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**Divergent Views on Class Analysis:
Focusing on Methodological Issues**

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1. Introduction

Is class still one of the most important characteristics of social stratification in the modern capitalist societies? With the growing concern about the usefulness of the concept of class in the analysis of social phenomena, Wright's recent book, *Class Counts: Comparative Studies in Class Analysis*, has been regarded as one of the most integrated researches over the last decade among critical social scientists. Challenging a prevalent stereotype that Marxists are not good at empirical research, he has become one of the leading pioneers in class analysis.

However, most of criticism for his book has centered more on theoretical issues coupled with his orientation to Marxism, which prevents us from turning our attention to another important thing, research strategy also coupled with methodological issues. I do not mean to deny the importance of theory in social research because theory guides researchers at all of steps of social research process including problem definition.

Many sociologists begin with a bag of technical tricks and then ask: "What questions can I address with these methods?" Many dissertations are motivated not by passionate engagement with the substantive theoretical issues in some sub-fields of sociology, but by a desire to apply some elegant technique. Students are forced to invest a lot of time and energy into learning these techniques and thus have an interest in using them in their research. Much

quantitative research is thus methods-driven rather than theory-driven. (Wright et. al. 1989: 71-2)

For this reason, constructive criticism should rather focus on how his theoretical perspectives on class structure, class consciousness, and class struggle are integrated in his research strategy.

According to Jennifer(2002), the best possible research strategy could be made only when we are able to answer to the following four questions¹: 1) What is the nature of the phenomena, or entities, or social 'reality', that I wish to investigate in terms of ontological perspective? 2) What might represent knowledge or evidence of the entities or social 'reality' that I wish to investigate in terms of epistemological position? 3) What is the intellectual puzzle What do I wish to explain or explore? What types of puzzle is it? What are the research questions? 4) What is the purpose of the research? What am I doing it for? Especially regarding research goals, following Ragin's classification(1994), there are different research purposes as follows: 1) identifying general patterns and relationships, 2) testing and refining theories, 3) making predictions, 4) interpreting culturally or historically significant phenomena, 5) exploring diversity, 6) giving voice, and 7) advancing new theories.

In this paper, I am going to pay more attention to both Wright's theoretical concept of class consciousness and his quantitative methodology, especially the problem of measurement because the answer to why he came to regard survey methods as more appropriate than qualitative methods could be found in his understanding of class consciousness, in other words, his position on what might represent evidences of class consciousness that he want to investigate in terms of epistemology. My next question is what could be alternative qualitative methods, if any. What dimension of class

¹ Originally, there are five, but I merged two questions into one.

consciousness is more suitable to qualitative methods in the epistemological sense? In other words, what kinds of research questions about class consciousness could be raised with qualitative methods? I am going to try to tackle this problem, especially with the help of Fantasia's book, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers* and his recent article, "From Class Consciousness to Culture, Action, and Social Organization". In the conclusion part, I am going to compare two sociologists shortly again in terms of their theoretical position, and then discuss Bourdieu's class analysis as one of the promising alternative strategy.

2. The Overview of Wright's Class Analysis and the Position of Class Consciousness in his Analytical Framework

Wright suggests three possible bases as what classes have in common that make them classes (Wright 1989: 278-301). The first thing is a set of material interests opposed to those of capitalists by virtue of the relation of exploitation between them. The second is a set of common lived experiences bound up with selling labor power, being dominated within the labor process and being excluded from control over the social surplus. The last one is a set of collective capacities for struggle rooted in the interdependencies among workers within the labor process and the centrality of workers to the overall process of social production.

However, he eventually discards the last two bases and then moves on to positioning individuals in class structure based on material interests. Why? His major concern is that there are always chances that material interests, lived experiences and collective capacity do not coincide at the concrete level of analysis because people occupying a common location within the social relations of production might have different lived experiences and collective capacities.

Interestingly, Wright, in the similar way as Resnick and Wolff did², criticizes other approaches to class analysis although he does not think reductionism problematic for the same reason they have. For example, Wright criticizes that some theorists, to solve this problem, simply abandon the concept of an objectively given class structure. For example, “He[Thompson] has argued that the structural existence of classes is largely irrelevant outside the lived experiences of actors. While he does not go so far as to reject the concept of class structure altogether, he certainly marginalizes it within his elaboration of class.” (Wright 1985: 28) Additionally, other theorists suggest multi-dimensional structures such as class-interest structure, class-experience structure, and class-capacity structure, but, as he sees it, this solution causes more confusion rather than clarification.

