Social Differentiation Network Theory

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This edition contains the Preface, Introduction, and Chapters 1–39. It follows the adopted English translation of the current Chinese text, retaining the author's concepts, arguments, examples, and judgments. The Chinese edition retains the character forms of its adopted text and the existing forms of legal titles and quotations.

The closing "Cited Sources and Their Uses" and "Scope of Source Support" are editorial appendices. In accordance with the author's account of the writing process, the listed works should not be treated as a record of reading on which the author actually relied when developing the theory. The later addition of citations does not imply endorsement by the cited scholars or institutions. These materials assist retrieval, limited scholarly comparison, and checking institutional examples; they do not replace the book's argument.

This edition corrects the author–translator attribution in Note S03, supplies three complete article titles, and refines selected page references in S01, S02, S03, S04, and S06. These publication corrections leave the uses and limits stated in the notes, and the author's main text, unchanged. Chapter-end notes use stable F and S identifiers; the source appendix uses R identifiers.

The English and Chinese editions follow the same adopted text. English legal titles are editorial translations, not claimed official translations. The jurisdictions, years, subject limits, and reading scope specified in the appendices remain applicable. Inclusion in the bibliography does not mean that an entire paper or statute has been comprehensively verified.

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Preface: Why Step Out of the Class Image

Am I writing this book because I cannot see labor, poverty, debt, unemployment, wages, housing, medical care, workplace injuries, and risk? Quite the opposite. All these things are real. They can crush a person's daily life, leave a family with no choice, and drive people to the point where no exit remains. Precisely because they weigh this heavily, I cannot accept gathering everything into a total image called "class."

In the intellectual context of mainland China, class theory is the root of communism. It certainly includes political propositions and carries a critique of society; at a deeper level, it gives people a pair of glasses through which to see the world: first it compresses a complex society into a class image, then declares that image to be society as it really is; first it nails people into class positions, then explains family, locality, nation, clan, faith, rites and customs, the private sphere, community, and private life—all of them—as outer shells, appearances, or appendages of class relations.

I oppose communism, and what I oppose first and foremost is this way of seeing the world.

This opposition must be brought to bear at different levels. The name "communism," the theoretical structure that arranges reality through a total class image, historical traditions from different periods, actual organizations and institutions, and the actions of specific people must not be conflated into a single, undifferentiated subject. A name can suggest where to begin verification, but it cannot replace identifying structures, materials, authority, and consequences; nor can differences within historical traditions absolve an interpretive structure that employs class entities, class enemies and friends, and historical mission of responsibility.

The core structure this book opposes is an interpretive structure that uses class entities and a total class image to arrange in advance the positions of family, nation, locality, faith, the private sphere, and other differences, and organizes reality through divisions between enemies and friends and through historical mission. Judging whether a particular text, organization, institution, or person's actions enter into this structure requires corresponding evidence. Distinguishing these levels does not soften the stance of opposition; it simply refuses to let names replace proof and refuses to treat abstract labels as things that act on their own.

I do not deny inequality in reality, nor do I defend the rich, power, capital, exploitation, debt, or the shifting of risk onto others. Some people have had their wages withheld; some families are dragged into debt by a single illness; some workers suffer workplace injuries but cannot produce evidence to establish responsibility; some young people are so bound by rent and the risk of unemployment that they dare not quit their jobs—none of this is empty talk. Labor, wages, employment, property, debt, housing, risk, relations of domination, and the width of available exits tangibly change a person's living circumstances, action space, the risks they bear, and the exits they can choose. A social theory that cannot see these things is far too lightweight.

I do not acknowledge the existence of classes. Seeing these real differences certainly does not mean having to acknowledge class as what society fundamentally is. What actually enters into social consequences are concrete differentiating units and the processes through which they operate in nodes, relational chains, weights, and write-back. What is called a class image is an explanatory image formed when a set of high-weight differentiating units undergoes low-dimensional compression, projection, and naming. Explanatory power within a limited scope comes from these real differentiating units and the processes of extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression applied to them. The class image is only a low-dimensional output; interpreters must

not pass it off as reality itself, still less use it to demand that the whole of society operate according to its logic.

The most dangerous thing about class theory has never been that it is wholly false. A theory that cannot stand up at all can be dismissed at a glance. The problem is that it grasps some of the real weights bearing down on people, then compresses all these weights into the same total image. First it makes you think you have seen all of reality; gradually it makes you forget that what you have seen is actually only part of it. In the end, it is not content to explain wages, labor, debt, risk, and relations of domination; it wants to explain everything: family becomes class reproduction, nation becomes the occlusion of class contradictions, clan becomes a remnant of old classes, the private sphere becomes backward relations, culture becomes an instrument of rule, and local community becomes false consciousness. Even people's familial affection, memory, shame, loyalty, trust, and sense of belonging must be translated into a position within the class image.

Society has never been a flat sheet of class divisions. A person's position in labor can delineate only part of their social reality; it cannot define their entire situation. The family has never been merely a unit of resource transmission: it preserves familial affection, obligations, memory, care, and long-term trajectories of life. Local society carries complex connections of familiarity, trust, reputation, and local relations; it cannot be reduced to a mechanism for distributing benefits. Still less is a nation a container for economic contradictions: it holds accumulated layers of language, rites and customs, shared experiences, and a sense of boundaries. As for community, it is certainly not an outer shell temporarily slipped on only for class mobilization. People live within layer upon layer of relations. Kin, language, the body, official documents and credentials, debt, occupation, illness, local memory, accent, credit, ceremonial cash gifts, household registration, school, religion, historical scars, institutional status, caregiving responsibilities, and private space grow heavier or lighter in different relational fields. They change a person's position, qualifications, risks, evaluations, responsibilities, choices, and consequences; they are not decorative trim around the edges of the class image. I call these units of difference differentiating units.

What Social Differentiation Network Theory sets out to do is to unpack the reality swallowed up by grand concepts. Faced with grand terms such as "class," "state," "market," "nation," "culture," and "family," it does not rush to treat them as already constituted entities. Instead, it keeps asking: in concrete relational fields, exactly which differences are extracted, who or what mechanism assigns their weight, and how do these differences pass through institutions, nodes, and relational chains to connect with resources, risks, and responsibilities? Some differences are amplified in this process, while others are suppressed; some are seized by explanatory images and pulled into the foreground, while others undergo occlusion or are left behind in the dark.

Social Differentiation Network Theory is concerned with how society takes shape in concrete relational fields and enters into real consequences. Reducing it to an ordinary list of factors would lose the theoretical judgments it contains; using it to exclude other valid explanations would repeat the errors of a single underlying entity and a total image. Neither state, nation, market, family, nor culture can replace class as a new single axis. What matters is to turn away from this temptation: in concrete relational fields, differentiating units undergo extraction, weight assignment, connection, transmission, and write-back, forming a constantly changing differentiation-network order.

Oppression in reality must be faced squarely; on this point there is no room for equivocation. I oppose communism because it carries a deeper explanatory violence: crushing three-dimensional society into a class plane, crushing living people into class positions, crushing communities into class instruments, crushing history into class struggle, and conscripting all differences into the same total image.

Communism has proposed some mistaken policies, but that is not the whole problem. The deeper problem comes from its grounding in a mistaken social ontology: treating the class image as reality itself, treating a low-dimensional projection as the three-dimensional world, and treating limited distinction extraction as ultimate truth. It thinks it has explained society; in fact, it has merely flattened society.

This is where this book begins.

This book faces squarely the pressures that genuinely exist in society. Wages, labor, debt, risk, and relations of domination all carry a real weight that cannot be ignored. But interpreters who adopt class theory and its total image have no right to monopolize the explanation of these pressures, still less to use a single plane to swallow up family, locality, nation, the private sphere, community, memory, the body, and the concrete realities of people's daily lives all at once. Analysis and judgment are themselves necessary. What must be rejected is the practice of total-image subsumption of differences, of compressing reality through a monopoly on explanation, and of recasting every inequality in terms of class as an entity.

The starting point of Social Differentiation Network Theory is precisely the refusal to surrender the world to a single total image.

Society is not a class plane. Society is a differentiation network.

Introduction: What Social Differentiation Network Theory Aims to Explain

I. Judgment Must Begin with What Is Happening

This book is not about which grand term best sums up society, but about where people should actually begin their judgment when faced with a concrete matter. Someone has had their wages withheld; a child cannot enroll in school because the required documents are incomplete; a family suddenly can no longer hold on after a patient is hospitalized; a local relationship changes course because someone gives testimony; a debt approaches its due date; a movement draws people who previously had nothing to do with one another into the same public event. Many things do not initially present themselves as complete images of “class,” “state,” “market,” “nation,” or “family.” In concrete events, people often first encounter materials, money, illness, relationships, responsibilities, records, deadlines, and risks; grand concepts can help people organize these consequences, but they cannot replace tracing the event itself.

This book therefore does not begin with a ready-made name for society. First, look at how a particular matter lands in people's lives: which differences have already entered into consequences, who or what procedure is handling them, how a determination changes eligibility, risk, evaluation, responsibility, and ways out, and how the current handling leaves records that enter later life. Starting from concrete matters does not shrink society into everyday trivia. Only in this way can we know what abstract explanations actually capture and what they leave out.

Starting with grand terms is convenient: it can gather disorderly phenomena into a clear image and quickly bring certain burdensome relationships into view. The trouble begins when a concept is treated as society itself: events then fall into the compartments it has already prepared. A person's wages, labor relations, debt deadlines, housing conditions, household registration documents, physical condition, responsibilities to relatives, local reputation, language, credit history, and institutional status will not carry equal operative weight in the same event. Some differences weigh heavily at this moment, some sink into the background for the time being, and others have not even gained recognition yet. Neat names may be easy to understand, but they can wipe away the event's own texture.

II. Stepping Back from Grand Concepts to Concrete Differences

What this book calls a differentiating unit is a unit of difference in the world that can be distinguished, represented, subjected to weight assignment, and brought into comparison, and that may enter into consequences within a concrete relational field. It is not society's smallest atom, nor does it break a person down into an endless table of attributes. Its significance lies in reminding interpreters: do not rush to name an event; first identify which differences have already been extracted, which remain in the background, which are subject to occlusion, and which are changing a person's position, eligibility, risk, evaluation, responsibility, action, or consequences.

When wages are not paid on time, we cannot leave it at “low income”; the matter also connects to contracts, working-time records, contracting relationships, debt deadlines, rent, whether fellow workers can testify, and whether the case will be accepted for arbitration. Whether a child can enroll in school is likewise not just an education problem; whether actual residence can be recognized through documents, whether the landlord has made a filing, whether the enrollment deadline is approaching, and whether the family has the time and cash flow to navigate the

procedures can all change the outcome. These observations are not meant to establish a universal checklist. Each matter involves a different set of differences; what truly needs to be traced is how they enter into consequences in the event at hand.

The “relational field” here is neither a background nor a scene casually sketched by an interpreter. It refers to the concrete state of relations in which an event is already situated and which is causing certain differences to be extracted and subjected to weight assignment. Unpaid wages, school enrollment, seeking medical care, dividing a family household, migration, registration, giving testimony, transactions, and public conflicts bring different materials, relationships, and records to the fore. Discussing whether a difference matters apart from its relational field makes it easy to mistake abstract prominence for weight in reality.

A relational field will not have answers ready for the interpreter. It only lets certain questions surface first: which document is being required, which relationship can provide testimony, which record is being recognized, which deadline is approaching, who consequently has more to shoulder, and who loses choices. Interpreters cannot take in every possible difference at once; they can only follow the consequences that have already become apparent to determine which parts currently need to be traced. This limited scope must be adjusted as materials, nodes, and consequences change; it must be neither so narrow that it misses relationships already at work nor so broad that it crams everything into a single analysis.

Weight addresses precisely this problem. It is not a fixed ranking, much less a way of declaring a root cause for society in advance. A difference's weight consists in how strongly it can enter into real consequences within a concrete relational field. Household registration may not become an issue when buying groceries day to day, yet may suddenly gain weight in school enrollment, medical care, housing, and eligibility determinations; a past negative review may ordinarily have no conspicuous effect, but once a procedure extracts it again, it may change subsequent opportunities. Weight requires the interpreter to explain: why this difference gains weight at this moment, what steps it has passed through, and where it will transmit the consequences.

Weight also requires comparison. Why do two apparently similar events produce different outcomes? When a family is just as short of money, why can one document be deemed valid while another is sent back; when two people have both been injured, why can the fact of one person's labor enter into a determination, while the other's pain can go no further than a private account? Comparison does not automatically identify a single cause, but it can force explanation away from empty generalizations and back to which differences actually changed the consequences. A counterexample is not a nuisance; it makes the original judgment aware of its own boundaries and gives differences that have been downplayed a chance to reenter the analysis.

III. How Differences Enter into Social Consequences

A differentiating unit does not enter into consequences on its own. It first needs to be extracted and assigned weight within a concrete relational field, connected to concrete nodes and relational chains, so that it then produces actual effects in the present. Extraction is not arbitrary selection. A difference may be pushed into current consequences by an event, procedure, relationship, or record; it may also enter a judgment because the interpreter frames a question and chooses an entry point for analysis. In both cases, the basis for extraction must be explained and subjected to checks against consequences, comparisons, and counterexamples. Weight assignment, too, is not an abstract statement that something is important; it is when a difference begins to change eligibility, responsibility, risk, evaluation, action space, or available exits. Whether the results of current

handling leave traces and materials at nodes that can be extracted again in the future belongs to the subsequent processes of preservation and write-back.

Nodes are locations, mechanisms, or carriers where differences are stored, given definite form, formatted, identified, extracted, certified, passed on, put into effect, or subjected to write-back. Documentation requirements, files, contracts, schools, hospitals, judgments of responsibility within families, local testimony, administrative procedures, and other places where processing actually takes place can all become nodes. A node is not an abstract dot, nor need it be an individual with a will; its role becomes apparent through what, concretely, it stores, rejects, recognizes, or passes on.

Some consequences become more severe precisely because differences have not been successfully extracted. If the fact of actually living somewhere cannot be converted into recognized material, that does not mean no one lived there; if an injured body lacks records that can enter a determination, that does not mean the pain does not exist. The problem is that certain nodes handle only particular forms of difference, so facts of lived experience are rewritten, downplayed, or set aside as they enter a procedure. This gap cannot be fully accounted for by simply saying, "That is how the system works." We must also examine who preserves the materials, how certification is obtained, who bears the consequences after a refusal, and whether people can reconnect to the processing chain through other relations.

Relational chains, in turn, reveal how differences undergo transmission, recasting, branching, amplification, attenuation, or recirculation between nodes. A case of unpaid wages may move from an employment relation into debt deadlines, then into rent and household expenses; if a piece of material cannot be accepted as valid, the consequences may extend from a single service counter to school enrollment, residence, and the next eligibility determination. A relational chain is not simple linear causation. It can break off or take a detour, and it may reconnect at another node. Merely saying that "some structure caused everything" often amounts to skipping precisely these intermediate processes.

The historical index and write-back keep explanation from stopping at what is immediately before us. Past differences do not govern the present on their own; they must re-enter the present through family memory, archives, institutional records, local reputation, community commemorations, or other nodes. Nor is write-back ordinary archiving. When the result of a determination, recording, handling, or action is preserved and can later alter eligibility, risk, evaluation, and action space anew, that is write-back. It shows that people do not bear only the consequences of the present in the present; what is written down today may also become a difference extracted anew tomorrow.

These concepts are not a set of procedures to be imposed on everything. Their functions differ: the relational field grounds judgment in the state of relations currently unfolding; weight keeps judgment from placing all differences on the same plane; nodes reveal how differences are handled; relational chains allow people to trace how consequences flow; the historical index and write-back reveal how time enters positions and choices. Together, they serve not to explain society in its entirety, but to enable a limited judgment to make its own grounds clear.

If an explanation retains only the endpoint, it will quickly erase the intermediate processes: unpaid wages become proof of some overall condition, blocked school enrollment becomes an example of some label, and local testimony becomes an incidental phenomenon. Tracing the process does not negate broader pressures; it allows people to know where those pressures take effect and where they are amplified, blocked, or redirected. This is also why this book does not understand comparison as selecting the one and only answer. Different explanations must be compared according to their respective scopes of application, relevant materials, and actual consequences. If

they disagree about causation in the same event, they must still return to testing against that event, to see which consequences each can explain and where each begins to leave parts it cannot handle.

IV. The Differentiation Network Is Not a New Total Image

In concrete relational fields, differentiating units undergo extraction, weight assignment, connection, transmission, and write-back, forming a constantly changing differentiation-network order. This is the book's core judgment. It does not mean that a new entity called a "network" lies hidden behind society, nor does it seek to replace the original big picture with an even bigger one. What the differentiation network points to is the order through which differences enter into consequences by way of nodes and relational chains; this order overlaps, branches, flows back, and fractures, and also reconnects in new events.

This book therefore cannot be reduced to an ordinary list of factors. Merely listing income, household registration, education, family, locality, the nation, the state, the market, and platforms one by one does not explain how they have effects. Conversely, presenting the differentiation network as the sole truth would likewise commit the error of the total image. This book puts forward a core theoretical judgment about how society takes shape in concrete relational fields and enters into consequences; it neither compresses everything back onto a single axis nor excludes other explanations that can explain events within their effective scope.

Limited explanatory approaches concerning the state, the market, the nation, the family, locality, schools, platforms, and community can all be used, but each must return to its own traceable mechanisms. The state involves official documents and credentials, files, registration, certification, mutual recognition, enforcement, and write-back; the market involves prices, contracts, credit, deadlines, liquidity, debt, and risk shifting; the family preserves care, property, responsibility, memory, silence, favoritism, harm, and long-term evaluation; local familiarity, reputation, testimony, and spatial nodes can constitute real recognition networks. Nor can a national community be reduced to a myth of bloodline, a registered name, subjective imagination, or class occlusion: it may form through long-term interaction, language, rites and customs, shared memory, shared harm and protection, demands of responsibility, experiences of boundaries, and intergenerational write-back. Tracing mechanisms through these concepts does not deny the real relations to which they refer; it requires the corresponding explanatory approaches to undergo comparison and calibration.

V. The Power and Boundaries of the Class Image

Labor, wages, employment, property, debt, housing, risk, relations of domination, and the width of available exits are all real differences, and they may carry great weight. Any judgment about society that ignores them will lose its sense of reality. Class theory's appeal as an explanation within a limited scope lies precisely in its extraction of one set of high-weight differentiating units from among them. But classes do not exist. Extracting real differences and identifying a class entity are entirely different things; the product of low-dimensional compression, projection, and naming cannot prove the existence of a social entity, a natural community, or a reality constituting what society fundamentally is.

Limited explanations can take different approaches. In the discussions that follow, this book uses Model A and Model B solely to designate two explanations on the same level, each selecting a limited number of dimensions. Each extracts certain key differentiating units from a potentially infinite range of differentiating units and organizes the connections among them; real societies or institutions are the objects that both confront and seek to explain. Neither approach is presumed

superior or inferior to the other, nor does either designation imply that one is inherently more advanced.

The class image itself is not an actor. Acts of compression, subsumption, demotion, or monopolizing explanation can be attributed only to class theory, interpreters, organizations, institutionalized interpretive procedures, or concrete handling mechanisms. Class theory is, from the outset, Model C in its total-image-subsumption form, not Model A or Model B, still less the product of something originally healthy that overstepped its bounds only through later overuse. From the outset, its structure consists in inflating selectively extracted differences into an underlying total image, then demoting family, locality, nation, the private sphere, community, the body, records, and other valid explanations to subordinate material. The explanatory capacity within a limited scope that real differentiating units yield through operations such as extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression belongs to the concrete materials and the analytical process. It cannot be credited to the class image, nor does it change class theory's basic structure of subsumption from the outset.

This judgment does not require readers to deny oppression, unpaid wages, workplace injuries, poverty, debt, or risk shifting. Precisely because these consequences are indeed so heavy, it is all the more necessary to ask how they pass through concrete nodes and relational chains and intertwine with family responsibilities, local recognition, institutional qualifications, national community, private life, and historical records. If all problems are first translated into the class image, many differences already acting in events will be downplayed, leaving only an image that looks clear but is in fact far too flat.

VI. How Limited Explanations Remain Open to Calibration

Being limited does not mean being invalid. Any explanation can extract only some differences, and every explanation leaves some parts unaddressed for the time being. Acknowledging this limit is healthy explanatory humility: it requires an explanation to state what it has seen, what it has downplayed, in which events it is valid, and which counterexamples would force it to revise itself. This humility preserves comparison; it does not abolish judgment.

Even if Model A and Model B both have limitations, the fact that both are limited does not prove that they are equally effective. In judging the merits of explanations, the number of factors involved is not enough to establish that one model is better, nor does the simplicity or complexity of its construction in itself amount to explanatory power. Testing must be based on the materials relevant to the specific question, the weights of key differences, causal relational chains, and the actual consequences the explanation can account for. The merits of the explanatory models themselves and the institutional or social outcomes being explained are related but distinct objects of judgment. The incompleteness of an interpreter's knowledge cannot erase the differences among specific, known institutional outcomes; nor does judgment require an omniscient, complete model. When evidence remains insufficient, one should narrow or defer the corresponding causal determination, rather than use that insufficiency to cancel the possibility of substantive comparison.

Explanation can also run out of control at the other extreme. One form of this loss of control elevates a limited image produced through distinction extraction into society itself, leaving no place for other valid explanations; another illicitly substitutes the claim that society cannot be effectively explained for the fact that society cannot be exhausted and explanation is necessarily limited, thus placing models with explanatory power, limited but revisable models, erroneous models, and utterly groundless claims on the same level. The former is total-image subsumption; the latter is

the erasure of distinctions between explanations. They move in opposite directions, yet both destroy the conditions for comparison, revision, and calibration.

Complexity itself is no reason to refuse judgment. Events may indeed involve multiple sets of differences, multiple nodes, multiple relational chains, and records left at different times; this calls for more detailed explanation, not for declaring everything equally important and equally impossible to compare. Only when "too complex" is used to cancel valid comparison, revision in light of counterexamples, and explanatory calibration does complexity-based conflation constitute Model C's mechanism for erasing distinctions between explanations. Acknowledging omissions, boundaries, and counterexamples is not this mechanism; on the contrary, these are the conditions that allow limited judgments to remain revisable.

VII. The Book's Course of Work

This book does not provide readers with an answer they can immediately apply to everything. It first addresses why grand concepts are attractive and why they so easily exceed their own valid scope; it then clarifies, step by step, how differences undergo extraction, weight assignment, preservation, transmission, comparison, and write-back, and examines their different modes of operation in communities, institutions, history, and various concrete domains. The discussions that follow do not ask readers to accept a closed system, but require every explanation to return to events: what it has extracted, what it has omitted, at which nodes it holds, along which relational chains it is transmitted, and in the face of which counterexamples it needs adjustment.

This course also defines the limits of the book's use. Social Differentiation Network Theory cannot replace concrete historical research, institutional analysis, legal judgment, economic analysis, or people's own experience; nor can it recast all this work as material subordinate to itself. What it requires is that, before making any broad judgment about society, we do not let concepts flatten events in advance. Judgments may be limited, but they must be traceable, comparable, and revisable.

The episodes involving school admission, workplace injuries, platform accounts, families, and local life used repeatedly in this book are composite scenarios that bring multiple verifiable mechanisms into a single analytical setting. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, they neither refer to a single real case nor imply that different regions, years, institutions, or platforms share the same lists of materials, procedures, and consequences. Specific institutional facts remain bounded by the relevant jurisdictions, periods, and sources.

Society is not constituted in advance by grand concepts such as class, state, market, nation, and family. In concrete relational fields, differentiating units undergo extraction, weight assignment, connection, transmission, and write-back, forming a constantly changing differentiation-network order. This statement is neither the endpoint of the book nor another total image; it is the direction this book must hold to as it begins to make judgments.

Chapter 01 Why Class Theory Has Power: How a High-Compression Model Captures Real Social Pressures

I. Why a False Theory Can Still Capture Suffering

A theory that relies on fabrication alone can hardly gain a firm foothold in people's daily lives. Unpaid wages, looming rent, borrowing after illness, unemployment, and workplace injuries are not created by theory; they first fall upon people's bodies, time, and living arrangements. This is precisely why a false theory can still have power: it touches something in reality that carries immense weight. Touching reality is not enough to prove that the entire explanation holds.

Class theory has precisely this appeal. It brings wages, working hours, employment, property, debt, housing, protections, risk, and relations of domination to the fore, revealing pressures that are not purely personal within predicaments previously dismissed as "poor planning," "not trying hard enough," or "bad luck." Some people cannot wait for their wages, and not just because they are impatient; some dare not quit their jobs, and not just because they lack courage; some must keep working after illness, and not just because they are unwilling to rest and recover.

These pressures must be acknowledged; a social entity called "class," however, cannot be acknowledged on that basis. What actually enters into consequences are concrete differences and how they operate within relations: when wages are paid, whether a contract is recognized, who can schedule shifts, when debts fall due, and who can obtain medical records, evidence, or care. The so-called class image is an explanatory image that class theory produces through the low-dimensional compression, projection, and naming of one set of these differences. It is not society itself.

This chapter addresses only why this image is appealing. Many accounts prefer to push predicaments back onto the individual: unpaid wages mean a lack of savings, unemployment means insufficient diligence, borrowing after illness means a lack of planning, workplace injuries mean carelessness, and being unable to pick up a child means poor family arrangements. Such judgments sometimes touch on part of the situation, yet they often gloss over how labor, time, evidence, protections, and buffers produce consequences.

When rent has not been paid on time, asking only whether spending has been restrained sidesteps who delayed the wages, whether documentation can establish the unpaid wages and the employment relationship, how long asserting one's rights will take, and whether the next job can follow without a gap. A mother's inability to pick up her child cannot be reduced to whether she fulfills her responsibilities either; who schedules the late shift, whether taking leave means losing pay, and whether refusing a shift will cost her next month's shifts also determine whether she can be there. Debt after illness must be traced to interrupted income, medical expenses that must be paid up front, and gaps in protections; the inquiry cannot stop at accusatory questions about whether precautions were taken in advance.

The explanatory appeal of class theory comes from its ability to consistently bring a set of weighty differences to the fore. It enables people to see that many things attributed to character and choice are in fact already constrained by relations of employment, resources, time, and risk. Bringing one set of differences to the fore does not mean that one has already seen society itself. Any set of differences brought to the fore must still confront the other materials, relations, and responsibilities at work in an event. Grasping one hard line of constraint does not entitle class theory to assign all remaining differences in advance to the role of subordinate explanations. The weight it grasps is real; organizing that weight into the sole image of society is another matter.

Class theory cannot be placed alongside ordinary limited explanations, nor can it be described as an ordinary model that only later overstepped its bounds. Its ability to capture suffering is precisely what makes it easier for its basic structure—organizing the selected differences into a total class image—to operate.

II. Two Kinds of Deadlines and the Width of Available Exits: The Mechanisms of Unpaid Wages and Unemployment

In cases of delayed wage payments, we must first examine how two kinds of deadlines collide. The employer can postpone payment, but the worker's rent, food costs, children's expenses, medical bills, and repayment deadlines keep advancing on their own schedules. When wages arrive a day late, life does not pause for a day; the cost of waiting falls first on those who need the money.

There is also an asymmetry in the ability to wait. The party able to withhold wages may treat delayed payment as a way to manage cash flow, negotiate, or arrange costs; the party waiting for wages, however, may have no alternative income and cannot persuade the landlord, creditors, school, and hospital all to wait. One party can push the deadline back; the other must respond immediately. The actions available to the two parties already differ.

Unpaid wages are not just a matter of a verbal promise, either. Whether materials can establish the fact of unpaid wages and the employment relationship affects whether the case can enter subsequent procedures. Suffering and discontent may be real, yet they may not immediately translate into materials recognized by those procedures. The time spent defending one’s rights then feeds back into daily life: pursuing procedures requires taking leave, and while waiting for an outcome, one still has to pay rent, repay debts, and look for work. If a conflict arises with the original employer, whether one can move into the next job also becomes a problem. Unpaid wages do more than leave a sum of income unreceived. Evidence, time, housing, debt, and employment opportunities are joined into a relational chain, and the transmission of consequences continues along it.

Unpaid wages also change how people draw on relationships with relatives, colleagues, and local contacts. Some can turn to family for money to tide them over; others have no one to borrow from. Some can withstand the interval spent looking for their next job; others lose both income and existing support the moment they leave. These differences do not cancel the pressure of the employment relationship, but they determine how that pressure is borne, deferred, or passed on.

Failure to resist immediately cannot be taken as proof that one's existing position reflects one's character. The conditions for action are jointly constituted by payment deadlines, whether materials hold up as evidence, whether the chain of daily life permits waiting, and whether future employment can follow without a gap. By drawing out employment, income buffers, asymmetries of time, and the bearing of risk, class theory does prevent “not daring to make a fuss” from being reduced to weakness of character. This is the basis of its appeal. Yet workers whose wages have been withheld still differ in their physical condition, responsibilities to relatives, local relationships, existing debts, and available work. Class theory cannot, merely because it has drawn out the preceding factors, rule in advance that the remaining differences deserve to be no more than footnotes to the same image.

In unemployment, this mechanism manifests itself in differences in the width of available exits. Unemployment cannot be reduced to a single point in time. Questions of rent, deposits, social insurance, debt, family responsibilities, and the next job all open up at once. Once income stops, matters that could previously be handled separately begin to crowd together: whether one can keep

one's housing, how to cover children's expenses, when creditors will demand repayment, and whether institutional eligibility will become precarious because employment has been interrupted.

A person with a resource buffer is not free of pressure, but he still has time to wait, screen, and compare. He can send out a few more résumés, reject work he knows will harm his health or cannot sustain his livelihood, and give himself some time to recover before making the next choice. This time is not abstract freedom; it is sustained jointly by savings, housing, support from relatives, protections that can continue, and existing work experience.

Nor do people without a buffer lack the ability to choose. The problem is that their choices take place within a narrower span of time. When rent, repayments, and daily expenses press in, accepting or rejecting unsuitable work, accepting or rejecting worse conditions, often does not present two equally bearable options. Some can wait a few months; others can wait only a few days. Both are choosing, but they are not choosing under the same conditions for waiting.

The ability to refuse poor-quality work therefore cannot be understood solely in terms of personality or discernment. It also depends on how many rounds of failure one can withstand after losing income, whether one can avoid moving for the time being, and whether one can keep care, debt, and social insurance from breaking down all at once. A failed interview may merely delay plans for someone with a buffer, but for someone without one, it may immediately change housing, borrowing, and family arrangements.

Age, industry, city, health, institutional status, and family responsibilities also change the consequences of unemployment. Age affects the work available; industry affects the speed of transition; health limits what work one can take; and family responsibilities determine whether one can relocate or wait a long time. These differences need not be central every time, yet they can lead the same period of unemployment toward different outcomes. By drawing out resource buffers, the ability to wait, the width of available exits, and the bearing of risk, class theory can strip the claim that "the unemployed do not try hard enough" of its function of occlusion. It cannot, on that basis, presuppose a class entity, still less compress the time, bodies, families, and institutional relationships of all unemployed people into a single fate.

III. Branching Relational Chains: Family Responses, Bodily Reality, and Procedural Determination

Whether people can wait and choose under a deadline is one question; how working-time arrangements change care is another. Decisions about shift scheduling often take place outside the family. Workplace managers arrange early and late shifts, overtime, and days off; workers receive a timetable that has already been set. Yet the times when someone needs to pick up children after school or take on care within the family do not automatically fit that timetable.

A shift schedule enters the family along a temporal chain: late shifts cause drop-off and pick-up arrangements to fall through, last-minute overtime breaks prior commitments to provide care, and taking leave reduces income or affects the following month's shifts. Working hours are not clock times confined to the workplace; they change who cooks, who stays with a sick person, who explains things to the school, and who bears the burden of children waiting and older people complaining. Refusing a shift assignment is not simply a matter of declaring what one wants, either. Taking leave may mean a pay deduction, refusing assigned shifts may affect the following month's schedule, and changing jobs may bring an interruption in income and the risks of looking for work again. Workers know the arrangements are unreasonable, yet income and job opportunities have already raised the cost of refusal.

The consequences for care also accumulate. Failing to pick up a child once may be only a temporary difficulty; repeatedly coming home late and repeatedly asking others to pick up the child, however, change judgments among relatives about who owes whom, who is reliable, and who must give way. The pressure created by a shift schedule is therefore not just a sum of lost income; it also enters family memory and arrangements for responsibility.

The family's immediate response to this pressure first changes the care and housework arrangements at hand. Arguments, compromises, requests for help from relatives, reallocations of housework, or decisions about who must give up one of their jobs—if the outcomes of these responses are preserved in family memory and arrangements for responsibility as differences that can be retrieved again later, write-back has already taken shape.

Only when these contents are identified again, retrieved, interpreted, or subjected to weight assignment in subsequent handling will they again change whether leave can be taken next time, whether anyone is willing to help, and how much more uncertainty the family can bear. Responses outside the workplace may thus, in turn, constrain or support choices at work.

Class theory can see here how the power to schedule shifts reaches into the family, and this is no small matter. But the family is not a passive container. Whether relatives can handle drop-offs and pick-ups at short notice, who thinks care should be whose responsibility, who has helped whom in the past, and how the family remembers one absence after another will make the same shift schedule produce different results in different families. These relations do not arise unidirectionally from labor relations, nor can they be written as appendages of labor reproduction.

Work arrangements affect family care, but illness is first of all a bodily event. Pain, treatment, recuperation, and restricted mobility do not lose their own reality because of income or job titles. How much recovery time a patient needs, whether they can continue their previous work, and whether they need care from others are all direct questions arising from the condition of the body. The same illness does not produce the same social consequences for everyone. People with savings, more stable jobs, protection, or access to care support may still be able to sustain treatment and recuperation for a time; for people with few resources, unstable work, and heavy family responsibilities, other links in life begin to loosen more quickly as soon as something goes wrong with the body. Illness is not produced by class. Yet once it enters existing relations, the ways it is borne diverge.

Once bodily impairment meets daily pay, pay deductions for leave, or unstable work, an interruption in income immediately enters the picture. Hospital bills arrive first, while wages may fall; people who need to recuperate must also face pressures concerning absence, performance, their position, and returning to work. The body needs time, but income arrangements are often unwilling to wait. Once medical expenses, interrupted income, and loan deadlines are linked, the transmission of pressure continues along debt and kinship relations. Repayment dates will not give way to treatment, so whether one can quit a job or recover fully from an illness may be constrained anew by a sum of money falling due.

Protection, savings, and support from relatives form different buffers. Having protection does not mean that all expenses and pressures from missed work are covered; having savings does not mean that the pressures of care and missed work disappear; having relatives willing to lend money may also bring future responsibilities and changes in relations. These buffers cannot be summed up by saying that someone has "somewhat better conditions"; rather, different relations absorb or amplify consequences at different times. Debt following illness also makes treatment choices and arrangements for daily life constrain one another. Some people can recuperate first and then decide whether to return to work; others must secure their income before they can even discuss treatment.

Some can distribute part of the costs across relatives and protective relations; others can only keep all the pressure on themselves. The difference lies not only in having more or less money, but also in what kinds of support can be sustained as deadlines approach.

Debt after illness cannot be summed up along a single economic line, also because the same pressure changes shape across different relations. Savings may initially absorb medication costs, which later turn into loans from relatives; missed work may first reduce income and then bring care and repayment arrangements into conflict; whether an employment relationship can be maintained also affects the possibilities for protection, returning to work, and seeking further help. The type of illness, age, degree of recovery, medical system, marital relationship, urban eligibility, and care arrangements can also lead the same interruption of income to different outcomes. These factors do not serve to deny the weight of resources and protection, but to prevent any single line of compression from being treated as a complete explanation of illness, the body, and family relations.

Class theory extracts gaps in protection, resource buffers, interruptions of income, and the bearing of risk, and can thus point out that the consequences of illness do not fall evenly. But illness, the body, the family, and medical relations cannot be reduced to expressions of a class image. Each enters into the consequences through treatment, borrowing, care, institutional recognition, and recovery time, and may change where the burden of the same debt ultimately falls. Class theory can point out the uneven distribution of resources and risks within these consequences, but it cannot indiscriminately conscript the onset of illness, bodily recovery, what families bear, and medical procedures as evidence of one and the same class entity. Only by placing each back within actual relations can we see where pressure can be absorbed and where it is pushing people into debt.

Illness shows that bodily processes are not the same as economic arrangements, while work injuries further demonstrate that the fact of bodily harm does not automatically amount to procedural recognition or the actual bearing of responsibility. Work injuries likewise bring bodily harm and organizational responsibility directly before us. The consequences of a work injury do not stop at the moment of the accident. If it is described merely as an operating error, insufficient attention, or bad luck, attention becomes fixed on the instant of injury, while the labor arrangements before and after the accident are obscured. Whether a contract exists, whether the worker has received training, whether working hours are excessive, whether machinery has protective safeguards, and who is responsible for keeping records at the site are all conditions shaping how the injury is understood.

After an injury, medical records, proof of the employment relationship, site records, and coworkers' testimony each perform their respective evidentiary roles in determining whether bodily harm can be recognized through formal procedures. Evidence does not automatically stand on the injured person's side. Who controls the records, who is willing to testify, and whether the materials can be obtained can mean that the same pain sometimes enters the recognition process and sometimes remains only a private statement. Procedural recognition of a workplace injury, assessment of capacity for work when the relevant conditions are met, and the implementation of compensation are distinct parts of the handling process; the burden of waiting may also run through them. Whether responsibility can be confirmed through a procedure and who actually bears it are also separate matters. Who advances the medical expenses, who bears living costs while work is suspended, who can still afford to wait when assessment is delayed, and whether the employer acknowledges the fact of employment all affect how the accident's consequences travel along different relational chains. The consequences of a workplace injury are not an allocation of responsibility on a sheet of paper, but how the body, income, materials, and time support one another or push one another away.

Class theory extracts the organization of labor, the allocation of responsibility, and the shifting of risk from this, and can thus oppose attributing work injuries entirely to individual carelessness. This extraction has its real-world material: some people do indeed find it harder to preserve evidence and harder to bear the wait, and are more likely to lose their income after work stops. But bodily harm does not disappear within the recognition procedure. Family care, loans from relatives, relations with coworkers, local help-seeking, and the legal system all enter into the consequences of treatment, compensation, and returning to work. They do not serve to dilute the weight of the organization of labor, but to reveal why responsibility may still be borne by different people in similar accidents.

IV. How Dispersed Suffering Acquires a Common Language: Connection and Its Limits

No theory can do without compression, because the people, materials, time, and relations implicated in unpaid wages, scheduling, debt after illness, unemployment, and work injuries are too complex. Without extraction and connection, people can hardly see clearly which pressures repeatedly alter the consequences; compression serves precisely to place scattered experiences within comparable contours, so that people need not treat every event anew as an isolated accident. But these five domains enter life at different nodes, and the mechanisms each brings into play also differ: unpaid wages involve payment and deadlines; scheduling involves working time and care; debt after illness involves the body and borrowing; unemployment involves waiting and fallback options; and work injuries involve evidence and responsibility. Since they enter at different nodes, their concrete consequences in life will not be entirely the same. Thus, although theoretical compression is necessary, it cannot flatten out the actual paths through these different nodes.

Class theory and the interpretive procedures that adopt it extract resource possession, the sale of labor, control over time, the bearing of risk, buffering capacity, and differences in fallback options from these events. Class theory connects the power over payment, the power over scheduling, income buffers, debt pressure, the determination of responsibility, and differences in fallback options into a single line, revealing asymmetries within relations and pointing out that some suffering is not a private failure. This connection enables people who had previously borne their burdens separately to see similar pressures and recognize how others' difficulties and their own can illuminate one another.

On this basis, class theory gathers the extracted differences under names through which people can identify one another, allowing wages, working hours, risks, property, and fallback options to be seen as evidence of the same social position. This public naming can swiftly counter accounts that make the consequences entirely private, and thereby provide a ready-made language for organization, mobilization, and public judgment. Without having to fabricate unpaid wages, illness, unemployment, or work injuries, class theory can use a single explanatory line to organize dispersed suffering into what appears to be a common situation. This is precisely the source of its powerful appeal.

Yet what is connected consists of similar differences that may carry high weight, not an already existing class subject acting as a unified whole. Society is not first neatly divided into a few classes for people then to enter with their respective lives. People live within intersecting relations of body, occupation, income, debt, household registration, accent, kinship, locality, medical history, housing, institutional eligibility, and care responsibilities. When a child enrolls in school, household registration, social insurance, rental registration, school documents, and whether the parents can take leave may carry great weight; when borrowing money, creditworthiness, kinship relations,

past dealings, and local reputation may carry great weight; in debt after illness, interrupted income, medical expenses, recovery time, and loan deadlines may all close in at once. Wages, employment, resource buffers, and the bearing of risk do indeed carry great weight in many relational fields, but this does not give them a fixed priority over all relations.

Repeated connections among differences still do not form a class entity. Real relations within families, localities, and communities continue to exist. The fact that certain differences often occur together can show only that they jointly alter consequences in a number of relational fields. The fact that these concrete relations jointly gain weight within relational fields cannot, in turn, prove that behind them stands a class entity that arranges everything in advance.

A class image can indeed present some circumstances in compressed form, but it cannot replace the differentiation position of concrete people within relations. Even people with the same income may face different consequences in their lives because of differences in medical history, household registration, care responsibilities, residential address, support from relatives, and institutional recognition; the rough position marked by the image cannot replace the actual position jointly formed by these differences within concrete relations. When the same set of economic pressures recurs, class theory appears especially solid, but however solid the image may be, it does not exist prior to relations. Even when wages, housing, debt, and domination jointly grow heavier across several events, they still bear on concrete people through contracts, residential addresses, qualifications, care, records, and time arrangements; to take recurring outcomes alone and turn them into proof that an entity exists is precisely to retreat from relations to a total image.

The product must be distinguished from the subject performing the operations: the class image is merely the result of this compression, projection, and naming, and cannot be written as an actor that actively connects events. It is class theory, interpreters, organizations, or institutionalized procedures that carry out extraction, weight assignment, organization, naming, and the arrangement of interpretive positions. For the same person, labor relations may come to the fore when wages go unpaid; residential address, documents, and qualifications may have a more direct bearing when their child's school enrollment is blocked; and when they cannot recuperate after illness, they encounter different barriers involving medical treatment, care, and debt. If all these problems are adjudicated in advance under the same name, the relations that should have been identified anew are left merely to supply further evidence for that name.

When class theory extracts shared pressures, it causes these different circumstances to be translated first into the same kind of position. Translation is not without use; it can make visible some of the weight that was previously concealed. But class theory has a total-image structure from the outset and uses this capacity for connection to establish a shared language as the only exit, allowing branching mechanisms to appear only as examples of an already established image. Once translation becomes the only entrance, residential address, medical history, care, local recognition, and institutional qualifications—which could otherwise change the judgment—are forced first to prove that they still ultimately serve the same image. Two things must be separated here: concrete differences do indeed grow heavier within relational fields; compressing them into a single entity posited as what society fundamentally is, however, strips each of its standing to reenter explanation. The former must be preserved; the latter must be taken apart.

V. The Structure of Total-Image Subsumption and Limited Economic Differentiation Analysis

The danger of compression does not lie only in someone occasionally misusing an originally neutral tool. The structure of total-image subsumption inherent in class theory does not emerge only later

or after excessive use; its basic structure is to organize selectively extracted high-weight differences into a total image of class and allow other differences to be understood only in ways this image permits. This structure makes compression cease to be merely a temporary task of explanation and begin to prearrange for society what is fundamental, what is superficial, and what can serve only as subordinate material. Concrete actors who adopt this structure will make family, locality, nation, body, memory, medical history, and community relations appear only as the image permits.

When some differences are extracted, others are simultaneously suppressed. How family care is distributed, how local relations provide or deny support, how national memory and language figure in recognition, how bodily recovery limits action, and how institutions handle medical histories and records may not all retain their original explanatory standing within class compression. They do not cease to have consequences simply because an image has not placed them at its center.

In concrete relational fields, some differentiating units do indeed carry great weight. When wages go unpaid, employment relations and payment deadlines immediately change life; when a workplace injury occurs, whether the facts of the work can be established directly affects compensation; when unemployment strikes, resource buffers and waiting time narrow or expand choices. These judgments concern consequences within events; they do not proclaim an eternal center of society. High weight does not imply any inherent hierarchy. The fact that income carries great weight in one event does not mean it determines outcomes before anything else in every relation; the same income can also connect to different consequences depending on differences in address, medical history, family support, household registration, and institutional eligibility. Weight within a concrete relational field cannot be directly rewritten as the sole main axis of all social relations.

Here lies the crucial transformation in class theory: it organizes differences in labor, wages, property, debt, risk, and domination that repeatedly gain weight in certain relational fields into a total image of class; it then uses this image to determine in advance where other differences should ultimately be placed. Family can be described as reproduction, locality as surface relations, nation as occlusion, and body and memory as derivative material. The material need not be denied; it may still be stripped of its standing to change judgments independently.

Rejecting a sole main axis does not mean flattening all differences into equal importance. Different events still require judgments about which materials, relations, and responsibilities are entering into consequences. What must be rejected is the use of a total image to decide the outcome for all differences before an event even begins; this turns high weight from a judgment open to examination into a naming of society that cannot be revised.

Acknowledging that class theory can draw out real pressures is the starting point for dismantling it. If wages, labor, debt, housing, risk, differences in timing, and relations of domination are described as inconsequential, the critique will be even further removed from people's daily lives than class theory is. These differences narrow people's ways out and change who can wait and who must bear the consequences immediately; they cannot be brushed aside. Their weight must be preserved; projecting them as class entities, natural communities, or what society fundamentally is is another matter. The various mechanisms are connected to one another, yet each still has its own relational chains through which it produces consequences.

Dismantling the total class image must not throw people back into individual blame, nor break pressures into unrelated fragments. It requires placing the labor, wages, employment, property, debt, housing, risk, domination, and ways out drawn out by class theory, together with the materials, responsibilities, and relations it has downplayed, back within concrete consequences. Doing so does not eliminate judgment; instead, it makes judgment open to scrutiny: who arranges

time, and where; which record can be recognized; what deadline is approaching; which relational chain transfers consequences to whom; which differences are becoming weightier at this moment. A class image can depict part of a situation; interpreters who adopt class theory must not let this image speak for society itself, still less use it to monopolize the interpretation of suffering.

Limited explanation also compresses, but it must still account for what it has drawn out, which materials it has not yet addressed, and what consequences might force a revision of its judgments. Class theory does not earn exemption from this responsibility merely by grasping real differences. Limited economic differentiation analysis must be kept separate from class theory. When researchers trace a case of unpaid wages, a debt relationship, ways out in housing, property use, labor arrangements, the shifting of risk, or concrete domination, and restrict their conclusions to what the available materials can support, this kind of analysis can be revised in light of family caregiving, relations involving national communities, local recognition, legal qualifications, and other materials. It addresses how specific differences enter into consequences; it does not automatically become class theory merely because its object of study is an economic question. In the analyses that follow, this book uses Model A and Model B to designate two limited explanations on the same level. Real societies or institutions are the objects that both confront and explain. Although both explanations are limited, they must still undergo substantive comparison on the basis of their respective causal connections and the consequences they explain. Neither is presumed superior to the other, and neither is inherently an upgraded version of the other.

Whether an analysis enters the class theory criticized in this book cannot be determined by researchers' self-designation, nor simply by the breadth or narrowness of their research. The key lies in the explanatory structure: once an analysis first forms a class image and then uses a total class image to prearrange the explanatory positions of other differences, fix the meanings they are supposed to have, or digest counterexamples anew as evidence of class occlusion, false consciousness, and deeper class relations, it enters Model C in its total-image-subsumption form. Narrowing the scope will not turn this kind of class theory into Model A, Model B, or an ordinary limited tool; what can be retained is limited analysis of concrete relations involving wages, debt, labor, property, housing, risk, and domination.

Chapter 02 The Formation of the Class Plane

The class plane is formed by class theory, interpreters, and institutional procedures of interpretation: they organize locally extracted differences into a single main axis, then expand this image into the base map of society as a whole. The discussion here concerns not the generation of objective class entities, but the formation of an explanatory plane.

I. The Capacity for Local Distinction Extraction and the Structure of Total-Image Subsumption

Wages, employment, working hours, rent, debt, risk, and resource buffers are all hard relations extracted by class theory. They do exist, and their consequences can be severe. Class theory has grasped a set of real differences; this cannot be passed over. Denying these differences would leave theory without ground beneath its feet, and the consequences of relations involving labor, income, resources, and risk would once again be downplayed. A social theory blind to these differences would also readily rewrite structural pressures as individual failures once again. A person's income, assets, labor position, employment relations, resource buffers, and capacity to bear risk profoundly alter his circumstances. Especially in problems involving wages, housing, debt, educational opportunities, and the risk of illness, this set of differentiating units extracted by class theory is often not background: these differences are intensely amplified and do carry high weight in such problems.

Analysis of labor, wages, employment, debt, risk, and relations of domination can be limited, concrete, and bounded. What is truly difficult to handle is locally valid explanation: real differentiating units such as labor, wealth, employment, and resource distribution, together with the processes of their extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression, form class theory's local explanatory capacity. Yet class theory's basic structure organizes this portion of explanatory power into authority over all explanation, compresses and projects the extracted differences and names them a class image, then installs this image in the place of what society fundamentally is.

The move from “there is a set of real differentiating units here” to “other relations are merely appendages of the class image” reveals class theory's procedure of total-image subsumption: from the outset, the capacity for local distinction extraction is organized into the total image's structure of subsumption. Class theory connects the extracted differences into a measure for all explanation and carries this line into the family, locality, nation, religion, culture, education, memory, private sphere, community, region, language, faith, body, identity, shame, responsibility, familial affection, and local standing. Other relations may still appear, but they can be mentioned only as explanations subordinate to the class image.

High weight does not mean always having the highest weight, still less does it justify becoming the sole main axis. A society does not have only one kind of difference at work. Family, region, language, institutions, the body, age, gender, memory, religion, education, occupation, local standing, legal status, and migration experience can all alter a person's position. They carry different operative weight in different problems: sometimes they recede into the background, sometimes they are amplified, and sometimes they determine how a person is seen, excluded, protected, or harmed even more directly than the set of differences extracted by class theory.

For example, a worker from elsewhere is seen first and foremost as a laborer in the factory. His wages, working hours, contract, and risk of workplace injury are indeed closely related to

differences in labor, employment, resource buffers, and risk-bearing. But when he applies to enroll his child in school, household registration, proof of residence, a rental contract, available school places, and local institutions reposition him. Resources, income, and the family's safety net remain present, because they affect whether he can rent suitable housing and pay additional costs; but what determines his position at this point is no longer labor relations alone.

When the same person enters different problems, the differences he carries are reordered. Class theory turns a set of high-weight differentiating units into the sole main axis through low-dimensional projection, thereby forming the class plane. Interpreters who adopt this image no longer ask about these units' operative weight in concrete problems, but assume in advance that this class image has already supplied the final explanation. Thus, the family is written as class reproduction, locality becomes the surface layer of economic structure, the nation becomes an outer garment for the mobilization of interests, religion becomes a tool of the order of domination, and culture becomes a shell of ideas. They may appear, but they lose their own explanatory standing.

This is like projecting a three-dimensional object onto a wall. A projection can show contours and can also show direction. The class image can indeed reveal certain real relations in society. But the projection is not the thing itself, and the shadow cannot replace the actual object. People can infer some relations from a shadow, but they cannot leave the object's thickness, sides, back, and internal connections entirely to the shadow to explain. The problem is that interpreters who adopt class theory mistake the projection for the actual object. An image can present part of reality, but it cannot present every relation; when the procedure of interpretation permits reality to appear in only one shape, the projection masquerades as society itself.

II. Presence Rewritten as Exclusivity: The Demotion of Family, Locality, and Shared Memory

Many errors first grasp part of reality and then expand it. This does not mean that class theory is merely an ordinary limited explanation whose application is occasionally expanded later; rather, its capacity for local distinction extraction is organized into the procedure of total-image subsumption from the outset. Class theory does not get every fact wrong: families do transmit resources, local disputes involve interests, religion may serve order, and national narratives may also be mobilized. The problem is that the procedure of interpretation directly rewrites “presence” as “exclusivity,” elevates these facts to the status of all facts, and connects the extracted differences in advance into a decisive measure for all explanation. Although other differences can still be mentioned, the procedure of interpretation strips them of the standing to alter judgments independently. They are no longer treated as real differences capable of altering social positions, but can appear only in a demoted capacity as shells, surfaces, disguises, or supplements of the class image. Society is thereby compressed into a plane.

There is nothing absurd about saying that differences in income, real estate holdings, educational attainment, personal connections, and occupational position exist within families. Parents' real estate holdings, income, education, and connections do alter their children's opportunities; whether a family can provide tutoring, a stable home, room for trial and error, and emotional support also materially affects the next generation's opportunities. The family has never been only about familial affection; it does transmit resources, habits, fears, and boundaries. But if one goes further and concludes that these differences have proved the family to be essentially nothing but a machine for class reproduction, explanation has crossed a line. The family is also a place of bodily care, a place where past relations accumulate, a place of emotional dependence, and a place where

favoritism and silences are preserved over the long term. Illness, indebtedness, inheritance, the ordering of elders and juniors, and memory also operate concretely within the family.

When an elderly family member falls ill, who pays, who steps back at the sight of the bill, who stays at the bedside, who takes leave from work, who remains silent before the sickbed, who received more parental care in the past, and who among the siblings has always been thought responsible for shouldering the burden—none of this can be fully explained by interpreters who adopt class theory and rely solely on the class image. Money is present, but it cannot substitute for the consequences that care, memory, responsibility, and emotional dependence produce at this moment.

When a person cares for his sick parents, economic position alone cannot explain why the responsibility falls to him. He may be the one who lives closest to home, may have been expected since childhood to be sensible, may be the sibling most afraid to refuse, may have been wronged in the past, or may, precisely because he has the lowest income, be the one whose time is most readily claimed. Class theory can extract the resource pressures involved, but the resulting class image cannot show why these responsibilities fall to him.

The same is true of local relations. There is nothing absurd about saying that local land disputes involve struggles over resources. A plot of land has value; when its boundaries change, interests change. But a local dispute often also draws out past relations, marriages, personal obligations, funerals, reputations, generational seniority, and trust or distrust accumulated over many years. A shifted field ridge may call up a land exchange twenty years earlier; a record of wedding and funeral exchanges may record who was absent from whose family funeral; an elder's words carry force not because of formal power, but because he still carries operative weight in local memory. Interests are present, yet past relations, reputation, generational seniority, and local memory still alter how the dispute unfolds.

Local society likewise cannot be reduced to a table of resources. Land, housing, shops, school places, and job opportunities certainly matter, but relations among acquaintances, standing, reputation, dialect, past events, wedding and funeral etiquette, pathways of mutual assistance, and mechanisms of exclusion also arrange people's positions. When someone returns to their hometown for a wedding or funeral, the amount of gift money, seating precedence, who takes the initiative to greet them, who avoids seeing them, and even who brings up a debt from ten years ago may all redefine that person's position. If the class image occupies the center in advance, these details are easily demoted to the surface layer; often, it is precisely these details that determine whether a person can be accepted, can ask for help, and can preserve their dignity.

The same is true of nations, religion, rites, and customs. National discourse may be used by political forces, religion may serve the order of domination, and rites and customs may oppress people; none of this can be denied. But language, migration, memories of war, shared experiences of harm, sacrificial rites, funerals, forms of address, rituals, and taboos also actually alter people's identifications, fears, boundaries, and ways of forming alliances. Domination is present, but language, shared memory, rituals, and taboos also concretely alter identification, boundaries, and alliance formation.

Shared memory works in the same way. Why does a group remember a particular migration, a particular conflict, a particular language, a particular festival, a particular boundary? These memories may of course be related to resources and power, but once they enter concrete life, they are no longer mere decoration for resource relations; they materially alter people's closeness and distance, alter trust and fear, and alter who is seen as one of us and who is seen as an outsider.

The class plane formed by class theory appears to have explanatory power because interpretive procedures that adopt it can rapidly recast complex relations as a set of predetermined questions: on seeing a family, they ask how resources are reproduced; on seeing a locality, they ask how interests are distributed; on seeing religion, rites, and customs, they ask what kind of domination these serve; on seeing nations and culture, they ask what economic contradictions these conceal. These questions have value in themselves, yet the answers have often already been predetermined when the questions are asked. This flattening explanation does not necessarily delete these relations entirely, but it depresses their independent operative weight, stripping them of the standing to govern their own meaning.

III. Turning Nodes into Labels and the Occlusion of Function

Class theory rewrites relations and, in the process of interpretation, also compresses nodes into group labels. When interpreters who adopt class theory see scholars, clans, academies, chambers of commerce, and local organizations, they often ask first: Which class do they belong to? Which class interests do they represent? Are they remnants of an old class? These labels cannot replace inquiry into concrete relations. Scholars may hold cultural qualifications, clans may uphold an order based on seniority and male authority, chambers of commerce may serve local capital, academies may exclude certain people, and local organizations may also keep power in the hands of a few; these are the concrete issues that need examination.

If analysis stops at class labels, nodes are directly compressed into group labels. Network analysis asks not which label they fall under, but what differences they have taken up, what memories they have preserved, which relations they have connected, which channels they have opened or monopolized, whom they have oppressed, and what they have protected.

Characterizing a clan as a “landlord clan” or an “old force” does not explain what it has taken up and sustained. It may preserve genealogies and mediate disputes; it may also arrange sacrificial rites and distribute resources while preserving structures that exclude women or oppress younger generations. In certain periods, it may also take in orphans, the sick, migrants, and people who have lost access to state relief. The label “cultural institution of the scholarly stratum” likewise cannot substitute for analysis of an academy. It may restrict access to knowledge, but it may also preserve texts, train people in expression, sustain teacher–student lineages, and connect local standing with public discussion. Calling a chamber of commerce a “merchant-class organization” does not explain its concrete workings either. It may defend commercial interests, but it may also take up and sustain functions involving credit, mutual guarantees, dispute mediation, and local public affairs.

These nodes can of course oppress people, but their oppressive character is not the whole of their structure. The class plane makes oppression, whose interests are served, and group labels visible, yet struggles to show how nodes take up and sustain what passes through them, what functions those nodes perform, and how differences are preserved, filtered, interpreted, and passed on within nodes. By ignoring the concrete mechanisms of nodes, this perspective further occludes the concrete channels on which people depend when learning to read and write, expressing themselves, seeking redress, migrating, entering commerce, and participating in local affairs.

Class theory's flattening explanations also erase channels. Describing all channels for education, expression, law, and migration, and all entry points into commerce and politics, as “outer shells of class oppression” obscures their concrete nodes, entry points, rules, those who take up and sustain their functions, and blockages. Whether a person can learn to read and write, whether they can express themselves, whether they can seek redress, whether they can migrate, whether they can

enter commercial networks, and whether they can participate in local affairs—all depend on passing through concrete channels. This plane can present oppression and the replacement of groups, but it cannot present channels and the migration of functions. Scholars, academies, clans, chambers of commerce, and local organizations may be oppressive; in different relational fields, they may also take up and sustain functions such as literacy, mediation, credit, public expression, local mutual aid, and privately sustained cultural and intellectual traditions. Judging modernization requires examining whether these functions have migrated successfully; the claim that "new classes replace old classes" cannot answer this question.

If the old academies are abolished, who takes up and sustains literacy, expression, teacher–student lineages, and local public discussion? If clans are broken apart, who takes up and sustains dispute mediation, assistance among kin, care for the elderly, and local memory? If chambers of commerce are eliminated, who takes up and sustains commercial credit, mutual guarantees, industry rules, and local public affairs? If local organizations are uniformly incorporated into a higher level, do channels for expressing local problems, negotiating, and self-correction still exist? These questions cannot be answered by replacing labels for groups of people. Replacing the labels does not necessarily mean that the functions have migrated. Dismantling one entry point does not mean that a new one has already formed; eliminating an old node does not mean that the differences it once took up already have new parties to take them up and sustain them. Class theory readily writes social change as the replacement of low-dimensional positions marked out by the class image, so that channels, the right to take up and sustain these functions, and the migration of functions cannot enter into the main judgment.

This makes it necessary to clarify the private sphere and intermediate nodes. The private sphere is the space in which a person, a family, and local society can live, accumulate, judge, pass things down, form associations, and speak without being wholly swallowed by the state, organizations, movements, or ideology. The private sphere is not necessarily warm, nor is it necessarily equal. Families and clans may produce oppression, academies may exclude people, and chambers of commerce may defend the interests of a few; teacher–student lineages may create barriers to entry, and local public expression may also be controlled by structures of prestige. Analyzing the private sphere and intermediate nodes does not mean glorifying them.

