

What is status?

and why does it matter?

January 18, 2023

Before we start —

- Professor Smith-Lovin introduction
- COVID updates —
 - Masks recommended but not required
 - Class as community
- No Durkheim reading for Friday, just Hughes
- Any questions about the syllabus, course structure, etc?

Occupations and Social Status

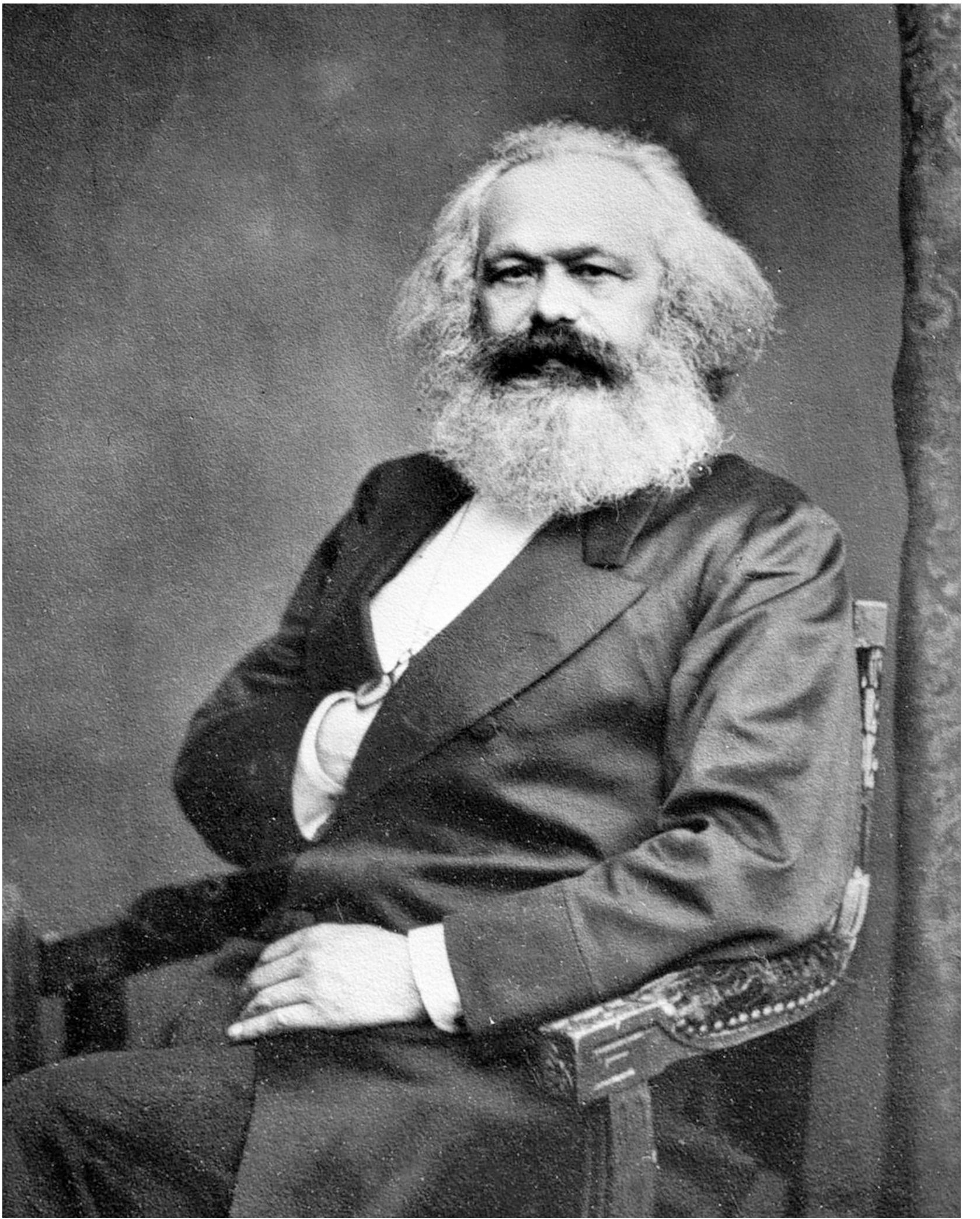
Occupations and Social Status

Occupations and Social Status

Class ratings of Occupations				
	Mean	Median	Min	Max
Lawyer	8.47	9.0	5	9
Department Head in a State	7.94	9.0	4	9
Accountant	7.73	8.0	7	9
Banker	7.59	8.0	4	9
Medical Technician	7.20	7.0	5	9
Insurance Agent	6.67	7.0	5	8
Musician in a Symphony	5.75	5.5	2	8
Farm Owner and Operator	5.71	6.0	3	7
Cook in a Restaurant	4.81	4.5	3	7
Manager of a Supermarket	4.71	5.5	2	6
Welder	4.71	4.0	2	8
Public Grade School Teacher	4.60	5.0	2	8
Telemarketer	4.53	5.0	3	7
Secretary	4.50	4.0	1	8
Barber	4.38	4.0	3	7
Bartender	3.80	3.0	2	7
Housekeeper in a Private Home	3.39	3.5	1	6
Bus Driver	2.41	2.0	1	8
Assembly Line Worker	2.18	2.0	1	5
Janitor	1.67	1.0	1	8

Is ‘social standing’ a good way of
operationalizing status?