For these reasons, he finally argues that there seems to be no comparable analytical strategy for producing a concrete concept of class structure built around lived experiences and collective capacities, although to say that concrete concepts of class structure can most systematically be built around exploitation and material interests does not in any way prejudge the ‘explanatory’ importance of material interests vis-à-vis lived experiences or collective capacity.

In his class analysis, “exploitation defines a set of mechanisms which help to explain both the distribution of economic welfare and the distribution of economic power... Within Marxism, therefore, to say that what members of a class hold in common is a common set of material interests is to argue that they have common

² Resnick and Wolff, as another version of subtle reductionism, gives the example of the distinction between class in itself and class for itself. “The latter is defined as the former plus an element of self-consciousness.” (Resnick and Wolff. 1986a: 105) However, they argued that this version is not that far from reductionism in the sense that it has the tendency to regard consciousness as the key determinant of class in the second and fuller sense. According to them, Thompson is guilty of this sort of reductionism. “His emphasis shifts rather to the consciousness component of his complex notion of class... The shift of emphasis in Thompson’s composite view of class becomes a reductionism.” (Ibid: 111) What is interesting is that, as they see it, earlier Wright’s book, *Class Crisis and the State*(1979), also shares this notion (Ibid: footnote 7).

interests with respect to the process of exploitation.” (Wright 1989: 284) What makes exploitation possible in capitalist societies, then? In other words, what leads the unequal distribution of economic welfare and power in capitalist societies?

His concept of assets was developed to clarify that different modes of production has different forms of exploitation such as labor power assets(feudal exploitation), capital assets(capitalist exploitation), organization assets(statist exploitation), and skill or credential assets(socialist exploitation) (Ibid: 306). Wright introduces the last three kinds of assets in the analytical framework for empirical studies of capitalist societies: 1) assets of the means of production (operationally defined as, e.g. capital ownership) 2) organization assets (operationally defined as, e.g. decision-making participation, supervision, and formal hierarchy position) 3) skill or credential assets (operationally defined as, e.g. occupation, educational credentials, and job autonomy). According to him, these three kinds of assets that are derived from the production relations of capitalist societies determine individual’s location in the class structure (Wright 1985, 1997).

Finally, let us take a close look at his conceptual definition of class consciousness and its measurement. What is class consciousness? According to him, it could be understood as a particular aspect of the concrete subjectivity of human individuals. He suggests three domains of this subjectivity: perception of alternatives, theories of consequences, and preferences. In this regard, class consciousness could be measured by these variables: consciousness on the perceptual level, consciousness on the theoretical level, and consciousness on the normative level. To measure class consciousness, he uses the scaling technique by making a set of matrix questions composed of eight indicators.³(Wright 1985, 1997)

³ Here are some examples of questions. “Corporations benefit owners at the expense of workers and consumers”, “During a strike, management should be prohibited by law from hiring workers to take the place of strikers”, “Striking workers are generally justified in physically preventing strike-breakers from entering the place of work”, and so forth.

Taken together, Wright's thesis could be summarized as follows: People could be located as discretely distinguishable groups in the class structure based on three kinds of assets. People have their objective interests in exploitation, and their own consciousnesses come from these common material interests. And, subjectivity mediates the ways in which the objective conditions of class locations are translated into the rational choice of class actions.

3. What is Problematic with his approach?

Let us think about strong points of his approach for the moment. Above all, it seems like unfair to classify Wright's approach as another version that still revolves around the dichotomy between property and power. Rather, he tries to integrate both of them, setting exploitation at the heart of class analysis. Most of big debates on a new middle class could be understood, arguably, in the historical context of the advent and development of modern joint stock companies and bureaucratic organizations. This is to say, those who with professional knowledge are able to command others about the overall work process in the hierarchy have a real power even if they are wage-laborers (e.g. supervisors) In this respect, one of his scholarly concerns is to attack Weberian approach based on the tradition of what is called managerialism. Resnick and Wolff contend that prevalent theories, without finding another way of thinking classes, that is, class-as-surplus-labor theory they advocate, have oscillated between property-based approach and power-based approach. However, first, as I addressed before, three types of assets are introduced in his approach where the means of production becomes just one of them. Secondly, although how to handle the problem of political struggles over appropriation and distribution of surplus labor in terms of corporate control is not well

developed in his analysis, his multidimensional exploitation-based approach, similar to Resnick and Wolff, but through classification rather than processes, make attempts to put exploitation in the entry point of class analysis in the sense that exploitation defines a set of mechanisms which help to explain both the distribution of economic welfare and the distribution of economic power.

