada. Yet, it is proposed by some participants as a middle-class criterion. In a few cases, it seems to be related to employment benefits: you are part of the middle class if you have a good health care plan. However, in other cases, it is presented in a more judgmental way. You are not part of the middle class if "health problems are evident," if your health is "below standards" or if you "cannot afford a healthy life" (Y182). This may be what a participant referred to when proposing that people are not middle class if "they never take care of themselves" (L458).

A concern with proper appearance is also reflected in the expression of clothing criteria. Responses suggest an interesting three-level classification: the upper class wear designer clothes, the middle class wear brand names, and the lower class wear torn or dirty clothes. Cleanliness and thrift are again the hallmark of the middle class.

The issue of a middle-class work ethic was previously addressed in the context of economic criteria. I argued that it was an element of what could be termed the middle class cocoon. It

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needs to be reconsidered in the context of values. Here, hard work is not only a means to insure financial security; it is a virtue in itself. Middle class persons must "work hard for a living" and have "gone out of their way to work" (L414):

> The middle class of people are not people that have just coasted through life, they have worked hard to achieve what they have. (L559)

This work ethic is contrasted with the idle ways of those who "choose to" be or are "placing themselves" in the lower class:

> People on welfare don't belong in the middle class because they aren't earning their money. There may not be many high paying jobs out there, but there are quite a few gas pumping and waitressing jobs. (L526)

> These people are ashamed they are not well-educated and do not have the money to provide for their families but they have no ambition or ability to change their life styles. (L445)

Not only does the middle class work hard, but it is also depicted as satisfied with its condition and, in other cases, as aspiring to better things. These are not contradictory images. Together they refer to the same processes discussed by Bourdieu (1984) when he says that middle-class people "tend and pre-tend." Some participants talk about a middle-class contentment and happiness. There is a spectrum along these two feelings. You are not middle-class if you are unhappy or extremely happy, and "the poorer people are trying hard to become middle-class where the richer are happy they are not" (L421). You are also middle-class if you "want more possessions," if you "want to be part of the upper class" or if you want others to believe you are better off than you are.

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Some respondents propose criteria that refer explicitly to values and morality. Exclusion criteria are expressed in general terms such as "poor values" or more precisely as a criminal record, teen pregnancy, or "abuse in the family." There is a stated need for "sociologically acceptable values and ethics" (L462) which, for some respondents, are identified as environmental responsibility, social awareness, or community involvement. All of these are occasionally presented as a middle-class norm. One respondent talks about middle-class "ideals, beliefs and rationalizations" (L434) as a criterion, while another says that middle-class persons "conform to the majority" (L505). These moral considerations, the need for conformity and, even in the face of these numerous criteria of exclusion, the lasting belief in the inclusion of a majority of people in the middle class are well summarized in the following statement:

> those who fill the most common or average group of people constitute the middle class, this being according to similar needs and values...those who adopt ideas or values that are radical or different from the majority would be excluded. (Y297)

Social identities

This category was developed to consider alternative social identities, such as gender or ethnicity, which may be used in depicting those who are included in or excluded from the middle class. In this sense, it was not very useful in the original analysis of responses. As indicated in Table 7, only seven respondents used such criteria and their responses were related to issues of global social inequality. For these participants, you

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were excluded from the middle class if you lived in an area "devastated by poverty," with India, Africa or simply the "Third World" offered as examples. Only one respondent identifies the elderly as possibly excluded from the middle class and this age group is defined in a rather inclusive way: "They are born in a different generation example prior WWII" (L432).

However, I would argue that some of the previously stated criteria, coded under other categories, can be considered as social identities or as the components of a constructed social identity for the lower class. References to the following characteristics can be considered as descriptors of this group: people that are poor, unemployed, on welfare or social assistance, homeless. All of these are frequently used and often related to social and cultural capital criteria or life style and values criteria. Together, they form an image of a dispossessed and disconnected segment of society which, in its depiction and in the manifestation of contempt, reminds us of Marx's description of the lumpenproletariat (Marx & Engels, 1848/1967; Marx, 1867/1976).

Responses to multiple choice questions

In Part B of the questionnaire, participants were asked to decide, on the basis of a single characteristic, if a person should be considered part of the middle class. The possible answers were "most probably middle class," " most probably not middle class," and "don't know." There were twenty five opportunities to classify on the basis of criteria from the following five categories: immigrant status and country of origin, religious affiliation,

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Table 10

Association of Personal Characteristics with Middle-Class Identity

	Lakehead U. (n=112)			York U. (n=137)		
	Y	N	?	Y	N	?
Annual income ($)						
15 000	10	93	9	12	102	14
25 000	36	60	16	32	76	20
35 000	75	23	14	76	36	16
45 000	77	22	13	98	22	8
60 000	74	28	10	85	32	9
200 000	25	83	4	34	86	4
One million	17	92	3	25	97	6
Family						
Single parent female	13	75	24	16	62	50
Single parent male	29	44	39	29	34	64
Married female with 2 children	59	16	37	57	13	58
Married male with 2 children	74	5	33	67	7	52
Married female with 6 children	16	56	40	27	41	59
Married male with 6 children	15	56	41	28	39	59
Housing						
Owns a house in the suburb	93	12	7	112	5	10
Owns a house in the city	84	11	17	89	12	27
Rents an apartment in the suburb	36	45	31	58	43	37
Rents an apartment in the city	44	31	35	48	31	46
Religion						
Attends...						
Protestant services	28	9	75	16	3	108
Catholic services	31	7	74	24	1	108
Muslim services	15	18	79	13	6	109
Does not attend church	28	11	72	19	6	101
Immigrant status and origin						
Recent immigrant from...						
England	40	21	51	45	8	75
Italy	17	48	47	14	32	80
China	17	48	47	21	35	71
Rwanda	05	66	41	3	59	65

Response key
Y: Most probably middle class
N: Most probably not middle class
?: Don't know

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income, family structure, and housing. Without engaging in the calculation of statistical significance, there are a few observations that can be made from these responses in regards to the criteria for inclusion in or exclusion from the middle class. In this chapter, I will discuss the responses concerning the four last categories of criteria. Responses to questions from the first category, immigrant status and country of origin, will be discussed in the next chapter. A summary of responses is provided in Table 8.