Marx



Wage Labor and Capital

- Audience:
 - workers
- Goal:
 - Explain wages in terms of key concepts in Marx's larger theory of historical materialism
 - Highlight contradictions in capitalism

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- Example: as a TA, I work for 20 hours a week and get a paid \$1525/month for that work
- Wage = ~\$19/hour
- Wage is the amount of money an employer pays to the employee for a certain amount of labor - either by time or by output

What is Duke paying for?

- I might be tempted to say that Duke (capitalist) is buying my (proletariat) **labor** for ~\$19/hour
- Marx says — no, actually what Duke is doing is buying my **labor-power** for the entire semester and uses my labor-power for 20/hours a week until the semester is over

Labor-Power

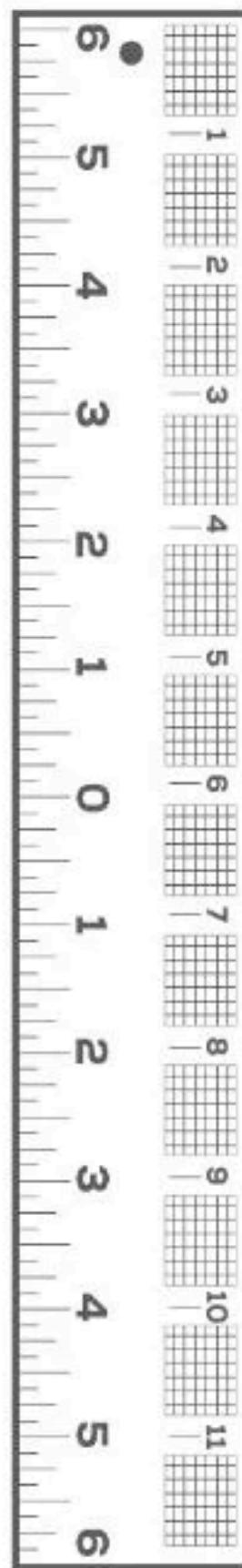
- Okay, so what's the difference?
- Labor-power is the **commodity** version of labor
- He also called it labor-ability / labor-capacity
 - The ability to perform some sort of labor
- In Economics – analogous to human capital
 - (although Marx would not have liked what this signifies)

Okay wait, what is a commodity?

- Normally we think of a commodity as a **product or service** that is **exchanged** for something in return (usually money)
- e.g. a burrito from Chipotle is a commodity
- I pay ~\$8 to Chipotle so I can eat the burrito
- \$8 is the **price** of the commodity

Commodities have

- Use value
 - Satisfies something that humans want or need
- Exchange value
 - Rate at which it can be traded for other commodities
 - Price = the quantification of exchange value



Price & Exchange Value

- Tuition for 1 year at Duke: \$62,941
- Equivalent to ~ 7868 burritos
- Money is the common language of commodities (and is in itself a commodity)
 - Allows us to compare them, put them in **relation** to each other

Labor-Power as commodity

- Wage is then equal to the **price** of my labor-power
- Your labor has:
 - use value (whatever skill, responsibility, creation you do for them)
 - an exchange value **price you are paid in exchange for your labor**
- How is wage determined?
 - Sum of: how much needed to keep worker alive, train the worker, create new workers
- This is the **wage** minimum

Why does this matter?

- I exchange my **labor-power** (teaching, preparing lectures) for the commodity of **money**
- Ratio of time/money
- Since we can now put all commodities into relation with each other, we can think of wage not only as money but as an expression of a certain amount of other commodities I may choose to buy:
 - Food
 - Bills
 - Recreation

