Goldthorpe, J. 2000a. *On Sociology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Goldthorpe, J. 2000b. Rent, Class Conflict, and Class Structure: A Commentary on Sorensen. *American Journal of Sociology*, 105, 1572–1582.
Goldthorpe, J. & Marshall, G. 1992. The Promising Future of Class Analysis: A Response to Recent Critiques. *Sociology*, 26, 381–400.
Grusky, D. & Sørensen, A. B. 1998. Can Class Analysis Be Salvaged? *American Journal of Sociology*, 103, 1187–1234.
Grusky, D. & Weeden, K. 2001. Decomposition Without Death: A Research Agenda for a New Class Analysis. *Acta Sociologica*, 44, 202–18.
Jones, G. S. 1983. *Languages of Class*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Korpi, W. 1983. *The Democratic Class Struggle*. London: Routledge.
Przeworski, A. 1990. *The State and the Economy under Capitalism*. Chur: Harwood.
Przeworski, A. & Sprague, J. 1986. *Paper Stones. A History of Electoral Socialism*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
Ricardo, D. 1817/1971. *Principles of Political of Political Economy and Taxation*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Roemer, J. 1982. *A General Theory of Exploitation and Class* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Rosanvallon, P. 1985. *Le moment Guizot*. Paris: Gallimard.
Sewell, W. H. 1980. *Work & Revolution in France*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Sørensen, A. B. 2000. Towards A Sounder Basis for Class Analysis. *American Journal of Sociology*, 105, 1523–1558
Statistiska Centralbyrân. l983. *Socioekonomisk Indelning*. Meddelanden i samordningsfrâgor 1982, 4. Stockholm: Statistiska Centralbyrân.
Therborn, G. 1995 *European Modernity and Beyond. The Trajectory of European Societies 1945–2000*. London: Sage.
Therborn, G. 2001. Globalization and Inequality. *Soziale Welt*, 52, 449–76.
Thompson, E. P. 1963. *The Making of the English Working Class*. London: Gollancz.
Wright, E. O. 1997. *Class Counts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Wright, E. O. 2000. Class Exploitation, and Economic Rents: Reflections on Sorensen's 'Sounder Basis'. *American Journal of Sociology*, 105, 1559–1571.

Deconstruction and Decomposition? A Comment on Grusky and Weeden

Julia Adams
Department of Sociology, University of Michigan, USA

David Grusky and Kim Weeden's cheerily entitled paper 'Decomposition without Death: A Research Agenda for a New Class Analysis' (2001) revives the case for a functionalist approach to class analysis, taking issue explicitly with both postmodernists and neo-Marxists. I find much of their argument quite persuasive, and congratulate Grusky and Weeden on writing a paper that offers such a large and friendly opening to poststructuralist thinking. I think this is a step forward in expanding our conceptual and theoretical repertoire for studies of social closure, stratification and other related processes.

Grusky and Weeden begin from the premise that people, individually and collectively, engage in strategies of 'social closure', by which membership in a collectivity or group is restricted to some while others are excluded. They argue that in today's capitalist world the meaningful entities and collective agents that result are, importantly, occupations and other related 'local' groupings such as professional associations and craft unions. These groupings tend to cluster around functionally specific, technical niches in the division of labor, they claim, acknowledging and elaborating on the analytical tradition of the early Durkheim ([1893] 1933). These groupings also control apprenticeships and similar closure devices (Weber 1968 [1922]) that tend to produce common forms of experience and *gemeinschaftlich* bonds. 'Social closure' is a useful concept, in other words, and theorists of social closure can help enhance our understanding of mechanisms of stratification. But because today's scholars are still captivated by neo-Marxian imageries of class and standard socio-economic and prestige scales (Grusky & Weeden 2001:204), they tend to assume that the 'real' action lies in nominalist, highly aggregated categories, such as the capitalist/working-class couplet, Frank Parkin's dyadic 'exclusionary' and 'subordinate' classes, and the like (Parkin

1978:58). Quite the reverse, Grusky and Weeden contend: occupational entities and agents are the key basis from which we should understand the rarer supra-occupational economic groups that do emerge and have real social consequences. Epistemologically, they argue, it is only when groups are conceptually disaggregated and we move down from aggregated and strictly nominal class entities to the 'realist' occupational level of analysis that a whole series of outcomes begins to make more sociological sense. Patterns of class identification; collective action, and lifestyles and attitudes – all these can be seen to flow from occupational groupings.[11] Thus they urge us to take a 'quasi-Durkheimian third road', in their words, forsaking the Marxian and postmodernist avenues of thinking about stratification (Grusky & Weeden 2001:214–215).

Neo-Marxists will have one set of complaints about this argument (and for a recent assertion of the continuing relevance of class analysis, see Wright (1996)). Here I am more interested in the fact that Grusky and Weeden also oppose their claims to so-called 'postmodern' ones, which are taken to include the assertion that production is not the 'principal locus of identity formation' (2001:204) and that, relatedly, 'postmodern interests are increasingly defined and established outside the realm of production' (2001:205). Leaving aside the fact that the concept of 'interests' sits awkwardly with poststructuralists, if they use it at all, I must insist that at least some forms of poststructuralism are quite compatible with an analysis that grants importance to the particular space of 'production', and marry very well with a focus on mechanisms of social closure. To begin with the latter point, social closure itself is at its heart a thoroughly cultural process. To put it in poststructuralist terms, people make appeals to others on the basis of signs – of discourses – that invite some (and not others) to recognize themselves in rhetorical claims and to act accordingly. As Louis Althusser (1971) put it, ideology 'hails', 'interpellates', 'addresses' and 'recruits' individuals as subjects. The actors who come to recognize themselves as subjects of particular signifying practices (and perhaps as part of a category or group) are transformed and potentially mobilized along certain lines, while others are by the same token ruled out. These forms of address, or interpellations, could certainly be delivered on the basis of occupation, and often are, in the economic realm, but they can also involve other groups, and sometimes even classes. 'Workers of the world, unite' is a pithy example of such a class hailing, and one that has had a certain impact over the years. Nevertheless, Grusky and Weeden are helpful precisely because they stress beginning with concrete mechanisms of social closure, mechanisms that people subject to them recognize and to which they respond in various ways. One finds few, if any, such mechanisms at the level of class in present-day capitalism, they point out, but quite important ones at the occupational level (2001:205–206). Agreed. My point is that at the core of these processes and signifying practices are signs or representations linked in discourses that define and bind rather than simply 'reflect' occupational and class categories and the identities that actors are invited to inhabit.