When it comes to how to incorporate power dimension into theoretical underpinnings for class analysis, sometimes by contrast, but some other times similarly to Wright, although Resnick and Wolff advocate over and over again the importance of non-reductionism following Althusser, they seem to assume that there are “reified” distinctive spheres or processes such as economic, political, cultural one first, and then all of these processes are intertwined with each other in terms of overdeterminism. This line of thought makes their approach something similar to what is called contract-centered theory of corporations that regards them as a nexus for a set of contracting relationship among individuals such as shareholders, managers, financiers, and so on. In this sense, I cannot agree with their criticism of Bowles and Gintis’s theory of corporations. The authors said, “A critique of economic determinism propels its proponents to a political (power and domination relations) determinism instead. For Bowles and Gintis, class is certainly a composition relation of production involving power, ideology, and economics in the narrow sense of surplus labor appropriation. However, they proceed to reduce the extraction of surplus labor itself to an effect of power... For them, power is the essence of class, its determining component.” (1986a: 111) However, the authors instead did not pay any attention to political struggles in corporations over who controls labor process and how. To put this another way, corporations are not kind of contested arena for the authors, which finally make their arguments about the appropriation and distribution of surplus labor, summarized by $SV=SC_I+SC_O+SC_C+SC_R$ (Resnick and Wolff. 1987: 180), something that is not that

different from contract theory proposed by those who follow Jensen and Meckling or Alchian and Demsetz. Relatedly, as I addressed below, this quantifiable concept of exploitation leads us to overlook that the appropriation and distribution of surplus labor is always intertwined with another exploitation that cannot be reduced to something measurable.

What is still problematic with him, then? Wright does not want the concept of class to degenerate into one economic determinant of social stratification, contrasting repeatedly discrete demarcation of class structure with continuous demarcation in social stratification structure. However, the very fact seems to prevent him from thinking about the interaction between class processes and non-class processes in Resnick and Wolff's term. Wright also realizes this problem is one of the four drawbacks in his approach, calling this in a little bit different way as the non-asset bases of exploitation. This reductionism on the one hand and reification of class relations on the other hand are closely related to his preoccupation with production relations and another problematic conceptualization of class consciousness. One of the good examples might be that he mentions lived experiences, but only when they are connected to the relation of exploitation. (e.g. alienation from the decision making process in workplaces) At first glance, it feels like that he is also interested in cultural or symbolic aspects of class relations such as languages, identities, or ideologies, but they are silenced in his research because he does not regard these things as something intertwined with social relations 'of' production. Exceptionally, when saying about Buroway, he seems to realize the importance of lived experiences in the relations 'in' production as the pivotal category for class analysis (Wright 1989: 300). However, this cannot change the conclusion that he is still preoccupied with production relations, either 'of' or 'in', and they are treated separately from internal politics over the appropriation of surplus labor that is strongly associated with political-cultural domination, i.e., quantifiable concept of

exploitation.

Keeping in mind what I pointed out thus far, let us turn the eyes more to disadvantages of research methods he insists on employing.

In the present study, I will not attempt to elaborate a nuanced typology of forms of class consciousness... but my general feeling is that the limitations of survey research methodology make it preferable to adopt relatively simple and straightforward variables. The measures of class consciousness which we will use, therefore, are designed to tap in a general way the extent to which individuals have attitudes that are consistent with working-class or capitalist-class interests. (Wright 1997: 387)

In terms of ontology and epistemology, Wright takes the position that individual holds attitudes that are determined by class location and those attitudes are significant components of the reality. His research puzzle is to map class formation and class alliance by using the distance between classes, and he assumes that the difference in attitudes is indicative of that distance. Lastly, his research purpose is to identify general patterns and relationships, and furthermore to test and refine theories.

Fantasia, based on Marshall's paper, provides us with a good summarization of several problems with survey methods when measuring class consciousness (Fantasia. 1995: 270-1). First, "Survey research acquires an individualist bias by treating the responses of isolated individuals as the primary data source. Though there is an assumption that individual attitudes can be summed to equal one or another forms of collective consciousness, the intersubjective nature of meaning-construction in a class (or indeed any group) consciousness cannot easily be apprehended."

Once it is willingly acknowledged that class consciousness is regarded as

collective consciousness in Durkheim's term⁴, the problem how we can measure class consciousness still remains, though this question is driven by empirical positivism, because even the aggregation of individual consciousness is not the same with collective consciousness as a whole. "How does one study the properties of a whole class? If working-class capacity is based on collectivity, how does one study that? Where and how does one see collectivity? How does collectivity manifest itself? What are the empirical referents for collectivity?" (Lembcke 1991: 88). This is also one of thorny problems to Wright. Including many scholars who criticize that Wright regards individual attitude as class consciousness, he does not seem to make the breakthrough in this problem. This is why there is no term at the macro level equivalent to class consciousness at the micro level (Wright 1997: 402), whereas class struggle and class structure at the macro level respectively correspond to class practices and class location at the micro level. He puts class formation at the macro level, that is, "the formation of collectively organized social forces within class structures in pursuit of class interests," instead of collective consciousness.