8 HOURS



8 HOURS



8 HOURS

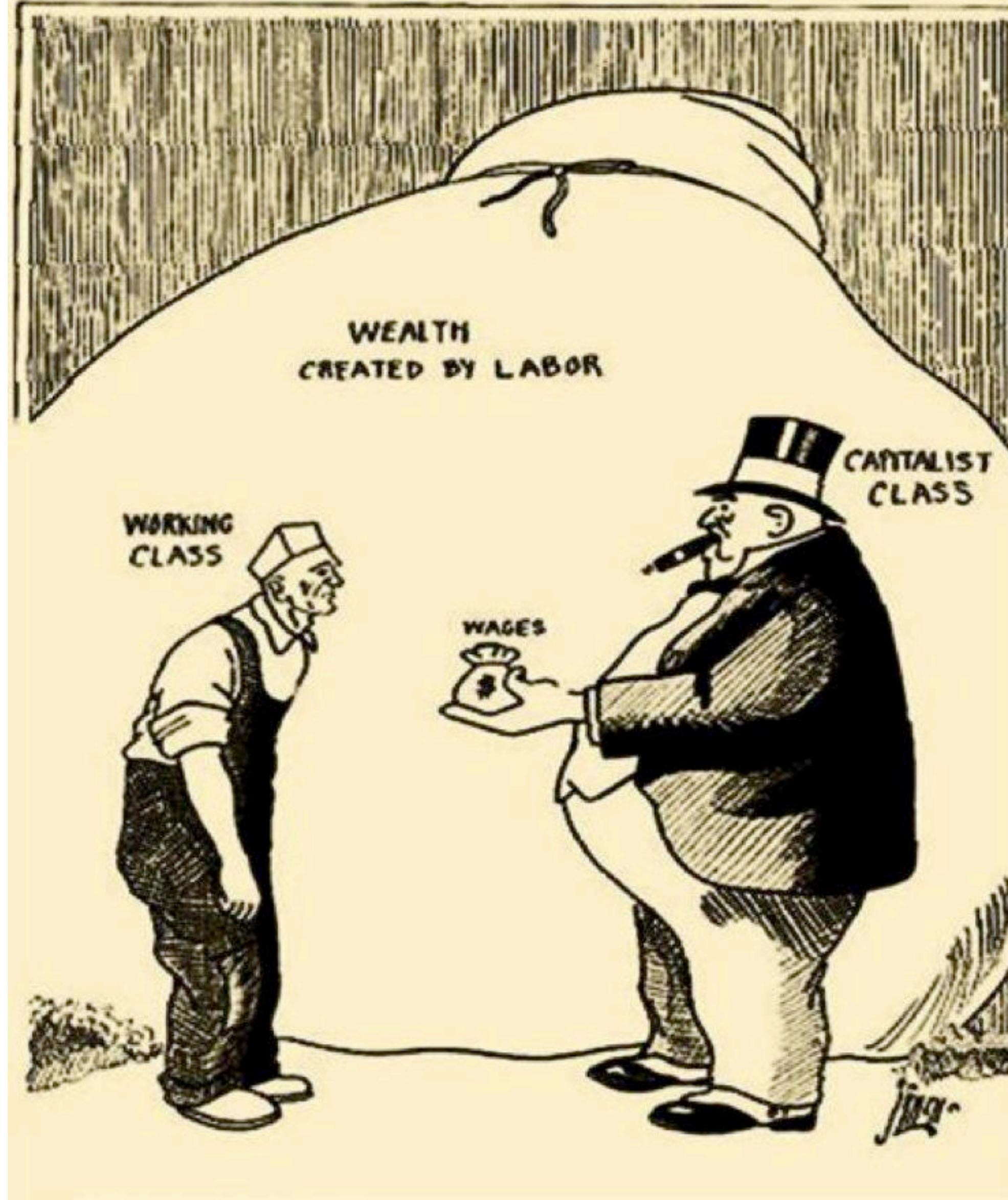


for WORK

for REST

for WHAT
WE WILL

Organize and Take the Big Bag!