The problem is that society cannot consist solely of vertical relations between individuals and the highest organization. Intermediate nodes such as clans, academies, chambers of commerce, teacher–student lineages, and local public expression may oppress people, but they may also preserve the root system of society's self-generation. These intermediate nodes may also preserve memory, train people in expression, or sustain credit arrangements; dispute mediation, the organization of mutual aid, and the maintenance of privately sustained cultural and intellectual traditions are sometimes also accomplished through them, forming social connections that do not depend entirely on the state and the market. Class theory readily treats all these nodes as outer shells of old classes. Doing so can sometimes reveal real oppression, but it also flattens society's intermediate layer along with it. What is flattened is not only the old forces, but potentially also a society's capacity for self-repair, self-expression, and sustaining its own relations and carrying them forward. The real questions are which functions must be retained, which forms of oppression must be dismantled, which channels need to migrate, and which intermediate nodes need to be transformed—rather than simply compressing all intermediate nodes into class labels.

IV. The Mechanism of Strong Compression and the Unfolding of the Formation Chain

The class plane is not clumsy. It appears clear because class theory has accomplished a strong compression. A complex society contains too many differences: income, occupation, family, region, language, education, legal status, the body, debt, trust, shame, memory, religion, local standing, and experiences of migration are interwoven. If each were unfolded, society would become a tangle of details difficult to judge. Every theory must compress; without compression, there is no understanding. The problem is not compression itself, but that class theory and the interpretive procedures that adopt it mistake the compressed result for society itself and use it to arrange subsequent material.

Class theory compresses complex society onto a single axis. Along this axis, the questions concern a fixed set of positions: who possesses and who labors, who receives the gains and who bears the costs, who holds a buffer of resources and who has no way out left. This line is powerful: interpretive procedures use it to organize material quickly and deliver clear judgments. Clarity itself brings pleasure. Many relations in reality are mixed: a family may both protect and oppress people; a tradition may both preserve memory and exclude others; the members and organizers of a local community may both provide mutual aid and punish those who do not fit in; a market opportunity may both release capacities and create new vulnerabilities.

Mixed states are difficult to handle. Class theory offers a quicker reading: interpreters who adopt it compress mixed relations into antagonism, multiple differences into a principal contradiction, and uncertain judgments into a definite stance. This is its attraction, but also its danger, because clarity may come from insight or from deletion. Class theory can extract the hard structures of labor, wealth, resources, and risk, and the resulting image presents some of the relations within them. When class theory then organizes all relations back onto the same axis, clarity comes to depend on deletion; what is suppressed is sometimes precisely the relations that make society what it is.

Criticizing the class plane must not lead to the opposite extreme of treating complexity as supreme and assuming that the more complex a theory is, the better. If a theory refuses compression and tries to retain everything, it will ultimately lose its capacity for judgment; society certainly contains countless differences, but not all differences are equally significant for every problem. A model that includes everything may seem comprehensive while actually making nothing clear. The error of the class plane does not lie in using compression or remaining simple, because every explanation must be simple enough to use. The real point of disagreement is that a limited model should know that it explains only part of reality, captures certain high-weight differences, and occludes others, and therefore needs to be tested against concrete problems and acknowledge its own boundaries.

The basic structure of class theory, however, directly organizes its own simplicity into a complete total image of society. As it captures certain high-weight differences, it immediately fixes them in the highest position forever, demanding that all reality must ultimately return to this scale and relegating other differences to appearances, outer shells, or disguises. This certainly allows it to incorporate more phenomena quickly into an established image, but in this self-enclosure it loses the capacity to be corrected by real consequences. It is precisely through this plane that class theory trains people to view society in a low-dimensional way, so that explanation is no longer merely a tool for looking at society, but instead permits society to appear only in the form prescribed by the class image.

The class plane is not formed by a single act of naming. Interpreters first extract differences such as labor, income, property, debt, housing, risk, exit costs, and domination from existing relations;

extraction itself is not fabrication, because these differences are already at work in concrete consequences. Next, interpretive procedures assign a higher explanatory standing to one set of these differences, making them the clues sought first when reading the material. This step may still yield valid judgments, because certain relational fields do indeed make these differences especially weighty.

The key lies in connection. The extracted differences originally operate through different relational chains: income connects to housing, care, and waiting; property connects to ways out, qualifications, and the bearing of risk; labor relations connect to time arrangements, possibilities of exit, and domination. Class theory gives priority to connecting these different chains into a single main line. Connection makes scattered material readable, while also changing the relative positions of the materials; relations that could originally alter a judgment on their own are now required to explain first how they relate back to this main line.

Compression follows. Compression does not delete the material entirely, but reduces multiple relations capable of changing the conclusion to an image with fewer dimensions. Family, locality, shared memory, qualifications, the body, and channels still appear, but they are positioned in advance as background, transmission mechanisms, or subordinate outcomes. Projection makes positions at different nodes and in different relational fields appear comparable along the same axis; naming then calls this set of results, which has undergone extraction, weight assignment, connection, compression, and projection, “class.” The name is thus easily mistaken for an entity that has long existed beneath the surface of society.

This formation chain must always return to the actors. It is not the class plane that extracts materials on its own, nor the class image that subsumes other explanations on its own; it is class theory, the interpreters who adopt it, organizations, and institutional procedures that select materials, arrange weights, establish connections, and use names. These actions may be dispersed across textbooks, slogans, research, organizational language, and institutional classifications, yet they point toward the same result: granting an already compressed line of explanation the standing to adjudicate other differences in advance.

V. Causal Distortion, Objects of Action, and Reifying Inversion

The formation process changes the point of entry into the problem. If an explanation first treats the class image as a total image, materials will be selected from the outset according to whether they can substantiate the predetermined main axis: wages, possession, labor, and risk are readily recognized as fundamental materials; kinship responsibilities, local recognition, memory, qualifications, care, and intermediate organizations are often retained only when they can supplement the main line. The selection and rejection of materials affect not only the length of an article but also causal judgments. Relational chains that needed further questioning are shortened, nodes that might have brought about a turning point are treated as surface phenomena, and channels that had to be checked are rewritten as incidental results of predetermined positions.

Flattening also changes the objects of subsequent action. If a node is first compressed into a group label, dealing with it can easily become nothing more than replacing, abolishing, or classifying it, without further asking what it has borne, what it has blocked, what it has preserved, or whom it has harmed. If a channel is first deemed the outer shell of an old image, then who will take up and sustain literacy, expression, mutual aid, credit, mediation, and local public discussion after that channel is dismantled ceases to be a question that must be answered. The point here is not to defend old nodes, but to refuse to let labels bypass the examination of functions, relations, and consequences.

Likewise, the private sphere is not a pure zone detached from social relations. Families, teacher–student lineages, local life, and intermediate organizations may all preserve oppression, exclusion, and inequality; they may also give people ties, memories, and room for judgment that are not wholly dictated by the highest organization or the market. When class theory assigns these spaces in advance to a single main axis, it may grasp the real resources and domination within them, but it may also fail to see how they take on responsibilities, sustain expression, or provide paths toward repair. Judgment should retain this two-sidedness rather than naturalize the private sphere or uniformly treat it as a disguise.

The class plane is readily treated as social structure partly because class theory grasps real pressures, and partly because the compressed image is easy to name, disseminate, and institutionalize. Once a name stabilizes, interpreters can easily treat it as the source of the materials, forgetting that it was originally the result of organizing some of those materials. Thus, “class” is misrepresented as a subject that determines relations, action, and history on its own, rather than as a compressed explanatory image. Reconstructing the formation chain means dismantling this inversion: concrete differences and their relational consequences come first; only afterward do interpreters perform the analytical operations of extraction, weight assignment, connection, compression, projection, and naming on material from reality. The final name must not be projected backward as what society fundamentally is prior to these operations.

Class theory therefore cannot be treated as an ordinary limited explanation, with the problem attributed to occasional extensions of its use later on. A limited explanation acknowledges the range of materials it draws on and allows materials it has not addressed to force adjustments in judgment through concrete consequences. By contrast, the total-image structure inherent in class theory organizes locally extracted differences into a predetermined scale of adjudication: other materials are recognized as having explanatory value only when translated back onto this scale. Both may use compression. The difference lies not in whether compression occurs, but in whether compression still accepts correction by boundaries, consequences, and relations that have not been subsumed.

VI. Dismantling the Plane, Calibrating the Order, and Local Comparison

Dismantling does not mean refusing to judge, nor does it mean laying out every difference as equally important. This chapter does not deny that class theory captures real differences; questions of wages, employment, debt, rent, educational opportunities, medical risks, domination over labor, and exit costs cannot be addressed without this set of differences. Interpreters who adopt class theory can indeed extract a set of real differentiating units. That local explanatory capacity comes precisely from concrete differentiating units such as labor, wages, employment, property, debt, resource buffers, risk-bearing, and relations of domination, and from the processes of extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression applied to them. But showing that class theory captures a set of real differentiating units does not mean treating the class image as what society fundamentally is, much less allowing the class image to monopolize society.

Dismantling the class image requires returning the already named image to its formation process, reducing it back to concrete differentiating units, and asking anew within which relations and concrete relational fields a given difference gains weight, if it does, how it connects, what consequences it produces, through which channels it enters into consequences, and which materials have been downweighted yet are sufficient to change the judgment. Interpreters must not let this image predetermine the meaning of all relations, nor demand that all other differences become subordinate to the class image. The problem with class theory is not that it sees wages,

labor, employment, property, debt, risk, and relations of domination, but that its structure of total-image subsumption does not allow society to extend beyond the class plane.

Nor does this book replace the class axis with another main axis; replacing class with the state, the market, culture, the nation, the family, or institutions merely substitutes one plane for another. What needs to change is the way questions are asked: in a concrete problem, which limited explanations can explain the current consequences? What real differences has class theory extracted? In forming the class image, what has the interpretive procedure that adopts it downweighted, and what standing to explain has it revoked?

It is the class image that needs to be dismantled, not remade into an ordinary limited explanation open to calibration. Only then can the extracted real differentiating units—labor, wages, property, debt, housing, risk, and so on—together with their relational consequences reenter concrete explanations that have boundaries and are open to calibration. Only by dismantling the class image back into concrete differences and concrete relations can downweighted materials reenter judgment. Only when interpreters no longer treat the class plane as society itself can concrete explanations accept calibration by consequences, counterexamples, and changes in relations.

The formation of the class plane involves an inversion of explanatory order: are differences first repeatedly extracted from events, or does the image first prescribe which differences should be seen in those events? Wages, debt, property, or housing may gain weight together in different events. This recurrence can support local comparisons between concrete situations, but it cannot, in reverse, prove that a class plane exists prior to events. The class plane's structure of subsumption is not an occasional overstepping of bounds in history. The criterion for identifying this structure, and the meaning of its closure, lie in the following: the interpretive procedure uses the image to predetermine the positions of other differences and allows counterexamples to be rewritten only as supporting evidence subordinate to that image.

Turning differences into an image also changes their temporal order. Family care, local interactions, medical histories, and educational qualifications sometimes operate before economic pressures arise, and sometimes are pushed to the fore only after unpaid wages, unemployment, or debt. If the class image organizes every temporal sequence into the same kind of reproduction or relation of interests, it will overlook when differences emerge, who preserves them, and which node brings them into consequences. Once time is flattened, the theory appears more orderly but actually loses its power to explain changes in events.

The key to dismantling the class image is to place compressed concrete differences back into relational fields, nodes, and relational chains, thereby preserving the capacity for local comparison. People can compare differences in wage payment deadlines, evidence, housing pressures, and the capacity to wait between two cases of unpaid wages; they can compare why two families with the same income obtain different school admission outcomes; they can also compare the consequences of the same policy in different places. These comparisons focus on the unfolding of concrete relations. They are by no means a return of the class plane, much less an indication that class theory, with its structure of subsumption, can be patched into a suitable limited model.

When new materials enter judgment, whether the plane can give way is an important clue for identifying Model C. If new materials show that what families take up and sustain, national memory, or legal qualifications have changed the original causal path, limited analysis should supplement or narrow its conclusions; if users can only say that these materials are actually still expressions of class position, and use this claim to refuse revision, the image has already digested the counterexamples. The problem with the plane is not that it is drawn simply, but whether it still allows reality to change the image anew.

Chapter 03 The Temptation of a Single Axis: How an Effective Concept Is Elevated into a Presupposed Main Line

I. The Structural Difference Between Class Theory and Other Presupposed Axes

Class theory seizes on wages, labor, property, debt, housing, risk, and exit costs. These differences are real, and they are often weighty. It does touch reality: its local explanatory capacity comes precisely from these real differentiating units and from the processes of extracting them, assigning them weight, connecting them, and compressing them. But from the outset, class theory organizes the differences locally extracted into a total class image and requires other relations to be measured against that image. Class theory does not first exist as an ordinary limited explanation and only occasionally expand later; its capacity for local distinction extraction is already situated within a structure of total-image subsumption. Concrete explanations formed around state institutions, market exchange, national communities, cultural relations, and family relations can provide limited accounts within bounded questions. These broad concepts do not become the highest main line on their own. A corresponding presupposed axis forms only when interpreters, organizations, or institutional procedures elevate one of them in advance above all questions. Concepts are not actors; it is the people and procedures that use concepts that extract, assign weight to, connect, translate, and adjudicate materials.

Accordingly, this chapter does not line up class theory and other concepts as a series of "models that later overstepped their bounds." What is distinctive about class theory is that total-image subsumption is its basic structure; other concepts, by contrast, may be turned by their users into corresponding subsumptive explanatory constructions. Class theory lowers the standing of other differences, and interpretive procedures that adopt other presupposed axes do the same, but the structural sources of the two must not be conflated. Distinguishing class theory from other presupposed axes does not absolve those other concepts in advance; it simply means that "they do this too" cannot be used to erase the inherent structure through which class theory itself moves from distinction extraction to a total image. The concrete differences extracted can return to bounded, concrete analysis, but the class image itself cannot be remade into an ordinary limited model that is safe simply because its scope is restricted. Renaming these differences as a safe form of class theory would still treat the result as an acting subject and once again reserve for the class image a presupposed position of adjudication.

The differences extracted by class theory can be tested case by case: Are wages in arrears? Is housing unstable? Is a debt deadline approaching? Has protection been interrupted? On whom does the cost of exit fall? These questions have weight in their own right. When class theory gathers differences into a class image, the image appears especially powerful precisely because the relations extracted are weighty. But this power cannot grant the image ontological status, still less can it serve as an exemption for class theory's total-image structure. Only when these differences are returned to concrete relations can we distinguish which consequences are produced by labor relations and which are also shaped by address, care, institutional qualifications, and what is taken up and sustained through local relations. Class theory can extract real differences such as labor, wages, and property, yet it also presses housing, debt, medical history, household registration, family responsibilities, and what is taken up and sustained through local relations—matters that

could have been examined separately—into one and the same position. Any concrete judgment involving wages, labor, property, debt, or risk must still make clear in what relations the difference under consideration becomes weighty, and which other differences present at the same time alter the outcome. What needs to be delimited is not the image, but the differences, relations, and consequences extracted by each concrete explanation.

II. Formation Procedures, Working Lines, and Temporary Centers

A presupposed axis does not appear out of nowhere. Certain differences first become connected to consequences within a relational field, and interpreters therefore give them priority when selecting material. Organizations and institutional procedures then fix weights and reconnect the material, arranging relations that could originally have been tested side by side into a hierarchy of primary and subordinate. Family, locality, institutions, the body, language, memory, and faith can each, in their own right, connect to consequences. Once the presupposed axis has formed, the interpretive procedure need not deny them; it translates them into subordinate elements of the main axis. This procedure calls counterexamples exceptions, withdraws standing from other explanations, and enables the image to spread rapidly, even issuing judgments before all the material is in. Every action in this formation chain has an actor: interpreters select material, organizations fix weights, naming processes arrange relations, and institutional procedures preserve and transmit judgments. It cannot be said that the state, the market, or the family compressed society by itself.

Local relevance by itself does not entail exclusivity. Between the fact that a given difference really becomes weighty and the claim that it should override all differences lie procedures of selection, weight assignment, connection, naming, and transmission. These procedures can be questioned, and material can overturn them. Once a presupposed axis is complete, the order of the material is rewritten as well. Relations that should originally have been questioned are treated as examples proving the main line; counterexamples that could change the judgment are required to explain themselves. Explanation is thus no longer a search within the material for the relations that are more weighty; it becomes an arrangement, under the main line, of where every item of material is to be placed.

This arrangement also changes what questions people can ask. When the axis comes first, the question often becomes how to prove it; when the material comes first, the question is which relations have already entered into consequences and which have not yet connected. On the surface, both ways of writing appear analytical, but in practice their attitudes toward counterexamples and what remains unknown are entirely different. Once organizations and institutional procedures fix a particular axis, it is written into tables, slogans, organizational language, and everyday judgments. People begin to use this classification to decide which materials matter, which suffering is merely incidental, and which responsibilities can be omitted. These acts of preservation and transmission make the presupposed axis more than a viewpoint: they turn it into a procedure that repeatedly arranges the questions. Every step in forming a presupposed axis can be interrupted: bring in omitted material, recheck weights, ask whether the relations are truly connected, and preserve the explanatory standing of counterexamples.

These efforts do not guarantee permanent correctness, but they prevent an explanation from declaring itself complete before it has begun. Interpretive procedures that adopt a presupposed axis also change how experiences not absorbed by the main line are understood. Such experiences are often judged unimportant, immature, or temporary deviations. Preserving their standing does not require treating all material as equally weighty; it prevents weights from being fixed before the evidence arrives. If an interpreter is to assign a higher weight to a given main line, the process by

which that weight was acquired must be laid bare: Which consequences support the judgment? Which relations were omitted? And who preserved this selection of material as common sense? These questions do not abolish the main line, but they prevent it from impersonating an answer before it has been explained.

Analysis still needs a main line. Without distinctions between primary and subordinate matters, people cannot judge what in an event first connects to consequences, nor can they track how relations change a person's position. Compression is not an error; a limited explanation is not an error either. The difference lies in where the main line comes from. If it emerges from a concrete relational field, consequences that have already appeared, and traceable relations, it must accept correction by new material and counterexamples. An interpretive procedure that adopts a presupposed axis, by contrast, decides the answer before analysis and then stuffs the material into predetermined positions.

A temporarily weightier line may appear in a child's school admission, exchanges surrounding weddings and funerals, or the fear of resigning. But no line can acquire complete explanatory authority before the question has unfolded, nor can it acquire standing through the fame of a concept. No judgment can trace every relation at once. The main line therefore becomes a necessary working line whose function is to narrow the range that must be questioned immediately, not to close the other entrances. Since it is a working line under a limited field of vision, it must answer why this relation is taking effect first at this moment rather than another, while leaving room to look back and check: Could omitted material change the consequences? Could another node invalidate the original weight? When conditions change, where must the judgment be withdrawn?

Acknowledging this limitation and making the main line retractable does not make a judgment weak, still less does it allow the line to be declared society's hidden skeleton. Sometimes a main line appears clear at the beginning of an event but later has to yield to new material; when material genuinely changes the judgment, the analysis adjusts with it. It is refusing this movement that makes a working line degenerate into a preset scale. Once a main line appears, it is therefore necessary to distinguish whether it is explaining consequences or merely naming them. Explaining consequences can yield testable judgments; naming them only pastes a known name back onto the material. The more convenient a main line is, the more this distinction is needed. The main line must serve the question, not make the question serve the main line. Once the order is reversed, analysis may look faster, but in reality it is merely repeating an existing verdict.

A presupposed axis sometimes forms quickly and sometimes through long repetition. In a single event, a difference may temporarily occupy the center because a deadline is approaching, resources are concentrated, or enforcement is coercive. After repeated events, it is only if interpreters transplant that temporary center into every question that the axis changes from a convenience within an event into a preset arrangement. To judge this change, one must compare whether the difference retains the same weight in different relational fields, rather than looking only at whether it is conspicuous in one case. The same person may be held by different relations at different times: during wage arrears, wages and payment records may come first; when a child enters school, address and documentary requirements may come first; after illness, the body and care responsibilities may come first. If an axis analysis preserves only the entry point of the first question, it will treat later new material as deviation. A genuinely limited judgment must be able to explain when the main line is valid, when it recedes into the background, and which relations re-enter into consequences.

Eliminating a presupposed axis does not mean rejecting long-term structures. Stable institutional, community, family, and market relations may recur across events; they must still be explained through carriers, materials, and relay pathways, and compared across different periods and against counterexamples. Long-term continuity requires more complete tracing of relations; it does not grant any name the right to impose a ranking in advance on every event.

III. The State Axis: Institutional Thresholds and the Administrative Plane

In certain areas and specific school-admission years, when families from elsewhere apply to enroll their children, they may be required to submit some of the following: household-registration or residence documents, rental or property documents, social-insurance or employment documents, and application and student-status materials. These families are also subject to local quota and allocation rules; the specific items vary by area, year, and admission category. Together with rental deadlines, work arrangements, family care, and the means of obtaining documents, these institutional differences affect whether a family can get through the procedure. The administrative plane forms when an interpretive procedure compresses all consequences into "the will of the state." Institutional thresholds can still be seen, but they are used to replace other relations: whether a landlord cooperates, whether relatives can provide care, whether work hours can be adjusted, and whether parents can obtain information are all demoted to background. [F05a]

The state is neither the sole cause nor an abstract actor that commands reality. Concrete institutions, service windows, records, quotas, and implementation arrangements enter into consequences along different relations. The consequences of the same set of administrative documents may also differ from one family to another: one person may be blocked by difficulties in obtaining proof, another by unstable housing, and another by being unable to arrange care and work at the same time.

When all these different consequences are reduced to a single abstract will, the points at which change is actually possible disappear. Administrative procedures appear to deal only with materials, but in practice they also arrange waiting, travel back and forth, qualifications, and visibility. Families from elsewhere face a chain of concrete thresholds: who can issue proof, preserve records, and complete documents within the deadline, and who loses options because residence and work are unstable. The question of school admission cannot stop at administrative criticism; when the means of obtaining documents, residential stability, working hours, and care arrangements are interconnected, changing one item may not be enough.

Only by tracing how these elements connect can we know which link causes a family to lose its options, rather than attributing every difficulty to an abstract name. Interpreters who adopt a state axis also readily make the direction of reform falsely simple, as if changing one institutional rule would automatically change every consequence. Institutional adjustment may be necessary, but one must still ask whether service windows, document preservation, what is taken up and sustained through local relations, family time, and working conditions have changed together; otherwise, the threshold has merely moved to another place.

In the school-admission relational field, the high weight of institutional materials does not deny the roles of local familiarity, sources of information, and family arrangements. Precisely because these relations can change the consequences of the same institutional threshold, an administrative explanation cannot write itself as the whole explanation. Criticism of administrative thresholds must therefore be concrete: which documents, which service window, and what deadline connect with whose work arrangements? Only then will institutional pressure not be replaced by an abstract state.

IV. The Market Axis: Monetary Pressure and the Transactional Plane

Cash gifts exchanged at weddings and funerals involve amounts, income, and burdens, so the market axis has something real to grasp. But a cash gift is connected not only to costs and returns; it is also connected to who once attended, who once failed to attend, degrees of closeness and distance, local reputation, dignity, and future mutual aid. If interpreters convert every exchange into a transaction, they grant the transactional plane complete explanatory authority. This image can present the monetary burden, but it cannot replace relational memory and recognition; translating the latter wholesale into costs does not make them disappear.

When interpreters designate monetary pressure in advance as the highest scale, the market axis forms, and the remaining consequences are arranged as incidental psychology or culture. Money is no fiction, and costs are not irrelevant. The problem is only that once cost is designated as the final scale in advance, memory, recognition, and mutual aid within relations can appear only as accessories, and originally different consequences are flattened. The language of transactions easily makes relations look clean, because amounts can be calculated and burdens compared.

Cash-gift relations, however, also preserve past exchanges and future expectations; they may create pressure, but they may also connect to support in times of difficulty. Looking only at price makes these different directions of relation lose their names at the same time. An interpretive procedure that adopts the market axis will also judge relations that people are unwilling to put a price on as unimportant. Dignity, memory, and mutual aid within cash-gift exchanges may of course conflict with burdens, but they cannot therefore be declared illusions. In later exchanges they may still change who can ask for help, who is trusted, and who bears shame.

When interpreters select material only along the market axis, they readily overlook that monetary relations do not occur only at the moment of payment. Who can postpone payment, who can borrow, who receives help because of their reputation, and who loses the ability to refuse because of an owed favor all carry price into longer relations. The memory, dignity, and mutual aid within cash-gift exchanges enter consequences through subsequent exchanges; the payment relation is thereby extended into a relation of continuing support and obligations. Cash gifts at weddings and funerals also remind us that relations are not the opposite of cost.

Costs can create pressure, and relations can create pressure; the two may also reinforce each other within the same exchange. Elevating either one into the sole scale only makes the other difficult to examine. Judging market pressure likewise requires tracing concrete payments and the support and obligations carried forward through relations: who can refuse, who must maintain the exchange, and who loses subsequent options because of one expense? These questions are closer to consequences than the name of a transaction.

V. The National and Cultural Axes: Memory, Responsibility, and the Plane of Identity

A national community may be formed through long-term interaction, multiple layers of relaying, language, rites and customs, shared memory, shared experiences of harm, shared protection, demands of responsibility, experiences of boundaries, and intergenerational write-back. The name of a nation may be compressed or put to use, but a real national community cannot therefore be reduced to a bloodline myth, a state registration, subjective imagining, a cultural label, or a class occlusion. Conflicts do involve language, memory, and harm, as well as institutions, resources, local relations, and individual experience. If interpreters designate nation or culture in advance as the highest scale for every conflict, they compress complex relations into a plane of identity; what is

criticized is this procedure, not the reality of community. Concrete explanations formed around cultural relations can show how rites and customs, expectations, shame, and long-term evaluation enter action, but they cannot deliver the final judgment on every concrete consequence.

A national community is even less synonymous with a “plane of identity.” National or cultural clues may be highly weighty in some questions, especially when language, experiences of boundaries, and shared responsibility directly change action. But this weight must be demonstrated by concrete relations; an identity name cannot guarantee it in advance. A community does not disappear because it contains internal differences. Long-term interaction can preserve language, rites and customs, protection, responsibility, and experiences of boundaries, and can also lead people to respond differently to harm and commitment.

Compressing all this into cultural identity cannot explain the source of shared responsibility, nor can it show how institutions and resources intervene. A bounded explanation of nation and culture can show when shared memory enters a conflict and can ask who is using the name and who bears the consequences. Presetting them as the sole main axis instead reduces a real community to a label that can be invoked at will, obscuring both interaction and responsibility. Protecting nation and culture does not mean exempting them from examination. A community may take up protection and responsibility, but the community may also be exploited through names, organizations, or propaganda.

Distinguishing these two things is precisely what prevents criticism of such use from becoming an erasure of the community itself. If the national or cultural main line does not accept the limits of the material, it will often read every difference as a question of friend and foe or identity. This reading may look firm, but in practice it removes the community’s internal responsibilities, local differences, and institutional conditions from what can be said. The reality of a community does not provide an all-purpose answer. It only means that long-term interaction and responsibility can genuinely enter into consequences; in each case, the community must still be examined together with institutions, resources, and local relations.

VI. The Family Axis: Everyday Relations and the Psychological Plane

When a person is afraid to resign, family relations, shame, a sense of security, parental expectations, and care responsibilities may indeed affect that person’s actions. An explanation that takes the family as its axis can present part of the inner relations, but it cannot reduce rent, debt, industry cycles, medical protection, and pressures of old-age support entirely to psychology. When interpreters first describe every difficulty as family structure or psychological dependence, the procedure forms a psychological plane and pushes labor institutions, housing costs, and protection relations into the background. Once the interpreter lets the family concept deliver the final judgment on every relation, the explanation has already gone beyond acknowledging family relations.

The family should neither be denied nor naturalized or romanticized. It can carry responsibility, harm, memory, and a sense of security, while intersecting with institutions, work, and resource conditions. Family influence likewise does not cancel external conditions. Whether work can be changed, whether protection can continue, and whether rent rises all return to family relations; calling them purely internal problems merely locks different pressures inside one psychological name. The force of family relations also requires concrete tracing.

Whether parents can help, who takes on care responsibilities, and how shame limits requests for help can all change a person’s action space; but they never occur alone. Rental housing, debt,

medical care, and fluctuations in an industry can in turn rewrite what the family can bear. An explanation that takes the family as its axis often seems persuasive because it is close to everyday life. Precisely for that reason, it is more important to distinguish responsibilities that have actually arisen within the family from the interpreter's practice of sending every external pressure back into the family. The former can help us understand action; the latter merely occludes how institutions and resources limit choice.

Within family relations, support and constraints may exist at the same time. Some people gain care and a way out through the family, while others bear heavier responsibilities because of the same relation. This difference cannot be decided in advance by the name "family"; one must see how resources, time, the body, institutional qualifications, and emotional demands intertwine. Questions about the family should likewise not be obscured by a blanket judgment of the family as either warm or oppressive. Who can provide care, who can exit, and who bears debts and takes on responsibility for medical care often determine action more directly than an abstract image of the family. Explaining these relations clearly is the only way both to avoid denying the family and to prevent the family from subsuming other causes. Family clues can explain why some people stay, remain silent, or cannot exit, but they cannot remove the need to ask about rent, debt, protection, and work relations.

VII. Comparison and Concrete Judgment After Removing Presupposed Axes

Replacing class with the state, the state with the market, or the market with nation, culture, or family does not change the method of a presupposed axis. These concepts have different contents and can grasp different relations; what they share is that the interpretive procedures using them elevate one line in advance as the highest axis. Choosing another total image is not a way out. As long as other differences must first prove that they serve the main axis and counterexamples are downgraded in advance, the structure of subsumption remains. This does not mean that all concepts are alike. Class theory grasps real differentiating units such as wages, labor, and property; its local explanatory capacity comes from these real differences and from the operations performed on them, but total-image subsumption is inherent in its structure: class theory cannot be remade into an ordinary limited model that becomes safe merely by restricting its scope. Concrete explanations formed around the state, market, nation, culture, and family, by contrast, can provide limited accounts within bounded questions. What must be taken apart are the procedures of presupposition and subsumption.

Interpreters are easily attracted to a presupposed axis precisely because this procedure quickly supplies a position, a distinction between friend and foe, and a verdict. Speed does not prove that a judgment is complete. If an explanation no longer waits for material or deals with counterexamples, it has merely exempted itself from the duty of accepting correction; its explanatory power has not increased. Changing the name does not change this shortcut to a verdict; it only changes the answer. The relations involved in the state, market, nation, culture, and family should not cancel one another, nor can class labels reduce them to subordinate elements. Different names cannot substitute for one another, and no name enjoys the right to adjudicate before the material. In a concrete event, institutions, prices, memory, family, and local relations can become weighty at the same time, and can also constrain one another. If one highest line is selected first, that mutual constraint is mistaken for disorder; only by tracing relations can we know how they enter consequences together.

Removing a presupposed axis does not make analysis lose direction; it forces the direction to explain itself. If a relation is weightier at this moment, material must support that judgment, and one must be able to trace the nodes that make it weighty. When the material and nodes change, interpreters should check whether the original grounds still hold; if the changes have affected the grounds for the judgment, they must make corresponding adjustments. Merely replacing the presupposed axis changes only which material is seen first; it does not change the adjudicative procedure. What needs to change is the adjudicative procedure itself: a main line cannot acquire standing before the relational field, nor can other relations be declared subordinate in advance. The sense of completeness supplied by a presupposed axis may save effort, but rejecting it keeps relations not yet heard in a position where they can be tested.

A main line may appear, but it cannot be preset. Judgment must always face concrete tests: which differences truly connect to consequences, which become weighty in the current relational field, which relations change a person's actual position, and which counterexamples are sufficient to force revision. If a line can absorb only material that supports it while calling other consequences noise, it has already left concrete analysis. A bounded main line does not require all material to speak with one voice; it allows different relations to coexist and allows a line that was originally weightier to become lighter when new material arrives. This adjustment to counterexamples and new material is precisely taking responsibility for consequences. Comparison and correction are not abandonment of judgment; they free judgment from dependence on a line that is always right and prevent a limited field of vision from masquerading as the whole field.

A limited explanation can identify a relation that is weightier, but it must state its boundaries and cannot call other relations outer shells in advance. This means that the boundaries of the main line must be stated clearly: which stretch of relation it addresses, which questions it does not address, what material it depends on, and what counterexamples would force it to change. These limits prevent a limited explanation from being elevated into the whole explanation. Once a main line can be corrected, it need not fear the existence of other explanations; different explanations can thereby be compared according to what each has extracted, what it has overlooked, and which consequences it has greater power to explain. Only when one line is first elevated into the whole are other explanations treated as enemies or noise. At the same time, a main line that emerges from consequences need not promise to remain valid forever. It can withdraw when a stretch of relation ends, or be rewritten when a new node appears. This capacity to change without fearing that material may force it to contract prevents the image from hardening; it is precisely the condition that allows a limited explanation to retain its boundaries.

Removing a presupposed axis does not invalidate concrete judgment. For a child's school admission, one must trace how household registration, social insurance, rental registration, quotas, care, and working hours connect; wedding and funeral cash gifts involve income, burdens, memory, closeness and distance, and future mutual aid; in the case of someone afraid to resign, one must examine how rent, debt, industry cycles, medical protection, old-age support for parents, and shame enter action. Social complexity cannot be an excuse for refusing judgment. Judgment must instead make clear what it has extracted, which differences it has assigned weight to, through which relations they enter consequences, and what material would overturn the original arrangement. This does not scatter every event into fragments; it returns concrete relations to a testable position. Concrete judgment does not mean listing items one by one. Tracing differences and their connections is meant to find what can change consequences and what is merely a substitute for a name; it can still reach clear conclusions, but it does not hand the conclusion in advance to a broad concept. The three cases do not point to an all-purpose answer; they require interpreters to trace separately how institutional qualifications, relational exchanges, and pressures on action connect.

Removing a presupposed axis requires interpreters to acknowledge that adjudication has costs. Compressing a question into a single cause too early makes nodes that could have been changed invisible; pulling relations apart is precisely how one avoids substituting a convenient answer for actual responsibility and consequences. The common requirement is simply that a broad concept must not decide the outcome of these cases before tracing begins. Conclusions may differ, and the weightier differences may differ as well. Concrete judgment must ultimately land where action is possible: which materials need to be added, which node can be changed, which relation needs to be taken up and sustained, and which responsibilities can no longer be occluded by a name.

This requires an explanation to take responsibility for the consequences it identifies; it does not reduce theory to administrative advice. After removing the presupposed axis, judgment can remain very sharp. It can point out how a particular institution traps people, how a debt relation tightens choice, or how a relation transfers risk; it simply cannot covertly replace these definite judgments with a single total name that has already adjudicated every question. The responsibility of judgment lies here: explain why these differences are weightier at this moment, rather than mistaking greater weight for exclusivity.

VIII. Society Is a Differentiation Network

Society cannot be adjudicated by a presupposed axis, nor can the state, market, nation, culture, and family simply be placed side by side and added together. That would merely replace one single image with a rough list. Judgment must return to concrete differences that can change positions, relations, and the consequences of action, and to the processes through which they connect. Society is a differentiation network: differences are extracted, assigned weight, connected, and transmitted within concrete relations, and consequences take shape through these processes. This judgment is not another highest image that subsumes every explanation. When analysis unfolds from it, every explanatory line must state what it has extracted, what it has downplayed, and when material should rewrite it. If an explanatory line cannot state its boundaries, it readily treats the part it sees as the whole. Returning to concrete differences rejects concepts passing judgment on society before the material.

To speak of a differentiation network is not to rename everything a network, still less to substitute a new name for the old total image. Analysis must still return to how differences are extracted, in which relations they become weighty, and how they change positions and action. Precisely because there is no presupposed axis, every proposed main line must accept comparison, counterexamples, and correction. Concrete differences do not by themselves constitute a completed total image. They are extracted and change positions only within events, nodes, and relations. Starting from this, one can make forceful judgments while preserving an opening through which those judgments can be corrected; that is why judgment remains possible after rejecting presupposed axes.

Returning from a presupposed axis to concrete differences does not require starting from zero every time. Existing concepts can provide an entry point, and known relations may temporarily be weightier; but an entry point cannot close off further inquiry, and temporary weight cannot become permanent supremacy. Social analysis must preserve a place for material to re-enter. The process by which concrete differences connect does not automatically provide an eternal main line. It requires interpreters continually to explain their selection of material and their boundaries, and requires readers to be able to point out relations that have been downplayed. This mutual correction is what keeps judgment within social consequences.

To develop judgment through the social differentiation network, one cannot use complexity as an excuse. Analysis must still question relations, positions, and consequences within complexity, and

refuse to let any preset name replace this work. Returning to concrete differences does not break society into mutually unrelated fragments. Differences affect one another within relations and transmit consequences to new positions; what must be rejected is only the practice of compressing these connections in advance into a single main axis.

Notes

[F05a] See Note F05; this passage is used only within the jurisdiction, period, procedure, and material scope specified in that note.

Chapter 04 Society Is Not a Combination of a Few Grand Concepts: From a Platter of Concepts to Differentiating Units

I. How a Platter of Concepts Occludes Consequences

A single governing axis cannot be presupposed for society. The clues supplied by class theory come from the real differences it extracts, but that does not make the class image a safe, ordinary, limited model; the concepts of the state, the market, the nation, culture, and the family may all provide important clues in particular questions. When any one concept is placed in advance at the highest level of explanation, other differences are easily translated into its appendages, and complex relations are flattened into a single plane.

After rejecting a single axis, people often retreat to "the joint action of multiple factors," saying that society has the state, the market, culture, the nation, and the family in addition to class. This list already treats class as something that exists. Acknowledging that multiple real relations may operate together provides no grounds for that presupposition; even if that presupposition is removed, the formulation can easily stop at a parallel list of concepts. The concepts have multiplied, while the formation of consequences still has not been explained more precisely. "They are all relevant" at most points to several directions. It does not say who extracts the concrete differences, how they acquire greater operative weight, which qualification or restriction they connect to, or which differences, though present, never enter the result at hand.

A child's school admission may involve institutional thresholds, income, the ability to rent housing, the ability to take time off, information channels, and the ability to pay at the same time. Wedding and funeral cash gifts may likewise involve amounts, reciprocal exchanges, local evaluation, and mutual aid; a workplace injury may involve labor relations, evidence, procedure, and waiting. If these questions are merely distributed into drawers labeled "the state," "the market," "culture," and "the family," analysis has not yet begun to track how the consequence is formed. Listing concepts completes only a classification; the consequence still has to be traced through concrete relations. A single axis sends all material toward one answer; a platter of concepts leaves several answers, but still sorts the material into pre-given names first. The former compresses differences into one line, the latter packages differences into several grand terms. Both can miss the steps that actually change the consequence: whether material can be obtained, whether a qualification can be recognized, whether waiting can be endured, whether a relation can continue, and who ultimately bears responsibility.

A platter of concepts appears prudent because it acknowledges that a matter has more than one side. But acknowledging several sides does not yet explain how those sides meet. If income, household registration, local reputation, care responsibility, and institutional procedure are merely named one after another, they remain like unrelated blocks. What must actually be made clear is which condition enables another condition to take effect, and which restriction prevents an existing resource from becoming a choice. This parallel listing also easily produces a false sense of balance. Once every grand term has been mentioned, people assume that the material has been treated fairly; in fact, some relations remain in the background, and some differences are named without anyone asking how they operate. Fairness in parallel listing cannot replace fairness toward the chain of consequences.

Listing concepts side by side has another problem: it easily mixes things from different levels. Household registration is an institutional qualification; whether a landlord cooperates is a concrete relation; taking time off is a time condition; a shortage of places is a distributional restriction. They may all appear in a school-admission problem, but they do not acquire the same position merely because they are all called "state factors." If analysis does not separate the levels, it cannot know whether to ask about the institutional text, the practice at the service window, what private actors take up and sustain, or family time. Grand terms also often describe an ongoing process as a static background. When people say that an institution is present, they still have to ask how it enters the result through registration, verification, interpretation, supplementary documents, and deadlines; when they say that the family is present, they still have to ask how care, economic dependence, and emotional demands change the choices a person can make. Only by returning the background to the process can concepts stop occluding the actual paths through which consequences arise. A concept can temporarily focus analysis when it is used as an entry point; when it is used to close the question, it prevents further inquiry. The former says, "Let us first see how the administrative procedure intervenes"; the latter says, "This is a state problem," and stops there. The difference is not whether a concept is used, but whether the concept leaves an exit back to the material.

II. Grand Concepts as High-Level Compression Labels and Indexes

Grand concepts such as "the state," "the market," "culture," and "the family" are high-level compressed names for many concrete differences and relations. They can serve as limited indexes for entering a question, pointing toward material to seek. Saying "the state" can gather together and direct attention to law, administration, household registration, registration systems, public finance, schools, boundaries, service windows, and enforcement; saying "the market" can gather together and direct attention to prices, wages, credit, rent, transactions, various opportunities including employment opportunities, risk, and the ability to pay; saying "culture" and "the family" can likewise bring rites and customs, social face, habits, care, dependence, debt, inheritance, and emotional relations into view. Such an outline keeps discussion from losing all direction. Unlike these indexes, which can point to material within limited bounds, the class image is a product of compressing and projecting real differentiating units along the axes of economic, labor, property, and domination relations. Class theory elevates this product into a total image; class theory cannot be retained as an ordinary limited explanation merely by being added to a list of concepts.

The problem is that an entry point cannot replace an analysis of consequences, and compression also occludes internal differences. Saying "the state" does not explain whether household registration, school places, registration with the subdistrict administration, administrative procedure, legal text, an explanation at the service window, or fiscal allocation is creating the restriction; household registration and school places are not the same kind of threshold. Saying "the market" likewise does not say which of housing prices, wages, credit, rent, employment opportunities, opportunity costs, or risk pricing has connected to the person's choice; housing prices and wages do not change choice in the same way. Care, debt, control, and inheritance do not all lead to the same consequence either. A concept points toward a field of relations, but that does not mean every relation within it has the same operative weight. When differences of different kinds, operative weights, and directions are gathered under one name, the name itself can no longer substitute for detailed judgment. A grand term may appear to have explained the problem when it has merely wrapped up the material that still requires further questioning.

Compression can also misrepresent differences that constrain one another as pointing in the same direction. A rise in wages may not immediately relieve housing pressure; acquiring an institutional qualification may not make up for a shortage of time for caregiving; local reputation may bring

mutual aid while simultaneously making refusal more difficult. If only one general name is retained, these tensions are smoothed away, and analysis is left arguing only over which concept is more important. Because concepts are convenient for argument, people also often mistakenly assume that concepts already correspond one-to-one to consequences. In fact, relations pointing in opposite directions can exist under the same name: the family can provide care, but it can also increase responsibility; local relations can provide mutual aid, but they can also increase pressure. Unless compression is unfolded again, these directional differences are easily erased by a single overall judgment.

The conceptual outline, the concrete institution, the points in relations at which things are taken up and sustained, and the actual consequence must be kept separate. An institutional name can indicate which kind of threshold to investigate, but it cannot replace questions about documents, deadlines, records, service windows, and modes of enforcement; the name of the family can indicate care and dependence, but it cannot replace questions about time, debt, health, and available exits. If a name is treated as the answer as soon as it appears, the points that can be examined and changed disappear instead. A compressed result cannot itself extract material, determine weight, arrange classifications, or make a ruling. Those acts are always performed by interpreters, organizations, or institutional procedures: someone chooses which records count, a procedure stipulates which documents are valid, and a form of naming puts relations that could previously be discussed separately into the same category. Asking about these processes preserves the concept while preventing it from occluding the actual extraction of material and the judgment applied to it.

Grand concepts do not need to be abolished; they can remain indexes for entering a question. They indicate which material is worth seeking, but cannot decide in advance which material is primary or secondary, still less act in place of concrete interpersonal, institutional, and resource relations. The point of taking them apart is to make names accept the constraints imposed by the material again; their public use remains. When people use “the market” or “the state,” they should be able to say which relations the term points to here, which parts have not yet been proved, and which counterexamples might force the judgment to contract. This restriction does not deprive a concept of force. It prevents the concept from pretending to be a conclusion that has already been completed.

The convenience of compression also changes the way questions are asked. When people first ask, “Is this really a state problem or a market problem?”, attention easily concentrates on choosing a name for the event. If they first ask which difference changed eligibility, costs, how things are taken up and sustained, or the possibility of exit, the name can remain until later as a temporary tool for organizing the material. This latter question does not deny concepts, but it does not let a concept assign conclusions to the material in advance. A concept can still be used as an index, but each use must return to one simple question: what material does it point to here, and what material does it occlude? If that cannot be answered, the concept may only be giving an existing judgment a different name. This questioning applies to the state, the market, the family, culture, and the nation. The selection of material and the occlusions involved in the class image must also be traced, but the purpose of doing so is to dismantle the class image and expose the procedures of subsumption through which it is formed and used, not to give it the same status as a tool that an ordinary limited explanation can have.

Reopening grand concepts does not mean looking for some social atom or final material. The analysis must pursue which concrete differences and relations are brought into comparison in this matter, how they are recognized, downplayed, or amplified, and how they enter the consequence along institutional, interpersonal, and resource conditions. Society is a differentiation network, but

this judgment does not provide another complete total image. How material is extracted and how it enters a ruling must still be traced to concrete people and procedures.

III. Unfolding the School-Admission Qualification Chain and Institutional Responsibility

In certain regions, specific admission years, and different admission categories, household-registration or residence conditions, school places, application rules, and local provisions issued by education authorities may affect admission. The documents required by policy depend on the particular applicable rules and do not constitute a uniform threshold for all families. [Fo5b] For families themselves, income, the ability to rent housing, the ability to take time off, information channels, and the ability to meet additional expenses are living conditions they may face while going through the procedure. Where local rules require them, the validity of a residence permit, continuity of social-insurance contributions, compliance of a rental contract, and rental filing may all change the result; a community certificate, too, counts as a formal document only when the specific rules expressly require it. In the actual application process, whether a landlord is willing to cooperate with filing, whether the community is willing to issue a certificate where the specific rules require one, whether the document deadline can be met, whether parents can take time off to go to the service window, whether someone reminds them of the procedure, and whether school places are scarce operate at different stages. These stages affect whether a family can obtain documents, go through the procedure, and bear the associated burdens. They may enable the facts of everyday residence and work to be converted into recognized qualifications, or cause that conversion to fail.

Here we see how the links in a qualification chain connect: the fact of residence needs to leave records that can be recognized by the procedure; the records must be assembled before the deadline; and assembling the documents in turn requires someone who can arrange time, obtain information, and make the necessary trips. These links are connected, not separate, unrelated items. In places that specifically require continuous social-insurance contributions, an interruption of one month may alter eligibility even when the documents originally appeared complete; when a landlord does not cooperate with filing, families with similar incomes and similar labor positions may also lose the same possibility of admission. The absence of one document may prevent the procedure from being completed even if other documents are available. The ability to take time off and information channels are not purely private conditions: they connect with institutional rules and affect whether a family can turn existing facts into documents that a service window can recognize before the deadline. Information channels are not just a matter of “knowing more.” They concern knowing the deadline, what kind of filing is needed, which certificate can be supplied as a supplement, and when one must appear in person; the ability to take time off determines whether this information can become action. When work arrangements conflict with document deadlines, the same procedural requirement imposes different costs in time and time off on different families.

The same rule does not necessarily produce the same result for every family. When school places are scarce, whether the documents are complete, the speed of supplying additional documents, residential stability, and the availability of a community certificate where specific rules require one may all change where a family ends up. This does not shift institutional responsibility onto individuals; it refuses to let an abstract institutional name occlude how concrete procedures connect with living conditions. Time, trips to the service window, and deadlines bring work arrangements into the conditions of admission. The ability to pay extra expenses may not determine the result by itself, but when housing expenses, travel expenses, the cost of obtaining supplementary or replacement documents, or losses from taking time off arise, it changes whether

a family can continue to bear the burden. Registration with the subdistrict administration, residence permits, rental filing, and school places each have requirements under the rules applicable to them. Not every family has to go through every procedure; what matters is tracing how these requirements connect. How rules are explained, how documents are verified, and whose cooperation is needed give the same facts of residence different degrees of visibility. Tracing these connections across stages and the concrete burdens involved does not negate institutional critique; it brings institutional responsibility to specific points that can be explained and examined.

IV. Wedding and Funeral Cash Gifts, Pressure to Marry, and Workplace Injury: Tracing Relations and Consequences

Assigning wedding and funeral cash gifts to "the market plus culture" can do no more than mark the two ends of the problem. Amounts, income, return gifts, and burdens affect a family; wedding and funeral exchanges, social respectability, the order between elders and juniors, and local evaluation are also involved. Yet the same five hundred yuan is not the same thing in different relations. It may be ordinary reciprocity, or it may be understood as estrangement, compensation, or pressure. The difference lies not only in the amount, but also in who attended, who was absent, how past exchanges left records, and how local reputation was preserved. Attendance records and return gifts in cash-gift exchanges are not fixed moral scales. They become conditions of pressure or mutual aid because past exchanges are continually preserved, interpreted, and responded to within local relations. Whether the parents still live locally, whether the person has not returned home for years, and whether help or mutual aid is expected to be needed in the future can all change how the same payment is understood. A name cannot make the final judgment for these relations.

The pressure of income and return gifts cannot be erased, and local reputation and future mutual aid cannot be reduced to an equivalent measure and then treated as nonexistent. One person loses room to maneuver because of an expense, while another receives support through past exchanges; the same relation can bring burden and help at the same time. Handing all of this over to the names of the market or culture only mixes different consequences into one conclusion.

"Culture plus the family" gathers several sources of pressure to marry, but it cannot show how that pressure changes with age, health, care, and work conditions. Age milestones, the parents' health, anxiety about old age, employment stability, the cost of having children, economic dependence, and relatives' evaluations make the pressure change direction at different moments. Age, employment stability, the cost of having children, and parental health in pressure to marry do not simply add up. When the parents' health begins to deteriorate, pressure to marry is no longer merely pressure at the level of ideas: care, old-age support, family continuity, and the taking up of economic responsibilities may enter the conversation together. This does not mean that all families will be like this. It means that the sources of pressure cannot be closed off in advance by the two names "the family" or "culture." Economic dependence may also make refusal difficult; when work is unstable, marriage arrangements are not necessarily only a private choice. Calling all these pressures culture or family merely removes from view the conditions that can be questioned separately.

In the case of workplace injury, summarizing the problem as "class plus the state" both presupposes class as something that exists and fails to explain how real labor relations connect with institutional procedures. Contracts, medical records, surveillance footage, testimony from coworkers, training records, the employer's attitude, the assessment procedure, advance payment of medical expenses, family savings, and waiting time may all change whether a remedy can be

carried through. Labor relations and institutional procedures are present, but they do not automatically produce evidence or make it possible for a family to endure the wait. Whether a contract exists, whether medical records are complete, whether footage is preserved, and whether coworkers are willing to testify each connects to different conditions of recognition. In workplace-injury remedies, training records and the employer's attitude may affect whether responsibility is recognized, while advance payment of medical expenses and family savings affect whether the wait can be endured. When the assessment procedure is prolonged, the relations among evidence preservation, coworker testimony, and family resources become clearer. These differences do not deny the importance of labor relations; they show how labor relations produce asymmetrical consequences within concrete procedures.

All three sets of circumstances point to concrete relations and their consequences. Differences are not a flat list of factors. Analysis must focus on when they acquire operative weight, whether they can be recognized, and whether they connect to consequences. Consequences are often not decided once and for all: exchanges continue after a cash gift is paid; conversations urging someone to marry change with health, care, and work; and remedies for workplace injury also involve collecting evidence, determining whether an injury is work-related, assessing working capacity when the relevant conditions are met, and enduring the wait during the process. Naming an event with a grand concept at only one point in time easily misses how relations redistribute pressure and reshape who provides support or takes on responsibilities as the process continues.

Concrete tracing therefore also prevents the sources of pressure from being reduced to mere individual choice. A cash gift is not only a matter of whether one is willing to give; pressure to marry is not only a matter of whether one is willing to marry; and a workplace injury is not only a matter of whether one is willing to defend one's rights. Income, records, health, evidence, waiting, and conditions for support and for taking on responsibilities constrain how action can take place. Making these constraints clear prevents abstract concepts or personal character from replacing actual relations.

This turn also requires preserving what is unknown. When a concept first acquires the status of an answer, material not yet seen is often treated merely as an exception; returning to concrete differences requires acknowledging that some relations have not yet been clarified and that an existing judgment may change with new material. Primary and secondary status cannot be declared before the material arrives. Retreating from grand concepts to concrete differences can still produce judgments. Analysis can still indicate which relations are provisionally closer to the consequence, but it must explain where that judgment comes from and what material would make it fail. A name provides a starting point; concrete tracing determines whether a judgment can stand.

This turn also places critique at a more concrete point. If one merely says that a grand concept oppresses people, it is often difficult to tell where change can be made; if one can trace which piece of material, which deadline, which way of taking things up and sustaining them, or which relation changed the consequence, it becomes possible to distinguish which links require further questioning. This does not reduce responsibility to technical detail. It prevents critique from stopping at a name that cannot be tested. Analysis therefore no longer settles for asking "what factors are there?" but asks "how do differences acquire consequences within relations?" The first question easily produces a long list; the second requires tracing the intersection of material, procedure, time, and taking up and sustaining what arises. It does not guarantee a simple answer at once, but it prevents explanation from stopping at a parallel list of concepts.

V. The Turn to Differentiating Units: Procedural Recognition, Actual Operation, and Judgments of Operative Weight

To say only that society "has class, the state, the market, culture, and the family" appears comprehensive, but it soon comes to a halt. This formulation treats class as an existing object and substitutes a string of names for analysis. It explains neither how consequences reach a particular person nor why similar situations produce different results. If analysis keeps moving among several grand terms, it can easily treat known concepts as explanations that have already been completed. School admission, cash gifts, pressure to marry, and workplace injury show that certain concrete differences acquire relative weight within relations and connect to qualifications, positions, actions, and consequences. What this chapter marks with "differentiating unit" is precisely the analytical turn from grand concepts back to these concrete differences and their relational processes.

The turn does not produce another, longer table of factors. If residence permits, contracts, medical records, cash-gift records, and parental health are merely placed side by side, we still have not answered when they are extracted, by what procedure they are recognized, or how they connect to qualifications, waiting, responsibility, or choice. The work of analysis is not to collect as many names as possible, but to find the differences and relations that genuinely change the consequence in a concrete question. Grand concepts can remain entry points: the state points to institutional thresholds, the market to payment and credit, the family to care and dependence, and the nation and culture to memory, rites and customs, and shared responsibility. After the entry point, however, analysis cannot stop at the name. It must return to the concrete material and ask which difference has entered the comparison and where it was taken up and carried forward in a way that changed the result.

When judging operative weight, one cannot equate "recognized by a procedure" with "actually operative"; they are not the same thing. Some conditions are downplayed because they leave no record, yet may still affect whether a person can obtain material, endure waiting, or maintain a relation; some conditions are formally listed but may not change the result in a particular situation. Tracing this gap keeps analysis from merely repeating existing classifications. Judgments of operative weight must also distinguish the direct from the indirect. A condition may not immediately determine a qualification, yet may affect whether the material needed to determine that qualification can be obtained; a relation may not directly produce a remedy, yet may determine whether support is available during the wait. These indirect relations cannot be treated as irrelevant simply because they are absent from the surface rule, nor can they therefore be exaggerated into the sole cause.

Being able to distinguish differences does not mean that all differences are equally important in the current question. If analysis lists every detail as equally decisive, the result is only a fragmented list; if it returns to grand concepts, it flattens the differences again. Between these two errors, one must judge which differences have acquired greater operative weight in the relation at hand. A rental contract may not stand out in ordinary life, but may carry greater weight at school admission because of filing and qualification; records of wedding and funeral exchanges may not ordinarily determine life, but may connect to local reputation and mutual aid in weddings, funerals, and borrowing money; a surveillance device is ordinarily just a piece of equipment, but after a workplace injury it may connect to evidence and the assessment procedure; parental health ordinarily looks like family background, but may redirect pressure when marriage is urged and old-age care is arranged. These comparisons do not establish a fixed ranking in advance. They require judgment to change with the concrete question. What analysis seeks is not an eternal ranking table, but a checkable judgment about how the current consequence was formed.

Operative weight is not an eternal property carried by a difference, nor is it decided once by a conceptual name. How material operates in a concrete situation depends on the handling by people, organizations, and institutional procedures: someone extracts material in the situation, stipulates which records are valid, and connects certain conditions to a qualification or responsibility. When a procedure, relation, or event changes, a former background may move forward, and material once considered weighty may cease to work; when new material appears, the previously weightier difference may also need to be checked again. A difference with greater operative weight need not remain weightier forever. This correctability is the restriction required to avoid both reducing analysis to a list and organizing it around a governing axis.

The key, then, is not to claim that everything matters, but to make clear what has affected the consequence in this question, what remains only background, and what, though not recognized by the current procedure, may reappear in another relation. This is only a transitional discussion; it does not write relative weights in advance as a complete rule for later chapters. Such questioning also preserves the place of counterexamples: people with similar incomes may end up with different consequences because of housing, medical history, care responsibility, or what is taken up and sustained through local relations. This is not a denial of labor and wages. It refuses to let a total image predetermine that every difference can only be read as the same position. Concrete differences can have very great force, but a total image is not thereby exempt from being taken apart.

VI. Dismantling the Class Image and Real Differences

The differences that class theory captures are often persuasive precisely because wages, labor, housing, debt, and risk really do compress people's choices. Taking the image apart does not erase these pressures, nor does it dilute them with culture or the family. It requires each pressure to be returned to a relation that can be checked: who pays, who waits, who has a buffer, who can exit, and which institutional qualification makes the pressure heavier or changes its direction. Taking the class image apart does not yield a list of differences that can be completed once and for all. Different questions call for extracting different material, and wages, housing, debt, and responsibility for workplace injury need not always appear in the same combination. Analysis therefore cannot first judge someone through a low-dimensional position; it must check whether the extracted differences are actually connected to the consequence at hand. This is especially relevant to judgments of responsibility. If one summarizes everything through the class image, different restrictions and burdens are easily written in advance as the same situation; returning to concrete relations of wages, housing, debt, procedure, and care makes it possible to see who carries the pressure, where it is shifted, and where it might be changed. This does not reduce the weight of labor and property relations. It refuses to let the image make the final ruling for them.

The class image cannot be supplemented to form a platter of "class plus the state, market, nation, culture, and family," nor can it be kept at the center with all other relations treated as peripheral patches. Class theory does extract real differences that carry considerable weight in labor, wages, property, debt, housing, risk, resource buffers, employment, and domination. Yet the local explanatory capacity formed by these differentiating units and by their processes of extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression cannot change the structure by which class theory organizes concrete differences into a total class image from the outset. The problem is not that class theory was later overused or occasionally claimed a monopoly on explanation in advance. It has never been a safe, ordinary, limited explanation. When material such as labor, wages, and property is extracted, class theory simultaneously compresses, projects, and names it as a total image, making it easy for other differences to be arranged inside that image. The concrete

differences extracted can return to a bounded analysis; the class image itself cannot be remade into a safe, ordinary, limited model.

Taking the image apart is not a denial of the weight of wage arrears, insecure housing, debt deadlines, unemployment risk, responsibility for workplace injury, or resource buffers. On the contrary, precisely because these consequences are real, we must ask separately when they become heavier and how they connect to household registration, medical history, care, institutional qualifications, what is taken up and sustained through local relations, or the ability to endure waiting. In wage arrears, labor, wages, employment, and resource buffers may carry considerable weight; in waiting for a workplace-injury remedy, labor relations, medical records, procedure, and what the family bears may jointly change the result. Returning these concrete differences to their respective questions does not thereby produce a gentler class theory. The class image is attractive because the relations extracted behind it really do carry considerable weight. That attraction cannot give the image the status of what society fundamentally is, nor exempt interpreters from scrutiny in light of counterexamples, boundaries, and other relations.

VII. Society Is a Differentiation Network: An Ontological Judgment and the Boundaries of Explanation

The phrase “differentiation network” first points to a real, dynamic structure of social relations: society forms and exists as a differentiation network. At the same time, it retains a requirement to trace processes: do not treat a social consequence as directly caused by a single name; ask instead how differences enter a result through relations, procedures, taking up and sustaining what arises, and write-back. It does not provide an all-purpose main line that can replace other concepts, nor does it declare differences not yet extracted to be known answers in advance.

Differentiating units cannot be arbitrarily added together into social atoms. Society is a differentiation network: concrete differences are extracted within relations, assigned operative weight, connected, transmitted, and returned to consequences. The differentiation network is a real, dynamic, open, relational social structure situated in relational fields, and it replaces the class entity and the pre-existing class plane. But it is not a fixed, closed, personified ultimate entity that is complete in advance and exhausts all of society; it is not the highest image, nor does it arrange society by itself. Extraction, naming, classification, recognition, and adjudication must still be traced to interpreters, organizations, and institutional procedures.