Responses related to religious affiliation indicate clearly that these participants do not believe there is a relationship between class and religion. An overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that they did not know if a person would most probably or most probably not belong to the middle class based on any of these criteria. This is also supported by the fact that the participants who did assign a probable class identity believed that a person not attending church was middle class as often as someone attending the services of any denomination. The only exception is for Muslim services, for which Lakehead participants had a slightly different pattern of answers. But even in this case, most Lakehead respondents reject this religious affiliation as a criterion.

It was to be expected that the income criteria would elicit a high rate of response. Responses also followed a predictable pattern with more respondents assigning a middle-class identity in the middle of the range, less at each end, and more indecision in the middle. Since the questions did not include a regular increase of income, we can only conclude that, in most cases, participants

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believe that people earning an annual income of $35,000 to $60,000 are part of the middle class.

Responses regarding the family structure raise as many questions as they answer. There is still a large proportion of undecided participants which probably indicates that they are concerned with varying circumstances mitigating the effect of the family type. There is also a large proportion of respondents indicating that single-parent families are most probably not middle-class. This is consistent with responses to the open-ended questions; the nuclear family was proposed as the middle-class norm and it was argued that there may be a need for two incomes in a family to achieve other middle-class criteria. However, other issues emerge. Large families are classified as most probably not middle-class almost as often as single-parent families. This was not obvious in the open-ended part of the questionnaire where only one respondent alluded in an indirect way that this may be a criterion for exclusion from the middle class. There is also an interesting difference along gender lines. In a similar familial situation, women are not considered middle-class as often as their male counterparts. It could be argued that the difference regarding single-parent families is an informed reflection of the added difficulties of women, when compared to men, in those circumstances. This explanation does not stand in the case of married parents with two children. Who are these women married to? How can they be middle-class in a lower proportion than married men with two children? An optimistic response could be that our

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participants considered the class location of the women in an unmediated and individual way, instead of considering a shared class location. A more realistic response would be that, for these participants, there is a gender effect. Overall, the image of the nuclear family as the middle-class norm is confirmed, large families are not considered to be middle-class as often as families with two children, and women are more often excluded from the middle class than are men.

Responses concerning housing confirm the importance attached to home ownership. To own a house, especially if it is in the suburb, is an almost definite sign of belonging to the middle class, whereas renting an apartment in either the suburb or the city is associated with a variety of class locations.

Conclusion

Many of the proposed criteria reflect a view of the middle class as the average, the middle of the road norm. This is especially the case in terms of economic criteria. The middle class is presented as "not rich, not poor" or as having some relative financial concerns, compared to the upper class which is above such worries, and to the constant financial difficulties of the lower class.

In regards to social and cultural capital, we more often find a dichotomous presentation of criteria. Middle-class criteria of this category are mostly presented in opposition to lower-class images. The middle class has access to post-secondary education, knows how to behave and is recognized by their peers of a similar

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status. The middle class shares all of these with the upper class. The remaining difference is that the upper class has larger financial resources that allow it to enjoy more power in society compared to the middle class. There is a difference in kind established between the lower and the middle class but not between the middle and the upper class.

The average becomes presented as the ideal, the norm to which one should aspire, when the criteria concern issues of life style or values. At this level, a difference in kind is established between the middle class and all others. To be middle class is to have the will to work compared to the idleness of the lower class and upper class. The middle class lives modestly, in good neighbourhoods. It enjoys life but without the misbehaviours of the lower class and the excesses of the upper class. In this category, the middle class separates itself from all others and middle-class virtues become the hallmark of good citizens. The comparatively more aggressive condemnation of the lower class may be a reflection of middle-class fears of slipping into the ranks of the destitute.

This analysis of the criteria used by the participants for the inclusion into or exclusion from the middle class does not allow us to construct a precise image of the middle class. It does support, however, my contention of the coexistence of a belief in stringent criteria and the view of a broad, inclusive middle class. The criteria combine to eliminate almost all of the population. The need for post-secondary education in itself disqualifies a majority of Canadians. Adding the criteria of home ownership, thrift, modest

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spending and leisure patterns, a strong work ethic, and a need for social recognition would make inclusion in the middle class an exception, rather than a norm.

The variety of criteria and the frequent relationship of these criteria to disputable and flexible social or moral judgements suggests a concept of "middle classness" which can be viewed as a level or degree of inclusion in the middle class. In this sense, only the clearly "higher class" persons and those included in the image of a lumpenproletariat would be excluded.