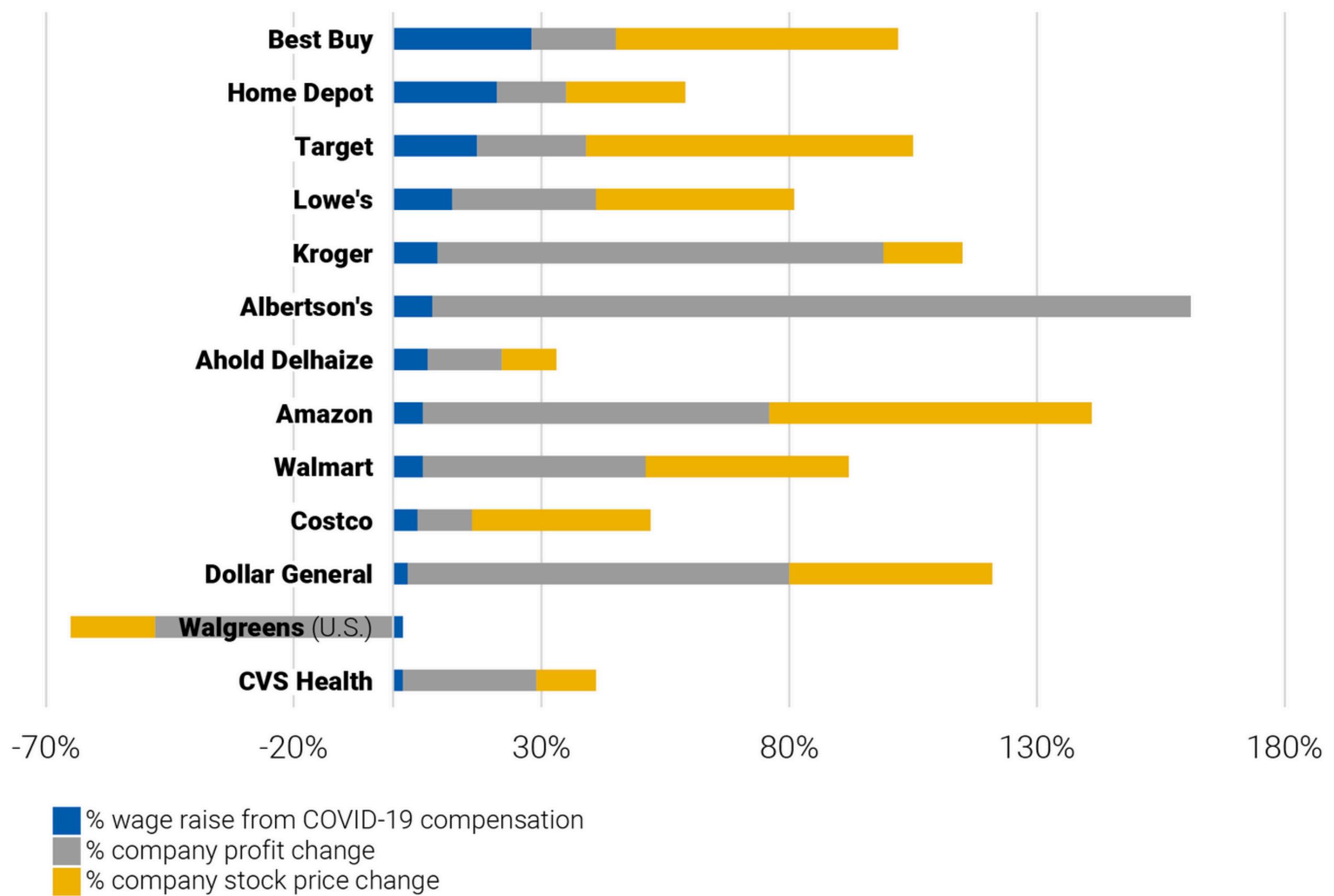
Two Sides



of the Same Coin



Figure 16. Walmart, Amazon, and Dollar General's investment in COVID-19 compensation pales in comparison to company profits



Source: Brookings analysis on hourly wage increase from COVID-19 compensation between March 13, 2020 and November 19, 2020; company quarterly earnings reported for 2020 compared to same time period in 2019; company stock price data compared from February 28, 2020 to November 19, 2020.

How Restaurant Workers Help Pay for Lobbying to Keep Their Wages Low

The National Restaurant Association uses mandatory \$15 food-safety classes to turn waiters and cooks into unwitting funders of its battle against minimum wage increases.

WASHINGTON — For many cooks, waiters and bartenders, it is an annoying entrance fee to the food-service business: Before starting a new job, they pay around \$15 to a company called ServSafe for an online class in food safety.

That course is basic, with lessons like “bathe daily” and “strawberries aren’t supposed to be white and fuzzy, that’s mold.” In four of the largest states, this kind of training is required by law, and it is taken by workers nationwide.

But in taking the class, the workers — largely unbeknown to them — are also helping to fund a nationwide lobbying campaign to keep their own wages from increasing.

The company they are paying, [ServSafe](#), doubles as a fund-raising arm of the National Restaurant Association — the largest lobbying group for the food-service industry, claiming to represent more than 500,000 restaurant businesses. The association has spent decades fighting increases to the minimum wage at the federal and state levels, as well as the subminimum wage paid to tipped workers like waiters.

What does this all mean for us?

- Marx places the main organizing principle of society on:
 - the mode of economic production and who has control over it
- Occupational class is then more important than occupational status
- Occupational class, in turn, is defined by one's **position** in the structure of production
- Everything is reducible to the mode of production

Primary positions

	Capitalist	Petty Bourgeoisie	Proletariat
Ownership of means of production			
Purchase of labor power of others			
Sale of labor power to others			

Primary positions

In contemporary society (Wright & Perrone 1977)

	Capitalists	Petty Bourgeoisie	Managers	Workers
Ownership of means of production				
Purchase of labor power of others				
Control of the labor power of other workers				
Sale of labor power to others				

Activity

- Questions?
- Thoughts?
- Critiques?
- <https://emkmaloney.shinyapps.io/occprestige/>

Weber



“In general, we understand by ‘power’ the chance of a [person] or number of [people] to realize their own will in social action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action”

Weber “The Distribution of Power within the Political Community: Class, Status, Party”