The name of a nation can be compressed, invoked, or used; criticizing the name of a nation and a plane of identity does not amount to denying a real national community. A real national community may form through long-term interaction, multiple layers of relaying, language, rites and customs, shared memory, shared experiences of harm, shared protection, demands of responsibility, experiences of boundaries, and intergenerational write-back. It cannot be reduced to a bloodline myth, a state registration, subjective imagining, a cultural label, a plane of identity, or class occlusion. Criticizing the direct adjudication of a problem through “the nation” as an unexpanded grand term is precisely a way of preventing the real relations of a community from being replaced by a convenient name.

Understanding society as a differentiation network does not promise a convenient total answer. It requires a fresh check in every concrete question: which differences are extracted, which relations give them operative weight, which material is omitted, and how the result returns to people’s qualifications, responsibilities, and actions. This work is slower, but it prevents complex consequences from being handed over to a name too early. In this sense, rejecting a platter of concepts is not rejecting the use of concepts, nor rejecting the formation of provisional judgments.

What it rejects is treating a name as a completed account of society before the relations have been unfolded. A concept can direct us toward material, but the relation between material and consequence must be explained separately.

Society is neither a presupposed axis nor a platter of a few grand concepts. Concepts can provide direction, but they cannot replace tracing how concrete differences enter qualifications, positions, actions, responsibilities, and consequences. Putting concepts side by side only expands the index; returning differences to relations is what begins to explain how consequences form. The differences extracted by class theory—labor, wages, property, debt, housing, and risk—must still be examined in concrete questions. What cannot be retained is the practice of collecting them into a total image of society. Retreating from a platter of concepts to concrete differences does not cancel judgment; it requires every judgment to state which relations support it, which material it has skipped, and under what conditions it would need to be revised.

Notes

[F05b] See Note F05; this passage uses it only within the jurisdiction, period, procedure, and material scope specified in that note.

Chapter 05 What Is a Differentiating Unit? How Social Differences Become Differentiating Units That Can Be Extracted, Assigned Weight, and Connected to Consequences

I. Questions in the Situation at Hand and the Formal Definition of the Differentiating Unit

If grand concepts such as class, the state, the market, the nation, culture, and the family are not treated in advance as completed explanations of society, social analysis must keep asking: which differences actually enter into social consequences? Merely saying that society is complex, or placing many factors side by side, cannot trace how differences enter concrete relations and consequences. A child who cannot enter school, a worker who cannot obtain compensation, a cash gift that causes estrangement, a person excluded because of an accent—none of these can be left at the level of grand concepts. Which difference was extracted within which relation, and how did it change the result? That is the question that must be pursued.

When a child enters school, formal institutional factors such as household-registration conditions, school places, and application rules may be involved; where local policy expressly requires them, some documents concerning residence, social insurance, renting, or filing may also enter the review. The deadline for documents stipulated by the rules is a procedural requirement. Whether a family can meet that deadline, whether the parents can take time off, and whether the landlord cooperates in producing rental documents, by contrast, are living conditions a family faces while going through the procedure; a statement from the community is formal documentation only where the specific rules expressly make it so. Formal institutional requirements and informal living conditions jointly affect the result, but they must not be mixed together and written up as a single set of admission rules. The same applies to compensation for workplace injury. Domination, risk shifting, and difficulties of exit within labor relations matter, as do the determination of workplace-injury status, the assessment procedure, and rules of evidence. The concrete result must still be traced to whether a contract exists, whether medical records are complete, whether surveillance footage has been preserved, whether coworkers are willing to testify, who advances the medical expenses, whether the family can endure the wait, and whether the person concerned understands the procedure. Grand concepts provide direction, but they cannot replace tracing how consequences form.

A differentiating unit is a unit of difference in the world that can be distinguished, represented, assigned weight, and brought into comparison, and that may be extracted, connected, transmitted, and written back within a concrete relational field, thereby changing an object's position, qualification, risk, evaluation, responsibility, action, or consequences.

The “unit of difference” meant here is not a fixed entity that exists independently of relational fields, nodes, and relational chains. Things, bodies, relations, memories, institutions, languages, spaces, resources, records, and actions in the world may all contain differences that can be distinguished. In a person, one can identify age, the body, language, income, debt, medical history, household registration, kinship relations, local belonging, platform records, and past experiences; family relations contain property, care relations, kinship order, past obligations left unfulfilled, and local reputation; local society contains accents, place names, roads, schools, customs, public memory,

and structures of recognition. These differences do not naturally all become weighty at once, but they may be extracted in a particular event and enter relations and consequences.

What makes a differentiating unit is not a name or category in itself, but whether a difference can be identified, represented, compared, and assigned weight, and whether it can change consequences within relations. Whether one has local household registration, whether social insurance contributions are continuous, whether a contract is compliant, whether medical records exist, and whether there are records of cash gifts are all differences. Only when they are extracted in school admission, job seeking, compensation, borrowing, marriage or romantic relationships, care, exclusion, or the allocation of responsibility do they enter social consequences as differentiating units.

II. Potential States, Relationality, and the Empirical Levels of Representation

The concept of the differentiating unit first requires us to distinguish three things: whether a difference meets the conditions for becoming a differentiating unit, whether it has already been extracted in the current relational field, and whether it has already acquired weight and connected to consequences. Units of difference in the world that can be distinguished, represented, assigned weight, and brought into comparison, and that may change positions or consequences through extraction, connection, transmission, and write-back, belong to what this chapter calls differentiating units. The fact that one has not yet been extracted in a particular event does not mean that the difference does not exist, or that it has lost its potential as a differentiating unit. Only when specific people or procedures actually extract and use that difference, making it change qualifications, responsibilities, risks, evaluations, actions, or other consequences, can we further judge that it has taken effect in the current relational field. Analysts must therefore explain separately a differentiating unit's potential state, its state of extraction in the present, and its state of actually taking effect; they must not compress all three into the same moment.

Differentiating units have potentiality and relationality. A medical history may not become weighty in ordinary conversation, yet it may change a position when it enters a hospital, insurance, marriage or romantic relationships, or labor arrangements. Household registration may not become weighty in everyday chat, yet in procedures for school admission, obtaining local household registration, buying a home, or applying for benefits, it may change qualifications or become weighty. An accent is sometimes only a difference in sound, but it may become weighty in local recognition, exclusion, trust, or judgments of identity. Whether a difference produces consequences depends on which nodes extract it, which relational chains transmit it, and which specific people and procedures within institutions, platforms, schools, hospitals, or state service windows—as well as which family members, market participants, or members of local communities—recognize, amplify, downweight, or reject it. The same difference can acquire different weights in different relational fields; it may also temporarily cease to have an effect or reappear.

When the same person enters a hospital, a school, a labor relation, or a family event, the differences extracted from them, and the weights those differences receive, will vary. In a hospital, medical history, health insurance, ability to pay, and a family member's signature may become weighty; on entering the school system, household registration, student status, proof of residence, and the parents' social insurance may become weighty. Labor disputes bring out contracts, wage records, evidence of workplace injury, and coworker testimony; in family events, care responsibilities, past obligations left unfulfilled, kinship relations, and local reputation may become weighty.

A difference may have several forms of representation at the same time. Income can be represented in a wage statement, a money-transfer record, a family's oral account, or proof of debt; residence can be represented in a lease, a community statement, school documents, or neighbors' observations; traces of bodily conditions can remain in pain, medical records, leave records, and care arrangements. One cannot assume that these representations are interchangeable or have the same operative weight merely because they point to the same fact. In identifying a difference, analysts must preserve distinctions between forms of representation, because different forms do not connect to the same nodes, scopes of authority, and consequences. Even where rules in a particular procedure may allow some materials to replace one another, that substitutability is conferred by the specific procedural rules; it is not a universal interchangeability inherent in the fact of life itself.

At the same time, the same experience may also be represented differently by the person concerned, family members, staff, and those who record it. Conflicting versions do not cancel the reality of the experience, but they require us to distinguish their sources, when they were formed, the occasions on which they are used, and the authority to adopt them. When specific people record and pass on the conflict and use it to change trust, procedures, or responsibility, it is these inconsistent representations and the way they are handled that enter into consequences, not an abstract “dispute” that acts on its own.

When differences are formatted in the course of handling them, some content is retained and some is downweighted. A form can record an address, income, and dates, yet may not record care burdens, waiting costs, and local support; an oral account can preserve the continuity of an experience, yet may lack the form a procedure requires. Analysis through differentiating units must recognize both the need for a form that can be processed and the omissions caused by that format; it cannot judge facts of life that did not enter a field on a form to be nonexistent. Correspondingly, the original experience, the result of its handling, and later explanation must also be kept separate. Pain, residence, and care first exist as facts of life; diagnosis, registration, and evaluation are ways specific people handle them under rules; later analysts identify and analyze the differentiating units in these materials. This identification does not create the real differences to which it refers. Treating the result of handling as an unprocessed original fact overlooks how the preceding node helped shape the form of the difference.

The scope of a difference must also be made clear. Listing someone's “family background” as a differentiating unit is still too coarse. One must go on to ask who provides care, which property or debt has been extracted, which memory is recognized in a dispute, and which kinship position has changed the available exits. Listing “locality” as a differentiating unit does not complete the analysis either: local reputation, address, testimony from acquaintances, travel distance, and local rules may each enter different consequences. A name can be an entry point; it cannot replace breaking the category down. But this process is not endless: the level of detail of a differentiating unit should be governed by whether it can explain real consequences. If finer distinctions only add names without changing judgments about material, positions of responsibility, or the continuation of relations, there is no need to go further. But when stopping would conceal who handled something, which difference was downweighted, or which pathway was interrupted, finer distinctions cannot be omitted. The choice of scale is therefore constrained jointly by the question and the material, rather than arbitrarily decided by an interest in classification.

III. Mechanisms of Operation: Weight Assignment, Continuation, Positions of Responsibility, and Receding Effects

The existence of a difference does not mean that it is already operative. The world contains many differences involving the body, age, language, region, wealth, labor, institutional status, medical history, debt, kinship, rites and customs, education, and memory; they do not all naturally produce social consequences. A difference must first be distinguishable, and it must also acquire a representation. Within institutions, differences usually appear as credentials, files, numbers, materials, and records; in local society, they may appear as reputation, forms of address, wedding and funeral exchanges, seating order, and memories among relatives; in bodily relations, they may appear as medical records, scars, the capacity to act, or age-related conditions. Representation is not decoration. It bears on whether a difference can be identified, transmitted, and extracted.

Even when differences have acquired representations, concrete relations do not extract every difference in a person. A school may extract household registration, social insurance, proof of residence, age, and student-status documents; an employer may extract contracts, attendance, performance, bodily condition, and degree of compliance; local society may extract cash-gift exchanges, kinship relations, past relations, reputation, and social respectability; a court may extract evidence, written acknowledgments of debt, money transfers, judgments, and enforcement records.

After a difference has been extracted, whether it acquires weight, and what operative weight it acquires, still need to be explained through concrete relations. Weight is not a natural property of a differentiating unit, but the operative weight formed within concrete relational fields and relations: in school admission, continuous social insurance contributions may carry more weight than the parents' accents; in workplace injury, proof of a labor relation may carry more weight than everyday popularity; on occasions of cash-gift giving, whether one attended in the past may carry more weight than present income. Differentiating units must also enter comparison, pass through nodes, and connect to consequences along relational chains. Qualifications, credibility, responsibility, available exits, and judgments about receiving help or being excluded can all change a person's position. Household registration can connect to school-admission qualifications, continuous social insurance contributions to recognition in a city, contracts to labor relations, and medical records to compensation and leave; cash-gift records and accents may connect in different ways to local reputation, closeness, or exclusion. Extraction, weight assignment, and transmission are not a fixed, one-way process: they may intersect or branch, and a downweighted difference may be extracted anew in another relation.

Differentiating units also have temporal conditions. A difference raised today was not necessarily already taking effect in the same way yesterday; nor can a record formed later be retrospectively written into the material available for an earlier judgment. What must be traced is when a difference was preserved, when it was extracted, when it entered comparison, and when specific people connected it to qualifications, responsibilities, risks, or arrangements for action. Once temporal order is flattened, the relaying that actually changed consequences in the event disappears. Differences appearing at the same time have not necessarily been connected to one another. Wages and rent, medical history and responsibility for workplace injury, income and household registration can coexist in one event. To judge that these differences have entered a causal linkage, analysts must use material to explain how specific people or procedures use one of them to change qualifications, deadlines, risks, responsibilities, or available exits, and must trace the carriers, acts of handling, and relaying involved. Statistical correlation, similar names, and co-

occurrence can suggest where to investigate, but they cannot replace carriers, acts of handling, and relational chains.

Within the same event, some forms of representation or evidentiary materials for differentiating units can substitute for one another, while others can only supplement one another. The fact of residence may be jointly supported by a lease, payments, a community statement, and school records, but whether any one can replace another depends on procedural rules; bodily pain and medical records can corroborate one another, yet they do not have equal force in every judgment of responsibility. Analysts must identify the boundaries between substitution, supplementation, and non-interchangeability. When materials conflict, subsequent handling changes as well. When facts of residence do not match procedural requirements, family memories contradict official files, or local recognition and state registration cannot be mutually recognized, the concrete participants must select material, explain their authority, and bear the consequences of their handling. Analysis should not rush to eliminate the conflict, nor write “conflict” itself as an actor. It must preserve the sources on each side, the positions at which materials are adopted, and the results of handling them.

Differentiating units also concern the allocation of responsibility. The person who raises a difference, the person who preserves the material, the person who assigns operative weight, the person who refuses recognition, and the person who bears the consequences may occupy different positions. Some only supply material; some have the authority to adopt it; some can initiate supplementation or correction. Writing a difference as “caused by the institution” or “caused by the family” conceals the differences between these positions. Making differentiating units concrete allows responsibility to be pursued through relational chains rather than handed over to abstract names. In judging responsibility, seeing a difference and having the capacity to correct it remain two different things. Personnel at the end of a process may know that the material is problematic yet have no authority to alter the format; those in higher positions may hold the power of correction without directly facing the person concerned. The weight of a differentiating unit can indicate where the problem lies, but responsibility must be pursued further through knowledge, authority, choices, and consequences.

Effects that run in the opposite direction within relations cannot be ignored either. Family support may reduce debt pressure while increasing long-term care responsibilities; local reputation can make testimony available, but it may also lead to monitoring and exclusion; institutional records can open a path to qualification, but they may also cause an erroneous determination to be extracted repeatedly later. Differentiating units have no fixed direction toward good or evil; their consequences must be explained through concrete connections. The receding of a differentiating unit also requires conditions. After a debt has been repaid, the current payment obligation may end, yet the associated credit records, family borrowing, and local evaluations may not disappear at the same time; when a qualification is corrected, an earlier refusal may still leave losses of time and opportunity. To explain that a difference no longer takes effect, one must separately check its direct consequences, how it remains preserved, and whether it is extracted again later.

IV. How Differentiating Units Differ from Ordinary Perspectives and Comparisons

An ordinary perspective can suggest where to look; differentiating units require us to go on to explain which concrete differences are operating and how they enter into consequences. Looking at a child's school admission from the perspective of the state brings household registration, school places, and administrative procedures into view. Yet whether the child can enter school must still

be traced to how continuous social insurance contributions, rental filing, explanations at the service window, document deadlines, and community certificates operate within relations. Interpreters who adopt class theory can extract labor domination, risk shifting, and exit costs in workplace injury. Whether a contract exists, whether surveillance footage has been preserved, whether coworkers testify, whether medical records are complete, and whether the family can hold out until the assessment result arrives must still be traced one by one, because they change how compensation ultimately takes shape. A cultural perspective can point to rites and customs, as well as local evaluations. Estrangement caused by a cash gift still requires tracing how past exchanges, kinship relations, and responsibilities for mutual aid enter into consequences. A perspective turns the field of vision in one direction; it cannot replace tracing the mechanisms of concrete consequences.

Differentiating units cannot be treated as permanent variables either. Today's household-registration documents may become weighty in a school-admission event, yet be merely background in tomorrow's dispute among relatives; the same medical record serves different functions in medical judgment, workplace-injury determination, and family care. That weight changes with relations does not mean that judgment is arbitrary. It requires a clear account of why a difference becomes weighty and of the nodes that take up its consequences.

In comparing different explanations, differentiating units provide common units for tracing, not common conclusions. Two explanations can begin with the same material on wages yet reach different judgments about its connections to housing, care, the nation, or law. What matters in comparison is not who lists more differences, but who can explain extraction, weight assignment, transfer, and consequences, and who can accept limits on the scope of their explanation imposed by contrary material. When several explanations extract the same difference, that does not justify merging them into the same theory. Economic analysis, legal judgment, and family research may all be concerned with income, yet ask different questions about material, responsibility, and consequences. Differentiating units make comparison among them possible, while still requiring that their respective scopes be preserved to prevent the formation of a new total image encompassing all research.

V. Judging Effectiveness and the Boundaries of Empirical Evidence

That everything can be differentiated does not mean that everything is equally important. If every difference is listed as important, analysis loses its capacity for judgment. The tables and chairs, dust, lighting, paper, sounds, and smells in a room can all be distinguished, yet they may not enter into the consequences of a child's school admission. Whether a difference matters depends on whether it has been extracted, assigned weight, brought into comparison, and connected to consequences. Rental contracts, continuous social insurance contributions, proof of residence, and school places may become weighty in school admission; surveillance footage, medical records, coworker testimony, and labor contracts may become weighty in workplace injury. The same difference may become weighty in different relational fields, or it may be unimportant. Whether a judgment can be made still depends on which differences acquire weight in the concrete relational field and what consequences they connect to.

Differentiating units can be downweighted, occluded, or suspended without thereby departing from reality. A fact of residence rejected by a school may still be preserved by the family; pain ignored by an employer may remain in the body and in medical records; local memories downweighted by a public narrative may still be transmitted among relatives and in commemorations. Analysts must distinguish between a difference not being extracted, being extracted without being assigned

weight, and losing its effect during transfer after being assigned weight. These three situations produce different consequences and require different forms of correction. Differentiating units can also help analysts distinguish the nonexistence of a fact from its nonrecognition: residence, injury, care, or shared life may actually have occurred, yet fail to enter a procedure for lack of the required format, witnesses, or authority to retrieve the material. In that case, one cannot say that the difference does not exist; one can only say that it has not yet acquired the force required by the current handling. Conversely, recognition of a record does not guarantee that its content fully corresponds to the facts of life. Both directions require checking.

Connecting difference, representation, extraction, weight assignment, and consequences is meant to preserve the conditions under which each link holds. A fact of life may exist without yet being represented; material may be received without acquiring operative weight; a determination may be made without being transmitted to subsequent nodes. The establishment of any one link cannot automatically prove the others. Precisely because interruption is possible at every point, the concept of the differentiating unit can preserve a place for counterexamples, the unknown, and correction. Whether a difference can enter a causal explanation does not depend on whether the concept makes sense, but on how carriers preserve it, through what material it is represented, at which node it is extracted and assigned weight, and how it ultimately changes a concrete position. If a key connection is missing, at most one can propose a possibility that remains to be investigated. New material can fill a prior gap in knowledge, but it cannot be retrospectively written in as evidence already available at the time of an earlier judgment.

The adoption of material on one occasion can prove only that it acquired force in the setting of particular personnel, deadlines, and procedures; without finding evidence that a difference has taken effect, one cannot yet confirm that it has. Whether the material is insufficient, the pathway has actually been interrupted, or only a correlation can currently be seen must be investigated separately. Until this has been clarified, one cannot simply conclude that no effect occurred. To propose a more stable pattern of differentiation, one must also compare whether other events exhibit similar extraction, recognition, and consequences. If new material changes a judgment, one should preserve the evidential boundaries of the original conclusion, then narrow its scope, reduce its operative weight, or reconstruct the intermediate relations; one must not retrospectively recognize the unknown as causation already established. Absence, silence, or refusal sometimes produces consequences within concrete relations, but the fact that a result has appeared does not justify inferring a single attitude behind it. Failure to submit material, attend, or respond may arise from lack of knowledge, insufficient time before a deadline, lack of authority, bodily limitations, relational estrangement, or deliberate refusal. Only when specific people or procedures record and interpret that absence and connect it to consequences do the relevant differences enter the current judgment. The conditions producing the absence must still be kept separate from those who interpret it afterward.

The strength of material is not determined by the neatness of its form or its quantity. Contracts, work schedules, money transfers, coworkers' observations, and actual management can jointly support the existence of a labor relation, yet formal records may also be mere copies of an earlier judgment; an oral account that is difficult to format may instead preserve an account of time and of what people bore, neither of which the procedure recorded. When several materials are used together, one must check how they were formed, whether they are independent of one another, and who preserved and passed them on. Only genuinely complementary sources constitute corroboration; repeated appearances of information from the same source cannot masquerade as stronger evidence. A research question can determine which differences to trace first, but it does not authorize interpreters to exclude material that conflicts with their position. Omissions caused

by limits of scope, time, and available information should be explained together with the reasons for selection, the current conclusion, and counterexamples that could change the judgment. If the conclusion is extended from an individual case to the family, locality, institutions, or a larger scope, the relaying and the basis for comparison must be explained separately. Making these boundaries public does not turn the main text into an appendix of materials; it lets readers know where an inference holds and where it can be opened up again.

Differences may occupy different positions when an analysis ends: some have been extracted by specific people and connected to consequences; some have been raised but not recognized; some already have the conditions for preservation but have not yet been triggered in the current event; others are only research hypotheses awaiting support from material. These positions cannot be compressed into a single list of factors, or unproved possibilities will acquire the same operative weight as effects already in force. Only by preserving these distinctions can subsequent research know whether it needs to add material, clarify authority, or adjust the original inference.

VI. Low-Dimensional Compression in the Class Image, Macro-Level Inference, and Changes of Scale

Classes do not exist; what exists is the class image formed in the process of handling concrete relations. It is neither an isolated differentiating unit nor a single-point difference. Differences such as labor position, possession of wealth, employment relations, resource buffers, the bearing of risk, the ability to exit, debt, and housing pressure, once compressed within relations of economic domination, form the situations marked out by the class image. When a person's wages are overdue, labor relations, income buffers, rent pressure, the cost of asserting rights, and alternative employment opportunities become weighty together. Interpreters who adopt class theory subject these real and weighty differences to low-dimensional compression, projection, and naming, thereby forming the class image. But the weight of the concrete material itself can in no way establish, in turn, that an entity called class exists.

The class image formed in this way must still be brought back by interpreters into concrete relational fields and subjected to calibration against other differentiating units and counterexamples. Local explanatory capacity comes from real differentiating units and the processes of extracting, assigning weight to, connecting, and compressing them; the class image is only a low-dimensional output and cannot on that account be passed off as what society fundamentally is. But this calibration does not mean that the class image can be preserved as a safe, ordinary, limited explanation. Class theory organizes differences into a total image from the outset; it is not an ordinary concept that was originally safe and only later lost its boundaries. The fact that it includes the extraction and compression of real differentiating units does not justify rewriting it as an ordinary entry point exempt from questioning of its structure.

When differentiating units enter macro-level judgment, a single difference must not be elevated into a permanent main axis, nor must all differences be placed side by side without distinction. If similar extraction, weight assignment, and ways of taking up and sustaining what arises recur across multiple events, they can support a judgment of stable relations within a particular regional, temporal, and institutional scope. If small differences change consequences through similar people, procedures, and relations across multiple events, they can also support larger structural judgments. But obstruction experienced by an individual family cannot directly establish that an entire region follows the same pathway; similar results in several places still require comparison of rules, resources, and implementation.

Macro-level conclusions must retain local material, the dominant pull, exceptions, and new events that may change the ordering; they cannot automatically expand on the strength of the number of cases or the name of a concept. Macro-level names, in turn, must remain constrained by region, period, sources of material, and exceptions. Such inference must also answer whether similar results arise through the same relay process: if the format of qualifications causes obstruction in one place, while a shortage of resources causes it in another, apparently identical obstruction does not support a single pathway. Conversely, even when results differ, a structural effect with a bounded scope may still be identified if the same rules repeatedly change action space under different conditions for bearing consequences. The macro level is not a matter of smoothing away differences between cases, but of comparing how mechanisms persist or change direction under differing conditions.

Comparison and changes of scale must first establish whether the units are commensurate. An individual's monthly income cannot be placed directly alongside a family's total assets, nor can one medical record be treated as being on the same level as years of local reputation. When differences in residence move from a family's everyday life into school-admission qualifications or state registration, content from that life undergoes retention and omission. Analysts should state whether they are comparing time, qualifications, risks, the capacity to bear burdens, or relational positions, and explain what content can still be mutually recognized across scales and what holds only within the original relation. Moving from local differences to larger relations cannot omit relaying. Similar wage pressures in multiple regions initially create only a question for comparison. To propose stable relations across regions, one must also investigate similar rules, enterprise arrangements, formats of material, resource allocation, and connections that can be repeatedly checked against material from events. Local material and macro-level theory are not two unrelated levels: macro-level judgments arise from local relations being continually taken up and carried forward, not from the automatic enlargement of the name “differentiating unit.” The importance of a differentiating unit is determined by its actual effects and the range of its continuation, not by the size of the scale; it therefore does not become the sole main axis merely by entering macro-level discourse.

VII. Not Becoming a New Main Axis, and Responsibility for the Boundaries of Material Selection

Listing differentiating units and then using the list to explain everything merely substitutes a new plane; it does not make society more three-dimensional. Without weight, the listed differences become only fragments placed side by side; apart from a relational field, one cannot judge which differences will be extracted. Differentiating units alone cannot explain how multiple differences jointly form an actual position. The entirety of possible differences not yet extracted is not equivalent to differentiating units; but a difference that meets the conditions for becoming a differentiating unit does not lose its potential as one merely because it has not yet been extracted in a particular event. Elevating differentiating units into a new main axis to replace class, the state, the market, the nation, culture, or the family merely repeats the error of flattening reality with an overarching concept.

Analysis through differentiating units establishes the conditions under which differences acquire social efficacy, not an infinite table of attributes. Details of life acquire corresponding operative weight in the current question only by entering consequences through carriers, material, procedures, and time. Conditions that have not yet become apparent may still really exist, but they cannot be written in advance as principal causes already in effect. This enables differentiating units to open up what grand concepts occlude without becoming a new total image that handles every

event. Differences that have not entered the present event are not thereby abolished by the theory. They may remain in bodies, family memories, local relations, or institutional materials, awaiting extraction anew at another node. Distinguishing real existence from current efficacy is precisely the condition needed to avoid mistaking the window of analysis for the boundary of social existence.

A differentiating unit is not a social atom, nor an ordinary factor waiting to be used in every relational field; still less can it preserve, interpret, or write back effects on its own. The difference it denotes manifests social efficacy in a given relational field only through concrete carriers, relational pathways, and handling procedures. This boundary both preserves the reference to real differences and prevents differentiating units from being fixed as the smallest units of a replacement for the class plane.

The theoretical function of differentiating units is to return selection, representation, comparison, and causal linkage to interpreters. Without material, carriers, and pathways to consequences sufficient to support the relation at issue, conceptual possibility cannot acquire the standing of an empirical conclusion. If new material fills in the connections, differences previously excluded may re-enter. This boundary, which can open and close, enables theory to judge without filling the unknown with an illusion of completeness. At the same time, the extraction of differentiating units is not without limits. Where medical histories, family conflicts, or religious practices involve the private sphere, whether material can enter a judgment is constrained by the consent of those concerned, procedural authority, and existing responsibilities within relations. Completeness of research does not suffice to justify indiscriminate retrieval; the manner in which material is obtained changes trust and risk, and also becomes part of the assessment of consequences and the scope of judgment.

VIII. Conceptual Tools, the Reality of Relations and Groups, and Explanatory Boundaries

Concepts are not useless. Concepts such as the state, the market, culture, the family, and the nation can compress complex reality into an outline that can be articulated, enabling people to judge and argue; once treated as what society fundamentally is, they also occlude the differences beneath them. The concept of the state may occlude differences among household registration, service windows, legal texts, administrative interpretation, and fiscal allocation; the concept of culture may occlude differences among rites and customs, shame, gender expectations, local reputation, and long-standing habits. Concepts must return to concrete relational fields and be calibrated against differentiating units and the processes through which they enter consequences. Only in this way can concepts avoid being passed off as what society fundamentally is. General concepts can thereby leave room to be unfolded again. The class image, too, can depict certain real situations, enabling people to form judgments and arguments on that basis, but class theory organizes differences into a total image from the outset. Interpreters who adopt class theory may occlude the differences among wages, debt, housing, risk, and the ability to exit; this total-image structure cannot be retained merely by declaring that its use is limited.

Some differences can be fully explained only within relations. The deadlines of creditors and debtors, what caregivers and those receiving care bear, and recognition between members and communities cannot be attached solely to one individual. Analysis must identify at once the positions of participation, the direction of effects, and the actual consequences. This explains how differences are constituted relationally; it does not establish a separate, pre-existing, fixed category of “relational differentiating units.” Differences at the group level, such as shared memories and shared experiences of harm, likewise persist only through real carriers. Family narratives, school

education, rituals, recorders, witnesses, archives, and members' practices may jointly preserve and bring forward the relevant material again. Names of nations, families, or organizations can summarize these relations, but they cannot themselves remember, judge, or take responsibility. Reality at the group level comes from an ongoing process of taking up and carrying forward these relations and their contents, not from a name acquiring a unified personality.

That concepts are not what society fundamentally is does not mean that they are confined to researchers' language. Institutional classifications, forms of address within families, and names of communities, when used by specific people, can actually change qualifications, trust, and responsibility. What must be ruled out is writing a name itself as a pre-existing entity or actor. The same holds for differentiating units: they point to how real differences enter consequences, but they cannot operate on their own apart from people, material, relations, and procedures.

Chapter 06 Concepts Are Not What Society Fundamentally Is: How Concepts Compress Differentiating Units and Occlude Reality

I. Concepts Are Not the Enemy

Without concepts, experience is difficult to remember, compare, and discuss. Wages, employment, debt, rent, medical records, household registration, accents, cash gifts, kinship relations, real estate, educational qualifications, religion, the body, age, prior relations, school places, evidence of workplace injury, and family responsibilities would remain scattered across individual experiences if there were no names at all by which to organize them. People in conversation first draw on names such as “wages,” “the state,” “the market,” “culture,” or “the family” to identify the general direction of the material: labor and income; law and registration; prices and credit; rites and customs, together with memory; and care and dependence. Only by using names to organize this material do people sketch a provisional outline.

Through names, people remember recurring relations and compare experiences separated from one another. Without this step, public judgment can readily fall back into scattered impressions and individual stories. People also use concepts to transmit material for discussion. When someone describes a difficulty with school admission, a case of unpaid wages, or a cash gift, they need not retell every detail each time. Listeners can first use the name to grasp the general direction of the problem, then return to the material to see whether that name applies. Concepts, therefore, are not the enemy. The problem begins when names are used in place of further inquiry. If a name serves only as an entry point, it can still lead people back to labor, documents, time, care, records, and the ways things are taken up and sustained; if it is treated as an endpoint, the material begins to disappear behind the name.

This distinction cannot be applied directly to class theory. Labor positions, wages, property, employment relations, debt, housing, resource buffers, the bearing of risk, the ability to exit, and domination are all real differences that carry considerable weight, and each can enter a bounded analysis. Class theory, however, organizes these differences into a total class image from the outset. It is not an ordinary concept that was originally safe and only later lost its boundaries.

General concepts can leave room to be unfolded again. The structure of class theory, by contrast, compresses, projects, and names the extracted differences as a total image, making it easy for other differences to be arranged inside that image. The fact that it grasps some weighty relations does not justify preserving it as a safe entry point.

Conceptual compression has at least three distinct levels. The first is naming for communication: gathering scattered events into formulations that can be remembered. The second places material within a particular explanatory framework and indicates which differences are considered important. The third may treat the framework, in turn, as the pre-existing structure of reality and require all subsequent material to prove that it is merely an expression of that structure. The first two levels can be useful; it is the third that constitutes the ontologization of concepts.

II. How Concepts Compress Differentiating Units

A concept is a name into which people compress a set of related differentiating units in order to discuss, remember, compare, and judge reality.

Compression here is not an action that a word performs on its own. In naming, classifying, registering, and discussing, people, interpreters, organizations, and institutional procedures extract some differences whose relations have already become apparent and group them under a name. The name is both the result of this compression and an entry point for subsequent use. What is compressed is not empty abstraction, but concrete differences and the relations they have already manifested.

This selection has a different focus in different concepts. In speaking of “the state,” users may bring together law, registration, household registration, school places, public finance, administrative boundaries, public resources, implementation at service windows, and supporting material. In speaking of “the market,” they may bring together prices, wages, rent, credit, exchange, competition, the ability to pay, risk, and opportunity costs. Likewise, users draw on “culture” to organize rites and customs, forms of address, face, gender expectations, memory, local habits, taboos, and judgments of closeness and distance. When naming something as “family,” they provisionally group together care, dependence, inheritance, debt, favoritism, prior relations, eldercare, intimacy, control, and available exits. The material drawn on need not be exactly the same in every case, yet people readily regard it as naturally belonging to the same kind.

Compression preserves similarities among certain differences, as well as the experience of their having jointly acquired greater weight in some problems, so that people do not have to name every encounter from scratch. Material included under a name becomes easier to see, while material that has not been extracted may recede into the background. Reality has not disappeared; explanation, argument, and institutional handling may simply no longer give it the same place.

A name must not be conflated with the material compressed into it. “The state” is not registration, public finance, and service windows themselves, nor is “the family” identical with care, debt, and prior relations. People use names to gather material provisionally, but in another matter that material may still connect to different relations and consequences. Nor can the same name guarantee that the differences within it have the same operative weight: household registration and school places form thresholds in different ways, just as housing prices and wages alter choices in different ways. People use names to sketch an outline; detailed judgments must still return to the material. The possibility of unfolding the material again is precisely a condition of a concept's effectiveness within a limited scope. Users should explain what they have extracted at this point and acknowledge what they have omitted. When counterexamples, boundaries, and new material enter, the original compression can be corrected, rather than reality being required to accommodate the old name.

Concepts can be used repeatedly because an act of compression leaves a name that can be taken up by others. Later users need not have experienced the original relations themselves to approach, through this name, experience that has already been organized. Yet carrying a name forward is not the same as carrying forward all the material. The more stable the name, the easier it becomes to forget how the original material was selected. Compression also changes the scale of comparison. Once people place several differences under one name, they often find it easier to see what those differences have in common, but harder to see their respective times and origins, and the conditions under which they are taken up and sustained. Comparison thus gains an entry point, and also a point at which distortion may occur. It is precisely these differences, hidden by the common outline, that need to be unfolded again.

Naming practices are not always carried out by the same kinds of actors. Everyday conversation, research explanations, organizational classification, and institutional registration gather material in different ways; what is retained and what is omitted may also differ when the same name enters

different procedures. Naming itself does not change life unless someone connects the name to records, qualifications, authority, resources, or responsibilities. The term “workplace injury” may have different consequences in procedures involving medical records, assessments, compensation, and leave; the term “nation” may likewise carry different relations in family memory, education, legal registration, and the handling of boundaries. A concept's efficacy comes from how specific people and procedures use it, rather than from a fixed power possessed by the name itself. Differences in authority also arise when different participants use a concept. Those involved can use a name to describe their experience, staff may use fields on a form to connect the name to qualifications, and researchers use it to organize comparisons. The three have different capacities to produce consequences. The fact that the word is the same does not justify assuming that all users are performing the same action.

Concepts also change shape as they are passed between stages. A school understands “residence” as material bearing on eligibility, a community as long-term interaction, and a family as a fact of everyday life. The same word enters different consequences at different nodes. If we compare only the wording, we can easily mistake different forms of handling for the same judgment. What must be traced, therefore, is which node extracts the concept, what format it adopts, and to whom it transmits the result. Problems of translation across contexts are connected to this as well: legal, family, local, and academic language may use different names to describe the same part of an experience, or the same name to handle different relations. Whether translation succeeds depends on whether material, responsibility, and consequences can be connected. Merely aligning words does not prove that a concept has the same meaning at different nodes.

The historicity of concepts must also be preserved. The same name may be supported by different material in different institutions, generations, and local relations. Continuity of the name does not mean that the mechanisms of consequences have remained unchanged. Names for nations can carry forward long-term memory, but may also be reformatted by institutions; the name “family” can sustain kinship responsibilities, but may change meaning through household division, migration, and conflicts over care. Concepts must be traced together with the relations that formed them.

Boundary cases often expose the conflation of concepts: an organization may both participate in market transactions and receive authorization from the state; a family may both preserve community memory and handle property arrangements. The same object can thus enter different relations. Analysis must explain the material, authority, and consequences of each relation separately. The fact that the object is the same does not justify combining the concepts of market, state, family, or community into a single actor.

III. Why Concepts Have Power

Through shared names, people bring widely separated experiences into relations that allow comparison. Events need not remain forever a matter of private experience alone. If a person's difficulty is always confined to a private account, it is not easy to establish comparisons with other people's material. Names bring situations that were previously difficult to communicate into public language. In a case of unpaid wages, wage arrears, rent pressure, lack of savings, the cost of defending one's rights, alternative employment opportunities, and domination in labor can be seen together. In school admission, household registration, student status, school places, certificates from subdistrict offices, education department rules, and implementation at service windows can also be placed within the same set of institutional relations. In cash-gift exchanges, records, social respectability, closeness and distance, seating arrangements, prior relations, and future mutual aid

can enter discussion. This organization speeds up public judgment. People can first see which problems are not isolated accidents, then ask through which concrete stages they are connected. The practices of naming and organizing material keep discussion from being reduced to “I had bad luck” or “He was unlucky.”

People, organizations, and institutional procedures also use names to preserve experience. Repeatedly used names retain in memory a set of relations that once appeared together. Later users draw on these names to approach old problems, and organizations and institutional procedures often use classifications to record, compare, and handle material. Institutional handling depends on names, fields, and classifications to preserve records, compare qualifications, and make decisions. Precisely for this reason, the use of names is never merely a question of language: it affects which material can readily enter a procedure, which requires additional explanation, and which experiences have no existing field in which to be placed at all. Concepts may also harden through repeated institutional use. When the same field, the same classification, and the same set of evidentiary requirements are used across multiple events, people prepare the corresponding material in advance, and experiences that do not fit the format find it harder to enter judgment. This stability is a real consequence, but it still comes from the ongoing handling by rule-makers, record-keepers, reviewers, and those implementing decisions. It does not mean that the concept itself has become an entity capable of acting.

Yet preservation is never complete preservation. The easier a name is to transmit, the more easily the disagreements, conditions, and exceptions once within it are occluded. Compression brings convenience, but also limits. Public judgment depends especially on concepts, yet cannot stop at them. After saying that a rule is an administrative matter, that an expenditure involves market pressure, or that a set of interactions involves local rites and customs, one must still return to specific documents, deadlines, the ability to pay, and prior relations to see how they alter consequences. The power of a name comes not from its standing above reality, but from users being able to enter reality through it. Apart from material, procedures, and relations, a name is nothing more than a slogan to be fought over.

IV. How Concepts Occlude Reality

Occlusion does not mean that reality disappears. Reality continues to unfold, but often it can enter explanation, records, and public discussion only through classifications already in use. Those who use class theory may see more of labor, wages, property, debt, housing, and domination, while downweighting language, religion, the body, local memory, prior relations within families, rites and customs, and institutional status. Those who use the name “the state” may likewise focus on law, registration, and administration, while placing rent, help from relatives, market costs, local familiarity, and family care in the background. The first set of material is not false, nor is the second set real only on that account. If interpreters forget their own choices about what to retain and omit, they will mistake the differences already extracted for the whole of reality.

Within a market framework, cash gifts, support for elderly relatives, family affection, and local credit are often treated as costs and returns. When interpreters adopt a cultural framework, housing prices, childcare costs, gendered risks, and the pressures of eldercare are readily assigned to traditional beliefs; when they turn to a family framework, unemployment, debt, housing costs, and industry cycles may in turn be classified as private trauma. Each account may grasp some relations and omit others. Occlusion also comes from institutional classification. A procedure specifies which forms of proof count, which experiences can be registered, and which relations can remain only in oral accounts. It is not concepts blocking material on their own: organizations,

institutional procedures, and naming practices place some material in visible fields and leave other material outside them. Once existing classifications become the only language, unclassified differences find it difficult to gain standing in an explanation. They may still affect qualifications, waiting, responsibilities, and action, yet find it difficult to enter formal judgment.

Occlusion is often not deliberate concealment. Interpreters may sincerely organize material under names familiar to them, while institutional procedures may simply continue using existing fields. As names are used repeatedly, differences not included come to look more and more like irrelevant facts, even though they continue to alter people's choices and consequences. The same material also takes on different appearances under different names: debt can be seen as market pressure, a family burden, or a problem of institutional qualification. Any of these accounts may grasp some of the facts. If only one is permitted to exist, the other relations lose the opportunity to be examined.

Names for nations must also be treated separately here. Names can be compressed, invoked, classified, or put to use; real national communities, however, cannot on that account be reduced to mere concepts, identity labels, state registration, subjective imaginings, or appendages of class. The compressibility of names does not cancel the real relations through which communities have formed historically.

Placing class, the state, market, nation, family, and culture side by side does not automatically yield a complete explanation. Institutions may also create records according to classifications and then use those records, in turn, to prove that the classifications are correct. Both practices readily allow names to occlude the actual handling. Analysis must trace who classified first, which fields and rules preserved the results, how subsequent personnel retrieved them, and whether contrary material can correct existing records. Only by opening up this formation chain can the juxtaposition of multiple concepts and institutional records be kept from replacing causation, time, and responsibility.

V. How Concepts Come to Be Treated as What Society Fundamentally Is

When a concept serves as an entry point, users still return to the material it indicates. If judgment stops at the name and says only that this is a state problem, a market problem, a cultural problem, or a family problem, documents, time, relations, the ways things are taken up and sustained, and responsibility are no longer investigated. Once a name is treated as fundamental reality, explanation undergoes an inversion: a judgment that should have been supported by material instead requires the material to prove the name. Relations that do not fit the name are described as secondary, exceptional, or superficial, and differences within the name are forcibly arranged in the same direction. Concepts do not inherently produce this result on their own; the problem lies in users and procedures refusing to unfold them again.

The ontologization of general concepts occurs when names are mistaken for independently existing social entities. Interpreters no longer explain who extracted which material or which procedures gave it operative weight, and no longer allow new material to change the judgment. A name changes from a tool for organizing experience into something that adjudicates experience in advance. When names seem able to arrange reality on their own, the actual actors who extract, classify, retain, omit, name, and adjudicate are erased. These actions must always be traced to specific interpreters, organizations, institutional procedures, and classificatory practices. Only by restoring the actions to these actors can we see where a judgment begins to lose its boundaries. The state, market, culture, and family can all be misused in this way. They can indicate entry points into different relations, but cannot declare a sole cause on reality's behalf, still less reduce all other relations to their own appendages. General concepts may still be brought back within bounds by

boundaries, counterexamples, and material. If users explain the scope of their material, acknowledge omissions, and allow judgments to contract, names will not readily replace society itself. What is at issue here is the limited use of general concepts, not an exemption for class theory.

Class theory requires separate treatment. It is not an ordinary concept that turned from an entry point into a wall only after later misuse. From the outset, it compresses, projects, names, and organizes differences such as labor positions, wages, property, employment relations, debt, housing, resource buffers, the bearing of risk, the ability to exit, and domination into a total class image. These differences can each enter a bounded analysis. The total class image itself, however, cannot be preserved as a limited entry point, with the state, market, nation, culture, and family then treated as peripheral supplements. The capacity to extract differences within a limited scope has not changed class theory's basic structure of subsuming explanations.

Abstract names cannot bear responsibility on behalf of actors. The market does not set prices on its own, the state does not carry out registration on its own, the family does not allocate care through a unified will, and the nation does not preserve memory on its own. Specific participants, organizational positions, rules, and procedures are the carriers through which differences are handled. Concepts can summarize their relations, but cannot become the source of their actions.

The power and danger of concepts come from the same capacity for compression. A concept organizes scattered consequences into comparable problems, but may also fix the outline obtained through comparison as a pre-existing world. Work with concepts therefore does not aim to find the largest name. It must maintain distinctions among naming, extraction, weight assignment, passing on, and write-back, so that material can reopen generalizations. Only under this condition can users draw on concepts to form bounded explanations without elevating names into images treated as what society fundamentally is. Concepts also function differently in different settings: in public language a concept may gather experiences together; in fields used in institutional records it can connect to qualification and implementation; in academic discussion, research concepts are used to organize comparisons. Even when all three use the same name, their respective carriers and consequences must be distinguished. Continuity of wording cannot stand in for continuity of relations.

Saying that concepts are not what society fundamentally is does not negate their power. Generalizations can still organize real problems, but must explain who carries them, when they form, on what material they are based, through which nodes they pass, and what consequences they produce. They must also acknowledge what contrary material would invalidate the conclusion. A concept's force comes from its ability to accept limits in reality while continuing to explain, rather than from securing a position immune to correction. When a concept proves effective repeatedly across events, an analyst can strengthen the judgment concerning its pattern of relations. Yet this stability is still supported by material and relaying; it does not elevate a generalization into an entity capable of acting on its own.

The boundaries of concepts must ultimately be grounded in responsibility. If "institutions," "the market," or "culture" leave people unable to identify who makes rules, allocates resources, preserves material, rejects objections, implements consequences, or holds the authority to correct, abstract names have already taken over the actions of actors. Whether analysts use these names to explain or to criticize, they should restore control, knowledge, authorization, and the capacity to make corrections to concrete positions. Disaggregating them in this way does not lessen criticism; it enables criticism to reach the relations that produce and sustain consequences.

VI. Differentiating Units Must Not Be Ontologized Either

Differentiating units cannot be elevated into what society fundamentally is under a new name, nor should they be treated as social atoms, ultimate entities, or an all-purpose term. They cannot replace class, the state, market, nation, culture, and family as another, still larger total concept. Breaking concepts back down into differences does not mean that we have found society's final material. Only within concrete problems, as differences connect with other relations, does it become apparent what they can change. Detached from these processes, arranging differentiating units into a fixed list would likewise freeze analysis back into a plane.

Treating differentiating units as new labels merely gives the old practice a different word. If someone says, “This is a problem of differentiating units,” but no longer explains which differences are extracted, by whom they are recognized, how they are transmitted, and when they enter consequences, the name likewise becomes empty. Nor can differentiating units serve as an all-purpose explanatory key. They remind people to ask how differences are extracted, recognized, and transmitted, but do not guarantee that every difference named will enter consequences. Differentiating units acquire meaning only within concrete problems. Which relational field they enter, which relations they connect with, and at which nodes they are preserved, certified, or passed on are what enable certain differences to enter qualifications, responsibility, action, or consequences. Nor can they be detached from relations of operative weight: a difference that is prominent in one matter may recede into the background in another, and the same record may produce different consequences when adopted by different procedures.

The judgment that “society is a differentiation network” has real standing in social ontology and cannot be reduced to an analytical method, an observational perspective, or a rhetorical metaphor. Equally, users cannot expand it into an ultimate reality or highest total image that is closed, exclusive, and completed in advance, that encompasses everything that exists in the universe, and that is immune to counterexamples. How concrete differences are extracted, connected, assigned operative weight, recognized, and adjudicated must still be traced to interpreters, organizations, institutional procedures, and actual relational processes. The network is neither a mechanical aggregate nor an actor operating on its own. Preserving this boundary serves to maintain the differentiation network's reality, the way society is formed, and the network's openness together; it does not withdraw this book's affirmative proposition in social ontology.

Criticism of concepts must also delimit its target. Pointing out that a particular usage occludes reality does not cancel the name's function in every setting. Rejecting class as an entity still leaves room for limited analysis of wages, property, debt, and domination. Analysts should specify whether they are criticizing ambiguity in the name, the explanatory structure, institutional usage, or the actions of specific people, so that criticism does not create yet another undifferentiated abstract object.

VII. How to Use Concepts Properly

Using a concept properly requires first explaining which material it points to at this moment. In speaking of the state, does one mean legal texts, household registration, registration, school places, implementation at service windows, or administrative boundaries? In speaking of the market, does one mean prices, wages, rent, credit, competition, or opportunity costs? A name cannot replace this explanation. One must also explain what the compression has retained and what it has omitted. If, in setting out a judgment, one presents only the material considered, readers cannot know which relations have been omitted or whether those omissions would change the conclusion.

The scope of a concept's application should also be stated. A name being helpful for one kind of problem does not mean that it can cover all problems; its grasping a key relation at one moment does not mean that the same relation will always retain the same operative weight. A concept's valid scope may change with the research question, but cannot be moved arbitrarily after the fact. Analysts should state their material and scope at the outset. If adjustment is needed after counterexamples appear, they must make public which participants, nodes, or consequences have changed. Merely excluding unfavorable cases from a new definition does not count as conceptual calibration.

The omissions made by concepts are sometimes necessary, but what has been omitted must be capable of being unfolded again. Without compression, analysis cannot form communicable judgments. Yet readers should be able to ask what material lies beneath a concept, which relations have been downweighted, which conclusion holds only for a particular event, and what new counterexample would deprive the concept of explanatory power. This means that users must be able to unfold again the concrete material contained in a name: labor, wages, debt, housing, and risk can return to their respective problems, while law, registration, public finance, service windows, and public resources can each be examined separately. Unfolding again still preserves a concept's limited uses. Its purpose is to prevent concepts from adjudicating in advance on reality's behalf. A limited concept should remain correctable: it can aid memory, comparison, transmission, and public judgment, but must leave an exit back to concrete material.

A concept's clarity depends on whether the basis of its formation can be traced. If, after a macro-level judgment returns to material, nodes, and relational chains, it is no longer apparent how the name was formed through extraction, weight assignment, and consequences, compression may have gone too far. If the core inference can still be re-examined by following the material, the concept remains open to inspection. This does not require writing to reproduce all of reality. It requires that names not allow an argument to leap over stages that have yet to be explained.

In the case of class theory, one cannot say that “there is no problem with using the concept of class.” What can enter analysis are concrete differences such as labor positions, wages, property, employment, debt, housing, resource buffers, the bearing of risk, the ability to exit, and domination. Returning these differences to their respective problems will not assemble them into a safe total class image.

Reopening concepts does not mean abandoning generalization. Analysts may retain “the family,” “the market,” “the state,” and “the nation” as provisional entry points, but must indicate the material they currently cover, what remains outside them, and the time span within which they apply. When counterexamples show that an entry point is too coarse, analysts should add differentiating units, split nodes, or narrow the conclusion, rather than wrap the problem up again in new grand words. When multiple concepts intersect, one should not establish a still higher total term to gather them all in. Family, state, market, and nation can affect one another within the same event; analysts must explain through which people, material, and procedures each enters consequences. The intersection of relations supports multiple traceable paths, not a new omnipotent concept.

The use of concepts must accommodate counterexamples. When new material appears, interpreters must be able to narrow, adjust, or abandon their original judgments. Names cannot become shields against revision. When new records, relations, or consequences incompatible with the original judgment appear, users must address them directly, rather than dismiss them all as exceptions. Whether a concept has been overextended can be examined precisely through boundary cases: when an event fits the name in only some of its material while other relations point

to different outcomes, can the interpreter acknowledge that the classification does not fully apply? When two events bearing the same name produce different consequences, can the concept be broken back down into nodes and relational chains? If every difference can only be gathered back under the same name, the concept loses the boundaries through which reality constrains it.

Whether a concept can return to reality ultimately depends on whether it allows material to change the concept's own organization. If new evidence is merely added to an existing framework without being able to change weights, paths, or scope, its supposed openness is merely formal. A concept that can truly be calibrated leaves room for revision: it can be narrowed, differentiated into levels, or given a different entry point, and it can be withdrawn if it continues to fail.

Concepts can form a public language that allows scattered events to be compared and downweighted experiences to enter discussion. This function does not require all material to submit to the same name. New records may break up existing generalizations, and other research can pose different questions on the basis of law, history, institutions, or the experiences of those involved. As long as the shared language still allows participants to add material, dispute the scope, and change judgments, concepts can enter comparison. If the unknown, objections, and outside research can only be taken in as examples of the concept itself, it begins to lose its limited boundaries. Concepts remain necessary theoretical tools. They allow different events to be compared and long-term relations to enter an explanation. The greater their power to generalize, the more they must be able to return to concrete relations and indicate what material they have retained, what differences they have downweighted, and under which conditions they offer only a partial explanation. Concepts are therefore neither temporary labels nor ultimate answers; discourse developed around concepts remains constrained by the boundaries of reality and the conditions under which it ceases to hold.

VIII. Turning to How Differences Produce Consequences for Action

Once concepts have been reopened, concrete analysis must avoid the closure of grand concepts while also avoiding listing differences as unrelated fragments and breaking every person down into countless unmanageable details. The question is no longer how to add more names to the same matter, but how concrete differences move from the background into qualifications, positions, responsibility, action, and consequences. People can certainly use concepts to explain reality. Whether that account can withstand correction by reality, however, depends precisely on how concrete differences enter consequences: analysis must explain which differences in the problem at hand have already acquired operative weight, how they enter consequences along relations, and what material might change the judgment. Consequences always take shape at points of connection and continuation. What must be asked is which differences have already connected with institutional procedures, the ways relations take up and sustain what arises, and temporal conditions, thereby enabling people to act, requiring them to wait, allowing them to exit, or forcing them to bear consequences.

These questions all require tracing the places where differences connect with procedures, relations, and the ways what arises is taken up and sustained: under what conditions a residence permit changes eligibility for school admission; how surveillance footage enters the determination of responsibility for workplace injury; how records of wedding and funeral exchanges affect local reputation; how accents connect with closeness and exclusion; and how debt deadlines change people’s capacity to resign, marry, bear a period of illness, or refuse work. Differences do not produce consequences as soon as they appear. Some material needs to be registered, some to be recognized, and some to be transmitted through relations; in some cases, support is needed during

the wait before the room available for action can change. When material is recognized, differences may enter qualifications; when records are preserved, differences may reappear later; when relations provide or withhold the means of taking up and sustaining what arises, differences change the room available for action. Nor do the same differences acquire equal weight in every problem. When work arrangements, family care, institutional deadlines, local relations, and prior records connect with one another, material that was previously inconspicuous may suddenly affect choices; material that appears weighty may also temporarily fail to enter the outcome because it has not been taken up and sustained.

Chapter 07 How Differences Produce Consequences for Action: Differentiating Units from Background Differences to the Chain of Consequences

Some differences have already been seen, extracted, and used in judgment, yet have no public name and have not been recognized as legitimate grounds. They can still alter eligibility, responsibility, closeness, and available exits. To see whether a difference enters into consequences, we must look beyond whether it has been formally named: we must also ask where it was extracted, by whom, and what form of handling it was then connected to.

The existence of a difference does not in itself automatically produce consequences for action. Its passage from the background into action involves relations, materials, timing, comparison, and the ways in which what arises is taken up and sustained; once consequences have formed, they may also leave new records, memories, and positions. This chain identifies the links at which consequences are advanced or blocked; it does not compress reality into a single path. Here we trace only how differences enter into consequences, setting aside for now the question of whether those consequences have moral legitimacy. If the grounds for a judgment are not explained, those concerned may sense that their treatment has changed yet find it difficult to know whom to ask, what to offer as proof, or how to appeal. There is no need to begin by attributing this difficulty to some fixed motive. What it first indicates is that part of the formation of consequences remains within relations that those concerned cannot see or directly check. Whether the grounds can be brought into a position where they can be explained, substantiated, and responded to will change the action space available later. Whether public reasons are given for the treatment will also affect people's ability to rearrange relations.

I. A Difference's Existence Does Not Mean That It Is Operative

An accent, a residence permit, a debt, a medical record, and records of wedding and funeral exchanges may all really exist, but they will not produce the same consequences in every relation. Having an accent does not mean being excluded everywhere; having a residence permit does not mean that it governs every moment of daily life. Existence tells us only that the materials, experience, or position are already there. It does not yet tell us that they have entered into the handling of the matter at hand.

“Operative” means that a difference enters into the handling of relations within a concrete relational field, connecting to eligibility, responsibility, recognition, shame, time, available exits, or choice. Being operative is not a fixed category, nor does it mean that the difference has acquired permanent power. Being operative is only a state of operation for a given period: here and now, a particular difference has had an effect on certain people and a particular way of handling a matter.

A difference's temporary absence from the consequences at hand does not mean that it has disappeared or has no meaning. It may remain in the background until an event, procedure, dispute, or change in relations brings it back to the center. Treating background differences outright as inoperative makes it easy to mistake a gate that suddenly appears later for something created out of nothing. Being operative refers to a difference's state of operation in concrete handling. It neither divides differentiating units into two eternally fixed kinds of entity nor declares temporarily silent materials false, much less assigns a difference an eternal identity.

A difference's effects shift. This does not mean that the difference itself moves back and forth between existence and nonexistence. Once an application is over, a document that previously carried substantial operative weight may recede into the background. A residence permit may become a gate in a school admission application, yet on days when no application is involved it may change none of the choices at hand. Conversely, a seemingly irrelevant old record is nevertheless extracted in a new dispute; a debt may not constrain action while its deadline is distant; it changes the capacity to wait only once the deadline approaches.

Nor does a name guarantee that a difference is operative. Someone may repeatedly emphasize a difference without being able to bring it into current eligibility, responsibility, or choice; another difference with no formal name may already be changing judgments in social exchanges. Accents, forms of address, and past exchanges often do not appear as explicit rules, yet they may lead to someone being asked an extra question, trusted on one fewer occasion, or placed at a greater distance. Analysis must therefore ask separately whether a difference exists, whether it becomes apparent, whether it is extracted, whether it is adopted, and precisely what kind of consequence it connects to after adoption. These steps cannot substitute for one another. To write “exists” directly as “causes” skips the relations in between; to write “unrecognized” as “without any effect” misses judgments operating out of sight.

II. How Differences Become Apparent from the Background

The background is not empty of differences. A residence permit lies in a drawer, a debt deadline is not yet approaching, an accent blends into everyday speech: they simply have not yet become central to the relations at hand. These materials need not be constantly brought to mind, but at a particular moment they may be requested, asked about, or noticed by those involved, changing the direction of conversation and the handling of matters. When someone applies for school admission, a residence permit, a rental contract, and other materials become apparent; as a repayment date approaches, the debt deadline becomes urgent. When a difference becomes apparent, an existing difference acquires a position within events and relations in which it can be handled. This process does not create the difference out of nothing. It makes what was previously set aside into something that must now be answered, supplemented, or explained.

Differences do not become apparent at the same speed or over the same range. Deadlines, disputes, applications, rituals, and negotiations bring different materials to the center; without these triggers, existing differences may remain in the background. Some differences become apparent as soon as a checklist appears; others become clear only when someone raises a question, refuses to take something up, or demands proof. The background is a difference's position within current relations, not an abstract warehouse containing everything. A single event brings only some materials into view while others remain obscured. In a school admission application, a residence permit and contract may become central, while an accent and records of weddings and funerals may not enter at all. This does not mean that the latter two are unreal, only that they have not yet connected to the handling of this particular relation.

Becoming apparent does not mean immediately acquiring greater weight. A reviewer may see an item of material yet decide that it does not meet the rules; an applicant may bring materials that cannot be used because of time, available places, or other conditions. After a difference moves from the background into view, it must still pass through extraction, use, and connection to consequences before it can change a position. Being seen opens a possibility; it does not mean a judgment has already been completed. Nor do participants in the same event have access to exactly the same materials. Who holds existing differences such as contracts and deadlines, and whether

these can be explained and preserved, affect the range over which they become apparent. The event itself does not automatically illuminate everything. Different informational and procedural positions may mean that different materials enter subsequent handling.

III. How Differences Are Extracted and Used

Being seen, being extracted, being used, and gaining public recognition are four distinct steps. School reviewers check materials, workplace managers handle attendance, participants in procedures examine evidence, and relatives look back through old records during their exchanges. These are all ways in which specific participants extract differences. A difference does not leap into the center of judgment on its own; it must enter the handling of a matter through questioning, checking, recollection, retelling, or recording. Extraction always has a scope. A reviewer will not put everything a person has experienced onto a checklist, nor will relatives revisit every old incident during a single exchange. Who has the authority to ask questions, what can be proved, and what materials are recognized as relevant determine which differences can move from the background into judgment. Extraction is itself already a selection: it makes certain things into grounds while leaving others outside those grounds.

A residence permit may be used in reviewing a school admission application; surveillance footage, medical records, contracts, and testimony may be used in judgments about responsibility for a workplace injury. Such uses are sometimes written into rules and sometimes occur at service windows, in interviews, around dining tables, in rental negotiations, and in exchanges among relatives. The former often leave checklists or procedural nodes; the latter may leave no clear trace, yet they can likewise push people toward different answers, periods of waiting, or concessions. When materials are used, they have already entered into a judgment; they are no longer merely lying on the table. A contract may be brought out to confirm a labor relation; a medical record may be consulted to address injury and responsibility; records of wedding and funeral exchanges may be retrieved to weigh those exchanges and the obligations to be fulfilled. The same materials have different uses under different questions. Their consequences cannot be inferred from their names alone.