We could also consider these criteria as elements of a Weberian ideal type. As such, specific cases of individuals or of relatively homogenous groups could be said to approach, more or less, this ideal type. We could even identify and possibly explain how they differ from the middle class ideal type. This approach would probably be more productive than to reject the usefulness of the concept of class, in its socially constructed form, simply because it does not fit any specific theoretical scheme. Bourdieu's (1984) depiction of social classes in France is very close to this concept of ideal type. Although he argues that his images of class may be universal, they may be more useful when considered in relation to their historical and cultural context.

An ideal type is constructed as the extreme representation of a one-sided model, never to be found in reality. It is constructed, however, in light of some cultural or historical redundancies. In the case of the middle class, these recurrent traits include feelings of relative oppression, and beliefs in a moral and ethical

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superiority. These combine to create an apparently contradictory but conceptually reconciled image of the middle class as an "exclusive majority."

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Chapter 7: Class and Racial or Ethnic Identity

Introduction

The need to consider racial or ethnic identity in this project comes from two distinct sources: the debate concerning the conceptual validity of class schemes, and the underlying references to racial or ethnic identities in political class discourse.

One of the arguments against the concept of social class is that other social identities are (or have become), more salient and more important. For example, gender issues are often said to be more significant than class in today's social relations. Another way of expressing these conceptual objections is to argue that the effect of class interacts so closely with other social identities that it becomes essential to prioritize and favour the most salient factors. In this debate, class often looses its place to measures of gender, racial or ethnic identity. Since this leads us closer to simplification than clarity, it seems more appropriate to recognize interacting identities and to either analyze these factors, if our research is so designed, or to understand the limitations of our research.

The political discourse aims at securing the support of the largest constituency possible. However, as I have argued previously, this process also involves an underlying process of selection in the statement of priorities. Aronowitz (1992) proposed that the Republican Party's resurgence under Richard Nixon was largely based on scarcely veiled attacks against the perception of favoritism for minorities. These were the days of appeals to the

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"silent majority" and the origin of the arguments concerning "reverse discrimination." In Canada, it is argued that the rapid rise of the Reform Party involves a similar message of exclusiveness, especially in the context of the Party's position regarding immigration (e.g. Kirkham, 1998). This stands beside the Reform's frequent interventions in the name of the Canadian middle class. Arguments are made in the name of Canadians, however defined, and at other times in the name of the middle class; both identities seem to converge in the Reform's political discourse.

This research project was not specifically designed to address issues of racial and ethnic identity. Only a few of the survey questions can serve this purpose. The open-ended questions, however, provided the opportunity for respondents to bring any form of criteria for a middle-class identity. As discussed in the previous chapter, there were no specific references to other social identities except in terms of the exclusion of citizens in underdeveloped economies. I proposed that some criteria of exclusion from the middle class combined to construct the image of a rejected segment of our society, in many ways similar to Marx's lumpenproletariat. But there was no indication of an interaction of gender and racial or ethnic identity with the criteria for middle-class inclusion or exclusion.

Open-ended responses could in turn be considered according to the participant's identity. Modified versions of the racial and ethnic categories from the Canadian census were used in Part C of the questionnaire. Based on the participants' self-identification,

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two groups were constructed: those identifying as members of a visible minority and the others. A comparison of the responses from these two groups did not indicate any significant differences. The criteria for inclusion or exclusion were comparable and there was no identification of a trend specific to one group or the other.

Some multiple choice questions did address the issue of gender, racial or ethnic identity. The indication of a gender effect was discussed in the previous chapter. Responses to questions in Part B of the questionnaire indicated that respondents exclude women from the middle class more frequently than men.

The issue of racial or ethnic identity was also addressed in this part of the questionnaire when respondents were asked if they would most probably include or exclude recent immigrants from the middle class, based on their country of origin. The last questions of Part B also concerned the inclusion of visible minority and Native Aboriginal Canadians in the middle class. The following analysis will focus on the responses to these multiple choice questions.

Analysis

The distribution of responses from each group of participants to questions regarding the relationship between a middle-class identity and an immigrant's country of origin were presented in Table 8. They are reproduced in Table 9 with the inclusion of total responses.

When comparing response patterns, there is one difference between groups. In every case, a majority of participants from York

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University withhold judgement and answer "don't know" whereas only a minority of participants from Lakehead University choose this response. However, the participants from each group that do or do not assign a middle-class identity based on the country of origin, respond in a very similar proportion to each question.

Table 11

Middle-Class Identity and Country of Origin of Recent Immigrants

	Lakehead U. (n=112)			York U. (n=137)			Total (n=249)		
	Y	N	?	Y	N	?	Y	N	?
Immigrant from...									
England	40	21	51	45	8	75	85	33	126
Italy	17	48	47	14	32	80	31	80	127
China	17	48	47	21	35	71	38	83	130
Rwanda	5	66	41	3	59	65	8	125	106

Response key:
Y: Most probably middle class
N: Most probably not middle class
?: Don't know

There is a strong tendency to assign a middle-class identity to a recent immigrant from England. This is most pronounced in the case of the York University group where only eight participants respond that a recent immigrant from England is most probably not middle class. These responses stand in contrast to those offered in the case of immigrants from other countries. An overwhelming majority of participants believe that recent immigrants from Italy, China and Rwanda are most probably not middle class. This is most

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notable in the case of Rwanda as country of origin; in this case, it is exceptional for participants to assign a middle-class identity. Only eight participants believe that a recent immigrant from Rwanda is probably middle class whereas one hundred and twenty five participants believe that such immigrants are most probably not middle class. Overall, there seems to be a propensity for exclusion from the middle class of recent immigrants who are not from England, one of Canada's original colonizing nations, and this effect seems to be most pronounced in the case of immigrants from an African country.