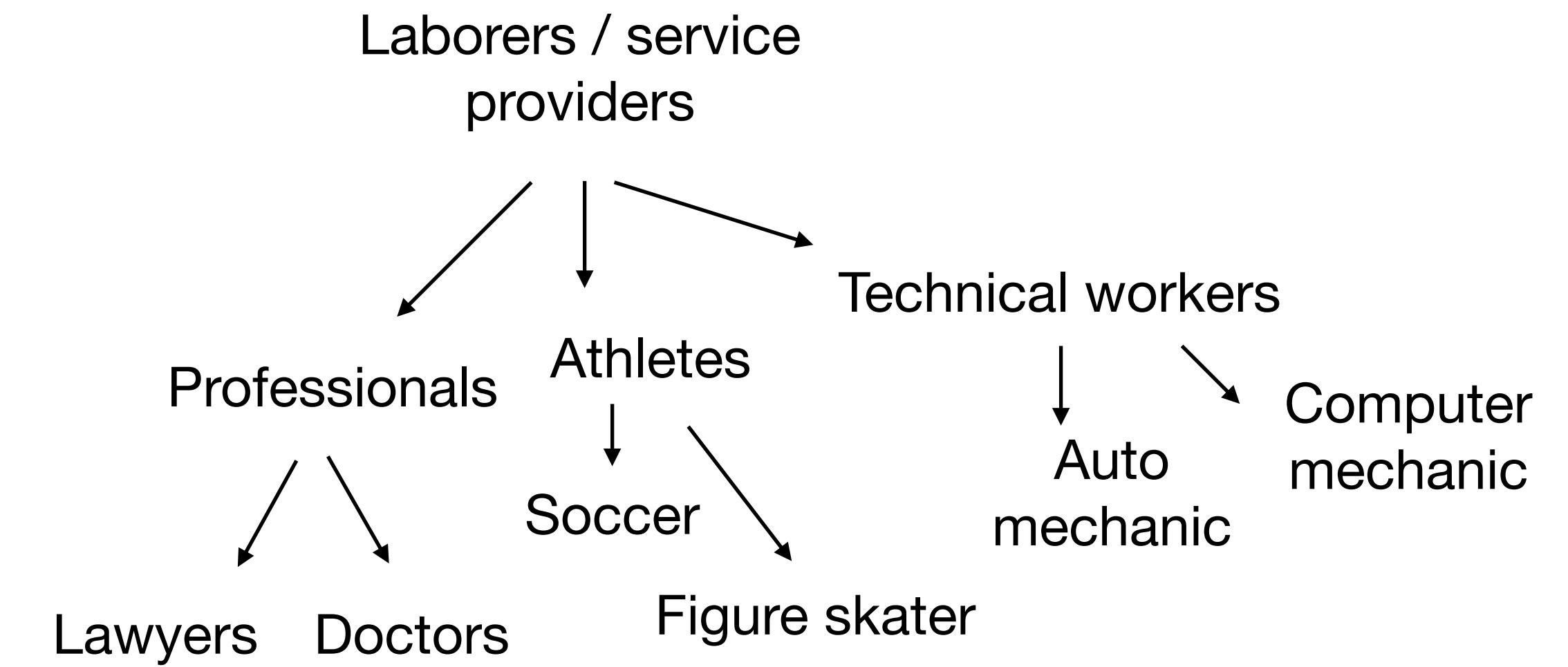
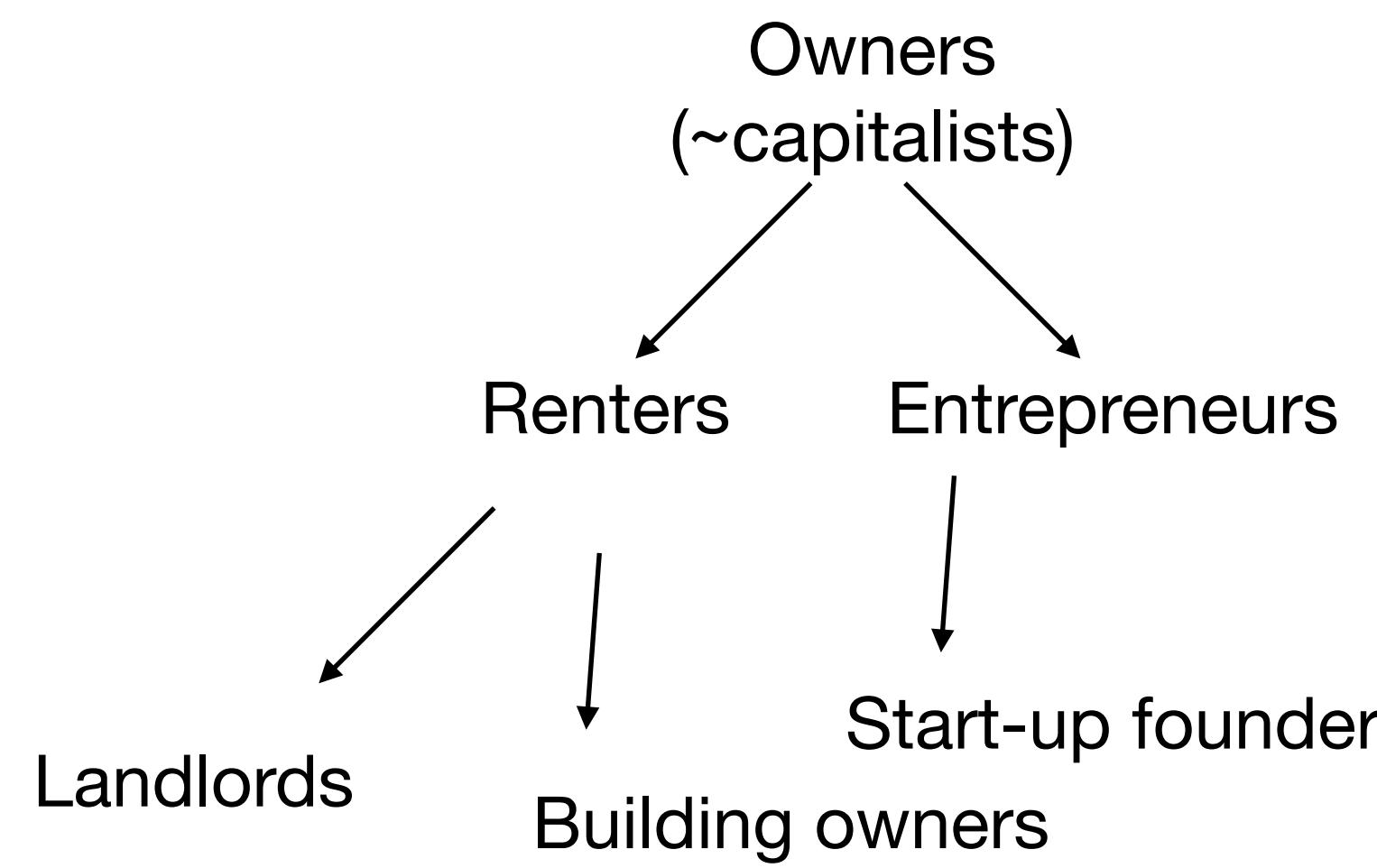
What influences the amount of power people have in society?