Some differences have already been extracted and used but have no public name, formal recognition, or legitimate standing. A lack of formal recognition does not mean that they have produced no consequences. Accents, forms of address, past exchanges, and family relations can all change judgments out of sight. When a basis for judgment cannot be stated aloud, those concerned may not know what they should supply or rebut, nor be able to identify where the decision has already been made. Formal recognition brings a difference within the scope of appeal, recording, or contestation; covert use may leave no such position. Both can produce consequences. The difference lies in whether those concerned can see the grounds for judgment, present proof, or demand a response. Thus, analyzing covert use does not mean attributing every adverse outcome to secret rules. It means asking how the grounds were extracted and whether they can be examined.

Extraction may also stop halfway. A contract is found but not recognized as relevant; testimony is heard but not entered into the record; a past exchange is brought up but fails to alter how the matter was handled on the spot. All these indicate a distance between extraction and adoption. Collapsing the two into a single step misses where a difference is set aside, weakened, or reinterpreted.

IV. How Differences Are Assigned Operative Weight

Weight forms within concrete relations, standards of judgment, time pressures, and connections to consequences. It is not a fixed intensity that differentiating units carry by nature. Operative weight means whether a difference can move the handling of a matter forward, block it, or change it in this particular judgment; it does not mean that a person is inherently more “important.” The same document may carry great weight in a school admission application yet not be central on days when no application is being made. The same accent may bring closeness among acquaintances but distance in rental dealings or judgments at a service window. The difference has not changed; the connections between relations and consequences have changed. Treating weight as a fixed essence of the difference makes this shift inexplicable.

How weight enters into consequences depends on who adopts which standards, when a judgment must be made, and what costs missing materials entail. What is at issue here is a difference's actual operative weight in a concrete judgment, not abstract rankings or moral importance. The operative weight of a medical record in a workplace injury dispute comes from whether it can be used to connect the accident, treatment, and responsibility, not from medical records being more valuable in every relation.

Time pressure can change weight, but it is not the only condition. With a generous deadline, the same materials may await correction or supplementation; at a deadline or in a dispute, they may immediately become a gate. The materials exist in either case. Whether they connect to consequences depends on their connections with procedures, relations, and standards of judgment. A deadline makes a gap that could previously be addressed later difficult to ignore, but it does not replace the other conditions. Operative weight also changes through comparison. If other materials can make up for something missing, a missing item need not dominate the outcome; if no alternative proof is available, a previously inconspicuous detail may suddenly become a decisive gate. No difference has mysteriously grown larger. The surrounding conditions for taking it up, supplementing or correcting it, and substantiating it are what have changed.

Being assigned operative weight does not mean that a judgment is already legitimate. Materials specified in rules may be given excessive weight, while the importance attached to accents or forms of address in informal relations may not be publicly defensible. The purpose of analyzing weight is to see clearly what actually constrains choice, not to endorse the operative weight already assigned. Whether something is actually operative and whether it ought to be so are two questions that must not be collapsed into one another.

Weight must therefore be understood within the concrete chain: how it is put forward, by what standards it is amplified, what time limits it encounters, and what consequences it makes possible. Merely saying that a difference is “very important” is still too crude. Only by identifying whom it prevents from waiting, passing through, or having their affairs taken up and sustained does operative weight acquire content that can be analyzed.

V. How Differences Enter Comparison

Comparison may be written into application checklists, procedures for determining responsibility, or records, or it may remain unspoken. Who has a complete set of materials, who can wait, who has testimony, who is more closely connected to local relations: these judgments may all connect differences to eligibility, order of precedence, credibility, and closeness or distance. Those involved in judgment refer to a range of differences in handling the same matter. What is at issue here is how differences serve as references for one another, not an abstract ranking of people from high to

low. In school admission, a residence permit must be considered alongside application materials, available school places, and the deadline; in a workplace injury case, medical records must also connect with contracts, surveillance footage, witnesses, and procedural requirements. Comparison need not be explicitly announced by anyone, yet it changes the operative weight of materials. An item of material that seems sufficient on its own may prove insufficient or crucial when placed among limits on places, timing, and other proof.

Nor do records of weddings and funerals concern only amounts of money. They are considered in relation to past exchanges, family circumstances, and local customs, allowing closeness or distance and responsibility to become apparent anew on specific occasions. Comparison here is often not presented in a formal table, yet it still has references that people can recognize: who attended, who was absent, and who offered a hand in times of difficulty become the background to what is said and arranged on the spot. Comparison brings differences of different kinds onto a common plane of judgment. Whether materials are complete, whether a deadline is approaching, whether testimony can be found, and whether someone is willing to take matters up and carry them forward may not be reducible to a single number, yet together they influence how a person is treated. This is precisely the difficulty of comparison: it is not always an explicit calculation, yet it still produces differences in precedence, advance or retreat, and credibility.

Comparison can also yield different results in different hands. Those holding materials, those under time pressure, and those with decision-making authority do not see the same conditions. Who can offer further explanation, which difficulties count as relevant, and which statements can be substantiated all affect judgment. The way points of reference are set is not neutral: it makes some differences visible while leaving others outside judgment. Looking only at a checklist may exclude the person's capacity to wait, what families take up and sustain, or difficulties in obtaining proof; talking only of closeness or distance may obscure the person's actual economic and time constraints. Which differences those making judgments place on the same plane of reference, and which they leave outside it, changes the conditions under which the outcome forms.

In examining comparison, we must therefore ask both “What was compared?” and “What was not compared?” Excluded differences may not immediately produce an outcome, yet they may make a later outcome appear a matter of course. Only by laying out the plane of reference can we see clearly how eligibility, responsibility, or closeness and distance have been pieced together.

VI. How Differences Connect to Channels and Responsibility

Actual facts do not turn into eligibility or responsibility on their own. The channels discussed in this chapter include materials, contracts, medical records, records, testimony, procedures, and forms of recognition. Those involved in handling a matter use these forms to bring facts into judgments of eligibility and responsibility. Channels are not the facts themselves. Precisely because facts concern people's lives, we must ask why they can or cannot be brought into a procedure capable of producing eligibility, compensation, permission to take leave, or responsibility.

A residence permit really exists, but it must still enter channels such as school admission review, checklists, application rules, and available school places before it can affect eligibility. The document's power does not lie in the paper itself but in which process it is permitted, required, or refused entry into. Injury, too, is a real fact; surveillance footage, medical records, contracts, testimony, and records do not create the injury. Whether those handling the matter can obtain and use these materials affects how an accident enters a judgment of responsibility and whether responsibility can be traced. This does not mean that without materials there is no injury. It means

that obtaining, certifying, and using materials still stand between an injury and its becoming something that can be confirmed and for which a response can be demanded.

The same fact will also have different consequences when it passes through different channels. Complete materials do not necessarily guarantee that responsibility is established, nor do missing materials erase the injury or labor itself. The difference lies in whether procedures can obtain, certify, and use them. The person's capacity to wait, others' testimony, and existing records change the available paths at this step because they affect whether the channels can continue to be maintained. Channels also include handling outside formal procedures. What is said in rental negotiations, whether relatives are willing to step forward, and whether a service window demands supplementary documents can also lead to certain facts being taken up or set aside. It is usually harder for informal channels to leave clear reasons, but this does not mean they have no consequences. Identifying them still requires returning to concrete questions, refusals, delays, and arrangements, rather than filling gaps with guesses alone.

“Where there is a fact, there is responsibility” does not adequately explain how responsibility forms. Responsibility also involves who is treated as relevant, what relations can be confirmed, what materials suffice to support tracing responsibility, and who has the time to follow this line through to the end. These steps do not deny the facts; they determine whether facts can give rise to consequences that can be demanded of others. When channels are blocked, the additional burden often falls on the lives of those concerned. Waiting for supplementary materials, seeking testimony, explaining repeatedly, and enduring procedural delays all take time and resources. Whether channels are open is therefore no mere technical background outside the consequences: it affects who can wait, who must concede first, and who can keep the matter open to further questioning.

VII. How Differences Change Recognition, Shame, and Distance

Social consequences do not appear only in tables and legal outcomes. Records of wedding and funeral exchanges, cash gifts, forms of address, seating order, accents, and past interactions also change recognition, shame, distance, trust, and the ability to seek help. These consequences may have no single procedural name, yet they bear on how people are greeted, whether they can speak up, and what they are expected to take on. Wedding and funeral occasions bring out again records of who attended in the past, who did not, and who offered a hand in times of difficulty. The amounts of money are not isolated numbers: they connect to relatives' memories, local reputation, and demands of responsibility. Being seen as distant may affect a person's subsequent borrowing, care, or attempts to seek help. “Records” here mean more than a ledger; they also include traces of exchanges that people repeatedly bring up and use to arrange relations.

Accents and forms of address are likewise not merely matters of individual personality. In local exchanges, renting, job seeking, or judgments at service windows, they may change closeness and exclusion. We cannot reduce these experiences to purely subjective feelings, still less erase the real ways community relations take up and sustain what arises. Whether a form of address is recognized as appropriate or a way of speaking is seen as approachable may affect whether others are willing to go one step further in explaining something. Recognition and shame alter action; they cannot be treated merely as inward feelings. Being treated as an insider or outsider affects whether a person dares to speak, whom they can ask for help, and whether others will testify or take on risk. Distance in local relations may also be used again in the next exchange, becoming a difference in whether someone is informed, whether others step forward, or whether the person is believed.

These do indeed have practical consequences, but that does not permit all emotion to be reduced to calculations of interest. Closeness, embarrassment, misgivings, and trust are lived in concrete ways,

yet at the same time they change the conditions under which action is possible. To write them only as private psychology is to miss how they connect to care, lending and borrowing, information, and testimony; to write them only as cold resources is also to lose the real shame and injury within relations.

Recognition can also be repaired or rearranged. A new exchange, an occasion on which someone steps forward to provide support, or a fresh explanation of old events may change an existing distance. This does not guarantee everyone an equal opportunity to repair relations. It simply reminds us that analysis should not treat a reputation or form of address at a particular time as an unchangeable essence. What matters remains who is willing to provide support later and which memories are extracted again. Thus, analyzing recognition, shame, and distance requires attention both to their informality and to their actual efficacy. They may leave no entry in clearly defined tables, yet they can make it harder for someone to explain themselves or find help, or easier for them to be believed. These consequences are not subordinate footnotes to institutional outcomes; they are part of the conditions of action.

VIII. How Differences Change Time and Choice

Debt deadlines, rent due dates, when wages are paid, application deadlines, and recovery time change choices by constricting the capacity to wait. They do not directly command a person to act in a particular way, yet they change the room for refusal, trial and error, rest, and exit. Time is not a neutral background. Whether different people can sustain themselves through the same period of waiting is itself a link in the chain of consequences. Repayment in three days and repayment in three years are different situations. As a deadline approaches, work, borrowing, medical care, marriage, and rest may all be reordered. Differences lie not only in the amount of debt but also in the deadline, whether negotiation is possible, whether someone steps in to take up the burden, and what consequences postponement would entail. Together, these conditions determine whether a person has time to look for another path.

Time pressure does not mechanically determine action. Under pressure, people may still obtain family support, a postponement, negotiation, or new income. But these forms of support are themselves part of the chain of consequences; the pressure of a deadline must not be erased by appeals to abstract freedom of choice. Being able to negotiate, having someone temporarily advance the money, and being able to wait for the next payment of income are not conditions everyone possesses equally.

When time enters into consequences, it often specifically changes the order of actions. Those who can wait can supply additional materials, look for work, or reject unfavorable terms; those who cannot afford to wait may deal with the immediate deadline first and bear the subsequent costs. This does not make people appendages of a countdown. It explains how the width of available exits becomes a perceptible difference through time. Deadlines also change the operative weight of other differentiating units: a residence permit or contract that could ordinarily be supplied at leisure may become a gap that cannot be bridged before the deadline; testimony that could otherwise be awaited may not be obtainable in time when urgent handling is required. Time does not replace materials and procedures, but it changes whether they can still be used in time.

The cost of waiting is not reckoned by the calendar alone. It may prevent people from working, moving, or resting, or force them to explain repeatedly and run from place to place. Some can bear it; others cannot. In analyzing choice, formally listing a number of paths is not enough. We must also ask how long each requires one to wait, who bears the cost, and which previously available paths close during the wait. Action under time pressure should not lightly be understood as

preference. Someone may accept unfavorable terms, suspend treatment, borrow money first, or abandon further questioning because the immediate deadline has already constricted other paths. Understanding this does not prejudge any decision; it places choice back within the time and exits actually available to it.

IX. How Consequences Are Written Back as New Differences

Consequences may settle into new records, new evaluations, and new states of relations, becoming materials for the next round of judgment. Failure to secure school admission may leave gaps in materials and pressure on a family to move; the outcome of a workplace injury determination may leave procedural records; a breach of propriety at a wedding or funeral may leave memories among relatives and a local reputation. Consequences do not always dissipate when an event ends. They may be preserved and await extraction once more.

Once consequences have appeared, analysts must still distinguish three levels: the direct effect, the formation of write-back, and taking effect again. A refusal may immediately interrupt eligibility: this is the direct effect of how the matter is handled. When the result of earlier handling is preserved as a difference that can be extracted again in the future, write-back has already formed. Preservation itself does not guarantee future adoption, and subsequent retrieval is not a condition of write-back's first coming into being. Only when later participants identify and extract these contents anew, and decide in light of subsequent relations, rules, and materials whether to interpret them, adopt them, or assign them weight, can the contents of write-back connect again to real consequences. Conflating these three levels misjudges their temporal relations and misrepresents records not yet adopted by subsequent procedures as already exerting a continuing effect.

Write-back is not fatalism. Misreading the writing back of consequences as the inevitable accumulation of fate occludes the real conditions of preservation, forgetting, and repair. Administrative outcomes left by procedures, evaluations left by relatives, and silence left by those concerned may all be adopted in later relations, or they may cease to have an effect. Whether consequences are preserved, by whom, and when they are extracted again determines whether they remain operative: some records are revoked, forgotten, or no longer adopted; some relations change through new ways of taking up and sustaining what arises. Administrative outcomes may be explained anew in new procedures, and relatives' evaluations may loosen through fresh exchanges. How old consequences continue to operate changes with new proof, new ways of taking up and sustaining what arises, or the repair of relations. Even if a trace remains, whether it carries operative weight later still depends on its becoming apparent, being extracted and adopted, and entering comparison anew.

To judge whether the contents of write-back can have an effect again, we cannot look only at whether a record exists. We must also ask who holds it, who can obtain it, what relations it is placed within, and whether it is still recognized as relevant. An item of material that no one looks at anymore and that can no longer enter a procedure, and one that can be retrieved at any time, both exist, but they do not have the same effect on the next round of action. Existence does not mean being operative, nor do the traces left behind necessarily continue to govern action simply because they exist.

These remaining traces do not mean that the past has sealed off the future. They mean that past handling has left materials that can be mobilized again, thereby changing the starting point at which differences next become apparent. Materials once requested as supplements, disputes that have occurred, and distances that have formed may lead to certain questions being asked earlier, or

to those concerned making preparations earlier. If we do not ask how traces are preserved and reused, we will miss why relations later present unequal starting points.

X. The Explanatory Boundaries of the Chain of Consequences

Becoming apparent from the background, being extracted and used, acquiring operative weight, entering comparison, connecting to channels, forming consequences, and being written back constitute an analytical path, not a fixed process through which reality must pass at equal intervals. Reality may involve leaps, missing steps, parallel paths, or informal handling: a difference may already have created distance without public recognition; some consequences may occur first and be recognized afterward through records and procedures; sometimes, before materials have been fully checked, misgivings within relations have already changed speech and choice; sometimes a formal outcome has been issued, yet actual recognition has not followed. The value of this chain lies in breaking apart the overhasty statement “differences cause consequences,” making the concrete points that drive consequences visible. It must not be written as an assembly line that advances automatically once a difference appears.

A chain of consequences must explain the choices of those responding and the relations among multiple paths. Faced with the same material, people may wait, refuse, supply further proof, pass it on, negotiate, or carry things out directly. Different actions lead to different consequences; every continuation includes an identifiable taking up or interruption. Consequences may also form along parallel paths: a family handles unpaid wages and care at the same time, schools and hospitals each require materials, and local relations provide or refuse support. Parallel operation does not mean that all paths are equally important. We must still examine which first connects to deadlines, eligibility, responsibility, or resources, and how it affects the other paths. Such analysis preserves the plurality of events without turning plurality into an inability to judge.

When reexamining a chain of consequences, we must retain the links that failed to form. If materials were not received, passed on, or recognized at some point, the interruption itself was part of the judgment at that time; conjecture cannot fill it in to make a complete causal account. New evidence that appears later may establish a separate connection, but it cannot erase the fact that the original judgment lacked a relay link when it formed. A chain's completeness is not measured by its number of links or the length of the text. When a few key nodes suffice to explain the connections among materials, actions, direction, and consequences, analysis can draw to a close; listing many unproven intermediate positions only adds superficial complexity. At the same time, a chain of consequences promises no prediction: knowing that a difference has become apparent does not justify asserting that it will necessarily connect to eligibility or responsibility; knowing that it has left a trace does not justify asserting that it must govern the next judgment. Differences do not necessarily produce the same consequences merely because they exist or because of a particular rule. This framework offers a way of tracing: when an outcome has already appeared or is forming, examine which steps of becoming apparent, extraction and use, comparison, taking up and sustaining, and write-back actually occurred and which did not, and identify the steps that opened, delayed, or closed a path. Distinguishing these steps is not an attempt to manufacture a tidy model. It prevents the real gates from hiding inside the vague word “difference.”

A chain cannot replace an understanding of specific people's experiences and circumstances. It shows how materials, procedures, and relations connect, but should not reduce shame, fatigue, injury, or hesitation to a few nodes. If analysis is left with nothing but mechanism names, it will once again obscure what those concerned are actually waiting for, losing, or being forced to bear. Likewise, this account does not predetermine that every consequence is caused by a particular kind

of covert discrimination or a single institution. Consequences may form through insufficient materials, urgency, distant relations, procedural rules, and other people's choices. We must return to identifiable steps and examine them one by one; avoiding crude attribution does not mean denying that informal use and unequal ways of taking up and sustaining what arises do in fact occur.

A single differentiating unit usually cannot explain the full consequences on its own. The questions remain: which differences were extracted in the relational field at hand, and through what materials, relations, and procedures did they connect to actual consequences? Residence permits, contracts, medical records, deadlines, records of exchanges, and accents often enter judgment together in the same event, but appearing together does not mean having equal weight. The dominant difference must be identified through concrete paths and evidence; the full consequences must not be attributed to any one of these differences on the strength of its name. This chapter only establishes the boundary of single-cause attribution here. It does not go on to develop the mechanisms by which they form configurations with one another.

Chapter 08 Superposition, Occlusion, and Generation among Differentiating Units: How Differences Form Relational Structures

Social analysis cannot stop at a list of differentiating units. It must also trace how, within concrete relations, these differences amplify one another's weight, occlude one another, and form new conditions of difference. School admission for children, compensation for workplace injury, medical insurance reimbursement, care arrangements, and platform employment each appear to present an immediate problem of their own. Yet what actually enters the handling of each is often a set of interrelated differences. Income, debt, residence permits, rental contracts, continuous social insurance contributions, deadlines, patient accompaniment and care, and records do not automatically arrange themselves into a fixed table. They must be extracted within concrete arrangements before they can change eligibility, responsibility, waiting, and available exits.

I. Differentiating Units Are Not Isolated Points

A single difference is not enough to explain relational structure. Residence permits, contracts, medical records, educational qualifications, years of work, care responsibilities, and overdue status can all be identified, but none produces consequences in isolation within a closed sphere of its own. When they enter the same matter, they connect through materials, procedures, arrangements among relatives, work arrangements, and time limits. Some differences are preserved, some asked about, some adopted, while others remain in the background. Differentiating units can be distinguished, represented, extracted, and brought into consequences; their operative weight and direction still depend on concrete relations. In school admission, a residence permit may become a gate not because the paper carries power of its own, but because it connects with such conditions as the rental contract, application timing, school requirements, and whether the family can supply additional documents.

School admission materials are not equivalent to one another. When a residence permit, a rental contract, and continuous social insurance contributions enter the same application, the family must also deal with whether its housing is stable, whether time off work is possible, whether the demands of transport can be borne, and who will look after the child. Failure to obtain a particular item in time is not necessarily just a last-minute oversight: shifts, commuting, care, and arrangements for expenses may already have squeezed the time for supplying additional documents. Nor does the real existence of materials mean that they are currently eligible to enter the handling of the matter. Materials may be in someone’s possession without necessarily being obtainable by the deadline; someone who has obtained them may be unable to explain their relation to the immediate question; someone able to explain may still face restrictions on format, checking, or adoption. Only when specific participants raise questions, recognize relevance, and leave a position for entry can materials connect to consequences.

The same holds for workplace injury compensation. Injury, contracts, surveillance footage, medical records, and testimony are not unrelated items. What materials can be obtained, who can testify, and when a procedure requires supplementation all affect whether responsibility can be traced. Analysis does not consist in listing the names of materials. It asks how they enter the same handling process, how people use them, and where they lose a position from which to serve as grounds. Relational structure is neither a juxtaposition of material names nor a fixed framework completed in advance. Relatives, schools, medical processes, residence registration, platforms, and

credit records may all preserve or process differences, but connections form in the course of handling only as concrete people check, explain, refuse, wait, accompany and care for patients, arrange shifts, or take matters up and carry them forward.

II. Superposition Is Not Simple Addition

Superposition does not mean an increase in the number of differences, nor does it mean putting several difficulties together to obtain a larger total. It occurs within the same relational arrangement: one difference changes another's operative weight, visibility, and path to consequences. When limited income, debt falling due, increased care responsibilities, and less time to wait enter arrangements for daily life at the same time, none continues to operate solely in its previous way.

Medical insurance reimbursement reveals this relation. Filing or referral requirements for the particular type of medical care under the applicable rules, along with hospital level under the corresponding benefit rules, bear on whether information can be obtained and handling can continue; advance payments, family savings, and the wait for reimbursement bear on whether expenses can be borne in advance; patient accompaniment and care, leave, transport, and treatment arrangements bear on whether time can be freed up. An arrangement for a medical visit connects them, and their respective availability for use changes accordingly. A change in one condition may alter whether others can be used. If filing or referral fails to connect, prepared materials and the reimbursement originally expected may not immediately enter processing; if patient accompaniment and care cannot be arranged, transport and the timing of medical care are no longer merely matters of an itinerary. Conversely, timely access to information, costs being temporarily covered, or arrangements for leave may also buffer the original constraints.

Different pressures may also appear in succession within the same arrangement. At the start of treatment, the problem may be information and referral; during the wait for reimbursement, it shifts to advance payments and income; as the time spent accompanying and caring for the patient lengthens, shifts and transport come to the center. These changes do not constitute a fixed chain, nor do information, cash, and time necessarily become obstacles at the same moment. Some people first face informational problems with filing and referral, and only later face advance payments and the wait for reimbursement; others can temporarily cover the costs but lose the time needed to complete the arrangements because of the time spent accompanying and caring for the patient and taking leave. Conditions change one another's operative weight anew at different steps. Analysis of superposition must therefore trace when each condition is connected and how it changes the usability of other conditions.

Income and debt likewise cannot be considered apart from relations. As a debt deadline approaches, whether income can be freed up, whether one can wait for the next wage payment, and whether transport or advance costs can be paid enter choice together with care arrangements. Debt, income, and care do not propel one another on their own; concrete arrangements for living connect them. Superposition also changes visibility. Commuting, shifts, and leave, which are not ordinarily central, may become crucial when care responsibilities arise; contracts, residence permits, or continuous social insurance contributions that could ordinarily wait may become gates at an application deadline or a change of work. The change is not that a differentiating unit acquires permanent power, but that it connects to new consequences in this particular relation. Income, debt, deadlines, and care therefore cannot be added into an abstract degree of difficulty. Superposition must identify how information, expenses, and time jointly change whether a path can be followed

through within concrete arrangements. It must also preserve the countervailing conditions under which relations may provide support or a buffer.

Superposition also requires distinguishing simultaneous existence from mutual weight assignment. Insufficient income and illness or pain may occur at the same time, but only when treatment expenses, time away from work, or care arrangements connect the two does a traceable relation of weight amplification form. Without such relay links, analysts can retain only their juxtaposition; they cannot write co-occurrence directly as causation.

Superposition can form relatively stable patterns on different timescales. Rent deadlines and delayed wages may connect within days; family credit and local reputation accumulate over years; national memory may be preserved across generations. If repeated events show family care, income, housing, and education affecting one another, a long-term judgment can be proposed. But different timescales cannot be compressed onto the same plane, nor does stability mean fixed weight. Institutional change, migration, and changes in the direction of relations may still break existing superposition; analysis must preserve the timing of formation and of taking effect again. Long-term superposition may lead people to form expectations and adjust their actions in advance. Repeated wage arrears make a family afraid to take on new debt; staff alter how they accept cases because of past review results; members become more alert to boundaries because of memories of shared harm. Expectations are not an abstract structure acting on its own. They arise as concrete people preserve and extract the ways matters were handled in the past and use them in current decisions.

III. How One Difference Amplifies the Weight of Another

One difference does not amplify another's weight on its own. Weight amplification occurs within concrete handling and arrangements for living: it is through what people must complete, supplement, or wait for within limited time that differences alter one another's operative weight. Weight amplification also requires distinguishing conditions that already exist from conditions actually adopted. Years of work may exist within past experience, yet connect to eligibility only through proof, checking, and application. Care responsibilities, too, may have existed for a long time, yet change the operative weight of a decision only when shifts change or leave is restricted. This distinction prevents weight amplification from being written as an automatic chain reaction among differences.

Weight amplification in occupational qualification comes from application and work arrangements. Educational qualifications, training fees, years of work, application timing, and qualification certificates are not the same kind of material, yet they may constrain an application together. Fees affect whether someone can attend training; training time may conflict with shifts and care; years of work require proof that can be adopted. A particular gap may not determine the outcome on its own, yet may prevent other conditions already met from connecting to job requirements. Nor are care responsibilities a fixed burden. When people pick someone up or drop them off, accompany someone, or attend to family matters, shifts, commuting, leave, and income stability may be pushed to the center. If work arrangements change, someone takes on the care, or deadlines are adjusted, the original weight amplification may cease to operate or be compensated for. Analysis of weight amplification must preserve these changes in relations; it cannot write any one difference as a permanent cause.

The consequences of weight amplification are not confined to exclusion. Some arrangements make a qualification easier to substantiate, allow leave to be recognized, or make time available for care to continue. The key is not to equate weight amplification with oppression in advance, but to ask which change within relations makes another difference heavier, lighter, or more usable. Once a

school disciplinary record is preserved, it may be extracted again in later evaluations. But whether it is adopted, whether new explanations are allowed, and whether later changes enter the handling still depend on specific participants and relational arrangements. A record does not expand into fate on its own; only when reconnected to evaluation and handling can it change subsequent operative weight. These conditions cannot be reduced to a single cause. Analyzing weight amplification means examining how a range of differences change one another's usability within the same relation, rather than attaching a fixed label to a person by adding several conditions together.

Relations of superposition first require identifying direction. Wage arrears may amplify the weight of a debt deadline, and that deadline may reduce the ability to change jobs; but a job change may also bring new income and, in turn, ease the debt. The presence of pulls among differences does not mean that they always act in the same direction. Analysis must specify whose handling increases a difference's weight and which consequence in turn changes another difference. Relations among differences may also be asymmetric. A change in Person A's income can alter Person B's care arrangements, while Person B's choices about care may not alter Person A's work with the same force; format requirements from higher levels can constrain handling at lower levels, while objections from lower levels may lack an upward channel. Symmetrical names cannot substitute for actual differences in direction, authority, and consequences.

Analysis of superposition must also preserve actors' responses. People may actively separate pressures, seek alternative materials, change relations, or reject existing evaluations; these actions loosen differences that had been amplifying one another's weight. Recognizing the capacity to respond does not mean that will determines outcomes. It places people's choices back within available resources, authority, and relational conditions.

IV. Occlusion Is Not Disappearance

Occlusion does not mean that a difference disappears, nor does it make an occluded difference false. It means that certain differences are downweighted or excluded in current judgment, explanation, or procedure, or lose a position from which to enter as grounds. Occluded differences may remain in life; they simply are not adequately seen in the handling at hand.

Occlusion may occur when a checklist of materials is the sole basis for judgment. Content that can be entered into a table, preserved, and checked is more readily accepted as grounds; accompanying and caring for a patient, running from place to place, changing shifts, commuting, and the time required to obtain materials may not enter the same judgment if no corresponding position exists for them. Materials still need to be checked. At the same time, we must ask how differences outside the format that already affect action space are downweighted.

Handling an event solely through disciplinary records may likewise retain only the conflict while downweighting subsequent care pressures, repair of relations, and time limits. Moral or cultural accounts that quickly attribute an outcome to insufficient effort, habit, or personal choice may similarly obscure deadlines, expenses, and bodily conditions. Interpreters who adopt a market image may downweight shame, recognition, local standing, and what relatives take up and sustain. In making judgments, specific participants adopt particular materials, accounts, and points of reference, thereby causing some differences to be occluded; this result cannot be attributed to abstract nouns themselves. The issue is not that every such account is necessarily wrong, but what specific participants extract and downweight, and whether they still allow downweighted contents to re-enter examination.

Interpreters who adopt class theory can extract real differentiating units such as labor, wages, debt, housing, and risk. But classes do not exist. The explanatory power within a limited scope that arises through this process of extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression comes from concrete differentiating units and the processes through which they are handled, not from classes. Such explanatory power cannot give the total class image a monopoly on explanation. If circumstances are explained only through the class image, residence registration, continuous social insurance contributions, care, deadlines, local records, and forms of proof may be downweighted.

Nor does occlusion mean that everything not adopted carries the same operative weight. Some differences need further explanation, checking, or comparison before we can know whether they really changed the handling at hand. But failure to adopt something immediately should not be rewritten as its never having existed. Preserving this boundary is necessary both to avoid treating a checklist as all of reality and to avoid taking any account directly as a conclusion. Different accounts can also correct one another. What a checklist does not include may re-enter handling through new explanations, supplementary materials, or subsequent relations; disciplinary or market accounts that were formerly central may also lose some explanatory force in light of new facts. Occlusion is a situation that requires examination, not an unchangeable endpoint.

Occluded differences may still produce consequences. A procedure's failure to list patient accompaniment and care among its grounds does not mean that such care does not affect access to medical treatment; a market account's omission of commuting does not mean that commuting does not alter shifts; an interpreter's failure to extract residence registration when adopting class theory does not mean that residence registration does not affect school admission. Whether consequences continue must still be checked against concrete relations. Occlusion often causes consequences to be misrepresented as having a single cause. To describe admission difficulties only as incomplete materials may miss the time needed to obtain them and the arrangements for residence; to describe difficulties in obtaining medical care only as insufficient funds may miss referral, patient accompaniment and care, and transport; to describe a work adjustment only as personal choice may miss shifts, care, and leave. Bringing downweighted differences back in does not cancel judgment; it gives judgment a more complete relational basis.

Occlusion also has different sources. Sometimes a difference has simply not yet been raised; sometimes it has been raised but is downweighted by format or authority; sometimes it temporarily loses its voice because another judgment with high weight takes the foreground. None of these three situations means that the difference has disappeared. Their conditions for repair differ in terms of materials, carriers, and procedures. To call all occlusion the same kind of oppression loses distinctions that can be acted on. A difference may also be occluded because a position at which handling occurs lacks the necessary capacity, rather than because of deliberate exclusion. Staff may lack authority to read materials, a family may have no one able to present proof, or data formats may fail to connect; any of these can prevent adoption. In judging responsibility, deliberate refusal, insufficient resources, lack of authority, and procedural restrictions must be distinguished. Motives cannot be inferred directly from outcomes.

Nor does lifting occlusion guarantee that a difference immediately acquires high weight. New witnesses, materials, or objections may merely make the question visible again; certification, comparison, and a judgment of responsibility are still required. To write a renewed presentation of the matter as a conclusion already overturned once again skips weight assignment and connection.

V. How New Relations Generate New Differentiating Units

Generation does not mean manufacturing differences at will, nor does it mean subjectively constructing the world. When specific participants, through new institutions, methods of recording, ways of life, and channels of interaction, require, preserve, extract, and transmit certain differences, what was not central before may become new differences bearing on proof, eligibility, or responsibility, or new temporal nodes. Generation depends on record formats, channels of preservation, and subsequent handling; it cannot occur out of nothing.

Within medical processes, filing, referral, the place of insurance enrollment, hospital level, advance payments, and patient accompaniment and care acquire new positions in which they can be handled. When these are used to determine reimbursement, leave, care, and the bearing of costs, they become differences that can subsequently be preserved, checked, and contested. They acquire new ways of being used within relations; they are not new social atoms. Residence registration and school administration also change the shape of differences. Once residence permits, rental contracts, continuous social insurance contributions, admission materials, records of school activities, disciplinary records, and comprehensive evaluations are preserved and connected to application, administration, or school transfer, they may form new gates to eligibility and grounds for evaluation. Specific participants use institutional records to bring certain differences into subsequent handling. This does not mean that institutions determine people's entire circumstances apart from such handling.

In platform employment, records of work assignments, traces of work activity, and online status can be preserved as new proof of work, grounds for responsibility, and temporal nodes. When managers, users, workers, and participants in procedures use these records to arrange work assignments, explanations, appeals, and responsibility, the records thereby acquire operative weight within relations.

New differentiating units may be generated through the handling of relations. A correction or supplementation turns an existing fact of residence into a verifiable difference in eligibility; an evaluation turns absence from care into a matter of family credit; preserving a shared experience of harm connects individual experiences to community memory. Generation does not create differences from nothing. Rather, existing experiences acquire new forms of consequences through naming, recording, recognition, and transmission. Generated differentiating units often change subsequent standards of comparison. Once a disciplinary measure forms a record, later participants may use it to judge credit or eligibility; once an instance of shared protection is preserved, members may judge responsibility on that basis. Analysts must trace who establishes the new standards, in which events they are adopted, and whether counterexamples can limit their scope.

Once a record has formed, not all participants can access it in the same way. Some are responsible for preserving it, some have the authority to retrieve it, and some can only offer explanations or request corrections. These differences in position affect whether the record can enter eligibility, responsibility, and evaluation. Generation does not refer to the addition of a name. It means that a difference has acquired a form and a path through which it can be handled later. Generation also changes how people arrange their lives in advance. Knowing that certain contents may be preserved or retrieved, people may prepare materials, maintain records, seek explanations, or adjust how they interact. These responses are not the result of records themselves making demands. They are arrangements people make in anticipation of subsequent handling, and may in turn become new relational conditions.

Credit records preserve overdue status, guarantees, and repayment histories, allowing the past to be extracted again later and possibly used in borrowing, renting, or judgments of responsibility. Who retrieves a record, for what question, and whether new explanations of repayment are accepted still affect the consequences; the record may also obscure the income, deadlines, care, and housing arrangements in place when the debt formed. New records may bring a public response to facts that were previously difficult to explain. They may also make it harder for waiting, commuting, care, and informal ways of taking matters up and carrying them forward to enter judgment when these have not been recorded. Generation therefore cannot be written as institutions or records acting autonomously, nor as a one-way intensification of consequences. We must examine what specific participants preserve and retrieve, and what they leave outside the format.

Preservation does not mean permanent efficacy. Whether medical records, residence registration, school records, traces of activity on platforms, and credit status can be used later still depends on whether they can be obtained, are recognized as relevant, and connect to the new question. Generating a new position in which something can be handled does not pin the past directly into a conclusion; it allows the past to enter concrete handling again as a possibility.

For newly formed differences to persist across events, they must continue to be carried forward, and contrary material must also be admitted. Once eligibility, an evaluation, or a shared memory has formed, it may quickly lose its effect if no one preserves, retrieves, and recognizes it. Only if multiple nodes use it repeatedly can it become a more stable pattern of differentiation. Even then, new eligibility may not be recognized in another procedure, and an existing evaluation may be overturned or rewritten. Stability comes from the continuity of relays; it does not mean that the meaning of what has been generated is permanently fixed.

Generation, as used in this chapter, is therefore a conditional concept. It requires materials to move from one form of handling into another and to acquire traceable consequences at new nodes. Without preservation, forwarding, recognition, or taking up and carrying forward, similar names alone do not warrant a judgment that a new difference has been generated. This keeps superposition, occlusion, and generation within the actual operation of the differentiation network.

VI. Why a List Is Still Not Analysis

A list can only make differences visible; it cannot yet explain how consequences form. Analysis must go further to identify which differences enter the same relation, which are amplified in weight or occluded during handling, and which are preserved as conditions that can be extracted next time. Merely saying that someone simultaneously faces problems of income, debt, care, and materials still tells us nothing about whether these conditions are juxtaposed, amplify one another's weight, occlude one another, or form a new usable position. Nor does it tell us which condition changed another's conditions of use, or when. More importantly, we must establish whose eligibility, responsibility, time, or choices these connections actually changed.

This requires analysis to reach concrete relational paths and gates. The same set of materials may make different demands on analysis at different times. In medical insurance reimbursement, we must trace how filing, hospital level, advance payments, patient accompaniment and care, and transport connect into relational paths of information, cash, and time, and how expenses and time are coordinated as the wait for reimbursement continues. For occupational qualification, we must trace how educational qualifications, fees, and years of work enter channels of eligibility for applications and jobs, and explain how proof, training, and deadlines constrain one another during the application. Nor can care responsibilities be treated merely as background: identifying when they form concrete gates together with shifts, commuting, leave, and the family's taking on

responsibilities requires examining the arrangements for who takes on the care, when leave is taken, and how income is maintained.

"The more differences, the worse the circumstances" cannot substitute for analysis. Differences sometimes amplify one another's weight, but they may also supplement or delay one another, or change visibility. What actually occurs must still be checked against concrete relations, materials, timing, and handling. Superposition, occlusion, and generation require separate questions; they cannot be merged into a single vague name. A list can serve as a point of entry. But if it is merely replaced by a longer list of mechanisms, without specifying concrete connections, handling, and actual consequences, superposition, occlusion, and generation become only new names and still do not amount to analysis.

This also requires analysts to state the limits of their judgments. When materials are insufficient, unrecorded relations cannot be treated as nonexistent; when materials increase, not everything can immediately be treated as equally important. Only by returning to concrete handling can we distinguish conditions that actually entered into consequences from possibilities that still need checking. If some relations have not been preserved, cannot be accessed, or have not yet entered handling, judgment must provisionally stop at known connections. Concepts cannot be used to fill what has not yet been established with settled conclusions.

Nor can these questions be used to assign people positions in advance. The materials that can be obtained, the responsibilities that can be taken on, and the explanations that can be adopted may all change across relations. Analysis can identify only the connections and constraints that have emerged; it cannot expand one instance of handling into a person's unchanging fate. The same matter can also be analyzed from different points of entry. We can begin with how materials enter a procedure, how time is compressed, or how records change evaluations. But we must ultimately return to whether these points of entry connect within the same relation and whether they change actual consequences. Without this step, analysis falls back into a list whose names alone have changed.

VII. The Analytical Boundaries of Superposition, Occlusion, and Generation

Superposition, occlusion, and generation are not three fixed steps, nor a process through which every event must pass at equally spaced intervals. Each examines a different relational mechanism. Superposition asks which existing differences change one another's operative weight and paths to consequences within the same arrangement, and identifies the direction of each pull. Occlusion asks which differences are downweighted in current judgment and where they lose a position for expression or recognition, while they may still continue to act. Generation asks how specific people handling matters use new records, procedures, and channels of interaction to give existing differences new representations and consequences, as well as positions in which they can be preserved, extracted, and transmitted. The three mechanisms may operate in parallel; they cannot be merged into an all-encompassing name. They cannot recast society as a static framework: relations break, change, or are rearranged; records may lose their effect; new explanations and new ways of taking matters up and sustaining them may reopen paths that were previously closed.

The complexity of relations does not cancel valid judgment. Analysis can still ask which differences an explanation extracts, which consequences it downweights, and whether it can return to concrete materials, relations, and counterexamples for testing. This does not define other concepts fully in advance; it preserves necessary boundaries for the three mechanisms in this chapter. Materials, records, and relations also hold possibilities in the opposite direction: an increase in materials may

bring recognition to facts that were previously difficult to explain; relatives' taking on responsibilities may provide an exit or create new responsibilities; a new procedure may bring some differences into a public response while making others harder to explain. We cannot assume that they always intensify consequences or always alleviate them.

A single event may also pass through more than one mechanism in succession. For example, existing differences first amplify one another's weight, one of them is then occluded by a high-weight record, and subsequent handling generates new eligibility or an evaluation. This is only one possible path, not an inevitable chain. We should not invent another master term to cover the entire process; instead, we must preserve the sequence, transitions, and different carriers, so that each mechanism explains only the part in which it actually participates. If we cannot yet establish the node at which a transition occurs, we should suspend the naming of mechanisms and first preserve the demonstrable changes from before to after. If materials show only an overall result, they are not yet sufficient to prove that superposition, occlusion, or generation necessarily occurred within it.

Superposition, occlusion, and generation may therefore begin as provisional classifications, but must ultimately be verified and corrected through the actions and consequences in the event. A relation that initially appears to be superposition may later show that one difference is in fact a new form produced by the handling of another. A difference thought to have disappeared may merely be occluded by a high-weight record. The same material is merely juxtaposed with others in an earlier event, yet may be used by people to form a new evaluation in a later one. Counterexamples may change judgments about the mechanisms: new materials may show that apparent superposition was only juxtaposition; a supposedly occluded difference may never have entered the question at hand in the first place, but that fact alone is insufficient either to establish or to rule out occlusion. We must still check whether relevant differences have been downweighted or excluded, or have lost a position for expression and recognition. A purportedly new differentiating unit may also be only an old record renamed. Analysts should revise each judgment in light of evidence. When a classification is inappropriate, it should be reassigned to a more suitable mechanism, or the analyst should acknowledge that an adequate explanation is not yet available. A mechanism's name from an earlier event must not be carried straight into a later one, and different errors certainly must not be dismissed together by invoking “the complexity of relations.”

An abundance of visible materials does not mean that the key differences have entered judgment. Repeated copies of the same record may swamp a piece of counterevidence from an independent source. Later participants may also rename existing differences, increasing their public visibility or introducing new responsibilities and classifications of friend and enemy. Analysis must therefore separate the quantity of materials, the independence of sources, and actual efficacy, and check carriers, authority, and consequences before and after a change of name. A changed name is not enough to prove that a relation has changed; an unchanged name is not enough to prove that the relation remains continuous.

The three mechanisms cannot replace concrete investigation. They can only require us to return to existing materials and relations to identify how differences enter together, how they are excluded, and how they acquire new forms of preservation. Without these concrete connections, however long the list, it will pull apart problems that are actually interrelated. Analysis of mechanisms must not let concepts replace events; it must ask who checks, who explains, who adopts, and who takes matters up and sustains them. Superposition and generation cannot take the place of concrete responsibility: if a difference acquires new operative weight through handling by those who record, review, or organize, analysts must attribute the actions to the corresponding positions. If differences have merely happened to appear at the same time, a relation of generation must not be

invented. The more complex the relations, the more necessary it is to distinguish clearly between links that have been demonstrated and what remains conjectural.

This examination also requires distinguishing temporary results from fixed conclusions. Materials adopted in one instance of handling may not remain central in another; an explanation not adopted on one occasion may re-enter judgment through new records, relations, or procedures. Analysis must ultimately return to the circumstances in which specific people act: only as people make arrangements, refuse, take matters up and sustain them, and respond amid materials, relations, records, and time pressures do differences change action space within those activities, opening or closing available paths. The role of analysis is not to draw conclusions about life in advance, but to identify its real gates.

Chapter 09 Why Differences Carry Different Weights: How Weight Forms within Relations

I. Why the Same Difference Carries Different Weights in Different Relations

A difference's existence and its coming to matter in the relation at hand are two different things. The former says only that a certain difference can be identified; the latter concerns whether it is extracted, whether it is assigned operative weight, and whether it changes people's circumstances. Nonlocal status exists throughout. When someone buys vegetables at a market, that status may relate only to accent, familiarity, and whether one is a regular customer. What matters more to the stallholder at that moment may be whether one pays, bargains, or comes often. When a child enters school, however, nonlocal status may connect with residence permits, rental contracts, continuous social insurance contributions, school places, document deadlines, the landlord's cooperation, and the parents' ability to take leave. It no longer manifests only as an accent, but enters the handling of eligibility, deadlines, and supplementary documents. In medical insurance reimbursement, rental registration, or eligibility review, this difference enters relations again through different materials and thresholds. The difference has not become something else. What has changed is how it is extracted and the consequences to which it connects.

The same holds for poverty. In everyday food and clothing, it may appear as economizing; at relatives' weddings and funerals, it connects with cash gifts and the parents' standing; when paying hospital bills, it bears on whether treatment can continue; in a bank loan, it connects with credit and guarantees. When a child moves on to further schooling, poverty also connects with training, accommodation, transport, and waiting for opportunities. These different consequences cannot all be attributed to a fixed power belonging to poverty itself. Its operative weight in each instance must be judged within concrete relations. Accents have no fixed operative weight either. Among people from the same hometown, an accent may bring closeness; in a job interview, it may bring distance; in negotiations over renting, it may change the landlord's expectations; in a local conflict, it may become a marker of exclusion. The same difference can become lighter or heavier. Weight concerns precisely these changes within relations, rather than a ranking of differences that holds forever.

When analyzing a particular identity or status, we must also ask whether it is adopted in this interaction, to what extent, and how it changes the handling together with other available materials. Otherwise, differences between situations can easily be misrepresented as sudden increases or decreases in the difference itself.

In judging these levels, we cannot leap straight from "already seen" to "certain to produce consequences." Someone who notices a difference may treat it only as background. Someone who extracts it may still keep it from becoming decisive because materials are insufficient, its relevance is not recognized, or other conditions impose limits. Only by explaining the grounds at each step can we know why operative weight rises here but may not rise elsewhere. Within the same situation, someone may see a difference yet choose not to adopt it, or adopt it while giving it very little operative weight. Analysis must specify where this turn occurs; otherwise, "differences have an influence" is an empty generalization. The operative weight of the same difference is therefore not determined in advance outside the situation. The scope within which it can be adopted becomes apparent only in concrete judgment.

Judgments of weight must attend to the capacity to bear consequences. The same monetary loss has different consequences for different families because their income buffers, debt deadlines, care responsibilities, and alternative channels differ. This has nothing to do with people's worth. These conditions must be explained through concrete materials and relations; they cannot be deduced directly from the names of identities or statuses.

Visibility and efficacy must also be distinguished. Readily available numbers, official documents, and public records often stand out more, yet may not change consequences more than care, pain, local recognition, or community responsibilities that are difficult to fit into a format. The visibility of materials is only one condition of extraction. Their actual operative weight still depends on how they are adopted and connected to action space.

II. Weight Is Not a Ranking of People

Weight does not mean that a difference has an inherently higher rank. Nor is it a ranking of people: it does not mean that one person is higher or lower, and still less is it moral worth. Accent, household registration, the set of differentiating units extracted by class theory, gender, and medical records do not carry great weight forever. Whether they enter into consequences depends on whether current relations extract them, give them operative weight, and connect them to concrete handling. Weight is the degree to which a differentiating unit is extracted and assigned operative weight within concrete relations, and affects judgment, channels, responsibility, recognition, risk, time, and choice. This definition does not treat weight as a fixed numerical value carried by a difference itself. It may take the form of thresholds and eligibility, or of responsibility, risk, shame, the capacity to wait, the ability to exit, and the range of choices. The same difference can connect to different consequences in different relations.

A difference not extracted within current relations may remain mere background. Even if it has been seen, it may not actually change circumstances if it has not been given operative weight. Weight therefore does not mean being seen. Being seen, being recognized, being given operative weight, and connecting to consequences are different relations that cannot be collapsed into one. Nor does weight mean a "root cause." It indicates only the strength with which a difference enters consequences in this relation. To declare abstractly, apart from concrete relations, that it is always the weightiest already exceeds the bounds of judging weight.

Treating weight as a label that can be preserved apart from relations readily occludes the conditions of extraction, the grounds of operative weight, and the direction of consequences. If any of these links cannot be explained, the judgment of weight should remain provisional. Such a judgment must therefore explain its grounds, scope, and provisional character: it must specify the handling in question, the materials supporting it, and the kind of consequences affected. Merely saying that a difference is "weighty" without explaining these conditions slips back into an abstract label that conceals rather than explains the actual handling. Whenever the scope, materials, or points of reference adopted by participants change, the original judgment should be checked again. This also requires separating judgments of weight from language that evaluates people. To say that a difference has greater operative weight in a particular handling only explains the consequences of its adoption; it cannot be extended into a judgment of the person's worth, ability, or deserved position.

III. How Differences Gain Weight within Relations

A difference gains weight not because it grows larger on its own, but because specific participants begin to require, adopt, or compare it within relations. We can approach this through several

connected points of observation that must not be treated as a fixed process, such as extraction, the assignment of operative weight, comparison, and connection to consequences. The differences participants extract vary with the handling. When buying vegetables at a market, they may extract whether one pays, is a regular customer, or bargains. In admission review, they may extract household registration, residence permits, rental contracts, continuous social insurance contributions, school places, and document deadlines. When hospital bills are paid, those involved may extract medical insurance status, medical records, balances, reimbursement rates, and the capacity to advance cash. At relatives' weddings and funerals, closeness and distance, records of exchanges, the parents' standing, past dealings, and attendance may also enter judgment.

Extraction, however, does not mean that operative weight has already been assigned. Consequences cannot be inferred directly from the mere existence of a differentiating unit, and handling does not always begin with complete materials and proceed in sequence. Some differences are merely seen, some become decisive, some are seen but not recognized, and some are recognized yet lack sufficient operative weight. Existing medical records may carry insufficient operative weight if they do not meet reimbursement or compensation requirements. An accent can bring closeness at a gathering of people from the same hometown, yet create distance in an interview. In some settings among relatives, poverty may bring shame rather than sympathy. Where a workplace injury has occurred but materials sufficient to prove the relevant labor relation and the circumstances of the accident are lacking, the relevant responsibility may be difficult to confirm within the procedure. Someone may first face time pressure and only then seek medical records, contracts, or available witnesses; alternatively, the materials may already be complete, yet temporarily unable to change the result because they have not been adopted. If analysis mistakes an order of observation for a procedure that reality must necessarily follow, it will miss the concrete nodes at which extracted materials are not adopted, fail to take effect, or are interrupted.

Comparison brings extracted differences into the same handling, giving them concrete positions. Whose materials are more complete, whose social insurance contributions are more continuous, who owns property and who does not, who can wait and who cannot, and who has a local kinship network and who does not may all become objects of comparison. Who gives more or less in cash gifts, who seems more like an insider or an outsider, who has savings and who can only borrow, and who can provide proof and who cannot also change how the handling at hand can proceed; they do not rank people in an eternal hierarchy. Different points of reference may also produce different results in such comparison. The same item of material may not be viewed in the same way in different questions. Both the points of reference and the consequences must be recorded to distinguish insufficient materials from a change in their operative weight caused by how they are adopted.

Differences must ultimately connect to consequences: residence permits to school-admission eligibility; medical record documents to reimbursement, leave, and compensation; accents to trust and distance; and debt deadlines to time pressure. Family responsibilities connect to migration and choices of work; savings to the capacity to wait; local kinship networks to available exits, information, and care; and national memory may connect to trust, fear, and community boundaries. The more direct the consequences, the more readily weight rises. But this is only an empirical tendency, neither a fixed formula nor something that can determine weight on its own. We must still ask what other differences are extracted, downweighted, or assigned weight anew at the same time. Someone may first feel the pressure of consequences and only then look back to identify which differences have been treated as grounds. These points of observation are connected but cannot replace one another. Every link should remain open to examination against materials and

consequences, allowing analysis to verify each part rather than supply a prefabricated answer to the circumstances.

Weight may also change repeatedly over time. A record may carry great weight in one application, then temporarily recede into the background once correction or supplementation is complete. Local recognition may provide support in a crisis, only to become a constraint later through conflict. Analysts need to record the conditions under which weight increases, recedes, and increases again, so that a ranking on one occasion is not presented as a permanent hierarchy.

IV. Why the Differentiating Units Extracted by Class Theory Often Carry Weight

The class image readily attracts interpreters because the set of differentiating units extracted by class theory often bears on whether someone can wait, exit, or proceed by trial and error. What must be acknowledged is not class as an entity, but the real weight of these differentiating units in many relational fields. Class theory extracts a set of differentiating units whose weights are amplified together within economic relations and relations of labor, property, risk, and domination. It does not extract a single difference. Wealth, labor, resources, domination, risk transfer, the capacity to wait, the capacity for trial and error, and the ability to exit may all belong to this set.

In illness, having or lacking savings changes the path of treatment. For someone without savings, treatment quickly connects with borrowing money, stopping work, reimbursement, pressure from relatives, and debt deadlines. In unemployment, whether a family provides a fallback changes the capacity to wait. Some people can wait a month, three months, or half a year; others face pressure to pay rent and buy food after three days without income. In children's education, property, the capacity to obtain training, the capacity to arrange transport, and time available to spend with a child change the channels. In workplace injury and debt, this set of differentiating units also changes bargaining power, the capacity to wait, and the ability to bear failure. Thus, in circumstances involving wages, unemployment, workplace injury, debt, medical care, housing, and buffers against risk, this set of differentiating units extracted by class theory may indeed press to the fore. In opposing the class image, we cannot write off the differences extracted behind it as irrelevant.

But this acknowledgment cannot be inverted into an assertion of a class entity. What is real and weighty consists of concrete differentiating units and their relations, and the image's appeal comes from these recurrent pressures. Unless we go on to ask who actually adopts property, labor, debt, or risk in what kind of handling, it is easy to mistake the explanatory power within a limited scope that arises from real differentiating units and the processes of extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression applied to them for the effects of an entity itself or of the image.

Class theory is based on a set of real differentiating units that may carry high weight. In extracting them, assigning them weight, connecting them, and subjecting them to low-dimensional compression, projection, and naming as a class image, it has already organized them into a total structure that prearranges the explanatory positions of other differences, thereby crowding out or subsuming other explanatory spaces. Class theory is, from the outset, Model C: total-image subsumption. It is neither Model A nor Model B, nor an ordinary limited model; its capacity for distinction extraction within a limited scope cannot change this structure. What is called class is only the image formed through this process, a low-dimensional output; there is no pre-existing, safe class image of an ordinarily limited kind. Real differences, interpreters' handling, and the image as output are three levels that cannot replace one another.

This is precisely why the class image must be dismantled back into concrete differentiating units, relations, and consequences, and why the image cannot be treated as society itself. The weightiness of the differences marked by the image does not mean that class theory has extracted every weighty difference. All relations placed outside the image that nevertheless affect recognition, responsibility, or available exits must re-enter examination; the total image must not be allowed to crowd out or subsume concrete explanatory spaces.

V. Why No Set of Differences Can Be Presupposed to Carry the Greatest Weight Forever

The set of differentiating units extracted by class theory can carry great weight, but analysts cannot declare in advance that this set of differences carries the greatest weight on every occasion. The same low income does not mean the same circumstances. Someone with a local kinship network may be able to borrow money, obtain information, receive care, or have someone introduce them to a job; someone without one may be more isolated. These relations change how the same income conditions enter consequences. Two people whose low-dimensional positions as marked by the class image are similar may nevertheless differ: one has a local fallback and the other does not; one knows local rules and the other does not; one has help caring for older people and children and the other does not. Their structures of weight are not the same.

Boundaries between national communities, memories of war, and religious relations may also outweigh differences in income, employment, and property. Two poor people do not necessarily trust one another simply because they are poor. Language, religion, historical injuries, community memory, and boundaries may change alliances, fear, recognition, and exclusion. Interpreters adopting class theory can extract some resource differences, but this explanation cannot automatically generate trust and community. Locality, language, clan, ethnicity, religion, institutional status, gender, age, medical records, and responsibilities to relatives may all gain weight within certain relations. Listing these differences is not meant to add them to another total table, but to reject the advance designation of a single center of high weight. Judgments of weight must return to concrete relations. They neither deny that differences extracted by class theory may be weighty nor allow that set of differences to subsume other differentiating units that have already changed consequences.

This limitation still allows valid comparison. Every judgment must establish which differences actually change the consequences at hand more strongly, while acknowledging that such comparison is constrained by materials, time, the ways matters are taken up and sustained, and changes in relations. Refusing to presuppose the highest weight does not mean assigning equal weight to all differences. When materials are sufficient, we must still judge which differences more directly change channels, responsibility, waiting, or available exits in the immediate question. But this greater operative weight holds only for this relation and this handling; it cannot be passed off as a permanent overall ranking. Economic, labor, and property differences may be the first to change whether people can wait and exit in some circumstances. That judgment, however, must be supported by the consequences at hand, rather than declared before any comparison. This is precisely why opposition to assigning equal weight to all differences and opposition to a total image can both hold.

Macro-level judgments across events cannot rely solely on high frequency. A difference may recur because the same institution repeatedly extracts it, or simply because the materials are easy to record. We must also compare whether it actually changes eligibility, risk, or action space, and which counterexamples show no such effect. Frequency is a clue, not sufficient proof of weight.

VI. What Changes When Differences Gain Weight Is Action Space

When a difference gains weight, this is more than another item in an explanation: people's paths may narrow or widen. Once a difference acquires higher weight within concrete relations and connects to consequences, people's channels, responsibility, recognition, shame, waiting, available exits, and choices may all change. When a residence permit gains weight, it may change the channel to school admission; when medical records gain weight, they may change reimbursement, leave, and compensation; when an accent gains weight, it may change trust, distance, and the degree of scrutiny one faces. When a debt deadline gains weight, it changes the ability to wait, resign, rest, or refuse poor-quality jobs. When family responsibilities gain weight, they change migration, shifts, leave, commuting, and physical wear. When a local kinship network gains weight, it changes information, borrowing, care, and available exits; when national memory gains weight, it may change recognition, vigilance, alliances, and exclusion. These consequences need not occur simultaneously, nor can they be written as a fixed chain.

A person may not immediately be ordered to do anything, yet action space has already changed: some paths open and others close; some choices become costly, some refusals dangerous, and some waiting impossible. Weight therefore cannot serve merely as decoration in an explanation. Analysts must also explain how a difference concretely changes the costs of choice, the bearing of responsibility, and the width of the paths that can be taken.

Analyzing a difference's weight is not meant to fix a person in a position. It is meant to explain what certain choices cost at the time, which support remains available, and which support is already insufficient. Only by making these conditions clear can we understand why the same refusal, waiting, or exit poses different degrees of difficulty for different people.

Channels, waiting, proof, refusal, exit, taking matters up and sustaining them, and fallback options are not the same thing. Someone may still have a channel through which to make a demand, yet lack the conditions needed to wait for a reply. Being able to offer proof does not guarantee the ability to wait, and one may also lack a fallback for bearing failure. Being able to wait does not guarantee the ability to exit. Being able to refuse one arrangement does not mean that the cost of repeated refusals remains bearable. Even having a fallback does not guarantee that one will have their affairs taken up and sustained within relations. Only by separating these can we see how action space concretely contracts or expands.

Action space also depends on whether these conditions can be obtained at the same time. No single one of them can therefore substitute for a judgment of the circumstances as a whole. Changes in channels and fallback options also affect, in turn, whether people can wait, supply further proof, and bear refusal, so we cannot look only at a single result.

VII. Why Judging Relative Weight Cannot Stop at a List

A list makes differences visible; their relative weight brings circumstances into view. In school admission, one can list household registration, social insurance, rental contracts, residence permits, school places, parents' leave, the landlord's cooperation, and information channels. Yet without knowing which of these outweighs other differences under current rules and at the current temporal node, analysis still stops at the list. The same holds for paying hospital bills: medical records, medical insurance, balances, reimbursement rates, patient accompaniment and care, and transport costs are all present, yet what pushes a family to the edge of borrowing may be its capacity to advance cash at that moment. At relatives' weddings and funerals, records of exchanges, closeness and distance, the parents' standing, past dealings, and attendance enter judgment again.

The source of shame still depends on whose evaluation, which past relation, or which absence has acquired greater operative weight.

Listing can tell us only which differentiating units are present. Judging their relative weight requires asking within what relations they are extracted, compared, and assigned weight, and what consequences they thereby connect to. Such judgment does not cancel comparison; it demands more concrete comparison. The multiplicity of differences cannot justify writing them all as equally important, nor can complexity be an excuse for abandoning judgment. Lists and comparison do not exclude one another: a list offers points of entry that can be checked, while comparison must explain when those points of entry actually lead to consequences. Without materials, we should not pretend that comparison is complete; once materials appear, we cannot invoke an earlier provisional judgment to refuse revision.