Second, "Survey responses tend to be recorded as fixed, static entities, minimizing any denotation of process, change, maturation, or ambivalence in consciousness. Contradictory or seemingly opposed meanings, oscillations, and shifts in interpretation,

⁴ I am talking about 'collective effervescence' in his seminal work, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. According to Durkheim, collective effervescence as the outburst of collective emotion and passion leads to new ideas and new formula through contagious symbolic mobilization. In this sense, he was one of the first sociologists that tried to develop collective action theory that is totally different from the prevalent ones (e.g. irrational crowds) at that time. "There are periods in history when, under the influence of some great collective shock, social interactions have become much more frequent and active... That general effervescence results [in something] that is characteristic of revolutionary or creative epochs. Now this greater activity results in a general stimulation of individual forces. Men see more and differently now than in normal times." (Durkheim 1947: 210-1)

which are often the consequence of intersubjective processes, are ignored.”

In historical and ethnographic accounts, discontinuities and paradoxes in consciousness emerge frequently, offering the most difficult, as well as the most potentially rewarding, problems for solution. The sociological survey, in contrast, largely precludes one from discovering contradictory lines of thought, as well as from exploring the methods by which individuals synthesize contradictions... Survey research generally overlooks paradoxes in consciousness by recording responses as fixed and static. (Fantasia 1988: 5)

As Carchedi addresses rightly, Wright chose the method which requires supposedly a static concept of both structure and consciousness and a deterministic notion of the relationship between them. (Carchedi 1989: 107) He continues to criticize, “It will be immediately evident that this is an inherently static definition of consciousness, one which does not see consciousness in its historical conjuncture. The question should not be whether, according to a certain scale, a type of consciousness is always pro-capitalist or pro-worker, irrespective of the concrete situation.” (Ibid: 115)

Third, “The exclusive focus on ideation and attitude significantly limits what may be considered an expression of consciousness. In standard survey research, class consciousness tends to be viewed as a fact that exists (or not) in the minds of subjects.” What is another form that represents class consciousness, then?

The point is that analyses of class consciousness should be based on actions, organizational capabilities, institutional arrangements, and the values that arise within them, rather than on attitudes abstracted from the context of social action... As such, class consciousness essentially represents the cultural expression of the lived experience of class, an experience shaped by the process of interaction of these collectivities in opposition to one another... When conceived of as cultural expression, class consciousness seems less a matter of

disembodied mental attitude than a broader set of practices and repertoires available for empirical investigation. (Fantasia 1988: 11, 14)

Fourth and relatedly, “In the social survey, attitudes and ideation are artificially decontextualized because they are abstracted from the class practices and social relations that give them meaning.” To put it another way, there is no room for human agencies in Wright’s analysis because his logic, to say roughly, is that individual position determines individual attitudes prior to a particular of interaction in the concrete situation. In this regard, the questions given to respondents are so decontextualized that they could not measure the dynamics of class consciousness in terms of validity.⁵

It[Survey research] also precludes a collective dynamic in class consciousness by supposing that collective consciousness can be gleaned from the sum of separate individual attitudes. A sum of the opinions of individual respondents recorded at a given moment in time may appear wholly different from the “consciousness” expressed by those same “respondents” in the midst of collective action and interaction. (Fantasia 1988: 5-6)

What does Wright think of this sort of criticism? As we can guess from his mention of Marshall’s paper in the second footnote of the chapter 14, he willingly admits that survey methods could be very problematic in some sense.

Class consciousness is notoriously hard to measure... Choosing responses on a survey is a different practice from choosing how to relate to a shopfloor conflict, and the forms of subjectivity which come into play can be quite different... These problems are serious ones, and potentially undermine the value of

⁵ Last but not least, Fantasia picks up another interesting problem in relation to survey methods: the pitfalls of (simple) random sampling. For this, see Fantasia(1995: 274-5).

questionnaire studies of class consciousness. My assumption, however, is that there is at least some stability in the cognitive processes of people across the artificial setting of an interview and the real life setting of class struggle, and that in spite of the possible distortions of structured interviews, social surveys can potentially measure these stable elements. While the ability of a survey may be very limited in predicting for any given individual the way they would behave in a “real life setting,” surveys may be able to provide a broad image of how class structure is linked to likely class behaviors. (Ibid: 408)⁶