The last questions of Part B sought to assess if the subjective assignment to the middle class was related to a visible minority identity or an Aboriginal identity. Participants were asked which proportion of the Canadian population, in their opinion, belongs to a visible minority and, in the following question, what percentage of the Canadian middle class belongs to a visible minority. The same two questions were repeated for an Aboriginal identity. Table 10 provides a summary of responses.

The only difference between each group of participants lies in the proportion of the Canadian population believed to belong to a visible minority or to be Aboriginal. These differences are to be expected considering the nature and geographical location of each group of respondents. Students at Lakehead University, in Northwestern Ontario, will be in contact with Aboriginal Canadians more frequently than students of York University, in Toronto. In turn, students at York will be in contact with a more diverse

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Table 12

Middle Class Identity and Visible Minority or Aboriginal Identity

	Lakehead U. (n=112)	York U. (n=137)	Total (n=249)
What percentage of the Canadian population do you think belongs to a visible minority?			
0 to 5%	0	1	1
5 to 15%	23	11	34
15 to 25%	42	34	76
25 to 35%	27	35	62
Over 35%	19	52	71
What percentage of the Canadian middle class do you think belongs to a visible minority?			
0 to 5%	8	6	14
5 to 15%	38	34	72
15 to 25%	41	47	88
25 to 35%	16	27	43
Over 35%	8	19	27
What percentage of the Canadian population do you think is Aboriginal?			
0 to 5%	10	32	42
5 to 15%	34	64	98
15 to 25%	37	24	61
25 to 35%	21	6	27
Over 35%	8	4	12
What percentage of the Canadian middle class do you think is Aboriginal?			
0 to 5%	42	82	128
5 to 15%	46	34	80
15 to 25%	17	14	31
25 to 35%	3	0	3
Over 35%	2	1	3

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population of Canadians, with a higher proportion from a visible minority. Consequently, each group overestimated the presence in the Canadian population of the most salient minority in their region.

For both groups of participants, there seems to be an effect of visible minority identity or Aboriginal identity on the propensity of respondents to assign a middle class identity. If ethnic identity had no effect, the middle class would contain a similar proportion of each ethnic identity as the whole Canadian population. Yet, the comparison of the proportion of the Canadian population which is assigned to an ethnic identity, here identified as visible minority or Aboriginal, is always greater than the proportion of that ethnic identity assigned to the middle class. It seems that, for these participants, to belong to a visible minority or to be Aboriginal reduces your chances of being part of the middle class.

Conclusion

This research project contained only a few questions that could indicate an interaction between the subjective assignment of a middle-class identity and a racial or ethnic identity. In each case, responses indicate that participants believe that being identified as part of a minority group may reduce your chances of belonging to the middle class.

These responses are too limited to indicate any form of prejudice or provide specific reasons for this higher rate of exclusion from the middle class. It may be that the respondents are

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well aware of the obstacles faced by some groups in Canada and, more specifically, the increased difficulty of higher social class attainment for visible minority and Aboriginal Canadians. However valid the reasons, it still remains that when these respondents or others defend the interests of the Canadian middle class, they are advancing the cause of a group which excludes, in their own view, a large proportion of Canadians from diverse minority origins.

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PART D

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Introduction

Participants for this research project indicate that they still use the concept of class in the construction of social identities. Furthermore, the criteria for inclusion into or exclusion from the middle-class suggest a middle-class image built around issues of relative security, work ethic, and moral values. Responses to the multiple choice questions indicate a potential relationship between class identity and other social identities such as gender, race or ethnicity. Such a relationship, however, is not found in the responses to the open-ended questions.

In this conclusion, I will: 1) consider how the images of class proposed by the participants, constructed by their choice of criteria for the assignment of a class identification, relate to theoretical concepts of social class; 2) compare the responses from this research to objective and subjective measures of the Canadian class structure; 3) address some related issues regarding the construction of a social class identity; and, 4) discuss the limitations of this thesis project and offer suggestions for future research.

Class Images and Class Theories

A Marxist concept of class involves the distinction between a class-in-itself, a group of individuals with a common class location, and a class-for-itself, with the added dimension of class consciousness and organized class action against another

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antagonistic class. In this paradigm, the process of subjective class identification can be seen as an essential element in the development of class consciousness. A large proportion of the participants in this project spontaneously identified themselves as middle-class. Furthermore, in expressing the criteria they believe to be useful in determining a middle-class identity, respondents showed a tendency to identify characteristics of social classes which can be related to potential common interests. Some participants also referred directly to issues of relative power in society; and, although they proposed that the middle class did have some power, this relative power was most often expressed in comparison to the decision making power of the upper class. Considering these responses, it can be said that there are some indications of a recognition, by the participants, of their class position and of the potential opposition of their class interests compared to those of the upper class.

Not many of the proposed criteria relate to Erik Olin Wright's class theory, except for those concerning access to higher education. Education relates directly to Wright's criterion of expertise, especially since it is often expressed in relation to career opportunities. The characterization of the upper class as "not having to work" may also be interpreted as a reference to Wright's concept of organizational assets or to the ownership of the means of production.

However, since Wright constructs his class scheme on the basis of occupations and most participants address occupations only in

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general terms, such as having a "good" or a "bad" job, there is little to lead us toward Wright's typology. Furthermore, the distinction between the gainfully employed middle class and the unemployed lower class points to an important limitation in Wright's analytical scheme, since the unemployed are not accounted for by Wright.