Valid comparison also requires knowing what is being compared: different materials within the same handling, different ways of taking matters up and sustaining them in similar circumstances, or the effect of the same difference at different temporal nodes. However abundant the materials, unclear objects of comparison cannot yield a reliable conclusion. Retaining a provisional judgment when materials are insufficient is not an abandonment of analysis; it avoids writing the unknown as a fixed position. Comparison yields provisional conclusions that can be questioned, rather than turning materials into unalterable verdicts. If consequences differ from what was expected, we should also return to examine what went wrong in extraction, operative weight, or comparison. The revisability of judgment is not weakness. It is a necessary condition for keeping abstract names from closing comparison in advance.

When several differences gain weight at the same time, weight analysis need not rank one difference above all the rest. It can explain how multiple paths run in parallel, who bears which part of the consequences, and which relations counteract or amplify one another. This differentiation into levels preserves the real structure of an event better than converting all differences into a single total score.

A judgment of weight must leave an argument sufficient for others to understand its grounds. Where materials come from, who extracts them, at which node they act, how far the consequences extend, and what contrary materials still await handling together explain why a difference gains weight. These need not be converted into scores or fitted into a fixed format. What matters is that readers can follow the argument to identify omissions and distinguish operative weight supported by materials from an interpreter's intuitive ranking.

VIII. How Weight Rearranges Other Differences

Once a difference gains weight, the operative weight of other differences may also be rearranged. Without local household registration, if local admission policy lists residence, social insurance, or rental materials among application conditions, the weight of some of these materials may rise; whether the landlord cooperates in producing materials is a condition of everyday life that the family faces as it goes through the procedure. Without savings, debt deadlines, dates when wages are credited, and rent dates may also gain weight. Formal institutional requirements and informal conditions that sustain the process must be understood separately. Greater weight in care responsibilities may amplify the weight of shifts, commuting, and leave rules; incomplete medical records may amplify the weight of the burden of proof, witnesses, surveillance footage, and the capacity to wait; greater weight in local kinship networks may also amplify the weight of local reputation, past relations, forms of address, and cash-gift exchanges. Differences do not propel other differences on their own. Concrete handling and arrangements for living make them alter one

another's operative weight within the same relation. Which connections actually occur must still be checked against materials, timing, and concrete relations.

When specific participants increase the operative weight of certain differences in explanation or handling, other differences may be downweighted accordingly. When the class image takes the center in an explanation, ethnicity, locality, religion, the private sphere, language, and rites and customs may be downweighted. When a cultural explanation is central, housing prices, working hours, debt, and institutional eligibility may be downweighted; when a family explanation is central, market pressures, labor institutions, and social security may be downweighted as well. When institutional materials are given very high operative weight, care responsibilities, information asymmetry, bodily conditions, and difficulties in taking leave may lose their position as grounds. Being downweighted does not mean nonexistence; they may continue to produce consequences.

Weight cannot be understood in isolation. When specific participants increase the operative weight of certain differences within the same handling, whether other differences can be seen, recognized, compared, and connected to consequences may change accordingly. It is when participants adopt certain materials, bring them into comparison, or act on them in handling that they change the opportunities for other differences to enter judgment. This change may come from different points of reference, supplementary materials, consequences becoming apparent, or changes in relations of taking up and sustaining. Once conditions of entry have changed, we must still ask who adopted what materials, to what extent, and whether the consequences really changed as a result.

Reconfiguration does not necessarily mean that certain differences are excluded from then on. It means only that, in the handling at hand, participants make less use of certain materials or have not yet connected them to consequences. A difference not adopted on one occasion cannot therefore be declared inoperative, nor can one configuration be written as a permanent structure. Once consequences become apparent or materials are supplemented, the original selections may still be rewritten. Thus, in saying that a difference is downweighted, we should also specify which materials were given priority, which kind of comparison occupied the position, and when the point of entry may need to be reopened. Only then does downweighting avoid rewriting complex relations as yet another abstract verb.

Different nodes may conflict in the weight they assign to the same difference. Medical staff focus on bodily conditions; workplace managers may focus on attendance at work; family members are concerned with income and care. No one side's judgment can automatically substitute for those at other positions. Analysts must trace what capacity there is to put each judgment into effect, while also preserving the constraints that conflicting materials place on subsequent handling.

Weight is also affected by alternative channels. If a node rejects materials but the person concerned can supply further proof through another procedure, the original constraint may be lighter. If the same record or deadline cuts off all alternative paths, the weight increases. When judging a difference's operative weight, we must examine both the main channel and available exits.

Nor does high weight automatically mean a high degree of responsibility. Materials may be important to a result without those who produce them having authority to decide the consequences. Conversely, staff at the end of a process may carry out an action while remaining constrained by upstream configurations and authorization. Weight explains the strength of a difference's effect; responsibility must still be judged according to action, knowledge, authority, and the capacity to revise.

Weight in intergenerational relations cannot be measured by whether those concerned experienced something directly. Later generations may extract old differences anew through family memory,

education, institutional records, and community practices. Only when these carriers give them consequences in the current event do past materials gain weight. Historical weight requires present relays; it is not the past governing the present on its own.

IX. The Boundaries of Judgments of Weight

Analyzing differences' weight reveals their relative weight, but cannot yield a permanent ranking detached from relations. To judge why a difference gains weight at this moment, we must still ask what relations it has entered, who extracted it, under what rules it was assigned weight, what consequences it connects to, and what other differences amplify its weight or downweight it. The same accent can bring closeness among people from the same hometown and distance in an unfamiliar institutional setting. The same poverty can take the form of economizing in daily life and direct pressure in hospitals and at weddings and funerals. These differences have not changed their essence on their own; what has changed is how they enter relations. Differentiating units such as labor, debt, risk, and domination, extracted by class theory and compressed into the class image, may carry great weight in workplace injury and debt, yet cannot automatically explain boundaries between national communities and religious memory. This does not deny their weight. It refuses to treat an image produced by distinction extraction within a limited scope as society itself.

Judgments of weight therefore cannot turn every increase in weight into irreversible fate, nor mistake a temporarily weighty difference for society's fixed substratum. Relations can change, materials can be supplemented, ways of taking matters up and sustaining them can emerge, and previously downweighted differences may re-enter judgment. Counterexamples, supplementary materials, and changes in relations do not interfere with judgments of weight; they are necessary conditions for correcting them. If new materials show that a previously overlooked difference actually changed consequences, or that a previously weighty difference did not act as expected, analysis should revise its judgment rather than defend the previous ranking. This caution neither refuses to explain consequences nor provides an excuse to delay judgment. It prevents the consequences that can currently be explained from being expanded into conclusions about all relations, so that every attribution of greater operative weight can state its grounds, scope, and conditions of refutation, and remain subject to counterevidence from consequences.

The calibration of weight must ultimately be grounded in the retractability of judgments and an honest account of what remains unknown. If later comparison shows that materials previously judged central did not enter actual handling within the question and scope covered by the original judgment, or that the result previously attributed to them in fact arose through another path, the operative weight attributed to them should be reduced. If the core path persistently fails, the conclusion should be withdrawn. Without this condition, weight becomes merely flexible language through which analysts preserve their original account. Likewise, if the materials establish only that a difference was raised but cannot establish how much operative weight it acquired, the conclusion should stop at "possibly relevant" or "still to be checked." Vague claims of high weight cannot conceal insufficient evidence. Reducing the strength of a judgment is itself part of keeping weight constrained by reality.

The responsibility of judging weight is not to assign people positions in advance. It is to explain which differences changed action space within which relations, which were downweighted, and which still need checking. Only by preserving these conditions, countervailing possibilities, and the responsibility of comparison can weight avoid becoming an abstract term of rank once again. It must guard against two errors at once: writing a temporarily weighty difference as the root of everything, and refusing to judge what is currently changing consequences simply because

differences are numerous. Weight analysis can maintain an explanation open to examination and correction only between these two errors.

Chapter 10 Relational Fields: How Social Objects Undergo Distinction Extraction, Weight Assignment, and Positioning Anew

I. Begin with Concrete Objects Rather Than Identities

A relational field is not a scene, place, or background. It is the concrete relational state within which an event is already situated and specific participants, drawing on rules that can be invoked, materials, responsibilities, and time constraints, are carrying out distinction extraction, weight assignment, connection, compression, and positioning with respect to social objects.

The relational field itself is not an actor. It is the specific participants within relations who require materials, adopt records, make judgments, assign operative weight, and connect consequences. They may be the people concerned, family members, colleagues, managers, medical staff, service-counter staff, teachers, neighbors, or case investigators. They handle the problem at hand according to rules that can be invoked, materials at hand, and responsibilities they must bear.

Here, "social object" refers to people, groups, institutions, events, or things that enter relations of identification and handling. A social object is not a fixed identity; nor does it constitute what society fundamentally is, complete prior to relations. An object carries many distinguishable differences. Which differences are raised, checked, adopted, and connected to consequences still depends on what problem specific participants are handling.

Even in the same physical place, different participants, rules, materials, or ways of handling matters may form different relational fields. A change of place, however, does not necessarily change the relational field. If the same set of materials, responsibilities, and relations of handling continues, an object will not be handled anew simply because it has moved to another room, counter, or road. Beginning with identity makes it easy to mistake an already formed designation for the object itself. Only by beginning with the concrete object can we see how the designation actually forms.

A person, group, institution, or thing does not first carry a complete, unchanging identity and only then pass through different relations. A person has an occupation, gender, income, household registration, and educational qualifications, as well as bodily conditions, medical history, an accent, debts, kinship relations, a local reputation, past experiences, other people's memories, institutional records, and risk labels. These do not all act at the same moment, much less all enter consequences automatically. The fact that a difference ordinarily remains silent does not mean it does not exist. It may remain in the body or in relatives' memories, be preserved in a record, or simply not yet have been treated by anyone as a problem requiring handling. To understand why a person is trusted, refused, or required to provide proof, we cannot begin by asking what kind of person they really are. We must examine who extracted what within which relations, and what judgments they made on that basis.

This holds not only for people. Groups, institutions, events, and things also reveal different usable differences in different relational fields. With a knife in a kitchen, the person cooking considers its use, sharpness, feel in the hand, material, and ease of handling. These differences bear on whether it can cut vegetables, is comfortable to grip, and is durable. When it is carried through airport security, staff are more likely to check its length, sharpness, capacity to cause harm, and how it is carried, and judge whether it can pass on that basis. In a criminal case, investigators may examine

bloodstains, fingerprints, purchase records, relations involving its holder, and where it appeared; the same knife may then be handled as evidence. Once it is placed in a museum, researchers and managers attend to its age, craftsmanship, provenance, decorative patterns, and historical connections, and it may be classified as a cultural artifact. The knife has not become four knives. What differs is which differences participants adopt and how they connect them to consequences in tool use, security screening, recognition as evidence, or collection and preservation. The object has not become multiple entities. What changes is which differences participants adopt and handle in different relations. People, institutions, and groups should be understood in the same way: no single label can determine all relations. Different participants extract different parts from complex differences and bring them into comparison and handling.

II. Distinction Extraction: Extracting Operative Differences from Potential Differences

Distinction extraction does not manufacture differences out of nothing. Within a relation, specific participants extract certain items from differences that already exist but may not be conspicuous, using them as grounds for judgment. Many differences do not ordinarily change circumstances because no one is currently using them for comparison, handling, or the allocation of responsibility, not because they do not exist. Each instance of distinction extraction has a concrete point of entry: someone submits an application; someone requires materials to be presented; someone checks against existing records; or someone brings a previously unraised difference into discussion during a conflict. Different points of entry bring differences into relations in different ways. The same item of material need not be approached through the same question at different points of entry.

Several aspects of the handling process need to be carefully distinguished: a difference already exists; someone notices it; someone requires materials relating to it; a participant accepts the materials; the materials are actually adopted as grounds for judgment; and the difference is connected to eligibility, responsibility, risk, channels, or other consequences. These aspects may overlap in practice, and the process may also proceed informally; they do not invariably occur in a fixed sequence. In analysis, however, they cannot stand in for one another. Being seen does not mean being required; materials being required does not mean they are accepted; acceptance does not mean consequences have already changed.

Body temperature is ordinarily just a bodily condition. It does not usually determine a person's post or generational rank among relatives. In circumstances involving infectious-disease prevention and control, staff, or the managers of schools, hospitals, stations, or communities may require body temperatures, travel histories, contact histories, test records, and records of protective measures, using these to decide whether someone can enter, needs to register or undergo isolation, or requires other arrangements. In this process, body temperature itself acquires no fixed power detached from relations. Someone first notices a risk, someone requires records, and someone accepts or rejects materials under the rules; only then is it connected to entry and exit, care, the bearing of risk, and the handling of responsibility. Merely writing that "body temperature is important" leaves out how distinction extraction occurs, as well as the conditions under which consequences may differ when materials are not adopted.

The same holds for medical history. It may remain a personal experience that others do not necessarily know or need to know. In an insurance claim, those handling it may judge responsibility on the basis of prior medical history, disclosures made when taking out insurance, and examination materials. In a pre-employment medical examination, medical staff and employers may make arrangements according to examination results and job requirements. In

determining workplace-injury status, medical records, how the injury occurred, diagnoses, and work records may enter judgments of responsibility and compensation. In romantic and marital relations, the people concerned may consider medical history in relation to trust, care, and life together. Medical history alone does not determine which consequences it enters. This also depends on who adopts what materials, which rules apply, and what responsibilities they are willing to bear. If materials are insufficient or contradictory, or those handling the matter refuse to adopt them, a medical history, though it exists, may not connect to the consequences originally expected.

Nor can an accent be understood as a permanently operative marker of identity. Among people from the same hometown, someone may use an accent to confirm a sense of familiarity. In a job interview, an interviewer may use it as one point of reference for judging familiarity with local rules. In local conflicts or migration management, someone may use it as a marker of an outsider. At the boundaries of a society of acquaintances, an accent may also affect whether someone is treated as an insider. Ancestral origin, surname, language, and kinship relations may likewise be adopted during war, political campaigns, ethnic conflict, or in an environment of hostility to outsiders as grounds for distinguishing inside from outside, friend from enemy, and reliable from unreliable. The danger of distinction extraction does not lie in differences suddenly becoming false. It lies in specific participants connecting them to exclusion, punishment, or protection and thereby changing other people's action space.

Distinction extraction has clear boundaries for judgment. A difference's having been noticed does not mean it is necessarily operative; the existence of materials does not mean they have already fulfilled their evidentiary role. Who extracted the difference, on the basis of what materials, at which step the materials gained acceptance, and whether they actually entered the handling must still be explained separately. Only by keeping these steps distinct can we avoid misrepresenting "being seen" as "having already determined the consequences."

III. Weight Assignment: Extracted Differences Are Not Equally Important

The extraction of differences does not mean they acquire equal operative weight. Weight assignment means specific participants giving different differentiating units different operative weight within a relation, on the basis of rules that can be invoked, materials, responsibilities, and foreseeable consequences. This operative weight is neither a fixed numerical value that differences carry by nature nor a moral ranking from high to low.

Different participants may give the same difference different operative weight. Someone treats a record as a condition that must first be checked, while someone else gives more attention to the immediate responsibility for care. Someone handles matters under formal rules, while someone else judges according to favors owed among relatives or local memory. These weights can conflict; they cannot be written as a fixed table applicable to every relation.

Within family relations, blood ties, generational rank, care, support for older relatives, unfulfilled obligations, sacrifice, and respectability are often put first. Outside the home, a person may be an employee, trader, teacher, patient, or debtor. At home, their parents may ask whether they have sent money, can care for older family members, have started a family, or have brought shame on the family. These judgments are not necessarily reasonable or fair, yet they may change the responsibilities the person must bear, the support available to them, and whether they can refuse an arrangement. At work, managers and colleagues may adopt job positions, attendance, performance, wages, obedience, the allocation of responsibility, and labor discipline as grounds. Someone with local prestige who fulfills their family responsibilities may still have their

arrangements changed at work because of repeated lateness, failure to meet performance standards, or inability to complete tasks. Their local prestige has not disappeared. Rather, attendance and task completion have been given greater operative weight in this handling.

Even within the same handling process, different participants face different responsibilities and therefore need not put the same difference in the same position. In a hospital, doctors must consider the illness and examination results; service-counter staff must consider payment and medical-insurance materials; family members must face signing documents, providing care, and making decisions. Medical records, symptoms, examination results, ability to pay, disclosure of risks, family members' signatures, and medical-insurance eligibility may jointly affect whether treatment can continue, how costs are borne, and how responsibility is divided.

In schools, actual living circumstances must also be converted into materials and eligibility that can be adopted. A family's many years of life in a city do not automatically mean that its child can enter a particular school. A child cared for within the family enters the handling of student registration, classes, grades, discipline, and eligibility at school. Age, student registration, household-registration materials, proof of residence, guardianship qualifications, grades, and disciplinary records may be adopted.

In local society, people may repeatedly adopt accent, local belonging, ancestral relations, exchanges at weddings and funerals, records of keeping one's word, and histories of mutual aid. Wealth does not necessarily bring immediate local recognition, nor does poverty necessarily mean a complete loss of local support. Exchanges, care, favors owed, and reputation not preserved in institutional materials may still affect trust and mutual aid among acquaintances. Weight assignment is not confined to formal institutions. Favors owed and repeatedly mentioned among relatives, old incidents in local society, and colleagues' impressions of a person's reliability may all be given operative weight in concrete judgments. Whether they enter consequences, however, still depends on the people who actually adopt them, the accounts that can be invoked at the time, and whether other materials can counterbalance them.

Formal rules, responsibilities to relatives, and local memory may also conflict with one another. Materials that meet procedural requirements may not eliminate relatives' demands for care; existing local evaluations may not replace checks on formal eligibility. In analyzing these conflicts, we cannot presuppose which side always carries more weight. We must examine which participant is handling what consequences, what responsibilities they are willing to bear, and which rules constrain them. The scope of weight assignment is always provisional. It explains only how certain differences enter real consequences here and now; it cannot turn weight into a numerical value permanently carried by an object. Without specifying participants, materials, rules, and consequences, saying that "a difference carries great weight" is merely an empty label.

IV. Connection: How Differentiating Units with High Weight Affect Consequences within Relations

Connection occurs when participants place differentiating units that have been adopted and given operative weight into other materials, rules, responsibilities, and relations, allowing their effects to extend beyond the original step of handling. A difference's gaining weight does not make consequences occur automatically. Only when relevant responsibilities are recognized, records adopted, procedures actually initiated, or support provided by someone can a relational chain extend further.

In an account book, debt may be no more than an amount owed. In market relations, lenders, borrowers, guarantors, or partners may examine credit, interest, guarantees, and the capacity to fulfill obligations. When a debt cannot be repaid, more than a single transaction is affected; eligibility for future cooperation may also be affected. In legal relations, the people concerned, their representatives, judges, or enforcement personnel adopt IOUs, transfer records, contracts, witnesses, and procedural materials to judge who bears what responsibility, which facts can be recognized, and which obligations must be fulfilled. In family relations, parents, spouses, and children may consequently recalculate medical expenses, tuition, rent, and everyday spending. In kinship and local relations, whether one borrows and whether one repays may in turn affect face, mutual aid, reputation, and future trust. Debt does not transmit itself through the network. Within each relation, specific participants separately take debt, credit, evidence, or reputation as points of reference and connect them to cooperation, responsibility, care, trust, or available exits.

A relational chain is not a straight line laid out in advance. Someone may first cut family spending under repayment pressure and only later seek contracts, transfer records, or witnesses. Or legal proceedings may already have begun before relatives learn of the debt and decide whether to help.

When medical records enter leave applications, reimbursement, insurance, workplace-injury determinations, or compensation lawsuits, they may also connect bodily facts, workplace responsibilities, institutional materials, monetary compensation, family care, and the allocation of risk. Medical records used for leave are not necessarily used for insurance or compensation at the same time: different procedures have different requirements for materials, responsibility, and timing. Where medical records are incomplete, those handling matters may not adopt certain facts about treatment. Where there are gaps in the records, responsibility may be difficult to pursue. Where materials do not meet requirements, experiences of treatment may not enter a channel for compensation.

Insufficient materials, unrecognized responsibilities, records not adopted, or the intervention of supportive relations may all interrupt a relational chain that had seemed likely to extend. Once the person concerned supplements the materials, family members change their decisions, those handling the matter check again, or a new procedure begins, later arrangements may reconnect previously interrupted links. These interruptions, branches, and reconnections are precisely why connection cannot be written as inevitable, one-way causation. Connection may also bring constraints. Once one item of material is given priority, other materials may temporarily fail to enter the grounds for judgment; once one responsibility is recognized, difficulties in other relations may be downweighted. Analysis must ask not only how one condition gains weight, but also which conditions have not yet been adopted in this handling, which relations have not yet been connected, and who has not been heard.

V. Compression: Identity Is a Designation for a Complex Configuration of Differentiating Units

People cannot unfold all an object's differences in full every time. Doctors cannot begin diagnosis and treatment with a person's entire family history; workplaces cannot begin every assignment of posts with the entirety of kinship relations; schools cannot incorporate each family's complete life history into the handling of student registration. To deal with problems within limited time, participants often compress a complex configuration of differentiating units into a designation. Compression itself is not an error. It makes limited handling possible, and designations have their convenience and scope of application.

For example, symptoms, medical records, examinations, payments, risks, and treatment plans may be compressed into "patient." Within treatment relations, this allows medical staff, family members, and service-counter staff to attend first to the illness, payments, and care. Yet being called a patient does not erase the person's circumstances as a parent, debtor, tenant, or member of local relations. Job positions, contracts, attendance, performance, wages, and labor discipline may be compressed into "employee" for handling matters of posts, attendance, and labor discipline. This likewise does not erase the person's care responsibilities, illness and pain, pressure from relatives, or available exits.

In other relational fields, debt, repayment, credit, evidence, and the capacity to fulfill obligations may be compressed into "debtor," allowing questions of lending and borrowing, evidence, and fulfillment to be handled. Accent, household registration, length of residence, kinship networks, and local recognition may be compressed into "nonlocal" or "local." Even being called a nonlocal cannot cancel the person's work, memories, mutual aid, and recognition already formed locally. Job positions, wages, employment, working hours, and production arrangements may also be compressed into "worker."

Compression retains only what has been extracted within the current relational field. When compression begins to occlude, the problem is not the existence of the designation. It is that participants no longer ask on what materials it was formed, to which handling it applies, or which differences capable of changing consequences it has hidden. Once a designation is mistaken for what the object fundamentally is, concrete handling may bypass necessary checks and treat a limited designation for handling as the complete person or their complete social position. It is only an entry point for handling, formed by compressing a complex configuration of differentiating units within a particular relational field. If analysts treat it as the final conclusion, they can no longer see how materials are adopted, how responsibilities are allocated, or which other differences may change circumstances. A designation cannot become what the object fundamentally is.

Designations must also be distinguished from positional consequences. Compression first produces a designation for handling. Only when specific participants use that designation to arrange eligibility, responsibility, trust, exclusion, or care does that designation give rise to positional consequences. The existence of a designation does not mean all consequences have already formed. The same designation may also connect to different consequences in different relational fields: someone called a patient need not face the same responsibilities, channels, or exclusion in all relations.

VI. The Class Image: The Power and Danger of Compressed Projection

Differentiating units extracted by class theory, such as labor, wages, employment, property, debt, risk, and domination, carry real weight. Once adopted by specific participants, these differentiating units may affect whether a person can wait, exit, bear failure, or obtain support. Analysis cannot deny the importance of these differences because it opposes the class image's total subsumption. Analysts studying factories, wages, labor discipline, and relations of exploitation can make certain inequalities, forms of domination, and risks visible by connecting job positions, wages, employment, working hours, and production arrangements along the same line of analysis. Explanatory capacity within a limited scope comes from these differentiating units and the process of handling them. The designation "worker" can mark an occupational situation, but it cannot replace that process, nor does it prove that classes exist. Yet a concrete worker may also face family relations, local relations, national memory, language, religion, bodily illness and pain, debt structures, responsibilities to relatives, care for parents, children's school admission, and local

reputation. Only when participants adopt these differences in different relational fields can they enter the handling of recognition, responsibility, channels, and available exits. A designation within labor relations cannot cancel these differences in advance or replace checking them one by one. Opposing total-image subsumption does not mean declaring wages, property, debt, and risk unimportant. It requires analysis to return to concrete relations and examine which differences are actually adopted and connected to consequences.

The problem with the class image is not that the set of differences underlying it, extracted by class theory, is unreal. It is that class theory extends the compressed projection formed by extracting these differences within a limited scope into a total explanation. Class theory is precisely Model C: total-image subsumption. It is neither Model A nor Model B, nor an ordinary limited model. Its ability to extract real differentiating units that may carry high weight does not change this structure.

When analysts make a class designation bear the whole explanation, differences such as care, debt, local reputation, language, religion, national memory, and bodily pain may lose the opportunity to be examined independently within the theory. They have not disappeared. Analysts simply cease to examine, item by item, how specific participants adopt these differences and how that adoption changes consequences. The class image is not an actor that extracts, compresses, or subsumes on its own. It is analysts adopting class theory who perform this theoretical handling.

Returning to concrete relational fields does not mean abandoning judgment or refusing comparison. Analysis must still ask who adopted which differences, on what materials and rules, and to which kinds of consequences they connected them; it must also ask whether the original judgment needs revision when counterexamples arise. In this way, labor, wages, property, debt, and risk retain weight that can be examined, without being gathered into a total image as the sole explanation.

VII. Positioning: Social Position Is a Structure of Consequences, Not a Name

A position is a structure of consequences. When participants extract differences within a relation, give them operative weight, connect relevant conditions, and handle matters, a person, family, or organization may be placed in an actual position. A designation may be used in this process of handling, but it is not a prerequisite for every instance in which positional consequences form. A position is neither an abstract noun nor a slot occupied by nature.

A designation produces positional consequences only when specific participants use it in handling. The various kinds of consequences cannot all be replaced by an identity designation, nor can they be equated directly with one another. Eligibility concerns whether one can enter school, receive reimbursement, apply, or enter a channel. Responsibility concerns whether one must repay money, sign documents, provide care, fulfill contracts, or bear consequences. Opportunity concerns whether one can find employment, gain promotion, cooperate, form ties through marriage, and gain trust. Exclusion concerns whether one is refused, suspected, isolated, or kept outside. Shame, reputation, punishment, and recognition also have their different consequences. Only by distinguishing these consequences can we see how a position concretely limits or opens up action.

Positional consequences within a concrete position may be inconsistent with one another. Gaining one form of eligibility does not mean having access to all channels; being able to provide proof does not mean having the conditions needed to wait. Being called a patient is more than a change of name: the person may enter treatment, payment, disclosure of risks, care, and the allocation of

responsibility. They may gain eligibility for treatment yet be unable to make it all the way through that channel because the conditions for payment, care, or leave are insufficient.

Likewise, bearing one responsibility does not mean other relations have already been explained; gaining recognition in one respect does not necessarily exempt one from responsibilities involving relatives, debt, or care. Being called a debtor is more than a change of name: it may bring consequences involving repayment, debt recovery, law, credit, and reputation. Yet a debtor may bear responsibility for repayment while retaining some support from relatives or local mutual aid. Someone called a nonlocal may encounter eligibility, boundaries, trust, and exclusion in certain relations. They may face boundaries concerning materials for school admission or residence, while also gaining trust through work, neighbors, and people from the same hometown. These inconsistencies are not exceptions to the theory. They are structures of consequences that must be preserved.

Position can neither be reduced to a single scale from high to low nor be recast retrospectively as a fixed identity. Analysis must trace back along the process through which a position formed. If there is a specific designation, it must ask who gave it, on what materials, within which relational field it is operative, which channels and responsibilities it changed, and which differences have not yet been adopted. Even without a fixed designation, analysis must likewise trace what distinction extraction, weight assignment, connection, and handling participants actually carried out. Only by reconnecting these aspects of the process can position be kept from slipping into another theory of identity.

VIII. Write-Back: How the Results of Positioning Affect the Next Instance of Distinction Extraction

Write-back means preserving the results of current determination, recording, handling, or action as differences that can be extracted again in the future and may change subsequent judgment, eligibility, risk, evaluation, and action space. Write-back is not simple archiving, much less a doctrine of predetermined fate. It explains how prior handling leaves materials that later participants can face anew.

Two levels must be distinguished here. When earlier handling leaves records or evaluations that are preserved as differences capable of being extracted again in the future, write-back has already formed. Only when later participants identify and extract these contents anew, and decide according to subsequent relations, rules, and materials whether to interpret, adopt, or assign weight to them, can the contents of write-back connect again to real consequences. A record's existence does not mean it will necessarily be adopted; its adoption does not mean it cannot be revised.

If a court records someone as untrustworthy, relevant people may later adopt that record when the person borrows money, cooperates with others, travels, spends, or undergoes workplace evaluation. If a workplace records someone as unstable, managers may interpret their conduct through existing impressions when handling leave requests, considering promotion, or assigning tasks. If a child is labeled a problem student, teachers, classmates, and parents may later use the label to explain the child's words and actions in advance. If someone is locally regarded as not keeping their word, neighbors and relatives may also treat past evaluations as points of reference in wedding and funeral exchanges, borrowing, partnerships, and job introductions. The records, comments, and memories in these examples do not themselves read, decide, or punish people. Later participants extract them anew and place them back into new judgments or the handling of eligibility, trust, or responsibility.

The renewed adoption of old records carries risks. A limited handling in a past relational field may be treated by later participants as a conclusion established in advance, occluding new materials, new actions, and changed relations. If old records simply replace fresh checking, the problem is not the existence of records, but participants' treating a limited judgment as a conclusion requiring no examination. Write-back also preserves the possibility of correction. New medical records, materials supplemented later, sustained actions, changed relations, and facts recognized anew may all cause old evaluations to lose their former operative weight. Checking again does not guarantee that the old judgment will be overturned, but it prevents us from writing write-back as irreversible fate.

A person is not understood from scratch in every relation. Past positioning may settle into files, reputation, memories, prejudices, and expectations of oneself. Later participants may in turn extract these sediments and handle them anew according to new relations. Write-back shows that handling within relational fields concerns not only the present: present results may also become conditions for future relations.

IX. From Relational Fields to Differentiation Positions

This chapter does not offer a theory of multiple identities. Such a theory can say that a person is a son at home, an employee at work, and a patient in the hospital, but this does not yet explain how those designations produce consequences. Relational-field analysis asks which differences are extracted by whom, how they are given operative weight, how they connect to materials, responsibilities, and channels, how they are compressed into designations, and how handling leaves results that can be adopted again. Multiple relations at the same moment need not fit neatly together. Some materials are being adopted, some relations have not yet been articulated, some responsibilities already press on the present, and some support may still appear later. Relational-field analysis must preserve these inconsistencies and incompletions, because they are the concrete conditions that explain why people can or cannot change their circumstances.

A nonlocal worker may simultaneously be a father, debtor, patient, tenant, someone from the same hometown, workplace employee, a child's guardian, and a member of a kinship network. He does not enter these relations one after another in sequence. Continuous social-insurance contributions, rental materials, and the ability to take leave needed for a child's school admission may simultaneously affect work arrangements, income, debt, care, and local support. Illness may in turn connect medical records, payment, leave, reimbursement, and family responsibilities. Participants' handling in different relational fields may intersect and jointly affect whether he can wait, refuse, supply further proof, migrate, or seek help. These ways of handling matters may also be inconsistent: workplace arrangements, family members' care decisions, schools' requirements for materials, and support from local relations need not point toward the same result. No identity designation can flatten all these relations into one. Nor does this analysis treat multiple relations as a list of identities that can be exhaustively compiled in a single pass. Every relation must be brought back to the materials actually adopted at the time, rules that can be invoked, responsibilities that must be borne, and consequences already formed or not yet formed. Only then can we distinguish a designation temporarily useful in handling from one mistakenly elevated into the object's entire position.

The scope of a relational field is constrained by participants' purposes and procedural deadlines. Analysts who track only the first materials to appear may miss care, debt, or community relations raised later. Yet including every possible background would lose the event's boundaries. A sounder approach is to make the current point of entry explicit, expand or narrow it as materials change,

and retain the reasons for earlier omissions. Different analysts may choose different points of entry into a relational field, but their choices must be open to mutual checking. As long as each makes the question, materials, timing, and omissions explicit, it is possible to compare which scope better explains the consequences. If a scope can be maintained only by excluding counterexamples, it needs to be redefined. A relational field's objective limits come from the event's relations, not an analyst's declaration.

A relational field is not a static container. The submission of supplementary documents, an objection, a revocation, or a new event may each bring different objects of handling into the same position. Once the relational field changes, the original weights and relational chains can serve only as starting points to be checked; they cannot be carried over directly as new conclusions. Relational fields may also nest within one another. Handling a workplace injury simultaneously involves medical care, labor, family, and debt, but analysts may first trace one of these according to their question and then explain at which positions it connects to other relational fields. Nesting does not mean combining all backgrounds into an infinite scene. It means making explicit how different questions meet at concrete nodes.

The analysis of relational fields concludes here. It concerns how differences undergo distinction extraction, weight assignment, connection, compression, positioning, and write-back anew, and how every step preserves specific participants, materials, rules, responsibilities, and consequences. It cannot recast multiple forms of handling as an identity, an image, or an abstract noun determining everything in advance.

Chapter 11. Differentiation Positions: How Multiple Weights Combine to Form a Person's Actual Position

In some relational fields, labor, wages, debt, housing, risk, and relations of domination can indeed constitute the dominant forces pulling a person. Analysts who adopt the low-dimensional position marked out by the class image can bring these relations, which carry real weight, into view. But this position is only a partial presentation within the image, not the person's entire differentiation position. Explanatory power within a limited scope comes from real differentiating units and the processes of extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression applied to them; the image itself has no independent explanatory power. A person's actual position is always the combined result of multiple sets of differentiating units being extracted, assigned weight, and connected within concrete relations. The position marked out by the image cannot replace all of a person's relations in advance, still less assimilate family responsibilities, bodily conditions, local relations, institutional materials, and past records into the same thing.

I. A Position Is Not an Identity Badge

A person may simultaneously be called a worker, father, nonlocal, debtor, patient, tenant, someone from the same hometown, or guardian. Each designation captures certain real relations: worker connects to labor, wages, and employment arrangements; father to responsibilities for care and family expectations; nonlocal involves household registration, accent, length of residence, and local recognition; debtor involves money owed, credit, capacity to fulfill obligations, and deadlines. The issue is not whether these designations are true or false, but the fact that any one of them can compress only some relations. Nor need the same designation carry the same operative weight in different relational fields. Wage relations may be raised first when someone changes jobs, yet may not suffice to replace medical records and determinations of responsibility in medical treatment. When specific participants invoke care responsibilities through the designation "father," this still does not by itself explain who devotes time to care and who bears its costs. Designations also easily compress distinct responsibilities into interchangeable descriptions. Calling someone a father does not automatically answer which materials are missing for a child's school admission, who provides care, or who can help submit supplementary documents. Calling someone a worker does not automatically answer how wages, working hours, workplace injuries, and changes in work enter family arrangements simultaneously. A designation can be an entry point into analysis; it cannot end analysis in advance.

A nonlocal worker living with his child in a city wants a job that pays more and is closer to where they live. Neither "worker" nor "father," taken alone, adequately explains his predicament. Where the local requirements for the relevant year and admission category call for continuity of social insurance and documentation of rented accommodation, wages affect rent, rent affects the filing of rental records, filing affects the materials for the child's school admission, and continuity of social insurance also affects admission conditions. Debt, support for aging parents, and wedding and funeral exchanges back home also involve income, time, and local reputation in their respective ways. These relations do not appear in turns; they make demands simultaneously within the same choice. An identity badge offers partial identification. Actual position concerns how relations combine in the present, and this combination does not presuppose the existence of a designation. Even placing designations side by side cannot directly establish which channels a person has, what responsibilities they must bear, what they can refuse, how long they can wait, or under what conditions they must bear risk. If specific participants use a designation, we must still examine

whether the relations it captures are adopted and connected to materials, rules, deadlines, and handling. Emphasizing that a position is not an identity badge neither invents another identity nor requires all designations to be abolished. Analysis cannot stop at a static list of roles. It must keep asking who uses which designation in what relational field, which materials and consequences the designation connects to, and which relations it does not include.

Comparison between positions must especially avoid comparing names alone. Two people both called tenants may face different available exits because their contracts, landlords, incomes, care arrangements, and residential materials differ. Two people both called parents may likewise have different capacities to wait because school procedures and support from relatives differ. A differentiation position is formed through the combination of relational consequences, not the replacement of an identity badge.

II. Differentiation Space: Where Differentiation Positions Form

A differentiation position forms within a scope of relations that allows differences to be compared with one another, acquire operative weight, and connect to consequences. This scope is neither a geographical location nor a container detached from reality. Concrete relations, institutional nodes, rules of evaluation, historical indices, and consequences for action jointly open it up. Only when certain differences enter the same judgment can they be compared in weight and connected to eligibility, responsibility, risk, recognition, or exclusion.

Differentiation space is the relational space in which differentiating units can be represented, compared, assigned weight, and positioned. Such a space presupposes that differences have entered the same set of comparative relations. It neither selects differences nor assigns weight on its own. In practice, hospitals, schools, workplaces, families, reviewers, relatives, or other specific participants extract certain differences using the materials, rules, and relations at their disposal, bringing those differences into comparison.

A differentiation position, in turn, is the position formed for a person, family, organization, or event within a particular differentiation space. Space explains which differences can potentially be handled together; position explains how they are connected at a particular moment and produce actual consequences for the object. The two must not be conflated: the former is not a physical place, and the latter is not a fixed coordinate.

In insurance claims involving medical expenses, medical records, insurance terms, prior medical history, payment records, diagnostic results, and determinations of responsibility may enter judgment together. In screening job applicants, those responsible may read educational qualifications, age, skills, gaps in employment, former workplaces, bodily conditions, and relations through which recommendations are made. In judgments about courtship and marriage, those involved may also weigh income, housing, debt, family responsibilities, local reputation, and capacity for care together. The fact that materials appear together does not mean they have equal weight; their operative weight still depends on current relations, materials, and consequences. Nor need the same material be adopted in the same way in all relations. Medical records may be regarded as crucial to one claim, yet a change in the conditions of review may alter how they work. When a recommendation relationship is raised, it still matters who recognizes it and what eligibility and consequences it can connect to. Differentiation space presents the relational conditions under which things can currently be handled together, not a static list.

Differentiation space must also be distinguished from latent differentiation space. The former carries relations among differences already extracted in the present, available for comparison, and

currently forming positions. The latter involves reserves of differences not yet extracted within the current relational field but potentially adopted anew in the future. Past medical history, old local grievances, school disciplinary sanctions, debts involving relatives, language differences, and past credit records have not disappeared when they have not entered current judgment. When and by whom they are extracted again still depends on later relational fields and materials.

III. Differentiation Position: An Actual Position Formed by a Five-Layer Structure

A differentiation position is not the sum of multiple identities. It is an actual position jointly formed by the dominant pull, connection chains, the constraint domain, lock-in structures, and write-back sedimentation. These five layers constitute an analytical structure for unpacking how a position forms. They are neither five independent entities nor fixed stages that everyone must pass through in sequence. When one layer stands out, the others may still operate at the same time.

The dominant pull identifies the high-weight relation currently most capable of changing consequences. Connection chains trace how it affects responsibilities, materials, eligibility, channels, and evaluations. The constraint domain shows how these relations narrow or adjust the range of possible action. Lock-in structures explain why the costs of change rise once multiple relations support one another. Write-back sedimentation explains how past determinations are preserved as materials that may be adopted again later.

Take a teacher in a county town. "Teacher" is only a designation. At school, he may face curricula, grades, assessments, parents' expectations, and inspections by higher authorities. Within institutional arrangements, whether his post is on the authorized staffing establishment changes stability and the conditions of handling. Back in the family, expectations of providing support, being considerate, stepping forward, and maintaining stability also affect choices. Acquaintance relations, reputation, and exchanges with relatives in local society may enter judgment as well. Together, these relations form a position that cannot be explained by the name of an occupation alone. When materials are not adopted, connections are interrupted, new supportive relations enter, or past evaluations are checked again, a seemingly firm position may change. The five-layer structure merely shows where changes may occur. It guarantees no particular conclusion and cannot presuppose a fixed sequence of change. The effects of the same support in different relational fields must still be checked anew against specific participants, materials, and conditions of handling. Analysis must explain under what conditions each layer is operating, rather than nail people into a structure.

The formation of a position is not driven by the five layers in succession. When the dominant pull connects to more materials or tighter deadlines, the constraint domain may narrow and existing connections may deepen; when one chain is cut, the strength of a lock-in structure may decline. These interactions between layers allow the formation process to be checked layer by layer, but do not constitute a causal staircase in which one step necessarily leads to the next. When someone seems trapped, only by first identifying the dominant pull currently adopted and then tracing the chains it connects to can we judge the range of action and the relations through which it narrows. Lock-in should be discussed only where multiple relations actually interlock. Before past evaluations enter analysis, we must also establish whether and how they have been preserved. To assert that they have already affected current positioning, we must further establish whether later participants have adopted them anew. This order prevents a conspicuous phenomenon from being prematurely treated as the entire cause; it does not force experience into a table. A differentiation position is therefore neither a social rank, a list of factors, nor a name for fate. It requires high-

weight differences to be placed back within concrete relations: who presents materials, who adopts records, who gives operative weight under which rules, who thereby gains or loses channels, and who bears the consequences. The five-layer structure serves precisely to prevent a designation from replacing these questions.

Nor can a differentiation position make value choices on someone's behalf. Analysis can explain which relations constrain waiting, exit, or what a person can bear; it cannot infer from this which interests the person will necessarily pursue. How people order family, nation, work, faith, and private life must still be identified from their actual actions and statements, not prearranged by a positional model. Where a judgment of position involves a community, the positions of members must also be distinguished from the community as a whole. Members may bear different responsibilities and preserve different memories; they may also exit or dissent. A community's name cannot eliminate these differences. A differentiation position can explain only how concrete members are pulled by relations; it cannot generate a unified personality for a community.

IV. How the Dominant Pull Unfolds into Connection Chains

A differentiation position often has a dominant pull within it, but dominance does not mean exclusivity. A difference's current prominence usually relates to the intensity of consequences, deadlines, substitutability, the scope of connections, and the depth of write-back. Operative weight forms through specific participants' adoption of materials, setting of conditions, and handling within relations. It is not an attribute differences carry by nature, still less something concepts determine on their own. A child's school admission may become the dominant pull because registration has a deadline, materials may not be substitutable, and schools or relevant institutions may include continuity of social insurance and rental filings in their review. Debt may also become the dominant pull because repayment deadlines involve credit, relatives' evaluations, negotiations within the family, and later cooperation. These differences carry weight precisely because specific participants handle matters on the basis of materials, rules, and existing relations, bringing the differences into visible consequences.

Returning to the nonlocal worker's choice, low wages are an important problem, but not necessarily the only or strongest pull. When the child's school admission, continuity of social insurance, and rental filing all face deadlines, a new job with higher wages may bring greater risk if it interrupts social insurance. Multiple relations are jointly changing the operative weight of income; this does not mean income has lost its importance. The dominant pull does not exist in isolation. Once a nonlocal worker considers changing jobs, social-insurance contributions and personal entitlement records, some materials required for the child's school admission, whether the family stays in the city, rental choices, pressure from rent, debt repayment, and support from relatives may all be affected in turn. Which formal materials are affected still depends on local policy, timing, and the specific matter. These relations form connection chains, expanding an apparently single choice into a question of multiple consequences. But a chain does not propagate on its own. Whether particular materials are required, a given record is recognized, or an eligibility issue can be remedied depends on specific participants' adoption and handling. The chain may also break at one point. If the new job maintains social insurance, a risk may diminish. If relatives are willing to share care, time pressure may change. If materials are checked again, an existing judgment need not continue as usual.

The same holds for a debtor who has been ill. Bodily conditions may connect to medical expenses, medical expenses to borrowing from relatives, stopping work to interrupted income, interrupted income to debt deadlines, and then to negotiations within the family and judgments of credit. This

is not inevitable causation along a single line, but a pathway along which relations may branch, reconnect, or be cut. A list of identities separates relations; connection chains require us to show how they connect. Merely describing the object as "worker, father, debtor" is still insufficient. We must identify which relation, through which materials and rules, makes another relation consequential. Only then can the process through which a position forms be examined.

Judging the dominant pull requires more than asking what matters most. We must also ask which conditions make it gain weight now, who adopts it, whether other arrangements can substitute for it, and which connections would loosen if its consequences changed. Such questions acknowledge the existence of other differences and the possibility of their gaining weight again, avoiding the error of making current dominance the whole explanation. Counterexamples return judgments of the dominant pull to the current relational field. If the previously most urgent condition is dealt with, or a previously unnoticed responsibility suddenly connects to consequences, the dominant relation may shift and previously downweighted relations may gain weight again. Operative weight indicates only what more directly changes consequences for action given the materials, deadlines, and conditions of handling currently in place. It is neither a ranking of how real responsibilities are nor a hierarchy of value. Conflating the two instead occludes how judgment forms and mistakes current dominance for the whole explanation.

Consequences that have already formed must be tracked separately from those that remain mere possibilities. The fact that two relations can conceivably connect is insufficient to write them as necessarily connected. Materials, procedures, participants, and conditions of recognition still stand between them, and each condition may change whether the chain can form; each must be checked. Connection chains require us to see the links and acknowledge their limits. Missing materials, differing rules, participants' refusal, or delays may all prevent a relation from passing through a node, or cause it to branch, reconnect, or break along the way.

V. Action and Conflict within the Constraint Domain

A position explains not only how the object is designated but also what ranges of action are currently possible for that person. A nonlocal worker's change of job may alter social-insurance contributions or personal entitlement records, affecting the child's application where local admission rules require the relevant materials. A move may also change procedural conditions if it affects rental or residential materials. Leave, income, rent, and asserting one's rights belong to consequences involving work and markets; the local relations affected by absence from weddings and funerals belong to informal evaluation. The two cannot be combined into the same institutional rule. Different relations narrow these choices to different degrees; this is not abstract freedom or unfreedom. A constraint domain is not a closed container, much less an absolute prohibition. People may still change jobs, move home, take leave, assert their rights, or return to their hometowns. What differs is the waiting, refusal, costs, risks, and conditions for seeking help that each action entails. Describing constraints as leaving no room at all would erase people's actual efforts to find support, supplement materials, negotiate deadlines, or reorganize relations.

The pressure of a differentiation position often comes not only from one relation carrying too much weight, but from multiple high-weight relations making demands in different directions. Returning home to care for one's father is one concrete instance of these conflicting pulls: if taking leave actually results in a deduction from pay, this affects rent and debt, while staying in the city may change relatives' judgments of responsibility. This cannot be reduced either to filial duty versus its neglect or to a choice about income. Different responsibilities, materials, and time conditions make simultaneous demands on action. Conflict occurs between these concrete conditions, not only

within a person's mind: ill parents require care, while the workplace requires punctual attendance; after illness, rest is needed, while debt deadlines demand uninterrupted income; a better job is elsewhere, while a child's school admission requires continuity in materials. The attendance and ceremonial cash gifts required for local weddings and funerals may also conflict with rent, debt, and spending on children in urban life. Local relations are not false, and urban pressures are not excuses. Once adopted by different participants, both may produce consequences for the person concerned. Arranging the conflict into a neat either-or choice instead occludes why it is difficult for someone to meet both sides' conditions at once.

The situation of caring for one's father also shows that constraints are never equal. Differences in the feasibility of waiting, substitutability, and the allocation of responsibility make apparently similar choices difficult in different ways: someone may be able to bear a temporary loss of income but not a break in the continuity of materials; they may refuse a local demand yet face long-term responses within family relations. Whether support is available also gives constraint domains different forms. Some people can obtain relatives' help, supplement materials, or negotiate deadlines; others lack these conditions. Similar designations therefore need not yield the same range of action. Even when support is obtained, it may change the difficulty of the action concerned if it carries new deadlines or demands for a response. The analysis of differentiation positions seeks precisely to identify the concrete relations from which these differences arise, rather than attribute them to personal qualities.

A differentiation position indicates how action space is constituted through concrete relations. Analysis should show how these demands constrain one another, without drawing conclusions on the person's behalf, passing moral judgment on them, or deciding in advance which choice should be accepted. When conditions loosen, support increases, or materials are corrected or supplemented, the constraint domain can widen. When deadlines approach, responsibilities increase, or access to channels is refused, it may narrow again. These differences of degree cannot be omitted. Institutional materials and the facts of everyday life may also be inconsistent. Someone may have lived in a city for years, with their children, work, and neighborhood relations all local, yet a specific review may still fail to include all these lived relations if the relevant materials are incomplete. This does not mean life outside the materials does not exist. It means the two have not yet been adopted equally, and conflict thereby enters the position.

Conflict analysis must preserve the inconsistency itself. The deadlines of different relations need not be synchronized, participants need not interpret the same material alike, and people able to provide support need not appear at the same moment. Only by refusing to flatten these differences can we avoid writing a differentiation position as a chart that automatically supplies answers. Sometimes conflict does not require an immediate, once-and-for-all choice. Instead, it forces the person concerned to delay, compromise, or reallocate responsibilities between different deadlines. These practices also carry consequences and may be evaluated by later participants as irresponsible, lacking stability, or disregarding personal ties and feelings. If later participants incorporate the person's way of handling matters, delays, compromises, or allocation of responsibility into subsequent evaluations, the results of this handling may become materials for the next round of positioning.

VI. Occlusion: How High-Weight Designations Deprive Other Differences of a Voice

Specific users can make judgment more efficient by using designations to identify a set of relations quickly; the basis of explanation remains the differences extracted and the processes through which

they are handled. The designation "worker" can identify labor, wages, employment, domination, and risk. If someone treats this designation as the whole explanation, family responsibilities, local reputation, bodily illness and pain, debt structures, and children's school admission may be downweighted. Likewise, "unfilial," "untrustworthy," or "nonlocal" may be used to organize judgment quickly, but cannot exhaust the object's position. Designations and images neither occlude nor speak on their own, nor do occluded differences actively fall silent. Occlusion forms only when specific participants, institutions, or analysts adopt a designation, ignore some materials, or relegate some relations to a secondary place. The relevant differences consequently lose the opportunity to be raised separately, checked, and assigned weight. Only by tracing these ways of handling matters can responsibility be placed back with the people actually handling relations.

For example, quickly treating someone who has not repaid on time as "untrustworthy" may help handle credit risk. But if debt following illness, workplace injuries, unpaid wages, and gaps in protection are not examined, judgment may retain only part of the consequences. Calling someone who does not return home "unfilial" may also occlude labor discipline, debt deadlines, bodily conditions, and the pressures of city life. What a designation captures and what it downweights must both be questioned concretely. A designation can still offer partial identification; the point is that it must not overstep its authority. The analysis of differentiation positions does not require designations to be abolished. It does require that no designation end judgment or replace checking materials and relations before differences with substantial consequences have been examined. Once analysts raise downweighted materials and relations again, the understanding of the existing position may change. This is one condition for avoiding dangerous compression. Beyond everyday designations, analysis may also close off the examination of materials too quickly with an image. If analysts retain only the most conspicuous relation and stop asking about downweighted responsibilities, medical history, local exchanges, or institutional conditions, they may reproduce occlusion. Re-examination does not elevate all differences to equal weight. It refuses to let a designation serve as an exemption from the responsibility to compare.

VII. Lock-In: Why Some People Cannot Move

Differentiation positions form lock-in structures, but lock-in is not a natural fate. A nonlocal worker knows the job is poor yet finds it hard to leave. This may be because continuity of social insurance, a child's school admission, rent, debt, and family spending interlock. A debtor who has been ill needs rest but faces interrupted income, repayment deadlines, borrowing from relatives, medical bills, and job arrangements. A teacher in a county town who wants to leave may also be constrained by a post on the authorized staffing establishment, a mortgage, age, family expectations, and local respectability. Lock-in forms when multiple relations, materials, deadlines, responsibilities, and past records support one another during the same period. No single relation, viewed alone, need suffice to keep someone in place. When several relations demand handling simultaneously, the costs of change may rise and existing channels become harder to adjust. Explanations invoking weakness of character, insufficient will, or moral failure once again occlude the conditions through which the position forms.

Lock-in can loosen. New supportive relations, corrected or supplemented materials, adjusted deadlines, release from debt, changes in work arrangements, or renewed checks of past evaluations may release one of the interlocking connections. They may also open a way to adjust how a matter is handled where no adjustment had previously been possible. They do not guarantee immediate improvement, but show that lock-in should be understood as a relational structure, not a fixed attribute of the object. "Why some people cannot move" should begin as a question about consequences for action: which channels would action cost them, who must bear what costs, which

materials will be adopted anew, which support has not yet appeared, and whether existing arrangements can be corrected or replaced. The lock-in structure can then be examined without erasing the conditions for change. Lock-in also varies in strength. Some relations merely tighten simultaneously for a time; others are harder to loosen because of past records, long-term deadlines, and responsibilities involving multiple parties. Calling all of them "unable to move" erases differences. More precisely, we should identify which connections interlock most tightly and where entry points for adjustment have already appeared.

The stability of differentiation positions also has levels. Some pulls operate only within a single procedure; others persist for years through family, work, and local relations; still others are preserved across generations as historical indices. A difference must not be written as an unchangeable underlying entity merely because it lasts longer. We must examine which carriers still preserve it, which people can still extract it, and whether new relations give it different operative weight.

VIII. Write-Back Sedimentation: How Past Positioning Becomes New Differentiating Units

A person is not read from scratch every time. Past determinations, records, evaluations, or exchanges may be preserved as materials for the next judgment. A court record classifying someone as untrustworthy may enter later judgments of credit, and a school's evaluation of a "problem student" may affect teachers' understanding of new behavior. Local reputation may be raised again in wedding and funeral exchanges, borrowing, and cooperation; a workplace's impression of "instability" may affect leave, promotion, and task assignments. Write-back sedimentation does not mean that records, files, reputations, or memories punish or decide on their own. Only when specific participants adopt a record anew, judge on its basis, and connect that judgment to consequences can past positioning exert force in the present. This distinction allows analysis to ask who retrieved what materials, whether the conditions under which they formed were checked, and whether supplementation, presenting a defense, or correction was permitted.

When earlier handling leaves records or evaluations that have already been preserved as differences capable of being extracted again in the future, past positioning may become a differentiating unit for the next judgment. But it should not be treated as forever correct. An instance of taking leave, an argument, an unpaid debt, or an absence from a wedding or funeral may all be reinterpreted when entering later judgment. The background, deadlines, allocation of responsibility, and subsequent changes associated with each may all affect how it is adopted. Without renewed checking, sedimentation may prematurely fix an old judgment as a new position. Write-back sedimentation explains the temporal dimension of positions without making history continue automatically. Relations, materials, and participants still mediate between preservation and renewed adoption. These mediating steps may deepen an existing position or provide an entry point for correction. Analysis of differentiation positions must therefore track both how sedimentation forms and when it may be reevaluated. Examining write-back sedimentation also requires more than checking whether materials exist. We must examine how they are preserved, when they are retrieved, whether their original background is retained, and whether the person concerned can offer a different account. These conditions determine whether past positioning is mechanically repeated or checked anew and adopted differently.

IX. Positional Displacement: A Differentiation Position Is Not Fate

Differentiation positions have a sedimentary character, but are not fate. Writing position as fixed fate would nail people into an ontologized classification, repeating the very error this chapter seeks to avoid. Positional displacement does not occur because a name suddenly changes, nor does will bring it about from nothing. It occurs after changes in the relational conditions that originally produced consequences: the conditions of distinction extraction, weight structures, relational connections, and write-back mechanisms. Personal wishes can prompt action to seek materials, negotiate relations, or obtain support. Wishes themselves, however, cannot replace social-insurance conditions, debt handling, institutional recognition and adoption, divisions of work among relatives, or renewed checks of past records.

The loosening of relations may come with burdens that remain. Paying off debt may change credit relations, but even when debt is reduced, past credit records may remain, or pressures of care and housing may persist. Completing household-registration or residential materials may change the channels for a child's school admission, but completing those materials may open only an entry point into a procedure. New channels may also bring new responsibilities and reviews, causing previously unadopted materials to enter judgment anew.

Nor need positional displacement proceed at the same pace in different relations. Recognition of a workplace injury and the handling of compensation may change the allocation of responsibility; changed divisions of work within a family may leave new care responsibilities. Sustained local exchanges may weaken old evaluations, but whether those evaluations have actually lost their support must still be examined. Acceptance by a new community may reduce some of the force of existing positioning, yet new recognition may not have formed in another relation. The reorganization of relations involving national communities or local society may also preserve old memories. These are only possible paths; they do not promise that every change will bring improvement.

Positional displacement should therefore not be written as an inspirational story, nor is it impossible. Analysis must establish which relations are loosening, which materials have been supplied, which responsibilities have been reallocated, which old evaluations have lost support, and which new relations are beginning to recognize the object. It must also identify whether these changes have actually connected to consequences. Changes need not be synchronized. A position may move only partially and slowly, bringing new risks; a change in one relation need not immediately release the remaining constraints, nor do the original differences necessarily disappear after displacement. Analysis of displacement cannot exaggerate one change of conditions into a complete reversal at a stroke. It must record together the constraints that loosen, those that remain, and those newly generated. The possibility of positional displacement does not guarantee improvement. Its core requirement is that analysts not naturalize an existing position and keep checking whether the conditions that formed it have changed. Displacement must be understood within the reconfiguration of multiple weights; partial changes must not be used to conceal continuing constraints.

X. From Differentiation Position to Latent Differentiation Space

Differentiation position concerns relations among differences that have already entered comparison, weight assignment, and positioning in the present. Yet a position may still carry differences that have not been extracted or adopted within current relations. Medical history, ancestral origin, accent, language, old debts, old evaluations, and past relations, when not yet extracted in the current relational field, may still be retrieved anew under conditions involving

insurance, workplace injuries, courtship and marriage, progression to the next level of schooling, borrowing, partnerships, weddings and funerals, or migration. Differences that have been extracted but carry lower weight must not be conflated with these unextracted reserves. These differences not currently adopted should not be described as a mysterious essence, nor directly treated as known components of the current position. Whether they gain weight depends on whether paths of preservation exist, whether triggering conditions arise, who can present or adopt the relevant materials, and whether they can connect to new consequences. Acknowledging the boundaries of current positioning permits neither cramming every possibility that has not yet appeared into present explanation nor concluding that these differences carry no weight simply because they have not become apparent.

There is a clear distinction between relations already compared and positioned within differentiation space and reserves of differences not yet extracted within the current relational field. The former explain how actual positions are formed; the latter indicate that conditions capable of altering a position may still lie beyond it. Neither can replace the other. Differences not yet adopted in current relations cannot be treated directly as causes of present consequences. Differentiation position can explain how a current position forms; for differences not yet apparent, we can only retain the conditions under which they may be extracted anew.

Chapter 12. Latent Differentiation Space: How Differences Not Yet Extracted Are Preserved and Triggered, and How They Change Positions

A person's differentiation position presents only the relations among differences that have already entered comparison, weight assignment, and positioning in the present. Differences not extracted at this moment do not thereby disappear. A medical history someone has left behind, care and disputes still remembered by a family, materials scattered across institutions, and evaluations sustained among local acquaintances may all become matters at issue again in later concrete relations. Latent differentiation space is neither mysticism nor another mysterious space.

What latent differentiation space preserves is a reserve of differences not yet extracted within the current relational field and not yet brought into the current differentiation space. These differences have not yet produced the direct consequences now at hand, but neither are they a blank with no conditions that can be investigated and nothing that can be explained. Whether they become relevant later depends on who preserved the materials, what event raises a demand for them, which people or institutions retrieve and use them, and whether they can connect to concrete consequences.

This distinction does not divide a person into a present part and a mysterious inner part. Differentiation space and differentiation position concern differences already extracted, assigned weight, and brought into positioning in the present. Latent differentiation space concerns a structure of differences that have not yet entered the current chain of consequences but may be extracted anew after conditions change. Only through preservation, triggering, extraction, weight assignment, and connection can latent differences potentially reorganize an existing differentiation position.

Differences in latent differentiation space must first have traceable conditions in reality. Bodily traces, existing records, relational memories, institutional materials, language habits, or local exchanges can show that a difference already had a basis for preservation or connection. Whether the current event triggers it is a separate question: what demands have specific people made, have materials been retrieved, and can the difference connect to eligibility, responsibility, risk, or consequences for action? Real differences not yet apparent, an event's actual triggering of differences, and an analyst's selection of what to trace on the basis of materials are three levels that must not be conflated.

Analysts have no authority to add contents to latent differentiation space. If a factor has never been raised, and no conditions of preservation, relations carrying it, events that might trigger it, or other supporting materials can be found, it cannot be listed on an ad hoc basis as a cause not yet manifested just to maintain the original conclusion. Newly obtained archival records, objections from those concerned, traces of preservation, or materials from the handling of a matter can support the formation of a new judgment; they cannot be retrospectively presented as grounds the analyst had already possessed. Latent differentiation space retains the real conditions under which differences can be extracted; it is not a storeroom for protecting an original explanation.