Nonetheless, this by itself could not change the fact that there are still some critical problems with his research strategy coupled with his theoretical perspectives. I would like to add a couple of things that have not been mentioned. First of all, as said before, Wright wishes to examine whether or not there is the correspondence between individual location in the class structure and individual attitudes to several questions. What are the assumptions about this? Not surprisingly, it is assumed that all of people already have opinions or attitudes to questions. However, what if they have never thought about those questions? For instance, some questions about the perception of alternatives such as “If given the chance, non-management employees at the place where you work could run things effectively without bosses” could be problematic since most of workers do not have experiences of worker-owned and controlled companies and thereby they must have never thought about this problem carefully. For another example, even though they have thought about them before, what if they have never thought about them in that way sociologists think or expect? The good example would be “One of the main reasons for poverty is that the economy is based on private property and profits.” Some people might believe that there are some other important

⁶ He continues to say that fixed-option questions are unavoidable mostly because the problems with coding open-ended questionnaire responses are greatly compounded in cross-national comparative research. I do not think that what he is trying to tell is a lame excuse. It would be more difficult for qualitative methods to interpret and compare the data generated in different cultural settings and contexts.

reasons for poverty, and other people might regard this question as something related to morality or subculture (e.g. culture of poverty over generation) rather than economics or politics. In this case, these people could or should be grouped into those who have pro-capitalist consciousness or conservatives? Just thinking that this leads to measurement errors would be too naïve, not to mention that one of the important assumptions in multiple regression analysis Wright used very often is that there are no measurement errors. Although I do not mean to contend that survey methods are useless in any case, that kind of assumption behind survey methods cannot be reduced to whether the questions given to respondents are easy to understand or not.

Another worthwhile addressing is that to what extent his perspective on the rationale for social actions can explain class practices and class struggles. “In one way or another, conscious choice involves processing information about the world. ‘Facts,’ however, are always filtered through categories and beliefs about ‘what exists.’... ‘Class consciousness,’ in these terms, involves the ways in which the perceptions of the facts of a situation have a class content and are thus consequential for class actions.” (Wright 1997: 385) Although he considers perception as one of three dimensions of subjectivity, few would deny that his perspective on action is based on rational choice theory. Similar to Fantasia, though he does not mention fully this kind of problem, Rose and Marshall find out the lack of the validity when measuring class consciousness in survey methods again. “So far as class consciousness is concerned, the available data from the survey is attitudinal, and therefore there are the usual caveats about the relationship between such data and class consciousness.” (Rose and Marshall 1989: 256-7) Wright said that subjectivity mediates the ways in which the objective conditions of class locations are translated into the active choices of class actions, but they argue that there still remains the question as to whether attitude items will yield valid information about this process that ends up with actions. In this sense, this problem is something more than the problem of validity because this is intimately connected to his theoretical perspective on class practices and class struggles.

He once said in his earlier work, “This is not the place to discuss the knotty philosophical problems with the concept of ‘objective’ interests... Actors may make choices under false information, with distorted perceptions of alternative possibilities and with incorrect theories of the effects of their choices.”(Wright 1985: 36, 248) In the recent work, he seems to qualify his narrow concept of class consciousness based on rational action theory, however.

This conceptualization of consciousness is closely bound up with the problem of will and intentionality... While the problem of consciousness is not reducible to the problem of intentionality, from the viewpoint of social theory one of the most important ways in which consciousness figures in social explanations is via the way it is implicated in the intentions and resulting choices of actions by actors. (Wright 1997: 383)

In the usage of the term I am proposing, this would be a form of class consciousness in which individuals have a relatively “true” and “consistent” understanding of their class interests. I am thus using the term class consciousness in a more general way to designate all forms of class-pertinent consciousness regardless of its faithfulness to real or objective interests... There will be no implication that such consciousness can always be evaluated as “true” or “false”. (Ibid: 385)

From his emphasis on perception and lived experiences in his recent work(1997) that are hard to find in his earlier works, it seems like that he has grown out of, albeit not satisfactorily, the dichotomy such as true consciousness as opposed to false consciousness and objectivity as opposed to subjectivity. However, it is still obvious that he believes that class practices and struggles come from people’s perception of their material interests and their rational choices. This theoretical assumption is again deeply rooted in quantifiable concept of exploitation.

4. Qualitative Approaches to Class Consciousness

As Fantasia addresses, Thompson provides a significant critique of both stratification research and Marxist determinism, by conceptualizing and demonstrating class as an active and relational historical process and class consciousness as the cultural expression of the class experience (Fantasia 1995: 276). This is why he coins a new term “cultures of solidarity” in his book instead of class consciousness to better understand a wider range of cultural practices generated in practical actions and class struggles.