What Wright's theory does offer are two potential explanations of how university students come to identify themselves with a particular class. Using Wright's concept of a mediated class location, we can argue that these students identify with a particular class by the intermediary of a significant other. The frequent agreement of their class identification with that assigned to their family is a good indication of this process. It could also be, as proposed by Wright's concept of temporal class location, that students identify to the class location they expect to reach. Their attendance at the university can be seen as one of the steps along a career trajectory. This interpretation is supported by a comparison of the participants' subjective class identification with their responses to the question regarding the class location in which they see themselves in ten years. There was only a slight tendency to move upwards, with some middle-class identifiers seeing themselves as part of the upper class in ten years. In most cases, respondents chose a future class location that was identical to their present subjective class identification. This indicates that their present class identification may be based, in most cases, on their prospective future class location.

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Many of the criteria expressed by the participants relate to Weberian concepts of class and status. In terms of class, the proposed economic criteria often refer to issues of market location or life-chances: to be middle-class is equated with financial security, which in turn provides opportunities for formal or informal education. In terms of status, the criteria often concern issues of life-style and consumption patterns, popular recognition, and social intercourse: middle-class persons have access to some luxuries and engage in some leisure activities; they are popular and accepted by their peers; and, they live in middle-class neighbourhoods and have friends who share the same values.

The criteria referring to life-style, popular recognition, and social intercourse also remind us of Warner and Lunt's class typology. The participants, however, do not seem to hold such a gradational image of classes. Whereas Warner and Lunt found it necessary to divide each class into two sub-groups, ending with a ranking of six class groups, respondents in this research stated the differences between classes according to a three-group system of high or upper class, middle class and lower class. These divisions often resembled Weber's concepts of the positively privileged and the negatively privileged, with the middle class situated between the extremes.

Income categories are used often, but very seldom without offering other criteria. Not only do the responses in this research lend little support to the use of income categories to determine social classes, they actually illustrate the reductionist aspect of

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the procedure. It is insufficient to say that income categories do not say it all; rather, it must be remembered that income categories do not say enough to be useful. These participants remind us that social classes concern other issues beyond the purely financial criteria.

It may be argued that the procedures used in the analysis of the open-ended responses created some of the affinities between the responses and Bourdieu's class theory. I do believe, however, that the use of social and cultural capital, as an analytical category, was dictated by the responses and not the other way around. It is also remarkable that while the other analytical categories were devised to reflect other class theories, the responses in these categories can also be considered in light of Bourdieu's concept of class. This interpretation seems most appropriate when considering the references to life-style and to values or morality. Class locations are expressed in terms of social and cultural capital and become symbolized and experienced in terms of behaviours and beliefs. Frequent references to the issue of financial security remind one of Bourdieu's arguments concerning a middle-class fear of a downward trajectory. As proposed by Bourdieu, this fear is associated with a condescending view of an impoverished lower class. Other respondents refer to the desire for upward mobility. The longing for status, however, does not preclude the middle class from taking a higher moral ground, in which the industrious and frugal middle class is compared to the lazy and wasteful upper

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class. The middle class may "tend and pretend" (Bourdieu, 1984) but it still contends to be the better class, in many ways.

In sum, there is no clear and complete relationship between the images of class emerging from this research and a specific class theory. Elements of diverse theoretical schemes come into play in the participants' construction of the middle class and, if one class theory must be chosen over the others, the proposed criteria point more clearly to Bourdieu's theory. There are some references to class struggles, but not of anything organized or politicized. This issue is addressed in individualistic terms that emphasize aspirations for an upward trajectory and fears of a downward trajectory. The perspective more adequately fits Bourdieu's concept of daily class struggles than the Marxist concept of class conflict. Other issues, as noted above, are also addressed in terms that evoke Bourdieu's and Weber's class theories.

The emerging relationship between class images and class theories may be partially due to the formulation of the questions. Marxist class schemes are constructed on the basis of the underlying causes of class divisions and class locations; whereas Weberian class schemes are mostly devised according to class indicators, which in Marxist schemes are considered outcomes or consequences of a class position. Given that the open-ended question asked for the identification of criteria by which the participants would assign a class location, it would be expected that the responses evolve mostly around indicators and outcomes.

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The issue of causality of class locations is not a necessary part of this question and its potential answers. It is, therefore, difficult to assess how important the issue of class conflict is for these participants. What can be retained is that they do identify as members of a class and that they have salient images associated with social classes.

Class Images and Class Measures

The sample in this research is neither large enough or sufficiently diverse to provide the data for a valid comparison with objective measures of the Canadian class structure. The only comment to be made is that, if these objective measures of class are considered to be true, then the participants in this research do not have a very exact knowledge of the size of the Canadian middle class. Recent studies of the Canadian class structure, based on Erik Olin Wright's class typology (Black and Myles, 1986; Veltmeyer, 1986; Clement, 1990), propose that 36% to 39% of Canadians should be considered middle-class. Most participants believe that over 40% of Canadians are middle-class, while approximately 20% of the participants believe that over 60% of Canadians are middle-class (see Chapter 6, Table 5). These estimates are much closer to the proportion of Canadians choosing a middle-class subjective class identification (Goyder & Pineo, 1979; Pammett, 1987; Johnston & Baer, 1993).