1. Class - Economic Situation
 2. Status - Social Situation
 3. Party - Political Situation
- **Independent** but affect each other

Class

- How one's position in the market affects one's life chances
 - Access to material resources
 - Wealth
 - Property
 - Income

Classes for Weber



Status

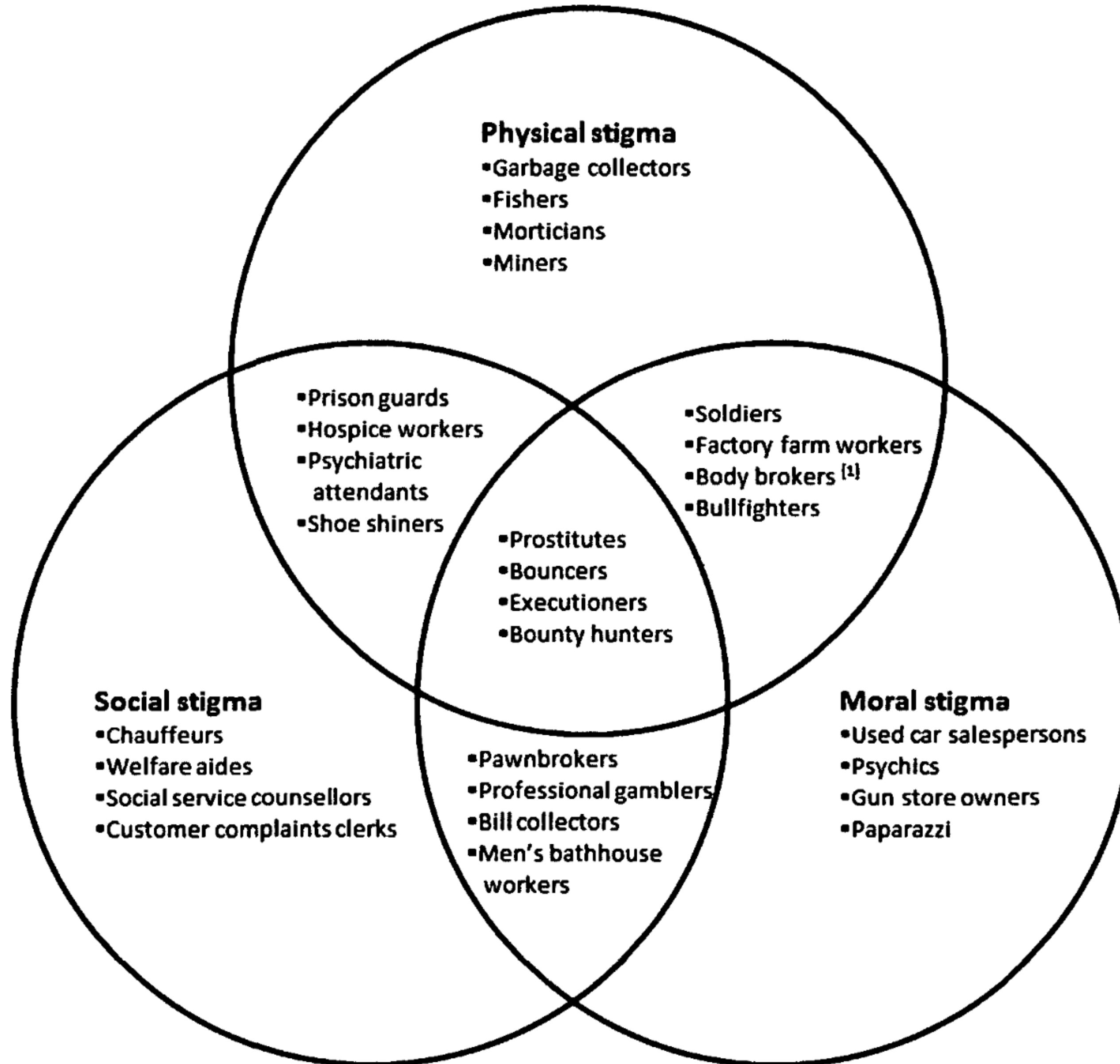
- Socially-based estimation of **honor**
 - Dignity, respect, distinction, esteem
- Connected to qualities shared by groups (typically) of people
- Acts in the social/cultural arena
 - A social evaluation