Class is a social and cultural formation (often finding institutional expression) which cannot be defined abstractly, or in isolation, but only in terms of relationship with other classes; and, ultimately, the definition can only be made in the medium of time – that is, action and reaction, change and conflict. When we speak of a class, we are thinking of a very loosely-defined body of people who share the same congeries of interests, social experiences, traditions, and value-system, who have a disposition to behave as a class, to define themselves in their actions and in their consciousness in relation to other groups of people in class ways. (Thompson, 1966: 357)

As Thompson sees it, the working classes and their class dispositions do not emerge automatically from its structural position in the production sphere. In other words, how people perceive their interests including material interests and interpret their worlds, community as well as workplace, is affected by cultural and institutional arrangements. Especially, just as culture is kind of ‘cognitive schema’ in cultural studies affected by the “linguistic turn”, so the culture of working classes is closely related to whether there are their languages that help working people interpret their lived experiences. In this sense, the success of working class formation with class consciousness in terms of class

for itself, depends on whether workers are able to get their own frames, develop their own collective identity, and transform themselves into an entity with definite dispositions.

One would not want to conclude from this that such collective “explosions of consciousness” represented the “true” class consciousness of the workers and that the survey results were therefore incorrect... Such approaches may capture some important attitudinal trends, but crucial dynamics of collective interaction are lost, and thus what is being measured may not represent the collective class consciousness that studies purport to show... I would argue, however, that the limitations and problems are not simply methodological but derive primarily from theoretical assumptions on which the method is based. It is not that the survey is never a useful technique; rather, what it tends to reveal about class consciousness is so narrow that the most important and interesting dimensions of class relations and experience are often missed. (Fantasia 1988: 7-8)

Fantasia’s criticism of Wright, above all, is that there should be human agency in class analysis. He argues that there are expressions of worker solidarity in collective action that have been largely ignored in social surveys because they do not meet the standard or classical model of what class consciousness ought to look like. Therefore, the focus of analysis should be changed from attitudes to (inter)actions, and from material interests alone to lived experiences coupled with them. Relatedly, the unit of analysis also should be collectivities rather than individuals⁷. This is derived from his position that interactions and cultural expression of lived experiences are significant components of the social world and the better indicators of class consciousness. Lastly, his research goal is closer to interpreting historically and culturally significant phenomena and exploring diversity than to testing theories or identifying general patterns and

⁷ Carchedi(1989: 106) also criticizes his methodological individualism. Obviously, the basic unit of Wright’s analysis is individuals, not classes.

relationships.

Not surprisingly, Fantasia's approach is hard to be incompatible with survey methods. Although Carchedi is a Marxist 'economist' and thereby he does not seem to have enough knowledge about qualitative methods in sociology discipline, it is on the right track for him to point out the conditions of applicability of certain techniques of social research. As he sees it, the interview method Wright used, though I have to say that Wright did not use the interview as a main method in his research, is not relevant to measure class consciousness. He contends that in a collective situation (e.g. workers' assembly), an individual worker becomes part of a process of collective production of knowledge in which his or her individual knowledge both is enriched by the collective one through discussion with other members and contributes to that collective knowledge. (Carchedi 1989: 121-2) Although he does not make a distinction between individual interview and focus group interview, it is sufficient to remember here that focus group interview would be more appropriate to generate the data about class consciousness in his view.

Once we focused on a variety of actions and interactions that is indicative of class consciousness, especially cultures of solidarity in Fantasia's term, then focus group interview, however, would not be appropriate any longer.

Generally speaking, I think it is important to consider two crucial elements inherent in studying collective action "on the ground." First, because it often takes place in a conflictual context, the researcher is directly confronted with the question of partisanship... The second important element in studying such actions is that they may be relatively ephemeral, limiting the collection of data (Fantasia 1988: 247-8)

In this sense, the best possible research strategy would be participant observation or

ethnography although some problems arise in terms of practical difficulties. It is with this method that he reveals the substantial discrepancy in the findings between survey methods and his qualitative approaches.

5. Conclusion: What could be an Alternative Approach?

According to Ragin(1994), one of the main criteria for the selection of the best possible research method is the number of cases and the number of features of cases, besides ontological and epistemological position, or research goals. He contends that there is a trade-off between these two. For instances, if few cases and many features, then it might be called qualitative methods where data are “enhanced”, and if many cases and few features, then quantitative ones where data are “condensed”. The comparative study of diversity across a moderate range of cases strikes a balance between in-depth knowledge of cases and broad knowledge of relations among variables. Basically, quantitative researchers sacrifice in-depth knowledge of each individual case in order to achieve an understanding of broad patterns of covariation across many cases. The quantitative approach prizes not only generality, but also parsimony. A parsimonious image that links attributes across many cases assumes that all cases are more or less the same in how they came to be the way they are.