I. What Has Become Apparent Is Not Everything That Exists

The pressures a person currently faces often make the few relations carrying the greatest weight seem to be their entire situation. Take a nonlocal worker living with his child in a city. In the

specific circumstances where local requirements for the relevant year and admission category call for continuity of social insurance and rental documentation, he may currently be pulled by the demands of his child's school admission, continuity of social insurance, the filing of rental records, wages, and debt. A change of job may affect the contribution arrangements this family currently uses; maintaining stable employment also involves wage income, whose level affects rent and debt repayment. Together, these relations constitute his differentiation position at this moment. The pulls already apparent seem complete because family members, the workplace, the school, the landlord, creditors, or relevant institutions are currently using them. It is through people arranging work, residence, school admission, and debt repayment on this basis that these differences connect to present restrictions on action.

Yet this position does not encompass all the differences that can be extracted concerning him. An old injury may already be causing persistent bodily pain and limitations on movement, and may have left scattered medical materials. Past relations involving land back home may be remembered in different ways by relatives, neighbors, or acquaintances in the village. Among the various materials needed for the child's progression to the next level of schooling, some also remain scattered across social-insurance records, rental filings, school records, and proof of residence, without having been retrieved together at the current stage. Their not being treated as the most urgent grounds for current arrangements does not mean they do not exist in reality. The pain is real, as are the memories back home and the materials not yet retrieved. It is only within the specific procedures or judgments that have not yet drawn on them that they have not entered the chain of consequences; they must not be flattened onto the same plane as differences currently producing high-weight consequences.

In analyzing the current situation, therefore, we must neither treat differences not yet apparent as consequences already in effect nor exclude them from understanding simply because the procedures currently in view have not yet retrieved them. We need to ask which relations are currently handling a person's position and which preserved differences these relations have not yet extracted. The former explain the current differentiation position; the latter constitute the scope that latent differentiation space is meant to trace. Making this distinction helps analysts avoid mistaking a temporary state for a settled fate. The position currently formed through the pulls of school admission, social insurance, rent, and debt does exert force, but it may be rearranged by a determination of work-related injury, a review for progression to the next level of schooling, or a land dispute. Change occurs when differences that had not entered current handling are extracted and connected to consequences; it does not arise from nothing.

For family members, this distinction has very practical significance. Choosing not to change jobs for now in order to maintain income does not mean that the old injury, relations back home, or materials for progression to the next level of schooling that have not yet been submitted have ceased to be relevant. These differences simply have not been brought to the foreground by the current arrangements. If different events arise later, differences previously downweighted or not yet retrieved may call for time, money, care, and residence to be rearranged. When this happens, and whether consequences can result, still depend on specific conditions.

Nor may analysts, simply because they know that latent differences exist, declare the current position impossible to judge. What current relations are already handling, and which consequences have already fallen on whom, can still be traced clearly. Analysts also need to identify differences not yet brought into these forms of handling and the conditions still missing if those differences are to become relevant.

II. Latent Differentiation Space Is Not a Hidden Essence, but a Structure of Differences That Can Be Extracted

Some differences have been retained through bodily conditions, records, relational memories, institutional materials, language habits, or local reputation, and may therefore be used again in later concrete relations. Latent differentiation space presents precisely this structure of extractable differences. It is neither a hidden essence nor a reference to a true self already concealed within a person; still less does it portray family, locality, or community as a deep force that determines everything from behind the scenes.

The same difference does not automatically have the same meaning in different relations. Before a doctor, an old injury may be a bodily condition; at the workplace, it may be used to describe a prior medical history; in a determination of work-related injury, it may become material for judging responsibility; before family members, it may concern rest, care, and income. Different participants retrieve and handle the same materials in light of different questions. These interpretations are not governed from within by some hidden essence.

Records, too, are only one path by which differences are preserved. Someone has kept diagnostic reports, leave forms, or payment receipts; a school retains enrollment and academic records; relatives remember accounts of care and the division of a family household; local acquaintances retain impressions of exchanges. All these may give later participants materials to inquire into and accounts to compare. Yet bodily pain, accents, work habits, and everyday exchanges that have not been entered into an archive may also be raised anew by specific people in subsequent events.

Latent differentiation space is therefore neither a comprehensive archive nor a collection of every possibility. Analysts need to ask whether a difference has a path of preservation, whether what is preserved suffices for identification, whether someone later has the authority or motive to retrieve it, and whether it can gain recognition once retrieved. Without these conditions, a supposedly latent difference cannot simply be written up as an influence about to occur.

Write-back sedimentation and latent differentiation space must not be conflated either. If past breaches of trust, disciplinary sanctions, or evaluations have already entered subsequent everyday judgments, they already form part of the current differentiation position. Only when those materials are temporarily unused in present relations but may be retrieved anew in a new event do they also raise the question of latent differentiation space. These are not two mutually isolated sets of contents, but a distinction between different states of handling the same differences.

III. Preservation: Why Silent Differences Have Not Disappeared

For silent differences to become apparent again later, someone or some concrete relation must first preserve them. The nonlocal worker's old injury may persist as bodily pain and restricted movement; it may also leave traces in medical consultations, examinations, the application of medicated plasters, taking leave, or what coworkers saw and heard. Ordinarily, no one may have gathered and organized these materials, but they have not disappeared from the reach of later inquiry simply because the person concerned continues moving goods and going to work.

The materials needed for a child's progression to the next level of schooling are usually kept separately by different institutions and family members, and vary with the specific verification requirements for the locality, relevant year, and category of progression. Social-insurance contributions are recorded by the relevant institutional system, rental filings arise from rental relations, and proof of residence, school-enrollment information, school notices, and report cards each have their holders or custodial institutions. Ordinarily, these materials are scattered

formalities and documents. Only when eligibility is checked may the school or relevant reviewers ask parents to bring specified materials, according to the relevant category, into a single process of judgment.

Past relations concerning land back home are often maintained through a different kind of relation of preservation. Old land deeds may be kept by family members, accounts given when the household was divided may be remembered by those who took part, and village officials, neighbors, or relatives have their own impressions of who cared for the elderly and who received more land. These accounts are not necessarily consistent, nor do they necessarily have equal efficacy. Precisely for this reason, later disputes involve who can testify, what materials can be used, and which accounts are accepted.

Preservation does not mean something has already entered current judgment. Bodily pain can be endured by the person concerned, documents can sit at home, relatives' memories can go unmentioned for years, and local evaluations may persist only intermittently among acquaintances. Finding a path of preservation does not entitle analysts to write it up as having already determined present eligibility, responsibility, or circumstances.

Nor does preservation guarantee that something can be extracted later. Materials may be lost, memories may contradict one another, holders may be unwilling to provide them, institutions may not recognize them, and people able to explain what happened may be unable to come forward. Whether a latent difference can survive and whether it suffices for use in later relations are two questions requiring separate judgments. Even if materials remain, only part of their contents may be identifiable, or they may be useful only in one kind of handling. Describing preservation as stable efficacy overlooks the differences between those who preserve, how things are kept, and the rules of use. These differences are precisely the preconditions for whether what is preserved can later translate into consequences.

IV. Triggering: What Conditions Give Silent Differences Greater Weight

Silent differences do not gain weight for no reason. Usually, only when a new event raises a question of eligibility, responsibility, risk, resources, trust, or handling do participants have reason to look back for materials not previously used. A worker from elsewhere may ordinarily experience an old injury only as pain. If he is injured again while moving goods, work is interrupted, his workplace demands an explanation, and his family also needs money for medicine and treatment, a determination of work-related injury may then bring his prior medical history into judgments of responsibility.

In determining whether an injury is work-related, the people involved need to ask when the injury occurred, whether it was connected with work, whether there had been similar injuries before, who was present, and what labor the workplace had assigned. This determination does not result from the old injury acting on its own. Only when medical materials, leave records, coworkers' testimony, and the person's own account are brought into the same procedure can they move from previously silent differences into matters open to discussion.

Reviews for progression to the next level of schooling also change the relevance of materials. Ordinarily, social-insurance records, rental filings, proof of residence, and report cards exist separately; they need not constitute the family's most immediate pressure every day. Only when an application deadline approaches, when a school begins verification under the relevant local category of progression, or when continuity is broken in an item of documentation actually

required by the applicable rules, do parents, schools, and relevant reviewers bring these materials into judgments about eligibility for progression and whether the family stays or leaves.

When land back home is to be requisitioned, compensation distributed, a road built, or land holdings readjusted, relatives may again discuss who received what in the past, who cared for the elderly, and who took which side in a dispute. These past relations are raised anew because of the present distribution of benefits. Whether they gain weight in that distribution still depends on the specific participants, the existing materials, local rules, and how mediation proceeds.

Triggering is only a condition for making a difference relevant again, not a guarantee that the consequences are settled. Material required for submission may gain recognition, or it may fail to change the outcome because the evidence is insufficient, procedural requirements are not met, or other differences carry greater weight. To write triggering as an inevitable reversal of position is to mistake an analysis of conditions for prophecy. Even after the event occurs, those involved may retrieve only some of the materials or understand them differently from one another. Triggering opens the possibility of renewed handling; it does not remove the checks, disputes, and further handling that follow.

V. Extraction: Who Is Requiring These Differences to Become Visible

Doctors, workplace managers, those involved in determining work-related injuries, family members, creditors, schoolteachers, reviewers, relatives, or local mediators each face different questions. It is for these reasons that they request, retrieve, ask about, or use particular materials concerning differences. Latent differences are extracted by these concrete actors in relations; they do not surface by themselves. Only by specifying who extracts them can we understand why they become visible at this moment.

The extraction of an old injury makes this especially clear. A doctor asks about prior injuries to judge a bodily condition. A workplace may use this information to argue that the injury is not recent, and participants in a determination of work-related injury may use it to discuss responsibility. Family members, meanwhile, may demand rest, care, or compensation in light of pain and income. When different people retrieve the same old injury, it enters different judgments and cannot be compressed into a single meaning.

In the relevant procedures for progression to the next level of schooling, schools use enrollment information and grades. In accordance with local requirements for the relevant year and category of progression, the relevant reviewers check household registration, the parents' or guardians' social-insurance records, and proof of residence to judge eligibility. Whether a landlord cooperates with the filing of rental records affects whether parents can submit the corresponding materials; information on social-insurance contributions retained by the workplace is part of the labor relation. Who holds the materials, who presents them, and under what procedure they are used change how they subsequently work; the materials do not gain weight on their own.

When past land relations are extracted, relatives may raise care, financial contributions, or old agreements in dividing property. Village officials may ask about earlier accounts during mediation, neighbors may provide what they saw and heard, and courts will handle the matter according to evidentiary and procedural requirements. Local reputation can influence how others regard someone's account, but it cannot replace judgments about materials within a concrete procedure. The efficacy of different relations of handling must not be conflated in the account.

Extraction carries the questions and purposes of specific participants; it must not be understood as the self-manifestation of abstract differences. Analysts need to ask who raised the question, who

holds the materials, who can testify, who has authority to decide whether materials can be adopted, and what rules constrain the final handling. Together these steps determine whether a latent difference can move from silence into visibility. Even if the same group of people all see the materials, their responsibilities and available actions differ, so the materials need not acquire the same weight. Distinguishing the extractors, purposes of use, and authority over handling prevents multiple relations from being compressed into the simple statement that "a difference was seen."

VI. Weight Assignment and Connection: How Differences Really Gain Weight

The extraction of a difference does not mean that it has already changed a position. Only when it is assigned operative weight and connected to consequences can it change the position; when it acquires higher weight, it may exert a stronger pull. Someone noticing or asking about an old injury may lead only to a medical consultation or a conversation. Only when the relevant people connect it to such consequences as responsibility for a work-related injury, compensation, life during a work stoppage, debt deadlines, and family income will it exert a stronger pull on the differentiation position.

The same medical materials may lead to different outcomes. If the handling process confirms that the injury is work-related and meets the applicable conditions, the person concerned may gain access to treatment, rest, or compensation. If the relevant parties determine that it is a pre-existing illness or an injury the person already had, the conditions for a claim may be weakened. A prior medical history alone cannot rule out a work-related injury: judgment still requires checking the specific injury's relation to work and the applicable conditions. What changes the position here is how specific people use materials under rules and connect their judgment to consequences that can be carried out, not the materials themselves.

The same applies to parents' or guardians' records of continuity of social insurance, rental filings, and proof of residence relevant to a child's application for school admission. In circumstances where local requirements for the relevant year and admission category call for these materials, their being seen does not mean that whether the family stays or leaves has already been decided. Only when schools and the relevant review procedures connect the materials to eligibility for progression to the next level of schooling, schools in the relevant catchment area, residential arrangements, freedom to change jobs, or rental costs can they acquire higher weight. At the same time, the different materials affect one another: if one is incomplete, the efficacy of other conditions may be restricted.

If relatives' mention of past land relations remains mere casual conversation, it need not change anyone's actual position. Only when these relations are used in judgments about compensation distribution, responsibility for elder care, cooperation among relatives, or future wedding and funeral exchanges, and gain recognition from those concerned, can old affairs become pressures in present relations. Even then, other materials, rules, or relations may counteract them.

Weight is not a fixed numerical value naturally carried by materials. It depends on who is handling what question now, which rules permit use, whether the materials are credible, and whether they can connect to eligibility, responsibility, risk, evaluation, handling, or channels. To write "being seen" directly as "determining the result" skips the most important processes of weight assignment and connection.

VII. Reorganization: How Latent Differences Change Differentiation Positions

Only after latent differences have been preserved, triggered, extracted, and connected to consequences can they potentially reorganize a differentiation position already formed. Reorganization can appear on five interrelated but noninterchangeable levels. This does not mean that all prior relations disappear. At the level of the dominant pull, the nonlocal worker was originally pulled mainly by the demands of his child's school admission, social insurance, rent, and debt. Only after specific people retrieve the old injury in determining whether it is work-related and, on the basis of materials, rules, and judgments of responsibility, connect it to compensation, life during a work stoppage, or income arrangements can bodily condition, the contract, circumstances at the scene, and workplace responsibility temporarily exert a stronger pull.

Connection chains may also be rewritten. Only when medical personnel, the workplace, and relevant procedures separately handle medical records, matters concerning leave, and what was seen and heard at the scene may these materials connect to income, debt, and family care. Which links are actually adopted still depends on those handling them, the materials, and the rules. One cannot assume in advance that every chain will form.

The constraint domain may widen or narrow. When a work-related injury is recognized, the relevant handling may open channels for medical treatment, rest, or compensation. When it is not recognized, stoppage of work, debt, family expenses, and pain may jointly compress choices. Lock-in structures may also form, strengthen, or loosen. If debt after illness, the job, medical expenses, loans from relatives, and care arrangements interlock in concrete handling, leaving the existing arrangements becomes more difficult. Only if those involved confirm new channels for treatment, compensation, or support may the previously interlocking restrictions partly loosen. These consequences need not take shape all at once: they may appear first in income arrangements and gradually affect residence, work, and the division of labor within the family.

Write-back sedimentation, in turn, may leave materials available for later retrieval. A determination of work-related injury, a refusal of compensation, an outcome concerning progression to the next level of schooling, a failed attempt to borrow money, or a local dispute may be recorded, remembered, or made into a basis for later evaluations by those concerned. When these contents are already exerting continuing effects in new relations, they become part of the current differentiation position. Only if temporarily unused may they again constitute a later latent differentiation space. There is no fixed moment for this transition: the same outcome of handling may already be operative in some relations while remaining unextracted material in others. One must therefore return to the concrete relational field to judge whether it is actually producing consequences or merely retaining the conditions for later use.

Passing a review for the child's progression to the next level of schooling may reinforce the family's arrangements for remaining in the city. If the review runs into obstacles, social insurance, renting, work, education, and the division of labor between spouses may all be renegotiated. Once a dispute over land back home arises, the city job has not been canceled, but responsibilities among relatives, past relations, and local evaluations may re-enter certain decisions. None of the five layers is an action accomplished by latent differences themselves. Only when specific people, institutions, or procedures extract materials, assign weight, and connect them to consequences can reorganization occur partially, after a delay, or temporarily; other conditions may also counteract it.

VIII. Why Present Explanations Can Misjudge Future Changes

Looking only at high-weight differences already apparent in the present makes it easy to treat a temporarily formed position as a complete one. When explaining through a class image, analysts may first see labor, wages, resources, employment, and risk, yet underestimate the possibility that ethnicity, locality, language, religion, medical history, and past relations will gain weight in a new relational field. This does not deny the partial explanatory power formed through the relevant real differentiating units and the processes of extracting, assigning weight to, connecting, and compressing them. That capacity does not belong to the class image, nor can it turn class theory into an ordinary limited model.

Different explanations bring different differences into the foreground. State-centered explanations often first handle registration, household registration, law, eligibility, and administrative boundaries, while real communities, responsibilities among relatives, local memory, and long-term interaction may recede. Market-centered explanations readily foreground prices, credit, contracts, and purchasing power, while family care, risks after illness, local reputation, and ceremonial cash-gift exchanges may be underestimated. If one starts from the family, blood ties, support for elderly relatives, familial affection, and respectability may in turn occlude labor discipline, institutional eligibility, debt deadlines, and personal boundaries. All these explanations can grasp some present differences, but they cannot treat what has now been extracted as a permanent account of a person's entire position.

Analysis of latent differentiation space needs to bring temporal conditions back into judgment. Differences not currently used need not remain unimportant forever. Yet before there are paths of preservation, triggering events, extractors, and connections to consequences, they cannot be treated in advance as causes already operating. Remaining sensitive to future change does not mean including every possibility in an explanation. It means investigating which differences already have traceable ways of being preserved, what events may make them relevant, who would raise them in those events, and which concrete consequences they might connect to if adopted. Only by following these conditions can future changes be placed back within concrete relational processes for examination, so that judgments neither close themselves off nor expand arbitrarily.

Within these limits, analysts need to distinguish between "not yet apparent" and "completely unknown." For the former, at least some traceable relations of preservation can be identified: what kinds of materials remain where, who still knows the relevant course of events, and what kinds of events might prompt questions about them. The latter lacks sufficient grounds and cannot be filled with arbitrary guesses merely because the theory acknowledges that society contains differences not yet extracted. Analysts who merely add to the list of possibilities without explaining the sources of materials, the conditions of events, and those who use the materials only expand the zone of vagueness; they do not increase explanatory power. In analyzing latent differentiation space, analysts must accept stricter limits on themselves: they must not treat unpreserved accounts as evidence, procedures that have not yet occurred as completed handling, or claims that someone might make as already recognized.

Current explanations must acknowledge the limits of their field of view, yet must not use those limits as a reason to abandon judgment. Analysts must explain what has already been extracted, what has not, and which materials, events, and people handling them may force a judgment to be revised. This is not an omniscient perspective; it simply helps analysts avoid treating a compressed view of the present as the whole of reality. At the same time, the existence of latent differences must not be used to downplay current high-weight differences. Once a child's school admission, employment income, rent, debt, or bodily condition is exerting specific pressure, it should be

analyzed according to how it has entered into consequences. The original judgment needs to be questioned when new materials or a new relational field emerge; it should not be declared invalid in advance.

IX. Latent Differentiation Space Does Not Predict Everything

Analyzing latent differentiation space does not mean predicting everything that will happen, nor saying that all differences are equally likely to gain weight. Whether latent differences can gain weight depends on the existence of a path of preservation, a triggering relational field, an actor carrying out distinction extraction, and the possibility of connecting to consequences. The absence of any one of these four conditions may still prevent an existing difference from entering actual judgment.

For example, even if an old injury exists, without medical materials, coworkers' observations, leave records, or accounts of the work site that can explain the injury, the relevant procedures may have difficulty handling it as a recognized difference bearing on responsibility. The pain is not denied. But whether it can connect to compensation, responsibility, or channels for rest remains constrained by materials and rules.

The same applies to past local relations. Someone may remember an earlier division of a household, care, or wedding and funeral exchanges. But if accounts contradict one another, there are no materials, no one is willing to testify, or the institution handling the matter does not adopt the relevant contents, these relations may not enter judgments of reputation, property division, or mediation on a stable basis. Things that once happened cannot simply be equated with differences that can be effectively extracted.

Even a person's long-term care for the elderly, help to relatives, financial contributions, or labor may fail to become qualifying grounds in property division, elder care, or family evaluations because records, recognition, or explanations from key participants are missing. This does not mean the contribution did not exist. It means that preservation, extraction, weight assignment, and connection still separate its existence from its consequences.

The analysis of latent differentiation space opposes substituting uncertainty for concrete analysis, but does not oppose uncertainty itself. It is not an all-purpose explanation: latent differences, even when they exist, do not necessarily gain weight. Only by specifying conditions, participants, materials, and consequences one by one can we know which silent differences may be relevant and which are merely empty possibilities conjured up in imagination.

This limit also applies to analysts' own judgments. A difference cannot be placed on the same level as those already assigned high weight in the present merely because it might be useful later. Nor can one presume that material will certainly be submitted and adopted merely because it was once preserved. Analysts should leave room for possibilities, but those possibilities must have conditions that can be checked.

Analysis of latent differentiation space should therefore both retain the possibility of future revision and explain when an inference cannot be drawn. Requiring every judgment about change to return to concrete materials, specific participants, and concrete consequences for examination does not mean making the theory conservative. This examination does not require advance knowledge of every later event. It requires that, when proposing possible changes, one clearly state which existing relation supplies the grounds, which kind of retrievable material supports them, and which necessary conditions have yet to appear. Precisely because some conditions are still absent,

analysts must describe possible reorganization separately from reorganization that has already occurred.

X. From Latent Differentiation Space to the Network

The question of latent differentiation space thus comes down to network paths of preservation, transmission, and renewed extraction. Such tracing first requires relations of preservation to be made concrete. Medical history may be retained in bodily conditions and medical materials, but medical records are materials that medical personnel create through diagnosis and treatment, keep, and provide when rules permit; they are not inherently powerful. Past relations may be sustained through relatives' memories and local reputation, but relatives' memories are accounts preserved by different people through exchanges, disputes, care, and recounting; they are not a single unchanging archive. Ceremonial cash-gift exchanges may be preserved by participants or left in relevant records. People may also carry language and ancestral origin into later relations through family forms of address, school life, household registration, surnames, or family narratives.

Analysis of latent differentiation space therefore cannot stop at saying "there are still differences not yet apparent." It must examine who preserves differences and what people can actually find out, distinguishing who holds the materials, whether they can be found, whether they are complete, and who later checks them. Materials and relations do not flow on their own. Someone keeps documents, someone remembers exchanges, someone demands proof, someone provides an account, and someone checks and adopts materials under rules. Only through these concrete acts of handling can previously silent differences be brought back into visibility. The stability, retrievability, and degree of recognition of different forms of preservation also lead to different later results.

Transmission, too, is not a line that extends automatically. One must establish what event raises a demand for retrieval, who can present the corresponding contents, and who can make them visible. Parents preparing materials for their child's progression to the next level of schooling may submit proof to a school. A person involved in the handling of a work-related injury may provide diagnostic reports, leave documents, or an account of the scene according to procedure. Relatives in a land dispute may also bring old land deeds, past accounts, or neighbors' observations into negotiation. Each such introduction requires specific people to act and may be interrupted by insufficient materials, procedural restrictions, or others' lack of cooperation.

After renewed extraction, differences must still undergo identification and use. Which rules assign them weight, what kind of handling adopts which materials, which consequences a difference may involve, and on whom those consequences fall must all be clearly distinguished in concrete handling. Schools, workplaces, those handling medical matters, relatives, and other people concerned do not face the same question or handle the same material under the same rules. Some need only establish a fact, some must judge eligibility, some must allocate responsibility, and some are concerned with how family life bears the consequences. These different purposes of handling bring the same difference into different relational positions.

Only by putting strict requirements concerning conditions, materials, participants, and actual consequences into practice can differences not yet apparent be understood as a relational structure open to inquiry, rather than some mysterious background. Nor does the analyst face a secret list waiting to be uncovered. Analysis of this kind can remain sensitive to future changes, neither treating the position at hand as a closed conclusion nor portraying the future through imagination detached from conditions. Paths of preservation, transmission, and renewed extraction do allow

differences beyond the current position to remain available for possible handling anew, but these paths themselves guarantee no result in advance.

Chapter 13. Nodes: How Differences Are Preserved, Given Definite Form, Extracted, and Passed On

Nodes include more than medical records, records of wedding and funeral exchanges, and archives. Bodies, language, genealogies, school disciplinary sanctions, platform accounts, local reputation, religious rituals, records of work-related injury, proof of residence, and kinship terms can all perform relay functions through which differences are preserved, certified, extracted, and passed on. This does not mean abstract dots on a network diagram, nor does it mean subsuming every phenomenon under some unified organization. If a person, institution, record, object, bodily trace, or relational position allows a difference to remain in a certain form and gives it a chance to be raised, identified, recognized, or passed on later, it may perform the function of a node within concrete relations.

I. Differences Do Not Preserve Themselves

That some differences have not entered into consequences at present does not mean they have disappeared. A worker has endured a bout of pain after a lower-back injury; someone has been absent from a wedding or funeral; an exchange between relatives has not been clearly explained. If these matters can still be raised later, saying only that "someone remembers" cannot explain this. Memory is only one form of preservation; bodily traces, medical records, receipts, past relations, and local reputation also leave different kinds of evidence. For a difference to exert an effect again in the future, it must first be preserved at some node.

But being preserved does not mean having already taken effect. Bodily pain can remain in the person's sensations, medical personnel can enter diagnoses and expenses into medical records, and relatives may remember an exchange at a wedding or funeral. Whether these differences can later enter judgments concerning borrowing money, taking leave, compensation, care, or courtship and marriage still depends on who raises them, who recognizes them, and the relational conditions at the time.

Preservation begins when specific people and procedures leave certain experiences, materials, or traces where they can be accessed again later, rather than depositing them in a static warehouse. If preserved differences are to enter later relations, someone must also continue to keep them, interpret them, or bring them up when needed. Without these concrete relational processes, traces may exist yet still be unable to enter later judgments about qualifications, responsibilities, or mutual aid.

Different forms of preservation lead to different ways of raising differences later; how differences are preserved also affects what can be asked about them afterward. Bodily traces can remind a person of continuing pain without necessarily explaining how the injury occurred. A diagnostic certificate can explain a particular examination and judgment without necessarily covering care, interrupted income, and pressure from relatives. Relatives' memories can retain everyday exchanges, yet their emphases may vary with the narrator. Preservation therefore comprises a series of actions through which experiences, borne by different carriers, acquire conditions under which they can still be accessed later.

II. What Is a Node?

A node is a social relay position at which differentiating units can be preserved, given definite form, and filtered, their extraction can be authorized, and they can be passed on.

A node is first of all a social relay position, not the equivalent of an actor with clear boundaries and a unified will. The node granularity used in an analysis must be determined by the research question, actual acts of handling, differences in authority, and the need to trace responsibility. If the question is simply whether material can move from a school into another educational procedure, the school can provisionally be treated as a broadly defined node. If the question turns to who refuses supplementation, who can correct records, or who has authority to grant certification, the analysis must break the node down into specific staff, rules, materials, and procedural positions.

Readers must also be able to check the actual choice of node granularity against the materials. Analysts should explain why they initially treat a particular institution as a broadly defined node, and which question of causation or responsibility leads them to break it down into personnel, rules, materials, authority, and procedures. If different ways of breaking it down lead to different judgments about consequences, the coarser node cannot be treated as the sole natural unit. Differences between levels should be retained, and the reasons for stopping further subdivision explained.

Nor can nodes be subdivided without limit. If an internal division of labor does not change how materials are extracted, passed on, judged, or connected to consequences, and does not affect authority or responsibility, further subdivision may add no explanatory power. Conversely, whenever different positions within the same institution have different authority over information, capacities for review, scopes of implementation, or responsibilities for correction, merging them into a single point will occlude causal linkage. Where subdivision stops must be determined by actual differences within the event, not by organizational names or the analyst's preferences.

People can perform node functions within relations. Relatives remember who borrowed money without repaying it; teachers record disciplinary sanctions or comments under school rules; village elders preserve past relations through wedding and funeral exchanges. Memory, qualifications, rules, and relational positions together enable differences to remain; individuals do not act out of nothing. Families, schools, hospitals, workplaces, courts, local police stations, neighborhoods, villages, and clans can likewise become nodes. These are not entities of the same kind: some handle materials through formal procedures, some preserve relations through long-term exchanges, and some accommodate several practices at once. Calling them all nodes means that they can allow differences to remain within relations, be identified, and possibly proceed into consequences, while specific staff within institutions handle materials and relations according to their responsibilities.

IOUs, contracts, records of wedding and funeral exchanges, household registration booklets, medical records, disciplinary notices, award certificates, chat logs, genealogies, stone inscriptions, and land deeds can likewise carry node functions. Documents, databases, accounts, and objects allow materials to be preserved, formatted, and retrieved later, but they are not acting subjects that can judge, authorize, refuse, or bear responsibility on their own. They carry differences already written down, registered, kept, or repeatedly used by people, and provide a form when someone retrieves them through the relevant authority or relations. Where causation and responsibility are involved, analysis must still identify who creates the records, who sets or enforces the rules, who has authority to access information, and who passes it on and handles it. Only by using the concept

of the node in this way can analysis retain the organizational dimension at a general level without mistaking an organization, database, or document for a unified acting subject.

A relational field concerns how specific participants extract differences, assign them weight, and connect them within current relations; nodes concern the forms in which those differences are preserved, who can present them under what authority or through what relations, and whether they may be passed on. The two must not be conflated. Bodies can retain pain from injuries and limitations on movement; language can maintain differences through repeated forms of address; records and objects can carry relations already inscribed in them. Yet when these carriers are seen, how they are interpreted, and whether they suffice to connect to consequences still require us to return to the people, rules, and relations through which they are used. People can remember, present, and interpret; documents and objects only carry traces already inscribed in them.

Thus, treating the node as a relay position does not merge people, institutions, language, and objects into one kind of actor; it serves to trace how differences are relayed. The name of a node merely marks a relay position that needs to be investigated. It cannot replace a concrete account of recorders, custodians, procedures, materials, and participants in relations. Only by separating these elements can we avoid mistaking functional shorthand for action by the node itself.

III. Nodes Preserve Conditions for Consequences, Not Materials

A medical record lists a name, a medical condition, examinations, medication, and expenses. Viewed only on paper, it looks like a piece of material; in matters concerning leave, reimbursement, determinations of work-related injury, family care, and the allocation of expenses, however, people raise the bodily differences it contains as grounds for judgment. What it leaves is a condition that may later enter judgments within relations, rather than the sheet of paper itself. Records of wedding and funeral exchanges work in the same way. The names and amounts are more than sums of money: they may also allow people to ask later who came, who did not, who gave more, who gave less, and who should give a gift in return. The record reaches no conclusion on anyone's behalf, but provides a form through which specific participants in relations can interpret past exchanges again.

Household registration, residence permits, social insurance records, and rental filings turn part of the facts of lived experience into materials available for judgments of eligibility. An IOU, in turn, fixes part of a debt relation as evidence that relatives, mediators, or court personnel can examine. The consequences to which different forms of preservation can connect are not the same. Nodes preserve differentiating units that can change future judgments within relations, not static materials.

Preservation does not guarantee that something will exert an effect again in the future. The material may not be raised at all; once raised, it may not be recognized; or it may be effective only within a particular relation. Preserving a difference merely leaves conditions for its possible entry into later judgments; it does not predetermine the result. The conditions retained through preservation may also weaken, be occluded, or fail to connect to a procedure because the material is incomplete. Whether the difference can continue to exert an effect depends on whether the later relational field needs it and whether the people concerned can raise and recognize it. To judge whether material performs a node function, one cannot ask only whether it exists; one must also ask who created it, where it is kept, who can access it, and in what relations it will be invoked. The same medical record, IOU, or other record may remain silent in one relational field and become an important basis for judgment in another.

Conditions for consequences are not consequences themselves. They are only a traceable basis on which later judgments may become possible. The same experience may also leave bodily traces, formal records, and memories within relations at the same time. These cannot replace one another, but may supplement one another on different occasions. Those who later grant recognition must still judge according to the materials, authority, and relations at that time.

IV. Giving Definite Form and Filtering: Reshaping the Forms of Recognition

Preservation never means moving reality unchanged into a record. When a worker says his lower back hurts, this is first a bodily sensation: when it began, where it hurts, whether an old injury has recurred, and what goods he has moved. These sensations are real and can also have effects in informal relations such as family care, but they do not automatically take the form of the medical records or diagnostic materials discussed here. Through consultation, examination, diagnosis, medication, and billing procedures, medical personnel record part of this experience as medical-record entries, examination results, diagnostic labels, treatment records, and expense receipts.

This handling gives pain a form that can be retrieved later. Workplace staff, insurance personnel, staff determining work-related injury, court personnel, or family members may raise different questions on this basis within their respective procedures and relations. Giving definite form does not mean that the original sensations were unreal; it means that the form available for their later recognition has changed. Yet preserving some parts also excludes others. A hospital's records of diagnoses, examinations, medication, and expenses may not record who took leave to stay at the bedside, who borrowed money to pay the bills, or who lost work opportunities because of caregiving. Medical records may bring pain into institutional judgment, but pressure from family care need not thereby acquire the same position. This also affects how rebuttals can be made: what has not been written down often requires other witnesses, supplementary materials, or explanation through other relations. Categories already recorded may also be reviewed, corrected, or set alongside other records.

Imagine looking through a record of wedding and funeral exchanges. At the event there may have been hardship, awkwardness, silence, lateness, gifts sent through others, and explanations offered afterward. If the recorder writes down names and amounts, this compresses these complex exchanges into a portion that can be entered in an account, compared, and used to seek gifts in return. The record is not false, yet it cannot preserve the full texture of the occasion. Records of wedding and funeral exchanges usually note attendance and amounts; they do not necessarily preserve why someone could not afford a gift, could not attend, or could only send a gift through someone else. The consequences of filtering also vary with the relations involved. Concrete explanations may still fill in an account of the hardships left unexplained in the wedding and funeral record.

Similar handling occurs in the formal process of giving differences definite form in institutional settings. Household-registration and residence materials are formed through concrete processes of registration, verification, and safekeeping. A person may have lived in a city for a long time, be known to neighbors, have children in school, and hold stable employment. When these facts of life enter institutional judgment, they often have to pass through such forms as household registration, residence permits, rental filings, social-insurance contributions, or supporting documents. Institutional personnel's recognition of these forms under rules does not amount to recognition of life in its entirety. School personnel record grades, attendance, disciplinary sanctions, and comments under rules, yet may not be able to record all of a student's fears, family difficulties,

exclusion by peers, and silence. When courts handle contracts, evidence, amounts, deadlines, and responsibility, they too may be unable to incorporate emotional debts, shame, and long-term mutual assistance into the same form.

Filtering is more than technical deletion. Who records, under what categories, which materials are retained, and what standards of proof are used all affect who will later recognize differences, how they will do so, and what consequences the differences can enter. Recording personnel, institutional procedures, classification rules, and interpretive authority within relations jointly determine which differences can remain and which experiences will lack a place in future judgments. Giving definite form also makes experiences comparable: names, times, amounts, diagnostic labels, categories, and requirements of proof allow experiences otherwise difficult to set alongside one another to be compared within a procedure, while also downweighting the parts that cannot be entered in these formats. Giving definite form makes it possible to raise differences, but does not mean fully reproducing experiences as records. It enables later comparison while leaving room for supplementation, explanation, or dispute. It concerns the forms of recognition, rather than a final verdict on reality.

A node is not a neutral place of preservation. It both preserves social facts and changes the forms in which social facts can be recognized. Filtering produces unequal conditions of recognition. The fact that something is excluded does not mean it never happened; it is harder to identify in subsequent procedures and may be difficult to bring into a form that can later be recognized. Loss of voice refers to insufficient conditions for recognition, not to facts never having occurred, still less to their being erased from reality. For example, sons and daughters who have provided long-term care for elders without leaving documents, witnesses, or recognition within the family may struggle to raise that care when family property is divided. Workers who have worked with injuries over a long period without medical records, coworkers' testimony, or materials concerning work-related injury may also struggle to bring bodily differences into compensation judgments. Pressure from care that medical records do not record may still be remembered among family members; conversely, categories that have been recorded may be questioned, supplemented, or understood anew. What is retained at different places of preservation can be mutually supplementary, but can also conflict.

V. Institutions and Relations: Formal and Informal Nodes

While a worker is moving goods, their lower-back injury worsens. The worker endures it for several days, then goes to the hospital because of the pain. Through consultation, examination, diagnosis, and billing, medical personnel enter part of this bodily experience into medical records and the system. It is the records left by treatment that make it possible for different people later to raise these materials under their respective procedures. Workplace staff may use the diagnostic certificate as a basis for leave or job assignments, while personnel involved in insurance relations may use the medical history for risk judgments. Staff determining work-related injury may address questions of responsibility using medical records, records of old injuries, accounts of the scene, and witness materials together. Family members may discuss care and how to share the burden on the basis of expenses and treatment records. These acts of handling are not one and the same judgment, nor do they necessarily lead to the same consequence.

Hospitals, schools, courts, local police stations, neighborhoods, workplaces, and state registration systems can perform formal node functions because their personnel, rules, procedures, and documents can convert certain facts of life into forms that institutions can handle. Once grades, sanctions, judgments, attendance, proof of residence, and public security records enter these

procedures, they are usually easier to raise in matters of progression to the next level of schooling, compensation, punishment, welfare, job assignments, and judgments of eligibility.

But formal forms are not inherently more truthful. A worker saying they are in pain does not mean the relevant procedure will necessarily recognize a work-related injury. Someone who has lived in a city for many years may still be unable to enter channels for school admission, medical care, or welfare if their materials are incomplete. Formal nodes handle only differences that rules can identify; they do not encompass all the facts of life. Their efficacy comes from traceable duties and procedures and still requires personnel to operate them, interpret rules, and verify materials. Whether materials are complete and how procedures work both change the outcome of recognition. Traceability and reproducibility make formal materials easier to use across relations between strangers, but do not thereby negate the reality of experiences outside procedures, nor can they guarantee that every item of formal material suffices to determine a result.

Outside formal procedures, differences also continue to be retained and recalled. Wedding and funeral exchanges are often not one-off events. Who came, who was absent, who sent a gift through someone else, and who still showed up despite hardship may be remembered by family members, relatives, and neighbors, or written into records of exchanges. Years later, when borrowing, partnership, courtship and marriage, or elder care are at issue, people may raise these past relations again and interpret them differently. Relatives' memories of care, household division, borrowing, weddings, and funerals may not enter formal archives, yet may be raised again in family allocations, mediation, and everyday cooperation. Neighborhood reputation does not preserve itself or judge on its own either. It continues through people's recounting, confirmation, questioning, and circulation of accounts over repeated exchanges, affecting whether others are willing to lend money, enter a partnership, or introduce a prospective spouse. Even requests for help, quarrels, rumors, screenshots, and public statements in group chats may be retained, forwarded, or brought up again by group members. Whether they are effective depends on who preserves them, who raises them, who believes them, and what relations recognize them, not on any inherent evidential force in the records themselves.

Informal nodes need not pass through institutional procedures to produce consequences, but neither are they necessarily truthful or effective. In societies of acquaintances, local communities, and everyday cooperation, they may command strong recognition; they may also be questioned, forgotten, or rejected by formal procedures. The same memory of a relation may elicit opposite judgments among different participants. Whether it can enter into consequences depends on which concrete people raise it, on what occasion, whether anyone responds, and how past relations affect trust. Informal preservation may retain processes of interaction, care, personal bonds, and past explanations that official forms could not accommodate. That is its advantage. Its limits are equally clear: memories may be dispersed, reputation may be disputed, and accounts may carry unequal efficacy depending on relational position. It must not be romanticized as truth untainted by institutions, nor dismissed as ineffective because it lacks a formal format.

VI. Objects and Documents as Relay Carriers

Objects and documents are often seen as passive materials, yet they can carry differences already inscribed in them and leave relay positions for later retrieval. An IOU fixes the amount, relation, and agreement involved in a loan as evidence. Only when someone brings it before relatives or submits it to a court can it become part of later judgment. A contract is concluded by participants, and specific clauses set out responsibilities, rights, times for performance, and the consequences of breach. A contract is not text that enforces accountability by itself. Only when parties, mediators,

institutional staff, or court personnel invoke it according to procedure can a relation enter handling in a particular form. Medical records retain diagnoses and the course of treatment; records of wedding and funeral exchanges retain attendance, absence, and ceremonial cash-gift amounts. They can make it easier for later participants to raise past differences, but cannot replace interpretation, recognition, and judgments about consequences.

Household registration booklets, residence permits, social insurance records, and rental filings fix some of people's relations to places, institutions, and qualifications. Genealogies, stone inscriptions, land deeds, and place names may also retain relations across generations and community memory. Objects and documents carry differences; they are not acting subjects capable of judging, preserving, authorizing, or passing things on by themselves. Through them, specific people can also extend the traceability of relations. A loan, an episode of diagnosis and treatment, or an instance of attendance might otherwise become difficult to raise again once the event has ended. Through writing, safekeeping, and repeated use, part of it can be brought into new settings later. Documents and objects can be preserved, copied, carried, and displayed. Only through such uses do specific people carry differences beyond the time and place of the original event and connect them to new relations and procedures. These uses carry forward differences that have already been handled; objects and documents do not interpret or decide on people's behalf.

VII. Authority to Extract Differences at Nodes: Who Can Make the Past Take Effect Again?

Preserving differences does not mean that anyone can retrieve them at any time. Consider medical records kept by a medical institution. Different people raise relevant contents for purposes of treatment, insurance, leave, compensation, or care, under their respective authority and within the corresponding procedures and relations. Who may access which materials, who is qualified to cite them, and who can bring them into judgment are distinct questions. Likewise, even if records of wedding and funeral exchanges are kept within a family or clan, this does not mean everyone can bring them out at will. Raising them while preparing a wedding or funeral may serve to arrange exchanges; raising them when borrowing money may serve to judge relations; raising them when dividing property may turn the issue into one of weighing past contributions and shortfalls. Whose account can be heard still depends on family and local relations and the specific conditions of recognition at that time.

Relevant personnel may retrieve records of school disciplinary sanctions when evaluating candidates for honors, considering progression to the next level of schooling, arranging transfers between schools, or meeting with parents. Memories among relatives may also be raised anew when property is divided, elder care arranged, or money borrowed. These cases show that authority, procedures, relational position, and interpretive authority always stand between the existence of material or memory and its gaining recognition. The power of nodes therefore lies not only in preserving differences, but also in determining just who can make differences take effect again.

Saying that nodes determine who can make differences take effect is, in essence, functional shorthand. In fact, institutions that keep materials, staff who retrieve documents under their authority, family members who can raise past relations, and personnel qualified to recognize or refuse materials jointly produce an uneven distribution of authority to extract differences. Preservation and authorization to extract must be clearly separated: a preserved difference is not one that everyone has authority to raise, still less one guaranteed recognition once raised. This uneven authority to extract differences also means that the past is not equally available to everyone

in reality. Even when they know the past facts, people who lack channels for safekeeping, standing to provide proof, or relational support may struggle to make those facts part of public judgment.

Authority to extract differences is also constrained by rules of custody, privacy restrictions, family authority, institutional duties, and requirements of proof. Knowing about a difference does not automatically entitle someone to disclose or invoke it; being able to raise it does not mean being able to decide its meaning. Only by separating, one by one, access to materials, retrieval of materials, presenting materials publicly, connecting materials to judgment, and who bears the consequences can we avoid compressing preservation, retrieval, recognition, and consequences into a single automatic process. Different procedures allocate these steps to different people. Memories that seem easier to raise within family relations may require other forms of proof in formal procedures.

VIII. The Recasting of the Same Difference at Different Nodes

The same difference may be given different meanings when it enters different nodes. At a hospital, medical personnel handle a medical history as material for treatment. In some matters concerning insurance, leave, or job positions, if specific rules permit or require it, that history may be examined alongside other materials. Within a family, it may be connected to care and the allocation of expenses; in courtship and marriage, it may be interpreted as a future risk. Both the authority to extract differences and the consequences vary from node to node.

Similarly, an old debt may mean a demand for repayment to a creditor, an evaluation of reliability within kin relations, material concerning responsibility in court proceedings, or reputation in local exchanges. An accent may bring closeness among people from the same home region, be marked as a risk in an exclusionary environment, become a difference mocked at school, or carry belonging within a national community. The meaning of a difference does not change on its own. Different institutional personnel, participants in relations, classification rules, and recognition procedures each extract different parts of a difference and connect them to different consequences. Nor is the meaning of a preserved difference fixed: which node it enters, who raises it, and on what grounds all affect the direction of consequences.

Different forms of preservation may also conflict. Pain not entered into medical records may be difficult for staff determining work-related injury to recognize on that basis. Relatives may remember care, yet if legal materials are insufficient, that care may struggle to acquire the same efficacy when property is divided. Local reputation may retain an absence without retaining its reason, and the person's explanation may be downweighted. What is called strength or weakness is not the result of nodes themselves contending with one another or adjudicating. Personnel, institutions, rules, and recognition relations in the current relational field give certain forms of preservation greater efficacy. In institutional procedures, medical records, contracts, household registration, judgments, and school enrollment records are usually more readily recognized. In societies of acquaintances, relatives' past relations, records of wedding and funeral exchanges, and local reputation may also affect borrowing, courtship and marriage, cooperation, and the division of elder-care responsibilities.

Formal and informal forms are not inherently more or less truthful than one another. Whether a form of preservation acquires efficacy depends on who handles it in the current relational field, what the rules recognize, what participants believe, and whether it can corroborate and be corroborated by other materials. Formal materials may not be valued among acquaintances, while informal memories may be supplemented and heard under particular circumstances. When recognition relations change, the efficacy of the same form of preservation changes too.

Recognition on one occasion cannot justify the conclusion that it is effective everywhere, still less can nonrecognition on one occasion be understood to mean that the difference can never be raised again. Giving the same difference new definite forms at different nodes may produce tensions in its consequences: medical records may emphasize diagnosis, family discussion care, workplace arrangements job assignments, and local reputation reliability. Different participants handle differences according to different relational requirements; this is not simply a repetition of the same fact. Analyzing differences in relaying by setting them side by side is not equivalent to tracing a complete relational chain.

IX. Node Failure and the Entry Point to Relational Chains

Nodes can preserve differences, and missing links in preservation also produce consequences. A worker who has worked with an injury for a long time but has no medical records, witnesses, or materials concerning work-related injury may struggle to raise bodily differences in compensation procedures. The worker felt pain, endured it, and kept working; these facts have not disappeared, but lack a stable form through which to enter institutional recognition. Likewise, sons and daughters who have provided long-term care for elders without records or recognition from family members may struggle to explain their contributions when property is divided. People from elsewhere who have lived in a city for years but have incomplete materials may still face eligibility barriers to school admission, medical care, and welfare. Help given to relatives that no one remembers may also be difficult to turn into credit within relations when borrowing later. Differences not preserved at a node first of all lack a basis on which they can be preserved, retrieved, or raised, and can very easily lose their voice in future judgments.

Yet having a form of preservation does not mean that it will necessarily be effective. Nodes unrecognized in the current relational field may likewise leave differences without a voice. Relatives' remembering care does not mean that court personnel will recognize it in the same way; a patient's saying that he is in pain does not mean that the workplace will acknowledge that the injury is related to work, nor that the social insurance administrative department will necessarily determine it to be a work-related injury. Neighbors' knowledge of long-term residence does not mean that school procedures will recognize eligibility for enrollment; preserving dealings in a record of wedding and funeral exchanges does not mean that institutions will recognize rights on that basis. Node failure may also arise from a mismatch between the form of preservation and current requirements: materials have been retained but do not meet a procedure's format; a witness exists but does not appear when needed; family members know what happened but lack sufficient relational standing to have it heard.

These two situations must not be conflated as the same kind of loss of voice. Where no form has been left that can be accessed later, the problem is a lack of a basis that can be preserved, retrieved, or presented. Where a form already exists but cannot connect to current conditions of recognition, the materials may fail to meet procedural requirements, or the person presenting them may lack the authority or relational standing to gain a hearing. Although both may temporarily make it difficult for differences to produce consequences, failure of recognition may arise either because no accessible form was left or because the form, authority, or relations associated with what was left cannot connect to present judgment. Loss of voice must not be understood as meaning that the event never happened, still less represented as meaning that the difference is forever ineffective. It means that at a particular moment, in a particular relation, and under a particular set of conditions of recognition, a difference failed to enter consequences in an adequate form. After conditions change, materials are supplemented, a witness appears, or relations are reorganized, a difference previously difficult to present may still be seen again. Remedying loss of voice therefore cannot

mean indiscriminately putting every experience into the same kind of record. It requires addressing preservation, form, and the conditions for gaining a hearing separately, examining what materials, testimony, accounts of relations, or procedural supplementation can give previously downplayed differences another opportunity to be heard.

When a difference preserved in a node meets the relevant conditions and is presented, it may leave its initial node and be passed on to other positions where handling takes place. This does not mean that all preserved differences automatically spread outward. Bodily differences in medical records may be used by workplace personnel in arranging leave, or by people involved in insurance relations as materials concerning risk. Household-registration materials may be presented separately in different school and hospital procedures; records of wedding and funeral exchanges may also be reinterpreted in borrowing and in courtship and marriage. Once specific people bring materials, memories, or traces left at one node into another, subsequent participants handle them anew according to new relations, rules, and materials.

Such passing on is precisely the starting point for differences to enter relational-chain analysis. When a lower-back injury moves from a medical record into leave arrangements, and then into attendance records, performance evaluations, wage income, debt pressure, or relatives' evaluations, the bodily difference extends beyond the hospital as a single node across multiple positions where handling takes place. If cash-gift figures in a record of wedding and funeral exchanges are retrieved as grounds for a judgment about borrowing money and thereby enter evaluations of credit and family, a path of handling likewise unfolds. Yet a node is only a starting point for preservation and extraction; it cannot guarantee that a complete chain will subsequently form, still less that consequences are already settled. Traceable passing on, recasting, or review of differences between distinguishable positions where handling takes place already falls within the observational scope of relational chains. Whether the chain can continue smoothly, or instead meets refusal or interruption, still depends on subsequent recipients' authority, rules, and standards of recognition.

Chapter 14. Relational Chains: How Differences Are Recast, Branch, Flow Back, and Produce Consequences between Nodes

I. Relational Chains Are Not Personal Connections

Nodes can preserve, give definite form to, filter, authorize the extraction of, and pass on differentiating units, leaving materials for subsequent handling as well. Materials of various kinds do not necessarily spread outward on their own. In concrete life and institutional practice, however, relevant people can bring medical records, records of wedding and funeral exchanges, household-registration materials, IOUs, or records of school disciplinary sanctions into new situations of handling under the corresponding procedures and authority. Recipients then examine the materials according to their rules and standards of recognition, either maintaining existing determinations or interpreting them anew; relational chains extend outward in this way. A network is not a matter of who knows whom.

Two people knowing each other does not necessarily form a relational chain, nor does one person's contact with another mean that differences have already entered a traceable path of handling. A relational chain is a social path formed when differentiating units undergo traceable extraction, passing on, recasting, recognition, refusal, weight assignment, or handling between distinguishable positions where handling takes place; it may take the form of continuation, cutoff, redirection, delay, maintenance, or failure. This means that whenever, through specific people and procedures, differences undergo such handling between distinguishable positions where handling takes place, they can enter relational-chain analysis. Reinterpretation, renewed weight assignment, and connection to new consequences are possible subsequent forms, not fixed prerequisites for a relational chain to form.

Thus, to judge whether a relation forms a chain, we cannot merely count contacts or ask whether the two parties know each other well. If a worker's lower-back injury remains only in the body, without yet undergoing handling between distinguishable positions where handling takes place, it does not constitute a relational chain. Once it is entered into a medical record, submitted to the workplace for leave, converted into an attendance record, and brought to bear on performance evaluation, with further effects on household income and debt pressure, this bodily difference unfolds across different positions where handling takes place as a concrete path. The same holds for a cash gift at a wedding or funeral. If this exchange has not yet undergone traceable handling between distinguishable positions where handling takes place, it too has not yet formed a chain. If it is entered in a record of wedding and funeral exchanges, later retrieved as grounds for a judgment about borrowing money, and that judgment also enters credit evaluation, with further effects on courtship and marriage, partnerships, elder care, and local respectability, the path of handling extends from there.

This does not mean that a chain must run its entire course before it counts as having formed. Once a difference undergoes traceable passing on, recognition, maintenance, or refusal between positions of handling, a path has already opened up. What must be asked is: which difference was retained, which material was brought out, who treated it as a basis for judgment in what procedure, and whether this judgment really changed later arrangements.

Relational chains rest on nodes: without nodes preserving differences, there can be no stable passing on. Without medical records, a lower-back injury has difficulty entering workplace leave

arrangements and the determination of work-related injury; without records of wedding and funeral exchanges, those exchanges are difficult to retrieve accurately many years later. Preservation, giving definite form, filtering, and authorization to extract at nodes are still undertaken by hospital personnel, workplace managers, family members, record custodians, and institutional procedures. Relational chains trace when materials already handled are brought elsewhere, and whether the new handlers have authority to incorporate them into judgment. Moving materials from one place to another cannot be understood merely as moving them unchanged; we must also investigate how recipients handle them. Handling can maintain an existing interpretation, or may retain only the part that a procedure can recognize. Neither reinterpretation nor a change in weight necessarily occurs with every transfer.

A relational chain is not a fixed thing. Its continuity comes from traceable processes of handling, not from a naturally inevitable impetus. Each link must be traced back to specific recipients, available materials, rules, authority, and standards of recognition. If any one is missing, differences may not be able to continue entering into consequences; relations do not naturally extend through contact alone. When the next processing position does not recognize the material, the chain can be said to be cut off there; when that position changes its interpretation, the chain may change direction.

Differences may also branch as they move. After extraction by different people and procedures, the same difference may enter a workplace, a family, a court, insurance relations, kin relations, and local reputation at the same time, forming several paths of consequences. Relational chains may also involve recirculation: consequences formed through handling at multiple nodes can, under particular conditions, return to the original object and change its differentiation position. If the results of a chain's operation are preserved by the corresponding nodes, they also sediment into new records, new reputation, and new evaluations, becoming materials available for renewed extraction later.

Relational chains concern the traceable handling and consequences of differences along connections, rather than connections themselves. This path is by no means an assembly line that invariably runs smoothly from beginning to end. The elements in the definition do not line up neatly: some materials are preserved for a long time, while others are refused as soon as they are extracted; some transfers bring new weight assignment, while others leave only records that have not yet taken effect. Maintaining an existing interpretation, encountering refusal upon review, or failing midway through handling are all real forms of relational-chain operation. If these differences in conditions are left out, relational chains will be mistaken for smooth channels without resistance.

II. How a Lower-Back Injury Leaves the Hospital Node

After injuring his lower back, a worker goes to a hospital. At the hospital node, this bodily difference is given definite form in medical records, examination results, diagnostic names, treatment records, and billing documents. At this point it remains primarily a matter of the body, treatment, and costs. Later, he may submit a medical certificate to his workplace to request leave. Workplace personnel judge whether to approve it, how to calculate its duration, and whether it affects job assignments on the basis of the employment contract, lawfully established rules, and specific materials. Medical records entering a workplace do not automatically produce a uniform decision on leave.

After leave enters attendance procedures, the lower-back injury is recast again. Under the attendance format used in this example, the attendance sheet records neither the degree of the

worker's pain nor who cares for him at home. Managers register only whether he is present at work, the number of days absent, and whether the formalities are complete, according to the rules. The lower-back injury is thus presented in the form of absence, days of leave, and a vacant job position.

In circumstances where attendance, performance, income, and the other stages are actually connected, this record proceeds into labor evaluation. Managers may assess his stability, cooperativeness, or labor efficiency on the basis of attendance, thereby converting the original bodily difference into labor evaluation. If his performance is rated low, his bonus falls, his job becomes unstable, and his income declines. At this point, the effects of the lower-back injury have already extended beyond the hospital into everyday expenses such as rent, spending on children, debt repayment, and the household budget.

When reduced income enters the network of debts and kinship relations, relatives may call him unreliable if repayment slows. Under the pressure of daily living, his wife may worry about the next rent payment, his parents may feel that he cannot send money home, and creditors may also begin pressing him. The bodily difference moves along the relational chain in this way, gradually turning into an evaluation of labor, an income problem, and judgments by relatives.

This process is not simply linear. The same medical-record materials may be brought into multiple nodes and read anew at the same time. In insurance relations, they may serve as a basis concerning medical history and risk; in the determination of work-related injury, the social insurance administrative department uses them to judge responsibility; in examination by a court, they serve as a basis for review; in family care, they involve who stays at the bedside, who pays, and who takes on housework; when evaluating him, relatives may describe the injury as "serious," or see the worker as "in poor health" or "a burden on the family."

Once medical records have been handed over, workplace managers follow leave procedures and attendance formats to handle what can be recorded and judged within the corresponding system. Procedures and forms constrain the forms that can be recorded; they do not make judgments on their own, nor does this handling automatically reconstruct the person's pain and family circumstances. Only by separating medical records, leave formalities, attendance categories, and performance evaluations can we distinguish how a lower-back injury affects income, care, and relatives' evaluations through concrete handling at each stage. Bringing materials out of the hospital does not mean that every subsequent setting will recognize the same interpretation. The lower-back-injury example shows that the body, documents, and evaluations belong to different levels: a diagnostic name can support leave without necessarily being sufficient to determine the outcome of a work-related injury determination; attendance results can affect performance evaluation without necessarily establishing the person's capacity for labor. Judgments at each position have their limits; only when connected do they form a traceable relational path.

III. How Cash Gifts Leave Weddings and Funerals

Wedding and funeral exchanges likewise form relational chains. When a household holds a funeral, relatives and neighbors arrive in succession, and cash gifts are entered in the exchange records. Many differences are also present that the records cannot accommodate: who came early to keep vigil, who had no money but helped with the work, who sent a gift through someone else, who was absent, and who left hurriedly after arriving. Records of wedding and funeral exchanges mainly retain names and amounts, giving definite form to a certain relation of closeness or distance and allowing exchanges to be compared and reciprocal returns to be sought. Yet they do not preserve the full details of the occasion.

Several years later, when a family needs to borrow money, local relatives or evaluators retrieve the record of wedding and funeral exchanges, and that exchange leaves the wedding or funeral setting to enter a judgment about borrowing. Those handling the matter consider whether both parties attended the occasion at the time, the cash-gift amount, whether gifts were reciprocated afterward, and whether the person can be relied upon when something happens. Here the gift is no longer only a matter of rites and customs; it becomes a basis for weighing credit and closeness or distance in relations. As judgments about borrowing enter credit evaluation, evaluators may recast someone who has repeatedly failed to attend, give gifts, or reciprocate them as "neglecting reciprocal dealings," "unreliable," or "not understanding social obligations." By contrast, someone who regularly shows up, gives gifts, and helps may be seen as reliable even when contributing little money. Credit evaluation then enters partnerships, courtship and marriage, elder care, and local respectability. These old records may affect who is willing to enter a partnership with the person, who is willing to introduce their child to that family, who is willing to step forward when elders need care, and whether local society allows the family to save face. As a cash-gift exchange moves along a relational chain, it gradually becomes credit, respectability, and eligibility for mutual assistance.

The unfolding of this path likewise depends on actual retrieval by the people concerned. Records of wedding and funeral exchanges do not naturally diffuse everywhere. When different people consult them for different purposes, however, they can branch across multiple positions of handling: they serve as a basis for credit in borrowing and partnerships, involve family evaluation in considerations of courtship and marriage, responsibility in the handling of elder care, whether someone understands proper conduct in clan evaluations, and the presence or absence of reciprocal dealings in matters of local face. Each setting draws on the same material according to its own rules and concerns, directing the difference toward different consequences.

When the records are brought out, borrowers, relatives, matchmakers, or local evaluators do not necessarily reach the same judgment, because they focus on different things. Some value the amount, others whether a person showed up, and still others consider the actual difficulties at the time. Precisely because handlers and grounds of judgment differ, cash gifts may be assigned different weights on different occasions. The original records provide material that can be drawn upon; they neither complete a credit judgment in advance for anyone nor naturally converge into a single verdict on character. Preserving differences of judgment among distinct subjects both avoids reducing local evaluation to a single will and leaves those concerned room to explain difficulties, add facts, or bring about changes in relations.

IV. Recasting, Amplification, and Distortion

Analysis of relational chains cannot merely trace transmission; it must also identify where materials are recast. When recipients reorganize materials and meanings according to the receiving conditions, interpretive rules, and standards of recognition at their nodes, differences are no longer merely moved unchanged elsewhere. Household-registration materials entering a school, for example, must pass through the handling required by enrollment eligibility rules. Take the same bodily difference: a lower-back injury is a treatment issue at the hospital; when it enters the workplace through the leave system, it is recast as a leave issue; attendance procedures handle it under their own standards, turning it into an issue of presence at work; at the performance stage it is organized into labor evaluation; connected to household income, it becomes a pressure on daily life; connected further to debt and relatives' evaluations, it involves credit, responsibility, and ability.