Overestimating the size of the Canadian middle class can be explained by the class identity and social environment of the participants. These are university students and it can be assumed

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that most of them are from middle-class families and interact mostly with members of the middle class. They also overwhelmingly self-identify as part of the middle class (see Chapter 5, Tables 3 and 4). In fact, considering their origins and their rate of middle-class subjective identification, it can be argued that the percentage of Canadians they assign to this class is surprisingly low, which brings us back to the contradictory processes of inclusiveness and selectivity. This issue will be discussed in the following section.

Class Images and Other Social Identities

A recurring argument against the validity of the concept of social classes is that other factors have become more important in the construction of social identities. It is argued that images of class are often expressed in terms of gender, race or ethnicity, and that these other identities displace the concept of social class. In this research, there was some indication of an interaction between images of gender and of race or ethnicity in responses to multiple choice questions. There was, however, no indication of such an effect in the open-ended responses.

As presented in Chapter Six, responses to the multiple choice questions regarding the relationship between family structure, gender, and class identity indicate that the respondents exclude women from the middle class more frequently than they exclude men. Responses to questions concerning the interaction between the subjective assignment to the middle class and an immigrant's country of origin, and a visible minority or Aboriginal identity,

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indicate that being identified as part of a minority group reduces your chances of being assigned a subjective middle class identity (see Chapter 7). Only when these issues were specifically addressed did the respondents take these factors into consideration.

In the context of open-ended responses, there was no indication of an interaction between class and gender, race or ethnicity. Respondents were invited to propose any criteria that could be used in the process of inclusion into or exclusion from the middle class. These questions were placed at the beginning of the questionnaire to provoke responses that were as spontaneous as possible, given the limitations of the procedure. It may be that some of the proposed criteria refer indirectly to issues of gender, race or ethnicity. Respondents may have offered answers that hid the perceived identity of groups. For example, the use of life-in-the-suburbs as a middle-class criterion may have been accompanied by a belief that only certain ethnic groups have access to suburbia. If such underlying associations were frequent, however, it would be expected to surface at times and be expressed more explicitly by at least a minority of the participants. This was not the case and it can be reasonably concluded that for these participants images of social class are salient and that, when evoked, the concept of class is not confused with or displaced by other concepts such as gender, race or ethnicity. When specifically addressed, these other factors were considered but, in a first step, the participants were able to construct social identities in reference to class and social class alone.

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The most striking similarity between the social construction of class and the social construction of racial or ethnic identity is the reliance on the process of exclusion. Just as whiteness is constructed in regards to what it is not and in opposition to others (Frankenburg, 1993), the middle class is constructed, by the participants in this research, in opposition to the upper and lower classes. To be middle class is not to be living from paycheck to paycheck, not to be homeless or unemployed; the middle class is also not living lavishly and things are not given but earned. The criteria were expressed by many participants as "litmus tests" of inclusion in the middle class. As such, they identify barriers to inclusion but tell us little about what is the middle class. Rather, distinctions are made between the middle class and others.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This research project was designed to efficiently gather and to analyze information regarding the social construction of the middle class. Although a large amount of informative material was assembled relatively easily, some limitations were found in regards to the sample of participants and the method of data collection. These limitations, in turn, suggest issues and methodological modifications for future research.

The sample was large enough to provide an interesting quantity and variety of responses. The participants, however, were all currently involved in the pursuit of higher education. Although these participants were found to be an appropriate group for a first step in addressing the research questions, it would be

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interesting to pursue a similar project with other groups of participants. This could involve participants mostly identified as middle-class, or theoretically homogenous groups of various class locations could be established to generate comparative information.

The analysis was sometimes limited by the superficiality of the information assembled. It would be interesting to extend the open-ended section of the questionnaire. Initial general questions such as those used in this project could be followed by more thematic and precise questions. Another interesting way to address this issue would be to add interviews of selected participants as another step in the procedure. The depth of the information provided in this segment of the research could enlighten us regarding the meaning of the previous, more cryptic information.

Conclusion

The criteria by which participants assign a subjective middle-class identification amount to the exclusion of most Canadians. Yet, at the same time, participants perceive the middle class as including a majority of the population and, furthermore, to represent the most valuable segment of the population.

At the end of this process, we find a three-level class structure in which the middle class distinguishes itself from the upper or high class and from the lower class. The process, however, is significantly different in each case. Differences between the middle class and the lower class are made on the basis of achieved criteria, whereas ascribed criteria are used to separate the middle class from the upper class. The middle class earns its status above

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the lower class and is not part of the upper class only because of fate.

You are in the middle class, it is proposed, because you work hard for what you have, you cared for your education, you spend carefully, you live in the good neighbourhoods, and you associate with the right people. You are in the lower class because you are unemployed and depend on social assistance, you did not get an education, you don't use your money carefully, you may even have a criminal record; in sum, you are in the lower class because of your own choices and actions.

You are in the middle class because you live modestly, you enjoy a few luxuries for which you worked hard, you are mindful of your future, and you hold some power. You are in the high or upper class if you live lavishly, you indulge in luxuries without having to earn them, you don't have to worry about your future, and you use your power to exploit others.

The three classes are described as: the unskilled, uneducated and dependent lower class, similar to Marx's lumpenproletariat; the irresponsible inheritors of privileges of the upper class; and, in between, the modest, moral, and hard working middle class. The middle class deserves the reasonable life style it enjoys, whereas the upper class is undeserving of its wealth and the lower class is responsible for its misery. In numbers as well and in values, the middle class is socially constructed as an "exclusive majority."

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Appendix A

LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY

955 Oliver Road, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada P7B 5E1

Department of ...
Telephone (807) ...
Fax (807) ...