Needless to say, both approaches, as Wright and Fantasia acknowledge, have its own strengths and weaknesses in the methodological sense. Therefore, it is theoretical cores that should be located again at the heart of debates. From this vantage point, Wright, above all, cannot incorporate the problem of ideology into his exploitation-based approach successfully, aside from some serious drawbacks in his research method, as Resnick and Wolff similarly fail to spell out how ideology as non-class processes operates in class processes. In other words, his preoccupation with production relations

has made it difficult for him to look at the sphere of reproduction, and his emphasis on the quantifiable concept of exploitation leads to define exploitation in the narrower sense, making him understate the political-cultural dimension of class processes through the lens of quantifiable concept of exploitation or non-asset based exploitation. In this way, ideological or political process, which is also as closely intertwined with class formation and class struggles as economic process, have been silenced in his study. By contrast, the problem of conflicts over appropriation and distribution of surplus labor is not crucial for Fantasia any more. In this regard, Resnick and Wolff's criticism of Thompson does hold for Fantasia's approach. They argued that Thompson's perspective is not that far from reductionism in the sense that he has the tendency to regard consciousness as the key determinant of class (1986a: 111). In the similar way, Fantasia does not care about the fact that exploitation is the center of class structure or class processes even though he considers material interests, and his theoretical perspective helps to see the emergence of class consciousness in the process of class formation through the lens of solidarity of culture.

Is there any other strategy for class analysis that has distinctive theoretical cores, then? This is why I would like to rekindle scholarly attention to Bourdieu's approach that is, albeit arguably, most promising for the following reasons even though his approach still entails some undeniable problems that, for example, exploitation in production relations is not any more entry point, and he also regards various forms of capitals as individual attributes, which makes his unit of analysis lean towards individuals. Briefly saying, the gist of Bourdieu's argument is that 1) there are some other kinds of capitals besides economic capital, 2) they can be transformed from one to another, and 3) their distribution defines each actor's winning the game in the given field. In this sense, different types of capitals correspond to different types of cards each player holds in the game.

Capitals seem to be similar to assets in Wright's term, but Bourdieu does not limit the forms of capital to economic one in production relations and furthermore he emphasizes the interaction and convertibility among different forms of capital. "Depending on the field in which it functions, and at the cost of the more or less expensive transformations which are the precondition for its efficacy in the field in question, capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as social capital, made up of social obligations ("connections"), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of a title of nobility." (Bourdieu, 1986: 243)

There are a couple of things I would like to underline here. First, in terms of the interaction between class processes and non-class processes, his approach helps to consider both of the two processes. Why does not he accept the dominance of production area over reproduction area, then? As I see it, there are at least two reasons. He makes a distinction between economic exchange and social exchange. Compared to economic exchange, social exchange has what he called "economy of time" because of the time lag between giving and receiving. Besides, this sort of exchange accompanies more uncertainty mostly because that is based on misrecognition, in other words, a form of faith and of bad faith in the everyday life. (Ibid: 252) As another reason, he thinks that social capital, that is, investing their time in building interpersonal networks, or cultural capital, that is, trying to get educational qualifications, becomes more important in the system of reproduction strategies, as the direct or visible forms of transmission tend to be more strongly censored and controlled. (Ibid: 246)

Second and relatedly, in addition to social capital and cultural capital, another form of capital he suggested, though it has been unspoken sometimes in many reviews,

symbolic capital coupled with symbolic struggles over legitimate languages, helps to better understand how three forms of capitals operate in the reproduction of class structure. “Symbolic capital, that is to say, capital – in whatever form – insofar as it is represented, i.e., apprehended symbolically, in a relationship of knowledge or, more precisely, of misrecognition and recognition, presupposes the interventions of the habitus, as a socially constituted cognitive capacity.” (Ibid: 255) Here, habitus could be regarded as “cultural capital that exists in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body.” (Ibid: 243)

For example, let us think about the interaction between social capital and symbolic capital and its implications for class analysis. According to him, the volume of social capital possessed by a given agent depends on the size of the network of connections he or she can effectively mobilize and on the volume of capital possessed by each of those whom he or she is connected. Aside from the fact that this concept helps to introduce network embeddedness of class relations in class analysis⁸, his concept of social capital, unlike other scholars that have studies on social capital such as Putnam, Portes, and Coleman, is closely intertwined to symbolic capital in the sense that “the reproduction of social capital presupposes an unceasing effort of sociability, a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed.” (Ibid: 250) Hence, it could be hypothetically argued that the chance that actors make profits by