The changes in the meaning of cash gifts at different positions work in the same way. At a wedding or funeral, a cash gift is a matter of rites and customs and of showing up; entered into a record of wedding and funeral exchanges, it becomes a name and an amount; brought into borrowing relations through judgments of credit and relational closeness or distance, it becomes a credit judgment; in courtship and marriage, it becomes family evaluation; in elder care, responsibility and reciprocal dealings; in local society, respectability. Differences are handled as different things at different positions because handlers at nodes recast them according to receiving conditions and standards of recognition, rather than moving them unchanged.

This is not simple misunderstanding. Much recasting is a normal mode of handling in institutions and procedures of social exchange. At workplaces that actually use the corresponding attendance system, managers enter leave into attendance records according to the formalities; at schools that examine eligibility under regulations, reviewers enter materials into eligibility review according to procedure; when relatives and neighbors judge credit and respectability on the basis of wedding and funeral exchanges, the original records also enter new evaluations. Yet recasting changes the direction of differences: a treatment issue may become labor evaluation, an exchange governed by rites and customs may become a credit judgment, a fact of residence may become enrollment eligibility, and a debt may become an evaluation of character. Receiving nodes recast original differences as issues of leave, attendance, eligibility, credit, or responsibility through their own material formats, handling rules, and thresholds of recognition. Recasting is therefore not arbitrary renaming, nor should it be represented as an irreversible, one-way transformation. It may be challenged, supplemented, or corrected. The consequences of a new name still depend on who adopts it, to what extent, and whether other materials change the judgment.

When handlers at different nodes rename the same difference, they often also select what remains visible. These handlers are constrained by material formats, institutional rules, and conditions of judgment: leave formalities concern duration and proof; attendance concerns reporting for duty; performance concerns arrangements; household budgets concern income and expenditure. Every selection may downweight other contents. Relational chains do not only amplify differences; they also downweight them. Pain becomes nothing but absence in an attendance sheet. Someone may be in too much pain to sleep or walk and fear losing his job, yet none of this necessarily enters attendance records, which record only whether he reported for duty. Difficulties at weddings and funerals are also downweighted in records of those exchanges. Someone may have been absent for lack of money, illness, or being tied down by work; the exchange records retain only a blank or an amount.

Relational chains amplify the consequences of differences. When the corresponding conditions connect, an instance of leave that initially amounts to only a few days away from work may affect performance evaluation once entered in an attendance sheet. Performance then affects income, income bears on debt, and debt enters quarrels between spouses and relatives' evaluations. When relatives' evaluations enter local reputation, the original difference is no longer merely a few days of leave, but becomes a question of whether a person is stable, able to earn money, reliable, or a burden on the family. An absence from a wedding or funeral may be amplified along a similar path: at the time it was simply not attending; entered into the record of wedding and funeral exchanges, it becomes a blank; in a judgment about borrowing, it is understood as neglect of reciprocal dealings; entering local reputation, it becomes unreliability. Later it may also affect family evaluation in courtship and marriage, and judgments of cooperation risk in partnerships.

At these stages, relational chains also distort differences. Distortion does not mean that the person has some predetermined quality; rather, in handling and transmission, other meanings are assigned to the limits of records. A record of wedding and funeral exchanges, for example, retains

only names and amounts, so the fact that someone did not attend appears only as a blank. When the register is opened without other explanations, this blank may be interpreted directly as indifference. Similar leaps occur in other relations: an old injury may be interpreted as laziness, a small cash gift as disregard for personal bonds, a period of leave as instability, and silence as resentment.

Such amplification, downplaying, and distortion all arise from concrete ways of recording and limitations of interpretation. An attendance sheet records only absence; it does not itself occlude pain. A wedding and funeral register records only names and amounts; it does not itself judge someone to be indifferent. Analysis must bring material formats, personnel's judgments, and institutional rules into view together, distinguishing what the materials retain, what handlers extract, and what meanings evaluators assign. Only then can we avoid misrepresenting the limits of records as inevitable harm caused by some abstract chain acting on its own. What has been downplayed need not disappear forever. Family care, coworkers' testimony, supplementary medical records, explanations of exchanges, or new records may all bring previously uncounted circumstances back into judgment. Yet this re-entry still requires concrete channels; it cannot be described as differences regaining force on their own.

V. Branching: How One Difference Enters Multiple Chains

A difference often moves not along a single line but branches at multiple nodes. Branching occurs when different handlers can draw on the same material or related records. This shows an increase in processing positions, not automatic expansion by the difference itself. Different destinations may appear simultaneously or remain merely possible; multiple chains alongside one another do not mean that they lead to the same conclusion, or that every one will be followed to completion. Whether a difference enters consequence settings such as insurance, courts, family care, or local evaluation still depends on specific conditions such as authority, evidence, applications, and recognition.

After leaving the hospital node, a medical record may enter not only workplace leave arrangements but also insurance claims, determinations of work-related injury, examination by a court, family care, and relatives' evaluations. Sent to the workplace, it concerns leave approval and job assignments; entering insurance relations, it concerns risk assessment and the determination of insurance payment; determinations of work-related injury address the attribution of responsibility, while examination by a court may involve damages. Back within the family, it connects to the concrete division of care work and the bearing of costs. Relatives may use it to judge whether they need to help or to assess whether the person still has the capacity to work.

Similar branching occurs in cash-gift records and household-registration materials. A cash-gift record enters not only borrowing, but may also enter partnerships, courtship and marriage, elder care, clan evaluations, and local face: in partnerships it concerns credit; in courtship and marriage, family evaluation; in elder care, responsibility and reciprocal dealings; in clan evaluations, proper conduct; in local respectability, face. Within the scope in which corresponding procedures or relations actually adopt them, household-registration materials likewise branch. They can enter such domains as children's enrollment, medical care, renting, employment, welfare, and recognition in the city. One material-related problem may simultaneously affect a child's schooling, whether the family stays or leaves, job stability, and relatives' evaluations. Branching means that a relational chain is no longer a single line: the same difference is extracted separately at multiple nodes, forming multiple chains of consequences.

Branching shows that differences can enter multiple consequence settings, while cutoff shows that not all these settings will recognize them. The paths that branch off may affect one another. Spending on family care, for example, may affect debt arrangements, while debt materials may in turn be used by relatives or local evaluators to judge reliability. Such influence across chains still requires actual passing on and use; a possible association cannot simply be written as causation that has already occurred.

VI. Cutoff and Redirection: Why Differences Sometimes Fail to Get Through

Relational chains are not naturally unobstructed. Whether a difference can continue to be transmitted depends on whether the next node recognizes it and how that node interprets it. Cutoff is not an exception but one of the normal mechanisms of relational chains. When the next position of handling does not recognize the materials, the corresponding path is cut off; when it recasts the difference, the chain changes direction. Cutoff and redirection make especially clear that consequences are not inevitable. Workplaces, insurers, courts, relatives, or local evaluators may all refuse to recognize a difference because materials are insufficient, rules are not met, or interpretations differ. Nonrecognition at one position, however, does not mean that all other paths are interrupted along with it.

In concrete handling, if a workplace reviews submitted medical records and decides not to approve leave, the leave chain is cut off. Workplace personnel may consider the diagnostic certificate inadequate, or judge that the condition does not warrant such a long period of leave. The lower-back injury has then been entered in the certificate issued by the hospital, and the certificate has been submitted to workplace review, yet it has failed to connect to subsequent arrangements for approved leave. If the workplace records the leave as unauthorized absence, the chain does not simply break off but changes direction. This handling does not mean that such a classification is necessarily legally valid, but it directs the injury away from arrangements for approved leave and into a chain of discipline and punishment.

Likewise, in insurance relations, if reviewers apply the relevant terms and refuse recognition on the ground that an old injury does not meet the conditions for payment, the claims chain is cut off. If coworkers do not come forward to testify in a work-related injury determination, this may obstruct clarification of the circumstances at the scene and put the chain of responsibility for work-related injury at risk of cutoff. Yet the concrete determination must still consider materials from the scene and other verification results together. If no one consults the record of wedding and funeral exchanges, local reputation may temporarily exert no effect. If an absence is not remembered, or is remembered but not interpreted as a breach of propriety, it will not enter borrowing, courtship and marriage, and partnerships along this particular path of evaluation as a breach of propriety. This does not deny the possible existence of other records or everyday impressions.

If a key elder rejects a particular interpretation, a cash-gift chain may change direction: what could have been interpreted as hardship may be described as aloofness; what could have been interpreted as sending a gift through someone else may be described as failing to attend. If an IOU cannot establish a debt, the debt chain may break off; if no one recognizes relatives' memories, past relations may likewise be unable to be passed on.

Even if material continues to circulate, new naming brings differences into another set of judgments and acts of handling rather than simply extending the original route. Analysis of cutoff and redirection must therefore explain the procedural and material conditions under which refusal, supplementary documentation, changes to records, and reevaluation each occur. Cutoff does not

necessarily mean a difference has no consequences at all. After a procedure rejects certain materials, they may still be raised again within the family, among relatives, or in another institutional procedure; others stop temporarily because no one preserves or recognizes them. Analysis should distinguish nonrecognition at one point from failure to take effect in every setting, avoiding the expansion of a local judgment into an overall conclusion.

VII. Recirculation in the Reverse Direction: How Chains Change Differentiation Positions

Relational chains do not spread outward without limit. Consequences formed through concrete handling can return to the object and change its differentiation position. At the same time, if the results left by earlier handling at different nodes are preserved in attendance records, evaluations, debt records, reputation, or family memory, and later retrieved and used anew by concrete handlers, this process also constitutes the continuation and recirculation of consequences. It is not a chain returning to the object on its own. Changes in differentiation position are products of handling within concrete relations, not the automatic manifestation of an object's inherent identity.

Take the lower-back injury. It moves from medical records into the workplace, attendance, performance, income, debts, and relatives' evaluations, then finally returns to the worker and changes his range of action: whether he can continue working, take leave, repay his debts, or maintain respectability before relatives will all be affected. At the same time, this also changes his lock-in structure. Bodily pain, falling income, demands for debt repayment, household expenses, and workplace evaluations lock into one another, making it harder for him to leave his present circumstances.

When the relevant records are preserved and later drawn upon by specific people, this recirculation also changes future distinction extraction. When the workplace considers him again, it may recall his leave; when relatives evaluate him again, they may recall borrowing and repayment; when the family discusses expenses again, it may recall the fall in income caused by this lower-back injury.

Similar recirculation occurs in cash-gift and household-registration chains. A wedding or funeral exchange moves from the record of exchanges into borrowing, credit, courtship and marriage, elder care, and local respectability, finally returning to the family's position in local society. Whether the family can easily borrow money later, whether its children's prospects for courtship and marriage are viewed favorably, and whether anyone steps forward when elders need care are all affected. Consider a hypothetical case in which the applicable local admissions policy actually requires verification of household registration, residence permits, parents' or guardians' social-insurance records, and rental filings for the year and enrollment category in question, and in which these relations are indeed connected. The review of materials enters the child's enrollment; the enrollment result enters the family's decision to stay or leave; that decision enters job stability and rental pressure; and the chain finally returns to the family's differentiation position in the city.

The constraints brought by recirculation are not unchangeable fixed labels. New diagnoses, income arrangements, care support, or explanations may change how later people use old records. Preserving this possibility of revision neither denies existing consequences nor locks the object into the position formed by a single act of handling.

VIII. How Formal and Informal Chains Connect to One Another

Formal and informal relational chains are not separate; they often connect to one another. A person is neither simply processed by institutions nor simply evaluated by a society of

acquaintances, but often moves between the two kinds of chain. This constitutes the complexity of social position.

The connection between formal and informal relational chains appears in the circulation of materials across different domains. At more formal nodes, medical records are handled through insurance procedures and a claim is denied; the denial connects to arguments within the family, the arguments to evaluations among relatives, and those evaluations spread into local reputation. In this way, the bodily difference originally handled by hospitals and insurers flows into informal social evaluation. Circulation in this direction also appears in other relations. After an IOU is submitted to a court and a formal judgment results, the debt, having undergone institutional and documentary handling, is reinterpreted by local society as a matter of credit and character. Household registration materials are submitted to a school, and institutional eligibility affects a child's enrollment outcome. That outcome both prompts relatives' evaluations of the family's ability to remain in the city and bears on the family's own decision to stay or leave.

A path can also enter formal procedures from informal nodes, then return to informal relations. Records of wedding and funeral exchanges are used as a basis for borrowing. After lending and borrowing have occurred, a dispute over the performance of obligations, repayment, or the attribution of responsibility may enter court proceedings. The outcome of the court's judgment returns to local reputation, becoming material through which people evaluate credit and character.

Formal and informal chains are not inherently more or less truthful than one another; they differ in rules, authority, and ways of tracing what happened. Formal procedures can leave documents, deadlines, and forms of responsibility; within informal relations, family members, relatives, or local evaluators may also preserve materials concerning care, exchanges, and reputation. As the two connect, they may supplement one another or conflict.

Connections between formal and informal chains must be traced to specific people, materials, and procedures. Family members, relatives, or local evaluators can reinterpret documents, judgments, medical records, and eligibility reviews; family memories, exchange records, and reputation may also be brought into formal procedures. When these connect to one another, one must still ask which person, which material, and which procedure changed the consequences. Neither side can be presumed to be the sole source of true explanation.

IX. Sedimentation: How a Chain's Operation Becomes New Material at Nodes

A relational chain is not a one-time flow. If the result of an act of handling is preserved in the corresponding form, it sediments into material for later judgments within relations and becomes a possible starting point for the next relational chain. Preservation belongs to a different stage from later renewed extraction and taking effect through weight assignment. Recording material does not mean that it has already exerted an effect again in a subsequent procedure.

In concrete practice, attendance records may be retained after an employee takes leave. Later they may be extracted as a basis for performance evaluation, or consulted when a job reassignment is under consideration. Once a court judgment has been made, the judgment document records the result of the case. Having a judgment document, however, does not mean that someone has already been designated untrustworthy. Only if an entry is subsequently made in an untrustworthiness record under the legally prescribed procedural conditions can that material later enter credit judgments, cooperation judgments, and local evaluations through concrete retrieval.

Within families and local society, an insurance claim denial may leave memories of past family relations: who paid for treatment at the time, who did not, who said what, and who undertook care. If remembered by family members or recorded, these become materials that can be raised anew later. An absence from a cash-gift exchange may leave a local reputation; only when later people adopt these evaluations in borrowing, courtship and marriage, elder care, or partnerships do past events take effect again in the corresponding judgments. A quarrel in a chat may likewise leave screenshots and group evaluations. When brought out again later, they can become materials for judging whether someone is reliable or unreliable, and whether they fit in with the group or not.

Records, evaluations, reputation, screenshots, and memories left by a chain can preserve differences that have not yet re-entered current handling. They are not latent differentiation space itself, but materials of difference that may be extracted anew, assigned weight, and connected in the future. Sedimentation does not leave abstract traces detached from people: there is a gap between the preservation and reuse of records. Material may be carefully preserved yet remain unused for a long time, or it may become relevant again in subsequent handling within the same continuing relational field, or on a new occasion of conflict, application, care, or evaluation.

Whether material is extracted anew depends on who preserves it, who can access it, and in what event it is considered relevant. Preservation does not guarantee reuse. When a subsequent relational field emerges, custodians, actors carrying out distinction extraction, and authorized handlers must still judge whether the material is relevant, whether it is sufficient to support subsequent handling, and whether it can reconnect to concrete consequences. Preserving material does not replace these necessary judgments and procedures. Consequences may persist because later people still extract and handle the materials through the relevant procedures, not because the materials themselves act continuously.

X. From Relational Chains to the Network

A single relational chain cannot encompass all the processes of handling occurring simultaneously in reality. Paths such as lower-back-injury chains, debt chains, cash-gift chains, and household-registration chains may connect through concrete materials, handlers, and consequences. When the same record is extracted in different settings, it may also be directed toward different judgments and arrangements. Such intersections indicate that analysts should broaden the scope of tracing and examine how materials, positions, and situations of handling are implicated in one another.

Intersections of relational chains also require attention to failures of taking up and sustaining what is passed on. Materials may reach the next node without being read, or may be read but not adopted because of insufficient authority, incompatible formats, or expired deadlines. Sometimes a recipient recognizes the material but connects it to a different consequence. Analysts cannot merely record that the materials have been passed on. They must also verify whether recipients adopt them, whether renewed extraction occurs, and whether and how they interpret them and assign them weight. They cannot presume that every transfer necessarily changes weight.

When several chains intersect, their consequences may amplify or offset one another. If an unpaid-wage chain and a family-care chain tighten at the same time, the person's capacity to wait is reduced further. If a chain of local support connects, it may temporarily provide a loan or testimony from someone who comes forward. Intersection does not mean that all relations share the same responsibility; the carriers, timing, and actual consequences of each chain must still be traced.

Stable relations across events must be explained through repeated relaying, rather than abstract names. If materials of the same kind are preserved, extracted, and acted upon at similar positions across multiple events, a relatively stable judgment about relations can be proposed. Once a new event shows that relaying has changed direction or failed, the scope of the original judgment should be tested to see whether it still holds, and the conclusion narrowed accordingly where it is indeed inapplicable. One must neither erase established paths wholesale on account of a single counterexample nor exempt them from concrete empirical checks. Relational chains provide paths that can be repeatedly checked against materials, not causal lines that never change.

The boundaries of a relational chain also depend on the research question. An inquiry into how a sum of wages enters household debt can be brought to a close at the corresponding positions of payment, borrowing, and taking up and sustaining what is passed on. If the question turns to long-term local trust, another set of materials and another time span are needed. Bringing the inquiry to a close is not arbitrary cutoff: it means explaining which stretch of the path is currently sufficient to answer the question and for which subsequent relations materials have yet to be obtained.

Chapter 15. Networks: How Multiple Relational Chains Jointly Process Differences and Reorganize Positions

I. A Network Is Neither Personal Connections nor a Diagram

A differentiation network is a structure for processing differences in which multiple differences, different nodes, different weights, and multiple relational paths jointly form, change, or maintain positions and consequences within a concrete relational field. Intersection, branching, mutual weight assignment, mutual cutoff, and write-back may all occur within it. Nodes preserve differences, give them definite form, filter them, authorize their extraction, pass them on, or put them into effect. Relational chains, by contrast, are paths that analysts extract from the operation of differentiation networks to trace how a difference is extracted, passed on, recast, recognized, refused, assigned weight, and transmitted, how it branches, is cut off, and flows back, and how it produces consequences. The concept of the network is used here to trace how multiple such paths intersect; nodes, relational chains, and networks must still belong to different levels.

A network is not a stack of relational chains. An important mode of operation of differentiation networks within concrete relational fields is the intersection of multiple relational chains in which they change one another's weights, interlink positions, and produce structural consequences.

Knowing someone or making contact only provides an opportunity for certain materials, information, or requests to be passed on. It does not tell us who has authority to draw on them, who will recognize them, or whether using them will change income, eligibility, evaluations, or care arrangements. Two people may know each other well without any existing material being brought into a procedure. The same medical record brought to a workplace may also remain confined to one instance of leave without connecting to attendance, performance, or household expenditure. Treating contact itself as a network skips the crucial steps through which differences are concretely handled.

If a network is understood in advance as a diagram, the handling that lines on the diagram cannot show will be overlooked. A static diagram can show connections between certain positions, and families, workplaces, schools, and exchanges among relatives can also be marked on it. Yet the lines alone cannot tell us whether medical records are adopted, whether supplementary materials are accepted, or whether existing records change judgments about lending and borrowing. A network can be identified only in the concrete processes through which differences are preserved, extracted, passed on, and connected. Without such handling, the lines are merely conditions for possible contact.

The interlinking of positions is not a matter of adding up identities such as worker, wife, child, parent, and creditor. What needs to be examined is who extracts differences pertaining to different objects, through which materials, and under what rules and at what relational positions those differences are connected. The same identity designation may enter different consequences under different income arrangements, divisions of care work, material conditions, and records of exchange.

Medical records, attendance records, eligibility forms, exchange records, and oral evaluations may all preserve differences or give them definite form. A node is therefore neither an abstract dot nor simply a particular person. Managers, reviewers, family members, and relatives handle these differences according to their available materials, procedures, and responsibilities. What the

network traces is precisely the intersection of multiple relational chains at different nodes; it does not add another subject capable of acting on its own.

II. How Multiple Chains Operate Simultaneously

A single relational chain can trace how a difference passes through nodes and enters consequences, but it is still insufficient to explain the interrelations among multiple differences within the same relational field. A worker's lower-back injury forms one path through medical records, leave, attendance, performance, and income; wedding and funeral exchanges form another through records, borrowing, courtship and marriage, elder care, and local evaluation. Only when the two paths actually meet in the same family or local circumstances does analysis need to trace further how they affect one another within the real differentiation network. A differentiation network is not assembled afterward from several pre-existing, independent relational chains. A lower-back injury, debts, children's school enrollment, renting, social insurance, and relatives' evaluations can simultaneously affect a family's position; cash gifts, borrowing, courtship and marriage, elder care, clan evaluations, and local reputation may also jointly affect a household's position. These differences and their consequences cannot be added up according to identity labels. Only through handling at concrete nodes and in relational chains does the interlinking of positions form.

After a worker from elsewhere suffers a lower-back injury, workplace managers can use his medical records for leave, attendance, and job arrangements, and attendance and performance may in turn affect income. Once income falls, rent, living expenses, old debts, and spending on children all become urgent at the same time. Creditors, relatives, and family members also make different judgments according to repayment, borrowing, remittances, and care. These issues are handled in parallel as multiple chains within the same household situation, rather than appearing one after another in a queue.

Parallel operation refers first to overlap in the timing of handling; this does not mean that every step already constitutes a necessary causal link. After a worker is injured, family members may face medical expenses first, or deal simultaneously with medical expenses, rent, spending on children, and time for care. Workplace personnel may examine leave, shift coverage, job assignments, attendance, and performance at the same time. Relatives may know only about borrowing or sending money, or may evaluate reliability through exchanges involving borrowing, remittances, and care for the elderly. Even when these processes occur during the same period, one must still examine whether the workplace adopts the medical records, whether attendance changes income, and whether income actually affects repayments and material conditions before judging which chains have actually connected.

Problems with materials for a child's school enrollment likewise cannot be reduced directly to consequences of unstable employment. Parents' or guardians' continuity of social insurance, rental filings, proof of residence, and school materials enter the corresponding review only when they are used under local admissions policies for the relevant year and enrollment category. Each item also has specific conditions under which it is examined, supplemented, or recognized; unstable employment does not mean losing eligibility in every procedure across the board. Changes in renting or incomplete materials do not necessarily change whether the family stays or leaves, but they may confront teachers, eligibility reviewers, family members, and relatives with different conditions for judgment. Although lower income may make certain expenses harder for family members to manage, teachers or eligibility reviewers still make their respective judgments according to materials and procedures. These processes need not develop in the same direction, yet

income, records, eligibility, or evaluations may interlink them during the same period, bringing previously separate problems together into the family's position.

The parallel operation of multiple chains provides a scope for tracing; it cannot directly replace concrete identification of materials, procedures, and those who undertake the handling. Being raised simultaneously must be distinguished from actually being connected. Family members may discuss medical expenses, rent, and spending on children together when arranging expenditures without necessarily making each a basis for the next judgment. Workplace personnel may see medical records and attendance at the same time yet still handle the matter under only one of the relevant rules. Only by preserving this distinction can we see where network intersection has formed and where there is still only a possible connection.

When multiple chains stand alongside one another, each can have different starting points and consequences. If medical records are used only in medical handling, an IOU is raised only in a private lending transaction, and enrollment materials are examined only in eligibility review, with no shared relation of handling among them, these remain simply several chains existing at the same time. Only when specific people concerned bring changes in income, gaps in materials, or existing evaluations into arrangements for household spending, lending and borrowing, enrollment, or care do connections, intensification, and offsetting occur.

The same set of chains may even operate in opposite directions. Medical records can secure recognition of leave without necessarily lowering performance ratings; relatives' assistance may temporarily ease debts without changing workplace job assignments; supplementary materials may maintain enrollment eligibility without eliminating rent pressures. Changes in position during parallel operation therefore often differ in timing and in the parts affected: some chains produce actual consequences earlier, while others remain only conditions that may be drawn upon; some processes return to family arrangements, while others remain within institutional procedures.

III. Nodes of Intersection: Where Networks Form

Household income can become a position at which multiple relational chains intersect, where consequences arise or handling takes place: a lower-back injury appears here as falling income through work arrangements, debt as repayment pressure, while children's school enrollment involves renting, materials, and educational spending. Relatives may in turn assess family responsibilities on this basis. But income itself does not preserve, extract, or process differences. The actual work of extraction, calculation, evaluation, use, and passing on is undertaken by family members, workplace personnel, creditors, and relatives, with the corresponding records, rules, and procedures.

A node of intersection need not be a single location. It may be an entry point for materials, an eligibility procedure, a fixed institutional position, or a relational position at which family members must make arrangements together. When family members arrange spending and care around income, reviewers process eligibility materials, or relatives or local evaluators use existing records in their exchanges, previously scattered differences may enter the same processing relation. If the same sum of income, material, or evaluation simultaneously affects borrowing, school enrollment, care, work arrangements, or local cooperation, analysis must trace concretely at the network level how the people concerned, according to their materials, rules, and relational positions, connect the consequences of multiple chains to one another.

Workplaces, schools, relatives' evaluations, and local reputation can therefore all become points of intersection, but they must not be treated as autonomous entities controlling consequences on their

own. The workplace here is a setting where managers process materials under rules for attendance, performance, social insurance, and job assignments. A school likewise does not admit or exclude on its own, but is a concrete relation in which teachers or eligibility reviewers make determinations according to existing enrollment materials and conditions. Relatives and acquaintances decide whether to lend money, help, or keep their distance according to exchanges, care, and evaluations of responsibility. Only by distinguishing specific handlers, the materials used, and the corresponding procedures can we see how intersection actually forms.

When multiple relational chains exist simultaneously, analysis can further trace whether they intersect, connect, intensify, offset one another, or undergo write-back, and how these operations change concrete consequences. Medical records, IOUs, household registration materials, school files, workplace attendance records, relatives' memories, and local reputation can connect different chains to the same consequence setting only when the people concerned draw on, recognize, refuse, or pass them on according to their rules, authority, and procedures. The same material can undergo different handling at different positions: in medical documentation, medical records describe an injury; in workplace leave arrangements, they provide grounds for judging whether someone may leave work; in arrangements for income, debts, or care, family members and creditors use them as conditions for judgment. Only when different people draw on the material anew under different rules and at different relational positions do the chains go beyond standing alongside one another and potentially connect, constrain one another, or provide conditions for one another within the same consequence setting.

A small number of personnel, procedures, eligibility conditions, or entry points for materials may sometimes become bottlenecks at these positions, simultaneously affecting whether multiple chains can connect. Whether a medical record can enter leave arrangements, whether supplementary proof can enter an eligibility procedure, and whether relatives adopt a record of exchanges as a basis for judging lending and borrowing may all limit the availability of multiple paths. A particular step becomes a bottleneck because conditions for connection are concentrated there, not because an institutional name is inherently important. Yet the appearance of multiple chains at the same position does not necessarily mean they have intersected. Household income, school materials, or relatives' evaluations may be raised at the same time; if the people concerned do not bring the outcome of one process into another judgment, the chains may still stop separately. Intersection requires an identifiable connection: a difference already processed becomes a condition, constraint, or available resource for another process.

Intersection can also produce constraints rather than amplification in one direction. Recognition of supplementary proof, for example, may reduce pressures previously produced jointly by leave, attendance, and eligibility materials; nonacceptance of material may prevent an existing arrangement on another chain from continuing. Analysis of differentiation networks does not set a threshold based on the number of relations or fixed minimum conditions. One important form of operation that can be traced is how multiple relational chains change one another's weights, availability, or direction of consequences through concrete handling. Yet the network's scope must still be determined by actual intersection. Relations that have neither been brought into joint handling nor changed the conditions of other chains cannot count as core parts of this network simply through proximity, even if they exist in the same family or locality. This restriction preserves boundaries for network analysis without drawing every coexisting relation into the same explanation.

IV. Reordering of Weights: Why Differences Suddenly Become Weightier

The reordering of weights often begins with an act of handling that seems limited in scope. Viewed alone, a period of leave may mean only a few days away from work, and its consequences may be limited. But if managers connect it to job assignments, attendance, performance, wages, and social insurance records, and family members then adjust debts, renting, spending on children, and care in light of changes in income, the difference is used repeatedly at multiple processing positions. Its growing weight does not lie in leave itself acquiring some fixed meaning, but in the consequences to which different people connect it. The same holds for absence from a cash-gift exchange or a gap in household registration materials. Whether the people concerned recognize or refuse it, supply supplementary proof, or evaluate on that basis affects its weight in different relations.

Whether these differences appear serious in certain relational fields depends on whether they connect to consequence settings such as attendance, income, eligibility, lending and borrowing, care, or local evaluation. This is not because they inherently possess equal force, nor does it mean that differences grow on their own or that the network assigns weight by itself. Multiple low-weight differences entering these consequence settings at points of intersection may produce high-weight consequences after specific people extract them and assign them weight according to materials, rules, and relational positions. Several originally lighter differences may also intensify one another: the worker uses his medical records to apply for leave, leave involves attendance, changes in income make debts and spending harder to arrange, and existing evaluations concerning lending and borrowing or by relatives may be raised again. Each link must still be handled by specific people according to materials and rules. Only by considering these processes together can we explain why weightier consequences occur. "Many" must not be taken to mean "necessarily weighty."

At the same time, if another chain can provide alternative proof, materials that can gain recognition, adjustable arrangements, or obtainable resources, an originally weightier difference may be downweighted. The original connection may then cease to intensify the consequences and even cut off some of them. Recognition and refusal by different people, whether different materials can corroborate one another, and whether alternative resources exist keep weight variable. Weight is neither moral standing nor a fixed judgment on a person or an inevitable result. It describes the intensity with which a difference enters real consequences in the current relational field, an intensity that changes with the concrete conditions of handling.

V. The Interlinking of Positions: How One Person's Differences Affect Others

Care relations can carry the effects of a lower-back injury beyond the worker himself into another person's work and time arrangements. But the interlinking of positions does not mean that everyone bears the same consequences, nor can the consequences borne by different people be collapsed into a single outcome. Whether the wife takes leave to provide care, works more, or adjusts spending on the children depends on the family's division of labor and available resources. Whether parents provide support, whether creditors grant more time, and how workplace personnel arrange job assignments and shift coverage all change the actual positions of those concerned. The child faces materials, residence, and educational arrangements. These people occupy different relational positions; the materials they can use, the rules they are subject to, and the responsibilities they bear differ. The interlinking of positions forms gradually through relations of care, work, debt, eligibility, and evaluation.

Debts, eligibility, and evaluations likewise interlink different people's positions, unfolding according to their respective rules. Whether creditors grant more time depends on exchanges, available information, and judgments within lending and borrowing relations; whether workplace personnel adjust job assignments depends on leave, attendance, and work arrangements; whether relatives help depends on existing exchanges, care, and evaluations of responsibility. Changes in social insurance or residence can affect a child's application and school arrangements only when local enrollment rules include the relevant materials in the review. Obstacles to the child's enrollment may in turn affect the parents' work choices, housing, and whether the family stays or leaves. Absence from a cash-gift exchange may affect the family's chances of borrowing, the children's courtship and marriage, elder care, and local evaluations. These processes may be affected simultaneously by the same event, yet each has its own materials, procedures, and responsibilities; they cannot be compressed into a single shared consequence.

A differentiation position refers precisely to the actual position formed after the people concerned extract differences pertaining to different objects in a concrete relational field, assign weight according to materials and rules, and connect the results of these processes through relational chains. It is not the accumulation of identity designations such as worker, wife, parent, child, and creditor, still less a fixed fate into which anyone falls upon being injured. When relational positions change, materials are processed anew, or a relational chain is cut off, each person's differentiation position may adjust accordingly.

VI. Local Spread: How an Event Passes through Multiple Nodes

Local differences do not spread throughout the entire domain; their transmission advances step by step through specific nodes, materials, and relational chains. A worker's lower-back injury can move from hospital medical records into workplace leave and job arrangements, then through attendance and performance into income. Yet each step depends on specific people drawing on materials and handling them at the corresponding relational positions and under the relevant conditions of recognition. If medical records are not brought into leave procedures, or the handling of leave does not change job assignments, attendance, and income, the injury's consequences may remain within medical treatment and family care. Even if income changes, one must still examine whether creditors adjust their judgments of repayment accordingly and whether relatives raise reliability anew in their exchanges before differences can continue into chains of lending and borrowing, debt, relatives' evaluations of responsibility, and local reputation. The path must be confirmed stretch by stretch; naming an event cannot stand in for the occurrence of all its consequences.

Other relational paths display the same step-by-step advance. A gap in household-registration materials may move from enrollment materials into renting, social insurance, job stability, and whether the family stays or leaves; absence from a cash-gift exchange may pass through records of wedding and funeral exchanges into borrowing, courtship and marriage, elder care, and clan evaluations. Along these paths, every connection depends on whether usable records exist, whether those concerned have authority to handle them, whether the consequence setting recognizes the material, and whether the person involved can obtain alternative proof or support. If supplementary proof is recognized, enrollment materials may cease to affect renting and work arrangements; if an existing record is not used, it may not enter new local evaluations. Materials not being extracted, procedures not granting recognition, or another chain providing an alternative path may all stop the spread somewhere, change its direction, or produce only limited consequences. On a particular route for passing on materials, if the people concerned refuse to pass

them on or lack authority to handle them, that route stops at this node; this does not deny the existence of other, alternative paths.

Local spread therefore describes conditional paths whose scope and boundaries may also change. Reducing spread to "everything affects everything else" would conceal which people actually handled what, which materials really passed through which node, and at what relational position a determination was made. Network analysis requires each concrete condition for connection to be specified, retaining the mechanisms through which spread may stop or change direction and consequences remain limited. This avoids misrepresenting conditional paths as structures extending without limit.

VII. Structural Lock-In: How Multiple Chains Interlock

When multiple relational chains repeatedly connect, making different positions where handling takes place constrain one another, structural lock-in may form within the relational field. A fall in the worker's income may worsen debt; debt pressure lowers relatives' evaluations of reliability; lower evaluations may make borrowing harder, further increasing pressure on household spending. In another set of relations, if the local enrollment category for the relevant year actually requires verification of materials showing continuity of social insurance and similar information, and changes in the family's employment affect the contribution arrangements it currently uses, social insurance records become interlinked with job stability, leave, bodily condition, and the division of care work. Renting may also interlock with these. When these steps of handling interlock within a concrete relational field, dealing with one chain alone is often insufficient to change the overall position.

Structural lock-in describes the structural consequences of multiple relational chains mutually restricting one another's conditions through concrete handling. It differs from oppression through a single relation and is not an irresistible fate in which the network actively imprisons the object. In the examples above, when changes in income make repayment arrangements difficult, creditors and relatives may judge anew within their respective relations. If such judgments restrict new lending and borrowing or support, family members have less room to handle spending and care. These consequences form lock-in only when the people concerned actually bring an earlier process into a later one. Thus, if we address only one instance of leave, one instance of borrowing, or one gap in materials without examining how it connects with income, care, eligibility, and evaluations, the original pressure may reappear elsewhere.

But lock-in is not unchangeable. Whether fellow workers are willing to explain how the injury occurred is not quite the same as whether they actually come forward to explain it; relatives' willingness to help likewise differs from their actually taking on responsibility for care. Similarly, whether the workplace recognizes leave, whether the school accepts supplementary materials, and whether the family can obtain usable resources all play a part at their respective stages. The parties' willingness, recognition, and acceptance affect whether chains are cut off, redirected, or reconnected.

Within a concrete relational field, when the parties concerned recognize new proof or adjust arrangements accordingly, or when relational resources are connected, these changes may cut off or redirect a chain, temporarily ease pressure, or reconnect it—whether through actual recognition, someone coming forward to explain, the acceptance of supplementary documents, relatives actually helping with care, or the family obtaining usable resources. Solving one problem alone may sometimes be insufficient to turn the overall situation around, but this does not mean that every partial adjustment is ineffective.

In analysis, structural lock-in must be distinguished from temporary difficulties and pressure from a single chain. A short-term expense, an instance of leave that was not carried forward, or material that can be corrected or supplemented does not necessarily make multiple chains interlock. Only when multiple relational chains repeatedly connect and make different processing positions constrain one another is lock-in needed to describe this conditional structural consequence.

VIII. Networks May Also Provide Room for Adjustment

Relatives may contribute money, accompany someone to medical appointments, or look after children; neighbors may also take children where they need to go and bring them back, cook, or care for the elderly. These concrete actions perform different functions and may provide time for care or ease immediate expenses, but money from relatives does not necessarily change the workplace's handling of attendance. Even after family members accept help with care, they must still redistribute time and responsibilities within the family.

People from the same hometown may introduce job opportunities, acquaintances may mediate over debts and coordinate temporary repayment arrangements, and someone may prevent work or living arrangements from being immediately interrupted. These actions can open new paths of handling within previously strained chains. Yet after debt has been temporarily deferred, lending, borrowing, and repayment relations have not disappeared; they must still be faced within the concrete relational field.

In matters of eligibility and proof, teachers, community personnel, or landlords may help provide supplementary proof when the necessary material conditions exist; fellow workers may describe the worksite and explain how the injury occurred. Help from teachers or landlords in supplementing materials may maintain a particular eligibility without eliminating debt and care pressures. Fellow workers' accounts of the injury may add materials for subsequent handling, but whether the people concerned recognize them according to the rules must still be examined. Even when supplementary documents are accepted here, the materials may be examined again in another procedure.

Room for adjustment is therefore neither a sentimental narrative nor the network rescuing the object on its own. Whether it arises depends on specific people, materials, authority, conditions of recognition, and relational resources. Help does not occur naturally or guarantee a change in the outcome. Whether particular people have resources and are willing to take responsibility within existing exchanges, evaluations of responsibility, or what they can afford; whether the relevant materials can be completed; whether institutional personnel have authority to recognize them; and the fact that procedures may still have their own timing and requirements after the materials are completed all limit the scope for adjustment.

Changes of this kind often reach only part of the situation. Their effects enter only the chains to which they actually connect, allowing some original paths to be redirected, temporarily deferred, or reconnected. New paths likewise require handling within concrete relational fields; a single instance of assistance cannot be abstracted into a permanent solution. Identifying these conditions and subsequent requirements does not deny the help. Describing a partial change as complete relief would instead erase the conditions for adjustment.

IX. Network Write-Back: What Remains after Intersection

Write-back occurs when the results of current determinations, recording, handling, or actions are preserved as differences that can be extracted again in the future. After multiple relational chains

intersect in handling within a concrete relational field, their results may leave specific materials at nodes: a lower-back injury may leave medical records, leave records, performance evaluations, borrowing records, and relatives' evaluations; a dispute over enrollment materials may leave impressions at the school, rental records, social insurance records, and parent evaluations; absence from a cash-gift exchange may also leave records of wedding and funeral exchanges, local reputation, and judgments made later in lending and borrowing or courtship and marriage. These materials are concrete carriers formed by specific people through recording, evaluation, eligibility procedures, and preservation. Whether they are retrieved later belongs to subsequent handling. They are not subjects acting on their own, nor are they latent differentiation space itself.

Latent differentiation space refers to a structure of differences that have neither been extracted in the current relational field nor entered current differentiation space, but already have paths of preservation and thus may be extracted anew in future relational fields. Materials are the concrete carriers left after differences have been preserved and given definite form through people, procedures, or relations. Whether later people can find and use them remains limited by authority, rules, and relational positions. Latent differentiation space is not the collection of these materials. A record can provide one path for future use without being latent differentiation space itself, and it does not trigger consequences on its own.

A leave record may remain in existing files for a long time, and a record of absence from a cash-gift exchange may not have re-entered judgments about lending and borrowing or courtship and marriage. Preserving materials through recording merely leaves conditions for future differentiation. The fact that material has been preserved but not used does not mean that it has already produced real consequences. Material at nodes is not a mysterious container holding differences, and there is no guarantee that it will take effect automatically in later handling. Whether preserved records are raised again because of new events, eligibility reviews, lending and borrowing relations, family disputes, or local evaluations, or remain unused for a long time, depends on subsequent relational fields and relational conditions.

When subsequent events, subsequent relational fields, or later steps of handling within the same continuing relational field arise, future managers, teachers, relatives, creditors, or others concerned must still judge, according to their authority, rules, materials, and relational positions, whether to draw on the materials, how to reposition or interpret them, and whether to connect them to new relational chains. Whether managers consult leave and performance records again, teachers or reviewers retrieve enrollment materials again, or relatives or creditors bring out existing evaluations in their exchanges all depends on how specific people later handle matters at the corresponding positions. Only when the people concerned extract the materials anew and reconnect them to rules, eligibility, responsibility, or evaluative relations may differences re-enter handling. Whether new consequences form still depends on the subjects undertaking distinction extraction, weights, and modes of connection. Preservation leaves conditions; extraction and weight assignment are later handling.

The same record may also be interpreted differently at different relational positions. Family members may use it as a basis for dividing care work, workplace personnel examine its relation to job assignments according to procedures, and relatives form another evaluation in their exchanges. Network write-back traces precisely how repeated preservation, extraction, interpretation, and connection leave conditions for later differentiation positions, rather than some fixed meaning inherent in the material itself.

X. From Networks to Communities

Networks can explain how multiple relational chains intersect, sediment, and interlink social positions, but this structure is not yet a community. Long-term local exchanges, school records, or clan narratives can allow certain differences to be used anew in later relations, extending the network's influence on specific positions. Yet such conditions of continuing preservation and use remain insufficient to complete a theoretical account of community.

The intersection, reordering, and write-back of multiple relational chains reveal how differences are transmitted between different nodes and affect the positions of the parties involved. But this interlinking does not automatically produce belonging or turn those within it into a naturally unified group. The retention of records, exchanges, or evaluations shows only that they may still become conditions for distinction extraction later. It does not yet explain who is recognized, who is required to bear responsibility, or how lasting boundaries are maintained. The concept of the network cannot directly substitute for an examination of the mechanisms through which lasting recognition, boundaries, belonging, protection, exclusion, punishment, and social memory form; these must be investigated separately.

Drawing this boundary strictly serves to avoid theoretical misjudgments in two directions at once. On the one hand, long-term exchanges, repeated evaluations, or the preservation of materials cannot be treated directly as shared belonging. On the other, the fact that the relevant handling has not yet constituted a community cannot justify denying that these network processes have actually interlinked the positions and consequences of the parties involved.

Chapter 16. Community: How Long-Running Differentiation Networks Form Boundaries, Recognition, and Social Memory

I. Community: A Boundary-Structured Memory Order

A community is a boundary-structured memory order formed through a long-running social differentiation network's repeated preservation, extraction, interpretation, weight assignment, recognition, exclusion, protection, punishment, and handing down of differences. Long-term handling of differences leaves sedimented judgments about inside and outside that later people can draw on; this definition does not establish community as a separate actor.

A real community is neither identity registration nor a membership list, still less something derived from an abstract classification. It is a boundary order jointly formed by long-term interaction, preservation of memory, mutual recognition, exclusionary boundaries, protective obligations, punishment mechanisms, and the bearing of consequences. Even if two people are placed near one another by the same class image, they do not thereby have relations of mutual trust, mutual assistance, shared memory, or bearing consequences for one another. A roster can record names and a classification can mark positions, but neither can by itself show which exchanges will be remembered, which responsibilities people will be called to account for, or who will take someone in when they are in difficulty or push them out.

Viewed through concrete exchanges, a community can neither be treated as a container for a group of people nor as some pre-existing spirit. It is an order that gradually forms through specific people, materials, rules, rituals, and exchanges. It contains belonging as well as refusal, care as well as humiliation; its definition cannot begin from an imagined picture of warmth. [S01]

Nodes, relational chains, networks, and communities occupy different levels of processing differences and cannot replace one another. Materials such as medical records, IOUs, household registration, evaluations, genealogies, local reputation, and wedding and funeral exchanges first make it possible for certain differences to remain preserved. Relatives, schools, workplaces, neighbors, and local exchanges allow these materials to be passed on, supplemented, occluded, or interrupted. Only when multiple chains intersect within the circumstances of the same family, place of residence, or locality do they constitute the network's joint processing of differences, allowing differences to affect income, eligibility, evaluations, care, or residential positions at the same time. The concept of the network explains how differences cross and flow, focusing on how multiple chains intersect. Yet the intersection of multiple chains still cannot answer who is regarded as one of the community's own, whose past is worth explaining, or whose difficulties others will take up and help them through. The concept of community explains how these flows sediment over time into boundaries, obligations, eligibility, reputation, and memory, and focuses on how these intersections are recorded, who interprets them, and how they change the next judgment.

For a network to become a community, this handling cannot affect only one event; it will also be invoked anew by later people. This requires the network to preserve differences over time, extract them repeatedly, form interpretive authority, produce recognition and boundaries, and pass the results of handling into the next round of judgments, gradually establishing more stable judgments about obligations, eligibility, reputation, and inside and outside. Without this continuity, even

densely intersecting nodes and relational chains may amount only to temporary cooperation, short-term contact, or exchanges unrelated to one another.

Therefore, the long-term operation of a network does not necessarily mean that a community has already formed. Knowing one another for a long time, maintaining frequent contact, or helping one another once are only possible materials, not proof that a community has formed. Amid dense everyday contact, people may rent in the same place for years, see one another daily, shop for groceries, and work together, yet when children's school enrollment, borrowing money, courtship and marriage, or a crisis arrives, they may still be treated merely as people temporarily present. People who repeatedly meet at the same construction site, school, or neighborhood, and even know one another's names, may likewise never establish a relation of jointly bearing consequences. At decisive moments no one may step forward to explain their circumstances, take up their difficulties and help them through, or bring past events into the judgment. Conversely, some exchanges may be infrequent, but if responsibilities, records, rituals, and evaluations can be reactivated when needed, they may still constitute a stronger community connection. The point is not how many times people have contact, but whether differences are handled over time as boundaries, responsibilities, and memory.

Personal connections and organizations likewise cannot be equated directly with community. Personal connections can serve as channels of exchange, but may be only paths through which information, requests, or resources are passed on. They do not necessarily preserve who once bore responsibility or establish arrangements for who has the standing to explain past events. An organization may have positions, rules, and rosters and may arrange work, but a community's boundary is not determined by a form alone. An organization may not form one and the same boundary in members' care, wedding and funeral relations, trust, humiliation, and long-term memory. In care, lending and borrowing, wedding and funeral exchanges, evaluations, conflict, and crisis, people will continue to reconfirm who has the standing to speak, who should bear responsibility, and who may be forgiven. Community always refers to the order that these materials and relations sediment over time, rather than to any form of contact or organization in itself.

Community appears after certain differences have been repeatedly preserved and extracted anew: who stepped forward at a wedding or funeral, who cared for children after an illness, who borrowed money and did not repay it, who said what in a conflict, and who has the standing to explain past events. Once these matters no longer remain only in the present but enter subsequent judgments, they gradually turn exchanges into memory marked by boundaries. Older people in the locality, relatives, neighbors, teachers, landlords, community personnel, and workplace personnel do not always handle these materials in the same way. Community is not a single voice. Someone may explain why a person unable to attend after an illness was absent; someone else may only repeat the absence itself. Someone may be willing to offer an explanation for an excluded student; someone else may retain only the disciplinary evaluation. Community is precisely the result of these forms of handling continually intersecting.

II. How Communities Selectively Preserve Differences

The preservation of everyday exchanges is accompanied by selection from the outset; it does not preserve the entire process in full. Wedding and funeral exchanges may leave names and amounts without necessarily recording the illness that caused someone's absence. Local reputation may remember whether a debt was repaid without retaining the difficulties a family faced at the time. This gap between results and background also appears in school life: grades, disciplinary measures, teachers' comments, and parent impressions each preserve different parts. A violation may enter

the file while the earlier bullying that led to it is not fully written down. Once a student is called a problem student, long-term exclusion, family hardship, or relations with classmates have often already been omitted.

What allows particular differences to remain available for later extraction is the existence of many different carriers. Household registration, rental materials, IOUs, community certificates, and workplace records, together with genealogies, wedding and funeral rituals, experiences of care, and local reputation, keep some matters visible while allowing others gradually to lose their voice; none of these is the whole history in a neutral form. Selective preservation does not occur only in written records. Older people's memories of past events, retellings among relatives, teachers' impressions of students, and neighbors' evaluations of a household will all fix certain emphases through repeated telling. In this process, who is heard and whose account is treated as reliable also affects which differences can remain.

The preservation of a difference does not mean that it has been judged good or bad. It first means that someone may raise it again in a future event. When analyzing these processes of preservation, we must ask who preserved it, where it was preserved, when it can be used, and in what relations it will gain weight. Preserved differences may also reinforce or offset one another across different materials. An absence from a wedding or funeral may be treated in relatives' memories as a breach of etiquette, yet receive another explanation once medical records or experiences of care are brought forward. A community certificate may support the fact of residence but cannot change an existing reputation on its own. Materials do not naturally line up into one complete narrative; they must be joined, compared, and assigned weight within concrete relations.

Selective preservation leaves behind materials, but also changes the conditions of future judgment. A person for whom more has been preserved is not necessarily more powerful as a result. Sometimes the opposite is true: because negative records, rumors, or fixed evaluations are easier to extract, that person finds it harder to obtain an opportunity for a new explanation in later events. Conversely, a person for whom no materials of care, labor, or hardship that could gain recognition were preserved may appear, when protection is needed, never to have contributed. No shared life can preserve every part of what happened. What must be prevented is mistaking the fragments that remain for the whole person, or treating what was not preserved as something that never happened. The selectivity of memory provides material for judgment while also creating the conditions for loss of voice and labeling.

III. Repeated Extraction and Interpretive Authority

The power of a community does not lie in a single unified subject remembering the past, but in past materials being able to enter new judgments. In everyday experience, when money is borrowed, people will again discuss repayment, who stepped forward, and care; in courtship and marriage, family reputation and past relations may be raised; when property is divided, past contributions, past obligations left unfulfilled, and companionship will be reassessed. School enrollment, renting, work, and elder care have the same structure. Household registration, social insurance, residence materials, school evaluations, or care records may normally rest at different nodes. Once there is a need to apply for eligibility, request help, or handle a conflict, they may be brought into a new relational chain.

Repeated extraction also makes the same event show different effects in different relational fields. An absence from a wedding or funeral may be only a small unexplained matter among relatives in ordinary times, yet be raised again when money is borrowed, ties are formed through marriage, or property is divided. A school document may normally rest in a file, yet affect a student's position

only when they advance to the next level of schooling, transfer schools, or appeal a disciplinary measure. Crisis especially changes the density of extraction: existing materials are assigned different weights in a triggering relational field. This does not mean that the difference suddenly comes into existence. An accent, place of ancestral origin, religion, kinship relation, past words or conduct, or family narrative may receive little attention in ordinary times but be brought to the foreground again amid conflict and insecurity.

Extraction does not happen automatically, nor do materials produce consequences by themselves. Someone raises a past event; someone preserves or refuses to pass on some material; someone adopts one interpretation or downweights another. Thus the same record of exchanges may become a reason for refusal, or, once the difficulties after an illness are understood, no longer be treated as evidence of a breach of trust. It is through specific people retrieving, interpreting, adopting, or refusing it within concrete relations that the difference once again bears on consequences. Because each extraction involves specific people and materials, a community's memory cannot be understood as a warehouse. It is composed of records, local reputation, rituals, evaluations, narratives, and concrete judgments. Each renewed extraction may change whether someone can borrow money, obtain an explanation, maintain cooperation, or remain within the boundary.

When accounts given by different materials disagree, who can make their interpretation heard becomes especially important. An IOU can record an amount, while a neighbor can explain the difficulties after an illness. A disciplinary record can document a violation, while a teacher or classmate may explain the exclusion that preceded it. Household registration or rental materials can indicate eligibility status, while people who share everyday life may offer another form of testimony. Preserved differences do not explain their own meaning; the difference lies in whose account is recognized as sufficient to affect judgment. In concrete community life, elders, parents, teachers, clan heads, workplace leaders, local evaluators, community personnel, religious authorities, and people able to narrate past events may possess greater interpretive authority in different relations. This power is embedded in age, position, kinship position, control of materials, and the degree of trust accorded to them, rather than floating abstractly above the community.

Differences in interpretive authority have consequences in concrete judgments. The same absence from a cash-gift exchange can be described as a failure to observe the rules, or as the result of illness and poverty. The same failure to repay a loan can be treated as a breach of trust, or placed back within the difficulties after an illness. If a teacher says that a student has long been excluded, the meaning of a disciplinary measure may change. If an elder says that a household truly faced difficulties at the time, the consequences of its absence from a wedding or funeral may be reduced. Conversely, if only the account that “the materials are incomplete” remains, the fact of long-term shared life may lose its place.

The process of extraction may also change memory itself. When someone raises a past event, another person may add the background of illness, poverty, care, or conflict at the time. Some repeat only the result; others preserve the reasons. Some are willing to let the person being evaluated explain, while others treat an existing label as the conclusion. When new accounts are voiced or adopted, what remains later may no longer be the past in its original form, but material shaped by new narration, argument, omission, and weight assignment. Extraction can also maintain an existing interpretation. A community's long-term character does not mean that memory never changes; if new accounts, arguments, or selections are preserved, they leave material for subsequent judgments. Whether that material takes effect again still depends on later retrieval and use.

For this very reason, interpretive authority always remains open to contest. The memories, records, and experiences held by different people are not identical. Who is allowed to narrate and whose materials are adopted affects the direction in which recognition, exclusion, protection, and punishment extend. A community is therefore not a homogeneous group but an order with unequal positions of interpretation. Nor is it a unified subject preserving only an orderly version of the past; its boundaries form among different positions of preservation and interpretation. Through different extractions and interpretations, community memory may keep responsibility from being easily erased, but it may also leave some people unable for a long time to escape a compressed evaluation. Differences in interpretive authority in turn determine whether materials are preserved in full: someone able to explain the reasons may prevent an absence from being fixed as a breach of trust; someone without a position from which to explain may, despite long-term contributions, leave behind only results that are easy to misread. In dealing with these matters, we must not emphasize only remembering or only forgetting. We must ask which differences remain where, who can extract them, who can change their meaning, and how these choices bear on recognition, protection, exclusion, and punishment.

IV. Recognition: Who Is Treated as One of the Community's Own

Recognition must be understood together with responsibility. A person is regarded as one of the community's own not merely because they live nearby, share a surname, or are in the same place, but because, across repeated exchanges, they are regarded as someone who will respond to requests, undertake care, explain past events, or remain willing to maintain certain obligations even when a relation breaks down. Whether they show up at weddings or funerals, repay borrowed money on time, provide care when someone is ill, take advantage in ordinary times, or are willing to bear responsibility at a decisive moment may be remembered by different people or entered into the corresponding materials. When these memories or records are drawn on later, they affect how that person is described. Conversely, if someone bears responsibilities over a long period but lacks materials, interpretive authority, or a recognized position, their contributions may not be counted in shared memory. Community recognition is a stratified result of long-term handling of differences, involving emotion as well as visibility, records, and power. It is neither a natural identity nor an all-or-nothing condition. Belonging cannot be reduced to identity labels and is not predetermined by identity.

Portraying recognition as a single unified switch would erase differences among relational chains and conceal how boundaries move through concrete events. Complete, partial, temporary, conditional, and absent recognition do not form a neat sequence. Complete recognition means that a person is treated more steadily as a member: people are willing to hear what they say, someone is willing to take up their difficulties and help them through, and even a small mistake may be accompanied by someone offering its background and reasons. Within an existing boundary, that person has more positions offering room for adjustment. This does not mean that there is no boundary. Those who are recognized cannot necessarily always control interpretation, and even stable members may contest whose past is credible, who should be responsible, and who may be forgiven. A community's boundary therefore does more than divide people into two sides; it also distributes opportunities to speak, provide proof, seek help, and obtain room for adjustment.

Recognition supplied by different relational chains may not agree. A person may be accepted in everyday neighborhood life yet restricted in school eligibility; they may be needed at work yet remain suspect in courtship and marriage or lending and borrowing. This partial recognition is common in situations such as families of nonlocal workers. People may work, rent housing, buy goods and services, and interact with neighbors in everyday life, while recognition may still remain

incomplete with regard to their children's school enrollment, welfare, community resources, or eligibility for long-term residence.

Recognition also moves with concrete circumstances and time limits. Temporary recognition appears in a particular instance of cooperation or labor, or a crisis: someone is accepted because they are needed at that moment, can receive temporary support in a crisis, and then returns to a marginal position when the event ends. Conditional recognition can become more open with social insurance contributions, renting, compliance with workplace arrangements, or local exchanges. When the condition is interrupted, the earlier acceptance may not continue.

Shared living, labor, care, or exchanges may already have existed for a long time. Nonrecognition does not mean that a person is not present at all, nor is it simply nonexistence. Belonging forms through the handling of concrete differences; it cannot be reduced to identity labels and is not predetermined by identity. At key nodes, if materials are incomplete or not accepted, contributions have not been explained, interpretive authority is lacking or is not in the person's own hands, or key nodes do not adopt the person's account, these facts cannot be converted into eligibility or protection, and the person remains outside the boundary. Even so, marginal members may still gain a partial position through long-term care, shared labor, explanations by others, or new records.

V. Boundaries: How Communities Distinguish Inside and Outside

A community's boundary forms repeatedly when differences are extracted, interpreted, and assigned weight. It is people's judgment, in actual events, of which relations count as dependable and which responsibilities ought to be borne. It is neither a static boundary nor a line on a map nor an identity label. When money is borrowed, who can borrow, who may receive more time, and who must repay at once will redraw distinctions of closeness and distance. In courtship and marriage, a family's past relations, experiences of care, and reputation may be reassessed. When property is divided, who cared for an elderly person and who appeared only when money was distributed will also affect who has the standing to speak.

Boundaries in school enrollment and residence cannot be described simply as the city or institutional arrangements acting on their own. Who prepares the materials, who issues the proof, whether a rental relation is recognized, and which people witness everyday life place a person in different positions of possible entry or exclusion. The conditional character of boundaries also appears in the fact that different people occupy different positions. A family may already be partly accepted in renting, labor, and neighborhood exchanges, yet remain excluded from school enrollment, welfare, or long-term eligibility. A person may receive care among relatives yet find it difficult to enter cooperative relations because of old debts or local reputation. Multiple relational chains give partly inconsistent results in different events; inside and outside are not one total state fixed once and for all.

On ordinary days, when people work, shop for groceries, and attend school together, differences may temporarily carry little weight. Once a crisis, conflict, resource shortage, or moment requiring a judgment of responsibility arrives, old materials and evaluations are raised again. A boundary can therefore loosen or harden, depending on how relations, rules, and the relational field connect differences to consequences.

Boundaries are also repeatedly maintained or changed through concrete practice. Someone willing to explain a past event, supplement materials, or mediate on another's behalf may allow a person whose standing was previously reduced to regain a position from which to speak. Someone who insists on using only an existing label and refuses a new explanation may make the boundary

harder to loosen. There is no boundary that moves on its own apart from practice; there are only the continuing effects of people, records, rules, and relational positions. The distinction between inside and outside forms in concrete events and cannot be written as a fixed cultural character or natural identity. Boundaries are extracted and confirmed anew in concrete relational fields of lending and borrowing, courtship and marriage, property division, school enrollment, residence, and crisis, and each confirmation may leave materials available for the next use.

VI. Protection and Room for Adjustment

When discussing protection, we must still return to specific people and relational positions; it cannot be written as natural benevolence. Protection is neither a favor bestowed by an abstract community nor a mysterious collective warmth. It consists in certain nodes and relational chains opening paths for adjustment for those who are recognized, and in support being taken up and sustained at concrete positions. When relatives lend money, neighbors look after children, teachers remind someone to supplement materials, or landlords cooperate with rental filings, specific people at relational positions are keeping a path from being cut off. As these actions provide care, they also show which people are regarded as worth continuing to support.

In everyday exchanges, the care provided by the relatives and neighbors described above, together with acquaintances helping to find transportation, elders explaining someone's circumstances, and mediators reducing the weight of a negative local reputation, keeps paths of care, work, or evaluation operating when they might otherwise be interrupted. In city life, the cooperation of the teachers and landlords described above, together with community personnel issuing certificates, people from the same hometown introducing jobs, neighbors helping take children where they need to go and bring them back, and workplace personnel fulfilling their legal responsibilities for social insurance contributions, may also prevent school enrollment, renting, or work from being cut off. These actions differ in nature: a workplace's fulfillment of its contribution responsibilities cannot be treated as a favor, and voluntary assistance also has its own relational conditions.