COVER LETTER and CONSENT FORM

The Social Construction of the Middle Class

Dear Participant,

We are conducting a study on the social construction of the middle class. The intent of this research project is (a) to identify the elements considered when choosing or assigning a social class identification and, (b) to analyze current perceptions of the social class concept.

We would like you to complete a brief questionnaire. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers to these questions. We are interested in your personal perceptions and opinions.

All information you provide will remain confidential. However, the findings of this project can be made available to you upon the completion of the project by contacting the Sociology Department at Lakehead University (Phone: 807-343-8477/Fax: 807-346-7831).

CONSENT

My signature in this form indicates that I agree to participate in the study on **The Social Construction of the Middle Class,** conducted by Graduate Students in the Sociology Department at Lakehead University under the supervision of Dr. Tom Dunk. My signature also indicates that I understand the following to be true:

A. I may withdraw from the project at any time.

B. There is no risk of harm to myself by participating.

C. All information and materials provided by me will be held in confidence. All data will remain in storage for at least seven (7) years.

D. I may receive a copy of the research results at my request.

____
Participant's name

________________________ ____________
Participant's signature Date

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The Social Construction of the Middle Class

PART A

1) There's quite a bit of talk these days about the middle class. Would you say you belong to the middle class?

YES _____ NO _____

2) Would you say your family (parents, yourself, etc.) belongs to the middle class?

YES _____ NO _____

3) Why would you say a person does belong to the middle class? What would you use as possible criteria for including yourself or others in the middle class? (Use the back of the page if necessary)

4) Why would you say a person does not belong to the middle class? What would you use as possible criteria for excluding yourself or others from the middle class? (Use the back of the page if necessary)

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PART B

1) If you had to choose from the following, to which social class do you feel <u>you</u> belong? <u>Choose only one</u>.

Lower class____ Capitalist class____

Middle class____ Upper class____ Working class____

2) If you had to choose from the following, to which social class do you feel <u>you</u> belong? You <u>may</u> choose more than one.

Lower class____ Capitalist class____

Middle class____ Upper class____ Working class____

3) If you had to choose from the following, to which social class do you feel your <u>family</u> belongs? <u>Choose only one</u>.

Lower class____ Capitalist class____

Middle class____ Upper class____ Working class___

4) If you had to choose from the following, to which social class do you feel your <u>family</u> belongs? You <u>may</u> choose more than one.

Lower class____ Capitalist class____

Middle class____ Upper class____ Working class___

5) If you had to choose from the following, to which social class do you feel <u>you will belong in ten years</u>? (Choose only one)

Lower class____ Capitalist class____

Middle class____ Upper class____ Working class___

6) If the following characteristic(s) describe(s) a person, is s/he <u>most probably or not</u> part of the middle class? Please answer for each characteristic listed below.

CHARACTERISTIC	Most probably middle class	Most probably not middle class	Don't know
Owns a house in the suburb	_____	_____	_____
Earns $25 000 per year	_____	_____	_____
Married woman with 2 children	_____	_____	_____
Does not attend church	_____	_____	_____
Earns $45 000 per year	_____	_____	_____
Recent immigrant from Italy	_____	_____	_____
Married man with 6 children	_____	_____	_____
Rents an apartment in the suburb	_____	_____	_____

CONTINUED ON THE OTHER SIDE

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Question 6 (continued)

CHARACTERISTIC	Most probably middle class	Most probably not middle class	Don't know
Earns $35 000 per year	___	___	___
Attends Muslim services	___	___	___
Single parent female	___	___	___
Recent immigrant from China	___	___	___
Earns $200 000 per year	___	___	___
Married woman with 6 children	___	___	___
Attends Protestant services	___	___	___
Single parent male	___	___	___
Earns $1 million per year	___	___	___
Recent immigrant from Rwanda	___	___	___
Owns a house in the city	___	___	___
Recent immigrant from England	___	___	___
Married man with 2 children	___	___	___
Earns $15 000 per year	___	___	___
Attends Catholic services	___	___	___
Rents an apartment in the city	___	___	___
Earns $60 000 per year	___	___	___

7) What percentage of the <u>Canadian population</u> do you think belongs to the middle class?

10 to 20%___ 20 to 30%___ 30 to 40%___ 40 to 50%___

50 to 60%___ 60 to 70%___ 70 to 80%___ over 80%___

8) What percentage of the <u>Canadian population</u> do you think belongs to a visible minority?

0 to 5%___ 5 to 15%___ 15 to 25%___ 25 to 35%___ Over 35% ___

9) What percentage of the <u>Canadian middle class</u> do you think belongs to a visible minority?

0 to 5%___ 5 to 15%___ 15 to 25%___ 25 to 35%___ Over 35%___

10) What percentage of the <u>Canadian population</u> do you think is Aboriginal?

0 to 5%___ 5 to 15%___ 15 to 25%___ 25 to 35%___ Over 35%___

11) What percentage of the <u>Canadian middle class</u> do you think is Aboriginal?

0 to 5%___ 5 to 15%___ 15 to 25%___ 25 to 35%___ Over 35%___

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PART C
Please answer the following questions in a way that best describes yourself.

1) Gender: Male____ Female____

2) Age group: 20 and under____ 21 to 23____

24 to 29____ 30 or more____

3) Years of post-secondary education (College or University):

1st year____ 2nd year____ 3rd year____ 4th year or more____

4) Current Major at University (use Undeclared, if this is the case): ____________________

5) Do you think of yourself as belonging to a racial group?