⁸ Wright also makes a mistake to allocate people with individual attributes in class locations in the end, although he emphasizes the “relational” concept of class. In other words, he does not include relational properties that cannot be reduced to individual attributes in his analysis, however until recently. The corollary is that one who meets three requirements about assets of the means of production, organization assets, and skill/credential assets could be classified into a particular distinctive group, regardless of his or her relations to other groups of people in terms of social networks. There are some questions about ego’s network embeddedness in class locations in his books(1985, 1997), though. For examples, see the following questions: 1) Is your spouse a working class? 2) Is one of your parents a working class? 3) Is one of your friends a working class among those who meet you more than once per week? 4) Are you a member of the trade union in your company? (Wright 1985)

employing their social networks depends on their symbolic power, that is, cultural leadership of dominant groups, as well as network size and capital volume, for instance.

Furthermore, Bourdieu, like Jones⁹, underscores that different languages could organize even the same experience in a different way and linguistic capital is critical of exercising symbolic power.

In order for one form of speech among others (a language in the case of a situation of bilingualism, a usage in the case of a class society) to impose itself as the only legitimate one, in short, in order for there to be a recognized (i.e. misrecognized) domination, the linguistic market has to be unified and the different class or regional dialects have to be measured practically against the legitimate language. The integration into the same ‘linguistic community’ (equipped with the coercive instruments to impose universal recognition of the dominant language – schools, grammarians, etc.) of hierarchized groups having different interests, is the precondition for the establishment of relations of linguistic domination.” (Bourdieu 1977: 652)¹⁰

⁹ Language disrupts any simple notion of the determination of consciousness by social being because it is itself par of social being. We cannot therefore decode political language to reach a primal and material expression of interest since it is the discursive structure of political language which conceives and defines interest in the first place. What we must therefore do is to study the production of interest, identification, grievance and aspiration within political languages themselves... Thompson’s concept of class consciousness still assumes a relatively direct relationship between ‘social being’ and ‘social consciousness’ which leaves little independent space to the ideological context within which the coherence of a particular language of class can be reconstituted... Consciousness cannot be related to experience except through the interposition of a particular language which organizes the understanding of experience, and it is important to stress that more than one language is capable of articulating the same set of experiences. (Jones 1983: 21-2, 101)

¹⁰ Bourdieu argues that sociological critique subjects the concepts of linguistics to a threefold displacement. “In place of grammaticalness it puts the notion of acceptability, or, to put it another way, in place of ‘the’ language (langue), the notion of legitimate language. In place of relations of communication (or symbolic interaction) it puts relations of symbolic power, and so replaces the questions of the meaning of speech with the question of the value and power of speech. Lastly, in place of specifically linguistic competence, it puts symbolic capital, which is inseparable from the speaker’s position in the social structure.” (Bourdieu 1977: 646).

Put together, Bourdieu's approach implies that class consciousness might be the product of historical struggles in pursuit for material interests and political power between social classes, however always through the mediation of cultural dominance, and thereby to make symbolic meanings and linguistic codes legitimate has become one of the important contested arenas in class practices and class struggles. This is why class analysis should pay more attention to the linguistic or discursive bases of lived experiences of classes. Furthermore, his approach also leads us to rethink the problem of ideology. As DiMaggio and Powell addresses rightly, the role of the concept of habitus is "to explain how and why strategically oriented agents chronically reproduce and acquiesce to social structures that are not their interest." (DiMaggio and Powell 1991: 26) To put it another way, people join the game in the everyday life even if it is not profitable because an open, but durable system of dispositions especially affected by their experiences in the past guides the course of actions at the cognitive level. In this sense, there is no assumption in Bourdieu's class analysis about rational action-centered schema. By contrast, Wright supposes that there are objective goals and means to achieve them, people select a series of actions in purposive manner according to their own interest, and thereby he still considers false consciousness as illusion or ideology. "Actors may make choices under false information, with distorted perceptions of alternative possibilities and incorrect theories of the effects of their choices." (Wright. 1985: 248) Such illusion, however, as Bourdieu sees it, is kind of misrecognition lying behind social interactions and social exchanges in the everyday life. Therefore, it could be stated that class practices means unreflective activities in the daily routine that reproduce the established order, but people happen to stand back and start to think about again what is going on with their lives in the course of class struggles.

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