What is the basis for status groups?

- Race/ethnicity, gender/sex, religion
- Occupations :)
- Weber defines status most of all by similarities in **lifestyle**
- **Meaning!!! Culture!**

How does status act through society?

- Social interaction
 - Expectations of deference
 - Stigmatization processes
 - Beliefs of competence



⁽¹⁾ An agent who buys and/or sells cadavers or body parts

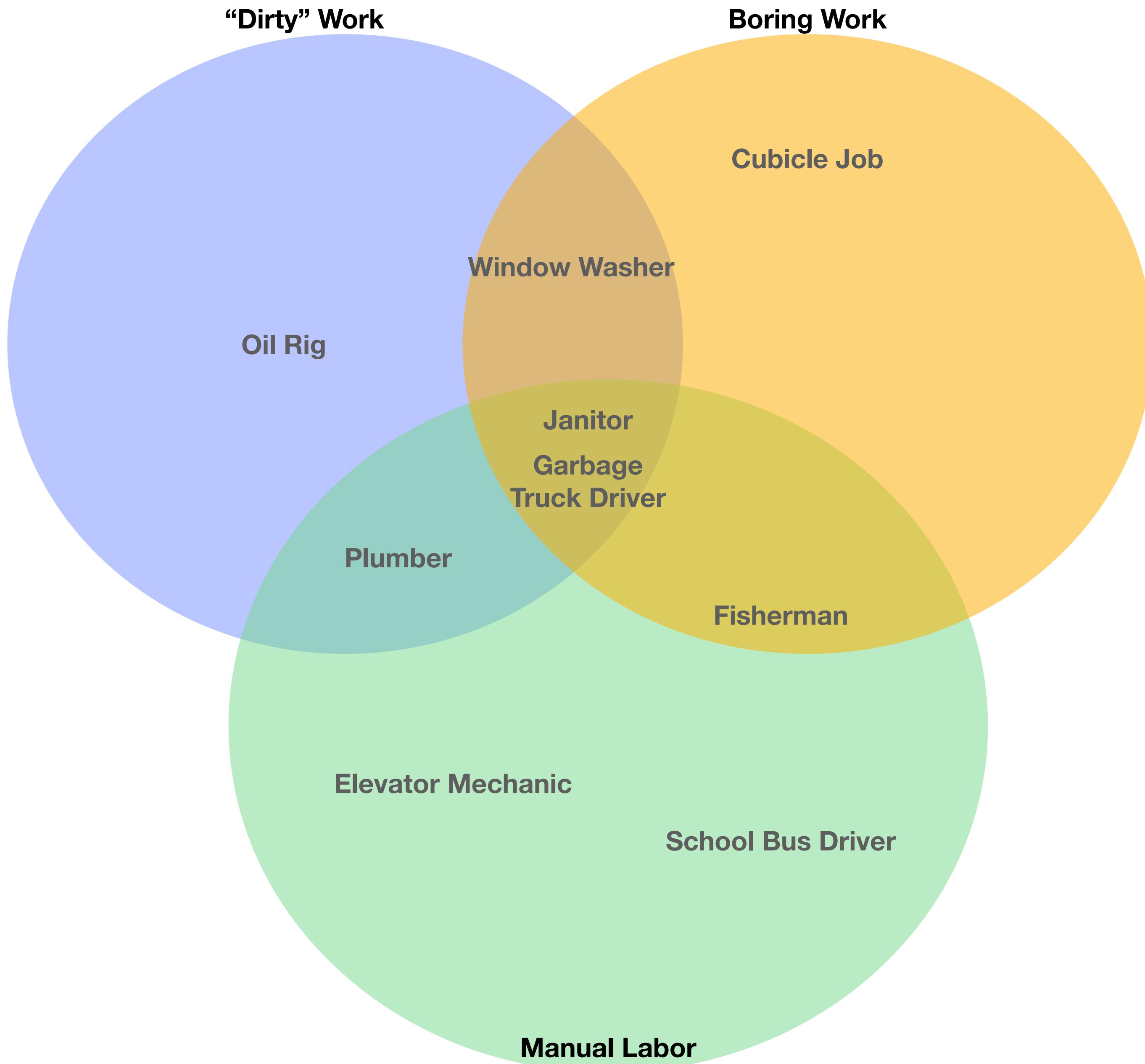
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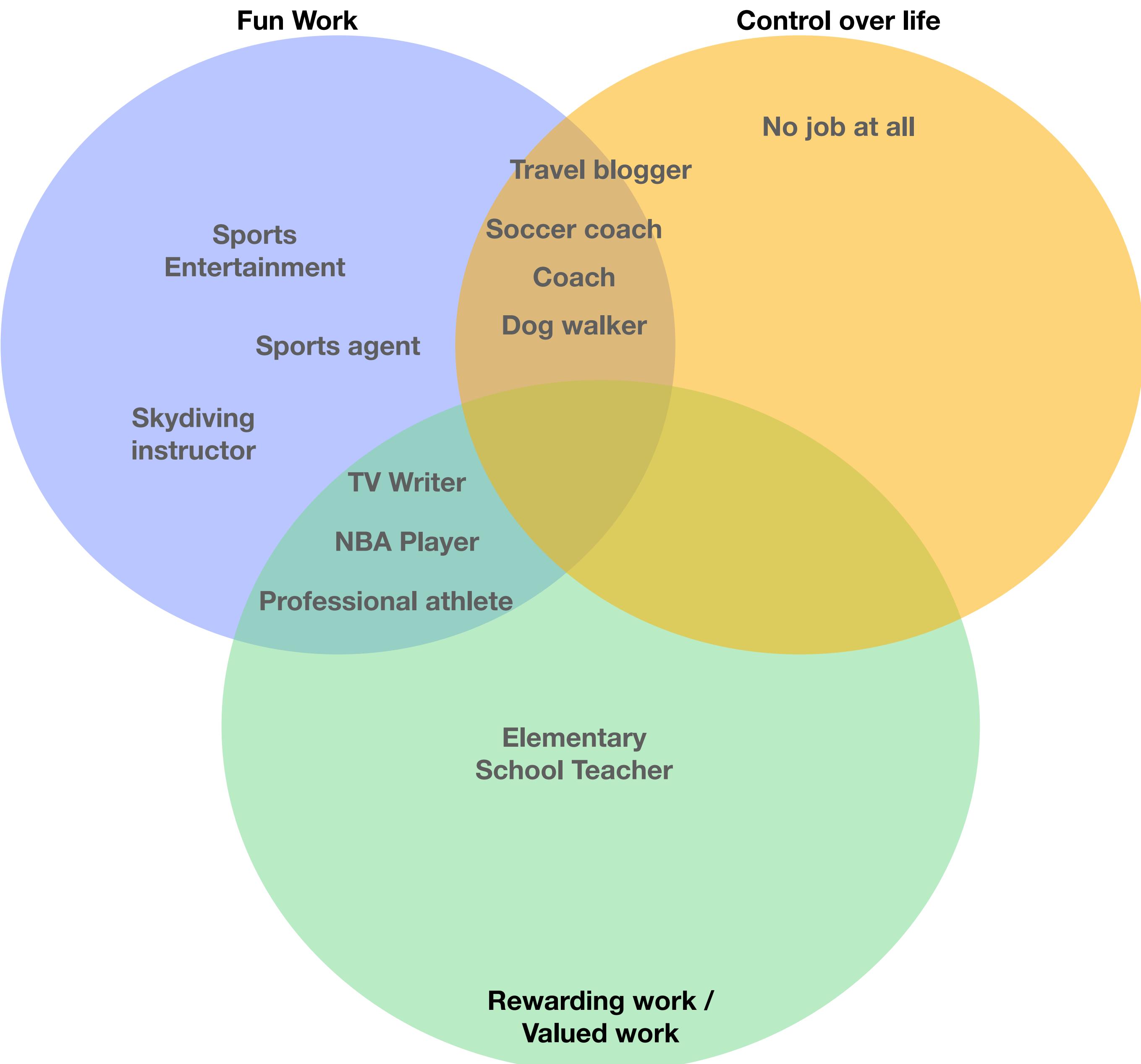
(Ashforth & Kreiner, 2015)

[I] hired an older gentleman who said, ‘You know, my wife is not too happy about me being a [used] car salesman’ [a morally stigmatized occupation]. And he was excellent . . . And his wife just couldn’t handle . . . telling her friends and stuff that he was a car salesman, and it ended up he quit. So now he cleans houses [a physically stigmatized occupation]. So it’s not even close to the money he was making as a car salesman . . . [but] his wife was okay with that. That was just amazing to me.

A manager of used car salespeople (from an interview we conducted for an earlier project)

Artist





Activity

- Questions?
- Thoughts?
- Critiques?
- <https://emkmaloney.shinyapps.io/occprestige/>

Discussion

- When is a Marxist definition of occupational class more relevant?
- When is a Weberian definition of occupational status more relevant?
- Are you more persuaded by one or the other?
- What **outcomes** might be more associated with class versus status?
- What are the benefits to a unidimensional versus multidimensional view of society?