YES____ NO____

If yes, which racial group?____________________

6) Do you think of yourself as belonging to an ethnic group?

YES____ NO____

If yes, which ethnic group?____________________

7) The annual income of your family is:

Less than 10,000$____ From 10,000 to 20,000$____

From 20,000 to 30,000$____ From 30,000 to 50,000$____

From 50,000 to 100,000$____ More than 100,000$____

8) Your family lives in the following:

Apartment in a rural community___ Apartment in the city___

Apartment in the suburb___ Rented house in a rural community___

Rented house in the city___ Rented house in the suburb___

Own house in a rural community___ Own house in the city___

Own house in the suburb___ Other (specify)____________________

9) What is the highest level of educational attainment of any one of your parents?

Grade 9 or less___ Some High School___ Completed High School___

Some College/University___ Completed College___

Completed University___ Completed University Graduate Studies___

10) If you had to choose from the following, to which racial group(s) do you feel you belong? You may choose more than one.

White____ Black____ Oriental____ Other (specify)____________

11) If you had to choose from the following, to which ethnic group(s) do you feel you belong? You may choose more than one.

Canadian____ British____ French____ Asian (specify)____________

Aboriginal (specify)____________ European (specify)____________

African (specify)____________ Other (specify)____________

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Appendix B

Development of the Initial Questionnaire

The open-ended questions, considered to be fundamental to the research questions, were placed at the start of the questionnaire (Part A), avoiding any effect of previous preamble or questions. They were only preceded by questions about self-identification to the middle class, without any reference to other terminology or factors that could be associated with social class. Ample space was provided and participants were invited to use the back side of the page if necessary. Two questions were retained: the first asked for criteria of inclusion into the middle class; the second asked for criteria of exclusion from the middle class. The processes of inclusion and exclusion may be considered closely related but the repetitiveness of the question was aimed at soliciting more extensive answers by appealing to different ways of retaining classification criteria.

The following sections of the questionnaire used close-ended multiple choice questions. Part B considered the issue of subjective class identification of participants and the relationship between middle-class identification or assignment and personal characteristics. Part C aimed at gathering descriptive information about the participants, including racial or ethnic self-identification.

The first questions of Part B were "traditional" multiple choice questions about the subjective class identification of participants and their family, as well as a question regarding

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beliefs about their future class identification. In developing these close-ended questions, it was decided to avoid using class fractions (e.g. upper middle class, lower middle class) but to include answers related to relational as well as to gradational class typologies. This led to the inclusion of five choices, deliberately placed without any reference to a logical progression (e. upper to lower, or the reverse): lower class, capitalist class, middle class, upper class, and working class. The next questions considered the relationship between personal characteristics and the middle class. The last section asked about the perceived class distribution of the Canadian population, visible minorities and Native Aboriginals.

In Part C, descriptive information about participants was solicited: gender, age, years of post-secondary education, major at university, family income, family housing, and parents' educational attainment. This last question was structured to capture the highest level of education of any one of the parents. The beginning of the section included "yes/no" questions regarding racial and ethnic identification with an open-ended part to each question, if answered "yes." This was followed, at the end of the section, with "forced response" questions of racial and ethnic identification. Current census categories were used as a guide in developing the answers provided in these last questions. Some categories were "merged" but an opportunity to specify a sub-group identification was provided.

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Administration Procedures

The administration procedures were developed to respect ethic guidelines and to avoid, as much as possible, the effect of subsequent questions on previous answers. Participants were informed, verbally and by the Cover Letter and Consent Form (Appendix A), that: the study is aimed at assessing their definition of the middle class (race and ethnicity were not mentioned as specific concerns); confidentiality is insured through a questionnaire numbering system, and; the researcher will only be aware of the University to which a participant's responses belong. They were also informed of their right to desist at any time and to access research results upon completion of the study.

After collecting the consent forms, participants were informed that: this is a three-part questionnaire and that each form will be distributed and collected separately; they should answer every question and there are no "right" or "wrong" answers since the only important answer is their own perception or opinion, and; this is not a test, but "sharing" of information should be avoided since the answers should be individual and personal.

After the distribution of Part A, participants were given the following instructions: they can think about their answer for a while before starting; they can take all the time they need to answer questions 3 and 4 (the open-ended questions), and; when completed, to put their pencil or pen down and wait for the next section. Before collecting Part A and distributing Part B, participants were instructed to remember the number in the right

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hand corner of their questionnaire and to write down the same number in the top right hand corner of Part B. They were also reminded to answer every question, and again asked, when completed, to put down their pencil or pen and wait for the next section. These instructions were repeated before collecting Part B and distributing Part C. When completed and while collecting Part C, participants were thanked for their cooperation.

Modifications and Final Questionnaire

The initial version of the questionnaire was tested on a group of eighty undergraduate students at Lakehead University. The administration procedures were found to be clear and efficient. Considering some of the questions raised by participants during the trial and the responses provided in the questionnaires, a few modifications were made to the initial version.

In Part A, a precision was added after the first reference to the concept of "family." A parenthesis was added with the definition "parents, yourself, etc." in view of eliminating the potential confusion between the participants' actual family and the family in which they were raised. This was especially confusing in the case of mature students already raising their own children. In Part B, substantial eliminations were made in the section concerning personal characteristics. Questions were removed if they were deemed uninformative or open to vague and contradictory interpretation. This also allowed for a shorter, less intimidating questionnaire. In Part C, the only modification was the addition of the answer "Other (specify)" for housing, in case the close-ended

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choices were insufficient. The final format of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

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