Not all efforts at symbolic closure are successfully institutionalized, of course. Subjects may not recognize themselves in ideological appeals or resonate with them; resources are or are not effectively mobilized; accompanying sanctions may or may not be put in place, and so on (see Adams & Padamsee 2001). All these dimensions seem crucial to collective action, so I am puzzled by Grusky and Weeden's claim that it is a 'simple fact that much collective action flows unproblematically out of structurally defined groupings' (2001:205) There are very good grounds to object to that claim, whether one takes a rational-choice perspective on the organizational conditions for collective action (see especially Olson [1965] 1971) or (in a poststructuralist vein) stresses the role of practices that establish links among signs and between signs and practices in political mobilization (Laclau & Mouffe [2001] 1985). Nevertheless there still seems to be a great deal of potential convergence between Grusky and Weeden's call for a new focus on 'local forms of structuration within the division of labor' (2001:214) and my interest in researching and spelling out ways that key signifying practices stratify via mechanisms of social closure. Along those lines, I applaud Grusky and Weeden's insistence that the categories of occupational classification schemes be treated as 'implicit hypotheses' about structuration, and their call for an empirical investigation of whether these categories actually call out to workers and define boundaries (2001:206), and hope they are widely heeded.

Grusky and Weeden are correctly concerned with description and causal explanation of social closure – with the question of when

and why salient boundaries are formed and when and why actors embrace relevant definitions of self, community and other – because they think that different logics of aggregation, closure and breakdowns of closure may have 'wider systemic effects' (2001:205). They call their project part of a broader analytical retreat to a point of greater intellectual modesty, but given that these questions have to be studied with an eye to comparative historical variation and change, the project seems eminently bold and ambitious, more so than they modestly acknowledge. To execute it, I would urge Grusky and Weeden to let their secret poststructuralist leanings out of the closet and to systematically incorporate what one might call the cultural conditions of collective agency (including individual and collective mobility) into their research and analysis. In fact, they are already on their way. For example: 'We are suggesting, then, that classifiers attend explicitly to the boundaries that are recognized by workers, represented by associations, and defended through such closure devices as occupational licensing, certification, and unionization' (2001: 207). Card-carrying poststructuralists could not have said it better themselves.

Perhaps they should push their deconstructive project farther, in two ways. First, they could junk the assumption that the relevant boundaries of structuration correspond to slots in the technical division of labor. There is too much research that suggests that that, too, may be a conditional outcome, that the technical division of labor is at least partly a product of signifying practices, and that the 'material' contribution of occupations, and even jobs, to some system cannot be taken to define their unity. In fact Grusky and Weeden seem to be moving in that direction anyway; they identify contingent 'patterns of collective action and micro-level cognitive mappings' as the best probable indications of relevant forms of local structuration (2001:207). And since those cognitive mappings are linkages among signifiers and the signified, which together compose signs, and relations among signs – not correspondences between some category and some reality that it reflects (de Saussure 1959) – Grusky and Weeden could also benefit by abandoning the attempt to align a permanent distinction between real and nominal forms of classification with substantive positions in the division of labor. The implication of their argument is that the forms of classification that actually serve to aggregate people and resonate with them will vary over space and time. By pursuing the analysis of mechanisms of social closure that they suggest, we can begin to build social theories that help us understand and explain those variations. Farewell to the early Durkheim, the Durkheim of *The Division of Labor in Society* – hello to the late Durkheim of *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* – in my view, a big improvement.

Note

[1] Grusky and Sørensen (1988) is the best source for the primary conceptual case for this new agenda.

References

Adams, J. & Padamsee, T. 2001. Signs and Regimes: Rereading Feminist Work on Welfare States. *Social Politics*, (Spring), 1–23.

Althusser, L. 1971. Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. *In* Lenin and Philosophy, pp. 127–186. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Durkheim, E. [1893] 1933. *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: Macmillan.

Durkheim, E. 1995. The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, translated by Karen E. Fields. New York: Free Press.

Grusky, D. B. & Sørensen, J. B. 1998. Can Class Analysis Be Salvaged? *American Journal of Sociology*, 103, 1187–1234.

Grusky, D. B. & Weeden, K. A. 2001. Decomposition Without Death: A Research Agenda for a New Class Analysis. *Acta Sociologica*, 44, 203–218.

Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C. [1985] 2001. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics*. New York: Verso.

Olson, M. [1965] 1971. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. New York: Schocken Books.

Parkin, F. 1978. *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique*. New York: Columbia University Press.

de Saussure, F. 1959. *Course in General Linguistics*. New York: Philosophical Library.

Weber, M. [1922] 1968. *Economy and Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wright, E. O. 1996. The Continuing Relevance of Class Analysis. *Theory and Society*, 25, 697–716.