Protection at school likewise has conditions. A teacher may provide an explanation for one instance of lateness, classmates may accept someone who has been excluded, and parents may provide care for one another. These things may reduce the consequences of discipline or isolation, but who can obtain such explanations and assistance is still connected with existing recognition, materials, and relational positions.

Room for adjustment does not cancel a boundary. It shows precisely that certain people are still regarded as people who can be won back, helped, and kept within relations. Protection may reduce harm and may also confirm who qualifies for protection. When care, proof, or mediation is open only to a small number of recognized people, the paths that could have allowed adjustment also become a way of distinguishing inside and outside. We must therefore ask at the same time who provides assistance, for whom it is provided, and whether those refused still have a relational position from which to offer an explanation.

VII. Exclusion and Punishment

Exclusion and punishment likewise cannot be understood as an abstract collective acting on its own; they must be brought back to concrete practice. Refusing a loan, refusing courtship or marriage, refusing cooperation, and passing on a negative local reputation are often jointly produced by concrete judgments, past records, everyday evaluations, and key events. A local evaluator refusing to lend again, a relative raising an old debt in a judgment about courtship or marriage, and people involved in cooperation who are no longer willing to introduce someone to a

job are all ways of connecting a past difference to an immediate decision. Evaluations such as “does not follow the rules,” “unreliable,” “does not seem like one of our own,” “from outside,” “does not understand proper etiquette,” or “not one of our own” compress conduct at weddings and funerals, lending and borrowing, care, past words and actions, or kinship relations into labels that can be extracted repeatedly. A person called such names faces differences compressed in this way taking effect repeatedly across multiple relations. Once a label is fixed in local reputation, evaluations, or retellings, it may travel more easily than the full course of events.

Only when the results of being refused, humiliated, fixed in others' eyes by rumor, or excluded are preserved through records, retellings, or other means do they form materials of difference available for future use and constitute write-back. Later people may use these preserved results as reasons to say that someone is unreliable or a household is not worth associating with. At that point, the content of the earlier write-back is extracted anew and takes effect again in subsequent relations. This is the concrete mechanism through which punishment can continue; it is not the community, as a single subject, holding a grudge on its own.

Exclusion does not necessarily mean a complete break. Someone may be refused on one relational chain yet still receive help on another. Someone may be temporarily accepted yet remain excluded at a key point of eligibility. This inconsistency is precisely the result of a differentiation position being handled differently in different relations.

Exclusion and punishment are not necessarily carried out through public refusal alone. A request that is no longer answered, an explanation that is omitted, or material that is not passed on may each gradually deprive someone of opportunities for cooperation, care, or being understood.

VIII. Shared Memory: What Communities Remember and What They Forget

Shared memory is not a complete history. It is material for judgment jointly formed by selective memory and selective forgetting. It includes preserved absences from weddings and funerals, care, betrayal, and stepping forward in a crisis, as well as reasons, prior circumstances, and internal harms that were not fully preserved. A locality may remember that a household did not attend a wedding or funeral while forgetting the difficulties after an illness at the time. A school may remember that a student was disciplined while downplaying the process through which the student was excluded. People may remember suffering together while being unwilling to revisit internal inequality. Forgetting is not a blank; it changes subsequent responsibility and evaluation.

When reasons gradually lose their place and only the result remains available for extraction, an absence from a cash-gift exchange is easily compressed into a failure to observe the rules, failure to repay a loan into failure to keep one's word, and an accent into being an outsider. Identity and evaluation therefore appear natural, but are in fact traces left by selective handling.

The handing down of memory is not a matter of copying it unchanged. Accounts by elders, retellings by relatives, arrangements within rituals, wording in records, and teachers' evaluations may all strengthen, downplay, or rewrite certain differences as they are passed on. The diachronic character of a community is built on this continual retelling rather than on complete preservation. Later narrators may follow an existing account or supply reasons that had been omitted. The handing down of memory can therefore fix a label or allow the past to be understood differently. The key is not whether memory is consistent, but which differences can be brought into new judgments.

IX. Community Boundaries That Harden in Crisis

A crisis does not create a boundary out of nothing. It makes differences already present in language, household registration, family narratives, local reputation, kinship relations, and historical memory easier to extract and connect to protection or exclusion. As conflict, an environment of hostility toward outsiders, or insecurity intensifies, accents, places of ancestral origin, surnames, religion, background, place names, and past words and actions that carried little weight in ordinary times may be assigned greater weight. People who work, attend school, trade, or have dealings with one another will be distinguished anew in judgment as people regarded as close, suspect, or reliable, or as outsiders.

A crisis therefore cannot be written as an autonomous actor. It provides a triggering relational field but does not replace the specific handlers and relations. What makes a boundary harden is the concrete handling involved: which people retell past events, which materials are raised, which rules are interpreted more strictly, and which paths of protection are closed. Nor can the hardening of boundaries be presented as inevitable or irreversible. Someone may be excluded during a crisis and later be partly accepted again through care, explanation, shared labor, or new relations. Change depends on which differences continue to be preserved, who reinterprets them, and which paths can be connected again.

X. What Is Identity within a Community?

Identity is a compressed expression produced through the long-term handling of differences by community members, recorders, interpreters, and relevant procedures. It is not the whole person; still less can a community be reduced to a collection of identities. Names such as local person, nonlocal person, one of our own, problem student, reliable relative, and someone who does not keep their word appear to be stable designations. In fact, behind them are differences that have been preserved, passed on, interpreted, and assigned weight. Belonging likewise cannot be obtained by adding several identity labels together. Unless we ask which nodes, records, and relational chains a label has passed through, the name will conceal the process by which it actually formed.

Identity compression has power precisely because it can stand in for a lengthy explanation. In concrete settings, the designation “nonlocal person” or “outsider household” may combine renting, social insurance, work, school materials, and urban eligibility, together with accent, kinship relations, and past evaluations, into one short designation. “Reliable relative” may likewise compress borrowing money, repaying it, caring for elders, showing up at weddings and funerals, actions at decisive moments, and shared experiences. Similarly, “problem student” may encompass grades, disciplinary measures, teachers' evaluations, relations with classmates, family circumstances, and past events; “local person” may involve household registration, place of ancestral origin, accent, kinship relations, wedding and funeral exchanges, and local recognition. These differences need not take effect at the same time and do not carry the same weight in every relational field. Such compression makes judgment faster, but it also easily leads to differences from different sources, times, and relations being treated as the same thing.

Compression does not mean falsity. It points to processes of handling that really occurred. The problem is that once a designation is treated as an essence, it conceals that the process can still change. Someone called a problem student may be understood differently through a new explanation from a teacher, new relations with classmates, or support from family. Someone regarded as an outsider may also gain partial recognition through long-term life together, bearing

responsibility, and obtaining testimony from others. The mutability of identity comes from the mutability of the handling process, not from the designation changing by itself.

Identity can therefore serve only as a starting point of analysis, not the endpoint of explanation. Analysis of identity cannot stop at whether a particular word should be used. It must first ask which differences make it up, at which nodes they are preserved, through which relational chains they pass, who interprets them, and in what events they are extracted. Further examination must also establish when and by whom the word was spoken, which materials support it, which experiences did not enter it, what positional consequences it produces in lending and borrowing, school enrollment, courtship and marriage, cooperation, or care, and which forms of recognition, protection, exclusion, or responsibility it makes possible. Only then can we avoid mistaking a collection of identities for the community itself.

XI. From Nodes to Community

In tracing the path from nodes to community, the guiding thread is not that society possesses many relations, but how differences leave the individual and enter relational structures in which they can be preserved, passed on, jointly handled, and remembered over time. Nodes allow materials to remain; relational chains allow them to move; networks bring multiple chains into intersection; and community allows certain results of handling to enter the next round of boundary judgments. This progression does not elevate community into a final reconciliation. When differences are preserved over time, reinterpreted, and extracted repeatedly, they may give rise to care, responsibility, and room for adjustment, but also to exclusion, humiliation, and labels that are difficult to loosen.

Community, as a boundary-structured memory order, forms through the long-term handling of differences. Preservation, extraction, interpretation, weight assignment, protection, exclusion, and identity compression provide clues to the mechanisms through which it forms and changes. Community cannot be equated with declarations of solidarity, membership lists, personal connections, or imagined pictures of warmth. Social memory takes root in medical records, IOUs, household registration, evaluations, local reputation, rituals, accounts by relatives, and everyday care. It is not an abstract background detached from life; it is embodied in the relational positions of who can obtain materials, who can explain reasons, and whose interpretation is believed. A network's long-term operation alone does not establish that a community exists. Community's formation and change depend on which differences are left behind, who can explain their meaning, which people receive continued support or are excluded, and how boundaries loosen or harden in different relational fields. Only when the handling of differences sediments over time into boundaries, obligations, eligibility, reputation, and memory does a community order become established.

Tracing this process through time reveals how certain differences are first preserved, then passed on and interpreted through relations, and extracted anew in key events, affecting recognition, responsibility, protection, punishment, and positions inside and outside. It is specific people, records, rituals, evaluations, and relational positions that bring old differences into new recognition and refusal, allowing identity compression, demands for accountability, and distinctions between inside and outside to continue.

This order does not gather everyone into the same container. Someone may be only partly accepted, someone's position will be explained anew, and someone else is excluded again; the boundary remains conditional. Judging a community therefore cannot stop at an existing name, a single act of acceptance, or a single refusal. It must examine how these positions are preserved, questioned,

supplemented, and changed in later exchanges. Only by bringing concrete relations, materials, and practices back into the process of judgment can we avoid mistaking changes in belonging, responsibility, and boundaries for a fixed essence of the person. The same name may also bring different consequences in different relations and relational fields.

Notes

[S01] For research on ethnic and community boundaries as processes of continual formation, maintenance, and change, see Andreas Wimmer, "The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries: A Multilevel Process Theory," American Journal of Sociology 113(4) (2008): 970–1022, especially 970–982 and 1008–1011; Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár, "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences," Annual Review of Sociology 28 (2002): 167–195, especially 168–169, 181, 186, and 188. The two works provide only closely related points of contact concerning boundary mechanisms; they do not define the status of community as a reality in this book.

Chapter 17. Institutionalization: How Differences Are Formatted, Judged, and Connected to Consequences That Can Be Put into Effect

The processing involved in institutionalization cannot be separated from specific people, materials, rules, and procedures. Household registration, social insurance, rental filings, medical records, labor contracts, IOUs, and application forms, together with the people and procedures involved in submission, review, supplementation and correction, determination, and implementation, connect previously scattered differences in life to processing chains within which they can be extracted repeatedly. Different procedures have their own processing sequences. The steps they may involve include someone submitting materials, someone preserving and checking them, someone acting under authorization to request additional documents or explanations, and someone making a determination under the procedure, followed by schools, workplaces, courts, communities, or administrative stages connecting the results to the corresponding arrangements. School enrollment, work-related injuries, assistance, debt recovery, and loans each require different materials to be extracted at different times. Materials do not have the same operative weight in concrete events. Whether materials corroborate one another, whether applicants can supplement them, how handlers explain their reasons, and whether opportunities for review or complaint exist all affect whether a relational chain continues, pauses, or opens up again.

A child's school enrollment, recognition of a worker's injury as work-related, or debt recovery does not stop at facts that have already occurred in life. The materials different institutions require, the formats they recognize, and the people entitled to make judgments determine which differences can enter processing and which remain outside its scope for the time being. The same matter may also be treated as different problems at different processing stages: residence can become enrollment materials, an injury can become medical records and responsibility for a work-related injury, and a loan can become evidence and an application for enforcement. On the basis of material requirements, rules, and procedures, handlers determine which parts of life can be verified, interpreted, and connected to consequences in the current event. Life itself has not disappeared in these transformations.

I. Institutional Nodes and the Process of Institutionalization

Institutions are concretely distributed across nodes that carry, pass on, and process differences; they cannot be treated as scenery standing outside social activity. Household registers, medical records, contracts, attendance records, rental filings, community certificates, IOUs, and written judgments are not kept in the same place or by the same people. Institutional nodes are precisely the places where these storage locations, handlers, and rules are connected. Schools, hospitals, workplaces, courts, communities, and administrative departments are not the same kind of node. They differ in how they preserve and check materials, in the procedures they can initiate, and in the consequences to which they can connect.

A child reaching school age does not mean that any school can allocate a place directly on the basis of age. School personnel examine enrollment materials, handle application verification and the allocation of places, and establish student registration records after initial enrollment or update them during subsequent transfers. Depending on local admission policy, the year, and the category of admission, the applicable materials concerning household registration, proof of residence, the parents' relevant social insurance, and rental filings must be checked by the corresponding

personnel within the prescribed time. Available admission places are a concrete condition of these arrangements, not materials to be submitted. Existing student registration materials can be provided in applicable situations such as progression to the next level of schooling or school transfers; they are not a prerequisite for every initial enrollment. The facts of the parents' work and residence are thereby brought into the same processing chain.

Other forms of processing likewise depend on the division of work among specific nodes. Workplaces preserve attendance records; court personnel handling debts encounter evidence, judgments, and enforcement applications; community personnel issue or do not issue certificates. A worker's pain after an injury is real, but work-injury processing also requires medical personnel to produce medical records, diagnoses, and materials concerning the injury, and workplace personnel to explain attendance, the labor relation, and the course of the accident. The social insurance administrative department verifies the labor relation, the time and place of the injury, and testimony, and determines whether the injury is work-related. When the conditions are met, a work-capacity appraisal committee then determines the grade of functional impairment on the basis of expert opinions. Whether the different nodes connect affects subsequent arrangements for responsibility, compensation, and recuperation. [F01]

Understanding institutions as a system of nodes does not mean that nodes act on their own. Every act of registration, verification, explanation, review, or implementation requires specific people to handle matters under authorization, material requirements, and procedural conditions. Even within the same institution, there may be different departments, different opinions, and differing scope for supplementation and correction. After materials are preserved, handlers must still identify their form, time, who or what they concern, and their use according to the rules. Schools, hospitals, workplaces, courts, communities, administrative departments, and appraisal bodies do not draw on materials in the same way. Their respective scopes of authorization also mean that the same material may be assigned different meanings at different nodes. Tracing these concrete positions shows how differences are passed on and avoids treating institutions as an autonomous force detached from people and materials.

Institutionalization is the process in which differences in life are preserved and formatted by institutional nodes, undergo rule-governed extraction, authorized interpretation, weight assignment through eligibility, exclusion through thresholds, and procedural determination, and are connected to consequences that can be put into effect and to institutional write-back. This process first gives residence, labor, injury, borrowing, care, or hardship in life a place in materials that can be preserved. Household registers, student files, medical records, social insurance records, contracts, attendance sheets, IOUs, written judgments, and community certificates are all concrete positions that carry differences, rather than the facts of life themselves.

Preservation, formatting, extraction, interpretation, eligibility, thresholds, determination, implementation, and write-back each occupy an irreplaceable place. Preservation allows materials to remain for later use; formatting determines the shape in which materials are identified; extraction occurs in a particular event; interpretation is limited by authorization and evidence; eligibility and thresholds concern, respectively, the opening and cutoff of channels; and determination and implementation decide whether processing can enter actual arrangements. Only by distinguishing them can we see which link changed the consequences.

Institutionalization does not mean covering life with rules. After materials are preserved, they must still fit the occasion of use; after they meet the format, authorized personnel must still explain them under the rules; and after a determination is formed, whether it can connect to school places, assistance, compensation, penalties, or enforcement remains to be seen. Only after differences in

life undergo formatting, authorized interpretation, weight assignment through eligibility, and procedural determination do they connect to consequences that can be put into effect. The chain of institutionalization is neither a one-way straight line nor a fate fixed as soon as something is registered. Registration may open an eligibility channel, while a gap in materials may halt an application. Supplementation and correction, investigation, arbitration, review, appeal, or reconsideration may subject an earlier judgment to renewed examination against materials and rules. This is a process of continual connection across multiple nodes that may also reopen.

II. The Formation of Procedural Material and Segmentation through Formatting

Before facts of life enter institutional processing, they often have to be written, substantiated, or recorded as materials that can be submitted. Long-term residence, continuous work, bodily pain, family hardship, and acquaintances' knowledge do not automatically enter school, hospital, court, or assistance procedures in the same way. A family has lived in a city for years, with the parents working locally and the child growing up there; these experiences can be real. Yet when the family applies for school enrollment, depending on local admission policy, the year, and the category of admission, some materials concerning household registration, residence, social insurance, rental filings, or existing student registration may be checked together. Review personnel usually need this information to process the application under existing requirements.

Materials form at particular times. Rent, work, injury, borrowing, and care may occur continuously in life. Parents preserve rental information; workplaces retain attendance records; hospitals create medical records; coworkers provide testimony; community personnel issue statements about residence or hardship. These materials may not be complete when the facts of life occur, yet existing records are often required only when an enrollment, work-injury, assistance, or litigation event arrives. Whether those concerned can retrieve, supplement, or explain materials later affects whether their lived experience can enter a procedure. But materials arriving later do not erase the facts of residence, labor, injury, or debt that already existed. Materials supplied afterward do not rewrite life as it has already happened, but they may change whether handlers can verify, compare, and make determinations about the relevant differences.

Institutionalization begins with the formation of procedural material. Differences in residence are carried by rental filings, proof of residence, community materials, and the like; circumstances of poverty are carried by proof of income, information on household members, records of property status, and assistance applications; and educational experience is carried by student registration records, grades, disciplinary measures, transfer records, and records of determinations of eligibility for progression to the next level of schooling.

Labor and injury each have their own material carriers in institutional processing. Labor becomes labor contracts, social insurance records, attendance sheets, and wage-payment records; injury becomes medical records, diagnoses, examination reports, and appraisal materials. After a worker is injured, medical records and diagnoses can preserve a record of the injury. Labor contracts, attendance records, the time of injury, the workplace location, coworkers' testimony, and appraisal materials may separately carry the labor relation, the circumstances at the scene, and the determination of responsibility. The absence of any one of them does not mean that the injury never happened.

In debt processing, debt must be rendered as procedural material. Acquaintances knowing that a loan occurred may not be sufficient for court proceedings to move directly into enforcement. IOUs,

transfer records, chat logs, witness testimony, materials for filing suit, judgments, and enforcement applications are extracted and examined at different procedural stages. [F03]

The formation of procedural material does not mean that facts of life are preserved unchanged. Institutions segment facts of life into formats that allow registration, verification, comparison, and determination. Different kinds of material, including registration forms, certificates, medical records, applications, and files, require the corresponding fields, times, parties concerned, addresses, numbers, or attachments according to their respective formats. Only then can reviewers confirm who provided the materials, when they were formed, and whether they corroborate one another, and bring different applications into the same procedure for verification and comparison.

A format makes materials comparable while also drawing the boundaries of comparison. Rental filings can record an address, a term, and the registered relation, yet may not present the full course of a family's long-term shared life. Medical records can present a diagnosis and the condition of an injury, yet may not fully present work arrangements, workplace responsibility, and pressures at the time of injury. A format is not wholly a distortion, nor is the content preserved through it the whole of life. Its necessity and its selectivity jointly constitute the conditions of institutional processing; neither can be concealed.

Formatting segments reality. It makes some differences clear while leaving others without a voice. Family relations, a landlord's attitude, pressures on coworkers, difficulties after illness, and local evaluations may not enter fields on a form with equal fullness. Situations in which a landlord is unwilling to cooperate, community personnel do not issue certificates, coworkers are afraid to testify, a borrower cannot repay because of illness or unpaid wages, or a student experiences exclusion before being disciplined may affect circumstances in life. Yet these situations may not fit the fields that a particular form can immediately record and verify. Not having been formatted does not mean that they never happened.

III. Rule-Governed Extraction and Authorized Interpretation

Handlers do not extract all materials under the rules every day with the same intensity. A family ordinarily rents housing, works, shops for groceries, and pays water and electricity bills; these facts can continue to exist. When school enrollment arrives, whether the family can connect to the school's processing chain still depends on whether the materials required by the rules have been preserved, submitted, and recognized in time. Depending on local admission policy, the year, and the category of admission, some materials concerning household registration, rental filings, residence, social insurance, or existing student registration may be checked together.

Different events open different windows onto materials. Once the determination of a work-related injury begins, medical records, materials concerning the labor relation, attendance records, proof concerning the scene, testimony, or materials on occupational-disease diagnosis and appraisal enter the processing chain according to the relevant issues in dispute and procedures. Work-capacity appraisal, conducted when its conditions are met, follows a separate procedure. A court proceeds to enforcement on the basis of legally enforceable documents, such as judgments, rulings, and mediation documents that have taken legal effect, and the statutory conditions for initiating enforcement. An enforcement application must be submitted under the corresponding procedure. Property leads supplied by the applicant help identify property available for enforcement, and the court also has statutory powers to make inquiries. The applicant's prior possession of property leads cannot be made a necessary threshold for initiating enforcement in every case.

For assistance applications such as reviews for the minimum subsistence guarantee, household members living together, household income, and household property status must be investigated and checked. Villagers' or residents' committees may assist with investigation and explanation in accordance with the law, but a community certificate cannot be made a universally required threshold. Materials obtainable through government service platforms must not be required to be submitted again. In loan processing, handlers may retrieve records of real property, credit history, income, marital status, and debt.

What institutions recognize is not all differences, but differences extracted from materials by specific handlers according to rules on prescribed occasions. When a difference gains weight depends on the event, the time when materials are submitted, the handlers' responsibilities, and procedural requirements, rather than on a particular material naturally dominating all of life.

Rule-governed extraction does not pass a total judgment on what is true or false in life; it only defines which materials can be processed at that moment within a particular procedure. Differences that are not extracted do not thereby disappear, nor do the materials extracted amount to reality in full.

The same material serves different uses on different occasions. Medical records preserve diagnoses in a hospital. In work-injury determination, they are checked together with proof of the labor relation, materials concerning the scene, and the like according to the issues in dispute; when the conditions for appraisal are met, they are separately used for work-capacity appraisal. Proof of income may bear on family hardship in an assistance application, while in loan processing it may be placed within another set of eligibility criteria. The current event, rules, handlers' responsibilities, and subsequent procedures jointly delimit the meaning of materials; the document itself cannot determine it once and for all.

Materials do not arrange consequences on their own, and institutions are not materials speaking for themselves. Only when medical records, contracts, community certificates, IOUs, and rental filings are placed within concrete review or determination procedures, and authorized actors interpret and explain their meaning under the rules, can they possibly connect to eligibility, responsibility, or enforcement. Specifically, school personnel interpret enrollment materials; medical personnel interpret medical records; social insurance administrative departments judge the connection to work and other matters involved in work-injury determination; work-capacity appraisal committees assess the degree of impairment in work-related functioning and in the ability to care for oneself on the basis of expert opinions; workplace personnel explain attendance and labor relations; judges and relevant court personnel examine evidence; and community and administrative personnel handle residence, hardship, and eligibility conditions. These responsibilities are not distributed equally.

Community personnel may understand the same material concerning long-term residence as proof of stable residence, while school reviewers may still regard it as incomplete. The same medical records can preserve information about an injury. The employer's account of the accident and its connection to work may differ from the social insurance administrative department's determination, while the work-capacity appraisal committee separately assesses functional impairment within the scope of the recognized work-related injury. The difference lies not only in the content of materials, but also in positions of authorization and procedural standards.

People authorized to interpret materials are also limited by their responsibilities. School personnel cannot replace judges in handling debt evidence; court personnel cannot replace medical and appraisal personnel in forming judgments about injuries; and community personnel's statements about residence or hardship cannot unconditionally replace materials required by other procedures.

This division of work produces unequal interpretive authority, while also showing that no single actor can fully determine the entire meaning of facts of life solely through their own opinion. A division of authorized responsibilities does not mean that interpretation can proceed arbitrarily. Institutions differ in the materials they can process, the determinations they can make, and the procedures they must follow. When different accounts conflict, the dispute must be brought back to materials and reasons through such routes as supplementary documents, investigation, arbitration, review, appeal, reconsideration, or complaint, in accordance with their respective scopes of application and procedures. These routes do not replace one another and do not guarantee a changed conclusion. This prevents interpretive authority from being misrepresented as unrestricted subjective opinion. Authorized interpretation makes institutionalization more than a matter of materials: whoever has interpretive authority can affect eligibility, thresholds, and the consequences put into effect. [Fo1a]

IV. Weight Assignment through Eligibility and Exclusion through Thresholds

Differences that have been preserved, extracted, interpreted, and judged may become eligibility to enter a particular channel. Household registration, proof of residence, continuity of social insurance, educational credentials, medical records, judgments, real property, and proof of income can each open the corresponding entrance only under particular rules and procedures. Eligibility is not the automatic manifestation of a natural right. It is a channel opened after institutions recognize certain differences.

Eligibility channels often depend on several kinds of material jointly establishing eligibility. When a child applies for school enrollment, depending on local admission policy, the year, and the category of admission, some of the following may enter review: age, household registration, residence, social insurance, rental filings, parental materials, and available school places. In applications for the minimum subsistence guarantee, by contrast, household members living together, income, property, and the household's economic circumstances are checked under the rules governing that guarantee. Different bodies handle the two procedures under different rules; they do not constitute one and the same list of materials. In concrete review, no link can be assumed in advance to be necessarily sufficient; a child's enrollment is not determined by age alone. The intersection of these conditions shows that eligibility is a conditional arrangement within a particular channel, not the natural effect of a single piece of proof, nor a total judgment on a person's entire life or value.

Work-injury processing likewise does not guarantee compensation as soon as medical records appear. The fact of injury is presented through medical records and other materials, while a contract or other proof of a de facto labor relation is used to verify the employment relationship. Proof concerning the scene and coworkers' testimony are checked according to the issues in dispute, and the social insurance administrative department determines whether the injury is work-related. When the conditions are met, the work-capacity appraisal committee conducts a separate appraisal, whose conclusion bears on the corresponding disability benefits. Recuperation, medical treatment for a work-related injury, suspension of work with continued pay, and disability compensation each have their own conditions. Completion of disability grading cannot be treated as a common prerequisite for all these channels. Weight assignment through eligibility is conditional. Complete materials, consistent explanations, and procedural continuation may open a channel; supplementation and correction of materials, renewed investigation, or review may also change the direction of earlier handling. It does not fix a person's position permanently.

The other side of an eligibility channel is a threshold. When materials are incomplete, records interrupted, the parties concerned mismatched, formats wrong, proof insufficient, or recognition refused, differences already present in life may be unable to enter the corresponding procedure, and the chain of consequences then stops at a node. A threshold is not a wall outside institutions. It is a cutoff formed when differences have not been preserved, extracted, and recognized in the institutional format.

When a threshold appears, we must ask where the break occurs. Has no rental filing been made? Has a community certificate not been issued? Has the workplace refused to recognize the labor relation? Have attendance records and materials from the scene not been preserved? Or has the application not been received within the prescribed procedure? Describing all of these as an abstract wall obscures specific responsibility and wrongly reduces difficulties in life to a single problem of the applicant as an individual.

A family of nonlocal workers has lived in a city for years; the parents work, the child lives there, and the neighbors know about them. These may all be real circumstances. In a setting where the relevant local rules for that year and category of admission do require this material, if no rental filing has been made and school reviewers can process matters only through prescribed materials, the enrollment chain may halt at the material node; this does not mean that lived experience is denied. A worker really was injured at work, and medical records can explain the bodily harm. If the workplace denies the labor relation, attendance records are incomplete, and materials from the scene are lacking, medical records may not be sufficient on their own to connect to responsibility for a work-related injury. This shows that different materials carry different links.

A threshold is not an immovable conclusion. Only by clarifying the point of cutoff can we identify whether there is subsequent room for completing a missing filing, supplementary checks, investigation, arbitration, or a new explanation. Completing a missing filing, checking social insurance records further, supplementing testimony, investigating the scene, or confirming the labor relation through arbitration may give a previously broken relational chain another opportunity to continue. Whether it continues still depends on specific materials, authorization, and procedures.

V. Procedural Determination: How Institutions Allow Supplementation and Correction, Dispute, and Room for Adjustment

Procedures connect materials, interpretation, eligibility, and consequences. Application, review, supplementation and correction, investigation, appraisal, hearing, judgment, enforcement, reconsideration, and complaint are not formalities appended to a determination from the outside, but concrete paths through which handlers re-examine materials and reasons. They determine whether differences can be supplemented and corrected, reinterpreted, recognized, or excluded again. Procedures turn disputes into steps that can be handled and also constrain arbitrary changes of conclusion. Supplementation and correction involve submitting specified additional materials under the corresponding procedure; investigation involves rechecking the scene or testimony within the relevant authority. Labor arbitration, renewed appraisal or review of work capacity, appeals in litigation, administrative reconsideration, and other complaints belong to different procedures. Each has its own handlers, deadlines, grounds, and legal effects; they do not constitute one interchangeable set of remedies. [Fo6]

Within concrete procedures, retrieval of student registration materials, supplementary checks of social insurance, reissuance of community certificates, investigation of materials from the scene, and supplementation of coworkers' testimony each show where procedures leave room for

adjustment. So do renewed work-capacity appraisals or reviews sought when the corresponding conditions are met.

Within their respective procedural conditions and time limits, rental filings can be completed later, labor relations can be confirmed through arbitration, and court proceedings allow supplementary evidence, appeals, or new property leads. In assistance applications, proof of income and household-member materials can also be supplemented and corrected, while community investigations may explain hardship anew. These paths make it possible for differences that were not adequately handled before to re-enter determination, preserving an opportunity for reinterpretation.

Yet the existence of room for adjustment does not guarantee that every application will change the conclusion, nor that any difficulty in life can immediately rewrite an existing result. When supplementation and correction fail, a request for administrative reconsideration is not upheld, an injury is not recognized as work-related, or a work-capacity appraisal does not support the claimed degree of disability, the earlier cutoff may remain in effect. Conditionality is precisely an important part of procedural determination: it means neither that conclusions may be reversed at will nor that a channel is closed forever after a single refusal.

VI. Consequences Put into Effect: Why Institutions Are Harder than Local Reputation

Community members can spread word about people's reputations, relatives can say that someone does not keep their word, and specific people in local society can refuse to lend money. These consequences are important. Kinship, neighborhood, and local relations depend on long-term exchanges, memory, recognition, and responsibility, and affect borrowing, testimony, care, local recognition, and family evaluations. Yet the consequences of local reputation usually depend on ongoing exchanges, memory, and concrete relations. On the basis of reputation within community relations alone, one cannot directly implement statutory asset freezes or recovery measures, or cancel institutional eligibility.

Institutional consequences and the consequences of local reputation may affect a family at the same time. Local reputation may affect whether neighbors are willing to testify, relatives are willing to provide support, or others are willing to lend money. School enrollment, work-injury processing, assistance, court enforcement, and administrative processing may connect determinations to school places, compensation, accounts, files, and eligibility arrangements. The two may affect each other, but they cannot be treated as the same mechanism merely because both produce consequences. The consequences of local reputation and institutional consequences rely on different carriers. Institutional consequences depend on materials, authorization, accounts, files, judgments, and actual implementation within schools, workplaces, courts, and administrative procedures. Local proof can sometimes enter an application, but community reputation does not thereby automatically replace procedural determination. Only by distinguishing the two can we preserve the weight of community consequences and the hardness of institutional consequences.

The strength of institutionalization lies in its ability not only to judge differences but also to form consequences under concrete procedures. Approval or refusal of school enrollment may change a child's educational path. A determination of work-related injury affects work-injury benefits and subsequent handling; whether the injury is recognized affects compensation, recuperation, responsibility, and income. Once a court judgment enters enforcement, it may connect to freezing assets, recovery, or restrictions on consumption. Confirmation or nonconfirmation of eligibility for the minimum subsistence guarantee or medical assistance may change a family's channels for

obtaining the corresponding support. Assistance, loans, and administrative processing likewise change a family's concrete channels. Each of these consequences has its own statutory conditions; they cannot be merged into one general form of processing. [F10]

Consequences that can be put into effect must still be brought back to specific people, accounts, files, schools, workplaces, courts, and administrative procedures. Forms do not punish on their own, and records do not change life on their own. Only when handlers, acting under authorization, connect determinations to the corresponding arrangements do consequences actually occur.

VII. Institutional Write-Back: How an Act of Processing Becomes a New Difference

The results of institutional processing do not necessarily disappear when an event ends. Write-back forms when institutional personnel or procedures preserve processing results as institutional differences that can be extracted again in the future. Only when specific people or procedures retrieve, interpret, or assign weight to those differences anew in subsequent judgments does the content of write-back take effect again.

After an application, determination, refusal, supplementation and correction, penalty, or enforcement has concluded, application materials, statements of missing material, determination results, judgments, penalty records, and records of interruptions in social insurance may all be preserved at nodes from which they can still be extracted later. A failed enrollment application may leave material gaps and application records; failure to obtain recognition of a work-related injury may leave administrative results, workplace explanations, and materials concerning the dispute; court enforcement may leave judgments, enforcement records, and traces relating to credit. Handlers may extract these materials again in school transfers, job searches, loans, assistance, litigation, or mediation.

Materials left by write-back can be extracted anew and take effect again in later events, later relational fields, or later processing stages within the same continuing relational field. The content of write-back is not limited to unfavorable records. A filing successfully completed later, testimony accepted after supplementation, an explanation formed through renewed investigation, or a conclusion changed after review may also become material for later use. What nodes preserve are differences available for renewed extraction left by particular processing results, not eternally fixed identities or conclusions that continue automatically. New events can change the conditions under which materials are extracted.

Looking further, procedures themselves may also permit supplementary materials, renewed investigation, or challenges to an earlier interpretation. Suppose that a handler accepts a supplementary piece of material at a particular stage and enters it in the file. This indicates a change in the state of the differences recorded. In subsequent processing, however, the operative weight of the material at that time may still change through supplementary materials, renewed investigation, or interpretation under different procedures. Allowing a challenge or accepting supplementation and correction does not mean that subsequent judgments have thereby been automatically settled. Write-back therefore should not be written as the past automatically governing the present.

Write-back explains the continuity of institutional processing while also preserving the conditions for reinterpretation. Old records do not necessarily determine a person's fate. Family, local, and community relations beyond those records may still affect subsequent processing.

VIII. Institutionalization and Differentiation Positions

Institutionalization does not mean applying external rules to a person. In concrete institutional processing, whether someone is eligible to apply, whether they can provide proof, whether they are registered, whether they are penalized, whether they are subject to enforcement, and whether they can enter a channel all change or maintain that person's actual position in the social network and differentiation position in the current relational field through eligibility, thresholds, procedures, and consequences put into effect. Materials that are recognized or not recognized are not abstract labels. They affect whether people can enter school, obtain compensation, apply for assistance, pursue recovery, or maintain residential arrangements.

The same child may enter different educational paths depending on whether the applicable materials concerning household registration, proof of residence, rental filings, the parents' relevant social insurance, and schooling are recognized under local policy for the relevant year and category. The same worker may face different arrangements for recuperation, compensation, responsibility, and income depending on whether the labor relation is confirmed. These consequences of institutional processing for positions also appear in debt relations: the same debtor will occupy different positions of credit and action depending on whether the case enters court enforcement or remains a dispute among acquaintances. The difference lies not in a name itself, but in whether materials, interpretation, procedures, and implementation connect them to actual consequences.

Changes in differentiation positions can be seen in individuals and also travel along relational chains to families and localities, unfolding among concrete people. Recognition of a child's enrollment materials may stabilize the parents' work and residential arrangements; blocked enrollment may affect the parents' work, renting, and whether the family stays or leaves. Confirmation of responsibility for a work-related injury may change recuperation, income, debt, and kinship support; failure to obtain recognition of a work-related injury may affect family income, debt, workplace relations, and kinship support.

If a debt enters enforcement arrangements, the creditor, guarantors, relatives, and local reputation may all be affected. These consequences must all be observed by following relational chains back to concrete materials and procedures. They are not driven by abstract concepts acting on their own, nor should they be reduced to abstract positions moving of their own accord.

IX. Institutionalization and the Projection of Class Images

Institutionalization is not the endpoint. Labor contracts, social insurance records, wages, jobs, housing, debt, educational credentials, and enrollment eligibility are, in concrete processing, distinct differences and the materials that carry them, yet may affect one another through long-term relations of work, residence, education, and domination. For families whose actual continuity of contributions is affected by changes in work, unstable work may interrupt social insurance. Where the relevant rules do select this condition, interrupted social insurance may affect a child's enrollment and urban eligibility. Falling income affects rent, debt, and household expenditure, while unstable housing also affects educational paths and community recognition. What must be traced here is how concrete differences connect across different nodes and relational chains.

Labor, property, income, housing, education, debt, and relations of domination exert a strong pull in certain events precisely because contracts, wages, social insurance, housing, educational credentials, enrollment eligibility, and debt records are preserved, extracted, compared, and connected to consequences over time. What institutionalization can explain is how these differences are preserved and connected to concrete consequences, but this real connection does

not in itself automatically generate a class image. It is interpreters using class theory who select a set of high-weight differences from these relations, project them onto axes of economy, labor, property, and domination, and give them a name.

Institutionalization therefore cannot be equated with class-image formation. Still less can a class image be treated as an explanation already completed, reducing labor, housing, education, debt, family, local reputation, and community relations to the same thing. Labor contracts, social insurance, wages, housing, debt, educational credentials, and enrollment eligibility each have different sources, different handlers, and different consequences. Family care, local reputation, and community recognition still operate within their respective relational chains as well. Only by preserving these differences can we avoid prematurely compressing multiple chains into a single image. To understand concrete differentiation positions, we must still unpack the compressed labor, property, income, housing, debt, education, and relations of domination back into concrete materials, handlers, procedures, families, urban eligibility, schools, local reputation, and community networks.

Notes

[F01] School admissions and student registration, work-injury determination and work-capacity appraisal, and civil litigation and enforcement in mainland China belong to different procedures. Relevant personnel receive, examine, or preserve the corresponding materials only within their respective responsibilities and authority. For enrollment and student registration, see the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China and Articles 3–7 of the Measures for the Administration of Student Registration in Primary and Secondary Schools, Ministry of Education, Jiao Ji [2025] No. 1. For work-injury determination, see Articles 4–25 of the Measures for the Determination of Work-Related Injuries (Order No. 8 of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, effective in 2011). For the division of responsibilities between work-injury determination and work-capacity appraisal, and for benefits, see Articles 17–25 and 30–37 of the Regulations on Work-Related Injury Insurance (revised in 2010), and Articles 2, 4, and 7–16 of the Measures for the Administration of Work-Capacity Appraisal (Order No. 55 of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and the National Health Commission, effective July 1, 2025). For debt evidence and enforcement, see Articles 66–75, 235, 247, and 250–255 of the Civil Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China (amended in 2023). Each source establishes only the corresponding procedure; it does not establish that the materials are kept by the same institution.

[F03] Articles 66–75 of the Civil Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China (amended in 2023) provide for documentary evidence, electronic data, witness testimony, and other evidence, and for their examination. Articles 235 and 247 concern the enforcement of legal documents that have taken effect; Articles 250–255 concern the time limit for applying for enforcement, enforcement notices, property reporting and inquiries, and enforcement measures. The evidentiary weight of chat logs or transfer records in an individual case must still be examined in conjunction with that case. Judicial interpretations concerning labor disputes are not used to establish ordinary debt relations.

[F01a] See note F01. The reference here is used only within the jurisdiction, period, procedures, and scope of materials expressly stated in that note.

[F06] The following procedures are handled separately under the corresponding legal sources in mainland China and cannot replace one another. For work-injury determination and remedies against such determinations, see Articles 4–23 of the Measures for the Determination of Work-Related Injuries. For the procedures for initial work-capacity appraisal, renewed appraisal, and review, see Articles 2, 4, 5, and 7–23 of the Measures for the Administration of Work-Capacity Appraisal (Order No. 55 of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and the National Health Commission, effective July 1, 2025). For routes for handling labor disputes, the provision of evidence, and enforcement of documents that have taken legal effect, see Articles 2, 4–6, 9, and 27–51 of the Labor Dispute Mediation and Arbitration Law of the People's Republic of China. For appeals and enforcement in civil litigation, see Articles 171–182, 235, 247, and 250–255 of the Civil Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China (amended in 2023). For acceptance,

supplementation and correction, evidence collection, and decisions in administrative reconsideration, see Articles 30–35, 44–47, and 61–79 of the Administrative Reconsideration Law of the People's Republic of China (revised in 2023, effective January 1, 2024). The handlers, time limits, grounds, routes of access to remedies, and legal effects of each procedure must be judged under its own rules. These sources cannot jointly establish the authority of every service counter or of other complaint procedures.

[F10] The consequences of school enrollment, work-related injuries, enforcement, and assistance fall under different rules. See the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China; the Regulations on Work-Related Injury Insurance and the Measures for the Determination of Work-Related Injuries; the enforcement part of the Civil Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China and Articles 1 and 3–6 of the Provisions of the Supreme People's Court on Restricting High Consumption and Certain Other Consumption by Persons Subject to Enforcement. For confirmation and payment of the minimum subsistence guarantee, see Articles 2 and 19–25 of the Measures for Review and Confirmation of the Minimum Subsistence Guarantee (Min Fa [2021] No. 57). For the recipients, coverage, and administration of medical assistance, see Sections II–V and VII–VIII of Guo Ban Fa [2021] No. 42. For distinctions among assistance materials and procedures, see also F08. The sources above each support the corresponding consequences and cannot be used interchangeably.

Chapter 18. Class-Image Formation: How High-Weight Differentiating Units Are Brutally Projected into Class Images

I. Strictly Speaking, Class Does Not Exist at All

When differences in life enter institutional processing, the relevant personnel need to preserve them as materials according to rules, put them into prescribed formats, and then pass them to people authorized to make determinations, connecting them to consequences that can be put into effect when the conditions are met. Household registration, social insurance, rental filings, labor contracts, medical records, wage transaction records, student records, and court enforcement records all preserve differences. What nodes preserve are differences left by particular acts of processing. If these materials are retrieved again in specific events later, their operative weight and interpretation still depend on the concrete handling; they do not all automatically gain weight. If these preserved differences remain connected over time to labor, property, income, housing, education, debt, and relations of domination, they make certain circumstances bear heavy consequences over the long term.

Strictly speaking, class does not exist at all. Wages, property, employment relations, debt, housing, risk, and relations of domination all really exist, and they are often very weighty. How much a person earns, whether their work is stable, whether their labor relation is recognized, whether they own real property, whether they rent, when debts fall due, whether their child can enter school, whether their social insurance is continuous, whether they can recuperate after illness, who can arrange other people's time, and who can push risk onto others: these are all real and weighty differences. The existence of images and classifications cannot in turn prove that class exists.

Society is not laid out in advance by total images such as class images. In a concrete event, what must actually be traced is which differences are preserved, extracted, assigned weight, connected, and brought into consequences. Differentiating units have a basis in reality, but they are not new underlying particles of society. Labor relations, sources of income, possession of property, housing conditions, debt deadlines, the bearing of risk, the capacity to wait, the width of available exits, concrete differences within relations of domination, institutional eligibility, family fallback support, household registration, accent, medical history, local relations, kinship responsibilities, national memory, and community recognition form traceable social consequences in the present only when they are extracted, assigned weight, and connected to relational chains within concrete relational fields. The results of this handling constitute write-back only when they are preserved as differences that can be extracted again in the future. Their later extraction and renewed effects in subsequent relational fields are not inevitable; they still depend on concrete conditions and subsequent handling.

Class theory extracts a set of high-weight differentiating units from differences that have remained connected and gained weight together over time in reality. It casts them onto axes of economic relations, labor, property, and domination, compressing, projecting, and naming them to form a class image. The differences extracted and projected onto the same axis do not thereby lose their respective origins and consequences. The importance of labor, property, income, housing, education, debt, and relations of domination is beyond question.

Class theory is a form of total-image subsumption from the outset: it passes off the result of projection as an entity and an underlying reality, rewriting a person's multiple positions within the

social differentiation network as a single low-dimensional position. People are simultaneously situated within labor, family, household registration, locality, language, the body, debt, education, ethnicity, religion, institutional materials, and community memory. Yet class theory may cram all these differences onto axes of economic relations, labor, property, and domination, then say, “This is who you are.”

Rejecting class does not mean denying the wage, property, and housing differences and debt pressures people already bear, still less denying that employment, risk shifting, and relations of domination constrict their choices severely. Class theory also assumes a pre-existing social entity behind these relations, as if people were born into a natural group and their subsequent wages, medical histories, household registration, and family responsibilities were merely its manifestations. The actual order is exactly the reverse: differences are first preserved, recognized, amplified, or downweighted within concrete relations; only then does class theory select a set of them and supply a unified image.

Differentiating units must not be mistaken for another kind of underlying atom either. A differentiating unit is not something with a fixed weight apart from its relational field. The same material, debt, or housing situation changes eligibility, risk, and available exits only when connected to concrete nodes and relational chains. Arranging differentiating units anew into an eternal foundational table would merely create another plane alongside the class plane.

II. What Is Brutal Projection?

Brutal projection is not ordinary compression. Social analysis certainly requires compression: without it, reality cannot be discussed, remembered, or compared. Every concept extracts some differences from countless details and places them within intelligible relations. Using a few axes for limited compression is not in itself a mistake. The problem is that, after selecting a set of axes, class theory directly elevates this low-dimensional image into society itself.

These operations are interconnected. Class theory selects axes such as economic relations, labor, property, income, and domination, examining wages, employment, assets, housing, debt, and who dominates whom. These axes do carry considerable weight, but they are not everything. Meanwhile, household registration, locality, language, medical history, family responsibilities, national memory, religious relations, community recognition, institutional materials, and historical indices of kinship are pushed into the background. They have not disappeared; they have lost their own explanatory standing within the class image. An ordinary limited explanation merely downweights for the time being the dimensions it has not extracted. Class theory, however, presupposes that its selected axes govern all explanation, using a total image to deprive other differences of independent explanatory power.

Continuous differences are then cut into coarse categories by designations of different kinds. “Worker” and “boss” primarily point to employment, jobs, and relations of domination; “landlord” and “tenant” primarily point to property, leases, and control over residence; “debtor” primarily points to creditor–debtor relations, deadlines, credit, and responsibility; “the bottom stratum” and “the middle class” primarily belong to the naming of strata. These designations can serve limited analysis for particular purposes, but they are not the same kind of classification, nor do they automatically form groups, communities, or class entities of the same nature. Designations make identification faster while cutting differences into coarser categories. Once group labels are fixed, an individual's continuous differentiation position is more readily seen as an already constituted group position.

The operations of class theory are linked and driven throughout by the same structure: it inverts the order by treating the result of projection as an entity, as if an entity existed first and people then entered it, or an underlying group reality came first and concrete differences afterward, making this reifying inversion appear self-evident. It requires household registration, gender, national memory, and local relations to appear only as subordinate explanations, so that an image takes the place of real relations and other real differences must conform entirely to the total image's mode of display.

Ordinary compression leaves a path back to verification: people can still ask which differences were not extracted, which relations gave them weight, and when the original explanation needs adjustment. Brutal projection closes that path. It does not treat downweighted household registration, medical history, family responsibilities, or local relations as realities that might correct the image; it requires them only to confirm the existing image. Differences that could have supplied counterexamples thus become footnotes beneath the total image.

III. The Appeal of the Class Image and the Cost of Compressing Multiple Chains

The class image appears to be something real because the differences behind it often gain weight together, connect repeatedly, and become linked to heavy consequences, not because a real class entity is at work. Class theory does extract labor relations, sources of income, possession of property, housing stability, debt pressure, educational opportunities, buffers against risk, the ability to exit, and relations of domination, and projects them onto a single plane.

If these differences go unseen, many heavy pressures are rewritten as personal failures. Low wages are attributed to inadequate ability, and being unable to find suitable work after unemployment to a lack of effort; debt after illness is attributed to a failure to plan, and incomplete school-enrollment materials to parents not caring enough; failure to secure one's rights after a work injury is attributed to not knowing how to fight for them, and an inability to pay rent to careless spending. These explanations sometimes grasp a little of the truth, yet can all too easily bypass more constraining relations. Through the aspects of people’s circumstances presented by the class image, people recognize much suffering as the result of differences connected over time, rather than isolated events. But the grounds of explanation lie in real differentiating units and their processing; explanatory power does not belong to the image.

A person cannot wait because rent is due next week, wages have not yet been paid, their child must submit materials, demands for debt repayment have already arrived, and their parents are still waiting for money for medicine. Someone with savings can take time to find work after losing a job; someone without savings quickly enters a countdown.

A person does not dare to resign because, in circumstances where social-insurance materials are required locally for the relevant admission year and category, work supplies not only wages but also a connection to social insurance. Social insurance connects to the child's enrollment materials, and enrollment connects to whether the family can remain in the city. Resigning is more than changing jobs: it loosens a whole series of connected materials and eligibility conditions at once. People who own housing, have support from relatives, and hold stable eligibility can bear uncertainty; for people who rent, owe debts, and cannot let their social insurance lapse, a single change may bring cascading consequences.

In concrete arrangements connecting sick leave, attendance, performance, income, and living expenses, people return to work before they have recovered because sick leave affects attendance,

attendance affects performance, performance affects income, and income affects debt and rent. The body needs rest, but debt and household expenditure require them to recover their capacity to work immediately. Some people can start again after a failure; others fall into debt, come to be regarded as untrustworthy, become caught in family quarrels, and face relatives' evaluations after failing once. These circumstances cannot be explained by character alone.

The capacity to wait may come from savings, stable housing, relatives who can provide temporary help, social insurance that can remain uninterrupted, or a work relation still recognized by institutions. It is not an abstract psychological quality. Nor can the width of available exits be summed up by saying that someone has "better conditions." Some people can change jobs, wait to recover from illness, or supplement materials; for others, an interruption in wages brings rent, debt, and care responsibilities pressing in at once. The capacity for trial and error is likewise provided or taken away by these relations.

These differences often occur together. Extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression of real differentiating units produce explanatory power within a limited scope. As a low-dimensional output, the class image can present the weighty relations extracted; this constitutes its explanatory appeal. Yet this explanatory power within a limited scope comes from real differences and their processing. It cannot prove the existence of a class entity, nor does it mean that a class entity is arranging them. From the outset, class theory's basic structure belongs to Model C: total-image subsumption. Treating it as an ordinary limited model on this account would overlook the problem that it elevates a partial selection into the whole of society and requires other relations to retreat into subordinate positions.

The problem with class theory is not that it extracts labor, income, property, housing, debt, and relations of domination. These differences must be seen. The danger is that, after projecting them into a low-dimensional image, class theory uses that image to explain all of society. People with similarly low incomes are not necessarily in the same circumstances. Someone with local household registration, a kinship network, and stable rental relations does not occupy the same position as a tenant from elsewhere who has no support from relatives and whose child's enrollment materials remain incomplete. Their incomes and labor positions may be similar, but household registration, urban eligibility, kinship networks, rental filings, school materials, and local recognition place them in different differentiation positions.

Similar incomes indicate proximity along one axis only. They do not guarantee the same capacity to wait, institutional eligibility, or family buffers. The same wage may connect to entirely different consequences for a person with local household registration, stable rental arrangements, and kinship support than for someone with incomplete materials, an uncooperative landlord, and heavy care responsibilities. Naming both together certainly makes identification easier, but it conceals the nodes that separate their circumstances.

Being workers likewise does not mean being in the same circumstances. Statistical classifications can exist, as can similar economic pressures. But classifications and similar positions do not automatically generate a natural community, unified interests, unified consciousness, unified responsibility, a unified capacity for action, or a historical mission.

The class image appears weighty because real, weighty differences repeatedly gain weight together in concrete relational fields, after which class theory projects them onto a plane of economic relations, labor, property, and domination. But these differences do not always connect in the same way. The factory, school enrollment, courtship and marriage, and debt after illness are not four interchangeable backgrounds. Different materials, eligibility conditions, and relations are extracted in each. In the factory, labor discipline, wages, jobs, and attendance may carry great weight; in

enrollment, household registration, social insurance, rental filings, and student-registration materials may carry great weight; in courtship and marriage, real property, debt, family responsibilities, local reputation, and bodily condition may carry great weight; in debt after illness, savings, medical insurance, loans from relatives, lost work time, labor contracts, and bodily recovery gain weight together.

Class theory compresses differences that originally passed through different nodes and relational chains into the same plane, making them look like a single kind of position. These differences then lose independent explanatory standing. If every circumstance is called class, pressures of labor and resources are seen, but household registration, locality, ethnicity, gender, medical history, kinship responsibilities, community memory, and institutional materials can readily lose their explanatory standing. Class is not an entity, and the low-dimensional position marked by a class image is not the entirety of a person's differentiation position.

IV. How Labor Relations Affect Chains of Everyday Life

A nonlocal worker's circumstances cannot be explained by the level of wages alone. What work they do at the workplace, whether their contract continues, whether social-insurance contributions are paid, whether they can take leave, and when they receive their wages all connect with housing, children, parents, and bodily condition. Labor relations are not the sole source of other relations, but may connect previously separate pressures to one person's everyday arrangements.

How work affects chains of everyday life depends on how these institutional relations intersect in concrete circumstances. If local admission rules list social insurance among enrollment materials, an interruption in social insurance may cause problems with a child's enrollment materials. The residence in this situation requires verification and filing, and whether the landlord cooperates in providing the relevant materials also affects residential eligibility. Once these chains have actually connected, instability in work makes several procedures that could previously be maintained become vulnerable together. Beyond labor income, whether institutional materials remain continuous and whether other people cooperate likewise determine whether a family can remain in the city.

Moving changes the area in which the family lives, the commute, and arrangements for taking children to and from school. When the new home is farther away, parents cannot arrive by the end of the school day, while higher commuting costs squeeze the part of wages available for living expenses. If they postpone moving for the sake of school, rent and housing conditions may become new burdens. These consequences arise from the interconnection of working hours, address, and care arrangements. They cannot be deduced directly from a labor position.

Debt deadlines, money borrowed for a father's hospitalization, and old bodily injuries also constrain resignation, recuperation, and the assertion of rights. Repayment dates do not wait for bodily recovery, and taking leave may make wages and jobs more insecure. Some people need to protect their immediate income first; others can no longer bear their former workload because of an old injury. These constraints intersect through family, medical care, wages, and work arrangements. They cannot be reduced to a single economic factor.

The designation “worker” can roughly identify relations of employment, wages, and being dominated. It cannot replace, in advance, actual tracing of contracts, social insurance, addresses, care, debt, health, and available exits. People who share the designation “worker” do not necessarily have the same capacity to wait or the same ways of bearing consequences. A designation is not proof of a natural community.

It is the points at which contracts, working hours, income, materials, and addresses connect or break off that change a person's room to leave a job, find another, or recuperate briefly. The effects of labor relations therefore cannot be summed up by a wage figure. Whether a contract is renewed, whether social insurance remains continuous, and whether leave is permitted will each change the conditions of materials, income, and bodily recuperation. Only when these connect with relations involving landlords, schools, and families do they form the paths a person can actually take. An interruption in social insurance need not mean only the loss of one protection. In circumstances where social-insurance materials are required locally for the relevant admission year and category, it may also leave a gap in the enrollment materials currently in use. The repercussions of a change in work for income and residence may, in turn, affect the continuity of rental-filing materials and the room to choose another job. Once working hours are fully scheduled, moving, school pickup and drop-off, care, and treatment also become difficult to arrange otherwise.

V. How Property and Housing Become Education and Opportunity

Housing first enters education and institutional eligibility. The difference between owning and renting concerns not only the extent of one’s assets but also whether an address can remain stable, materials can be maintained, and a child can stay on the same educational path. When housing conditions change, educational opportunities may change with them. Housing is therefore more than a property situation.

For the family discussed above, if these materials are indeed required locally for the relevant admission year and category, rental filings, landlord cooperation, address, and school materials connect within the same relation. The fact that a tenant lives there may not be enough. Much also depends on whether the landlord is willing to supply materials, whether the filing can be completed, and whether the address is recognized. These procedures turn the fact of residence into institutional eligibility, while also making it possible for people who all rent to obtain different results. Whether a lease is stable and an address can continue affects whether a family can make longer-term educational, work, and living arrangements. But a stable address does not necessarily guarantee smooth schooling; these conditions do not lead to one single outcome.

Relocation changes commuting time and time spent together. Living farther away requires parents to keep adjusting between work and taking children to and from school. A longer journey consumes not only money but also time for companionship, supplementary lessons, and school matters. A change of address increases transport expenses and constricts a family's room to arrange its time and income. Housing thus preserves an address, a commuting radius, and family arrangements together. Even if the landlord supplies materials, the pressures of commuting and care are not necessarily relieved.

Housing also enters courtship and marriage and evaluations of the future. Whether someone has a stable home, can afford rent, and can maintain an address is treated by relatives, in courtship and marriage, and in local evaluations as evidence of whether they can arrange their life. These evaluations are not produced by housing alone. They form through connections between housing, family responsibilities, job stability, and expectations of the future.

Housing is a node where relational chains intersect, not merely an asset that can be calculated. It connects to addresses, materials, schools, commuting, family arrangements, and external evaluations. Precisely for this reason, differences in housing cannot all be compressed into differences between rich and poor, still less can “housing” as a whole be treated as a single differentiating unit. Whether each node can sustain the connection changes how much time and choice a family retains. When someone is forced to change homes, educational materials, time for

school pickup and drop-off, and evaluations in courtship and marriage may not change simultaneously, yet they constrain a person's room to arrange the future at different nodes.

VI. How Debt Produces Lock-In

Borrowing after illness hardens time. The body needs recuperation, treatment takes time, and income may stop, yet repayment dates arrive on schedule. When a sum falls due, the room to stop work, find a new job, or wait for treatment or appraisal is constricted. Debt's weight lies not only in its amount but in how it pulls bodily recovery, work arrangements, and repayment deadlines into the same span of time. This also changes the room to resign, recuperate, wait, and assert rights. Someone who must repay immediately can hardly bear an interruption in income; an injured person may also postpone handling matters because of the conflict between treatment and wages. Lock-in is not caused by the name “debt.” It results from the interconnection of deadlines, income, the body, and others' demands.

Consider a loan of the same amount. If it comes from relatives, the considerations of personal regard and responsibility facing the borrower enter into judgments about whether they can seek help or negotiate accommodation when they encounter difficulties. If the loan comes as an advance from a boss, and dependence on the job does in fact restrict alternative arrangements, a borrower who wants to resign, recuperate, or turn to other arrangements faces constraints tied to employment when trying to exit. These two circumstances place different limits on seeking help and exiting. Furthermore, if the loan connects to a bank's deadlines and credit, the constraints lie in repayment deadlines and credit judgments; if it connects to a platform's debt collection and fees, it involves the corresponding collection pressure and fees. These relations, too, must not be confused with the first two.

The four paths do not bring the same pressure. Each brings a person into different relations of recognition, urging, compensation, and return, making the boundaries around seeking help and exiting different, so that the same sum has different consequences for different people.

Debt deadlines, repayment pressure, credit, debt collection, and kinship responsibilities constitute a set of differences that can be traced separately; they cannot be merged into a single differentiating unit. Class theory can extract some of these weighty differences and project them as a rough position. The class image is the result: it cannot actively incorporate or compress differences in debt. Analysis must still ask when the deadlines fall, who is pressing for payment, and which work and family arrangements therefore cannot be interrupted.

Lock-in within debt relations is not forever immovable either. A loan repaid, a course of treatment supported, or a job becoming stable again may each loosen one pressure slightly. But other deadlines, credit, and responsibilities may remain. A partial loosening cannot be taken to mean that all consequences have disappeared.

VII. How Risk Is Distributed and Shifted onto Others

Illness does not reveal the same vulnerability in everyone. It brings savings, medical insurance, care, and leave conditions into view together, and these different conditions determine whether someone can wait and recover after bodily harm. Some have savings and can obtain treatment first; others must first think about the cost of medicine. Some can take leave and receive care from relatives; others lose their income as soon as they stop work.

Unemployment reveals time to wait and family fallback support. Some people can rely on their families to cover rent and daily expenses temporarily while waiting for another job. Others lack this

buffer: as soon as income stops, they must repay debts, move, or accept worse work. The consequences of unemployment depend on whether the family can provide support and whether time can be extended, not merely on whether a job is lost.

An injury does not automatically become compensation. Contracts or other proof of a de facto labor relation are used to verify the employment relation, while surveillance records of the scene and coworkers' testimony are reviewed according to the specific issues in dispute. Denial by the employer does not automatically block a determination: the social insurance administrative department can investigate in accordance with law and issue a work-injury determination. When the conditions are met, appraisal of the disability grade by the work-capacity appraisal committee follows a separate procedure. Completion of that appraisal must not be treated as a common prerequisite for all recuperation, medical treatment for work-related injuries, or benefits during work suspension with continued pay. Whether the appraisal can proceed and reach a conclusion does, however, affect whether the corresponding disability benefits and compensation can be implemented.

Although the procedures leave routes for investigation and remedies, injured workers still face a heavy burden because materials are hard to obtain when an employer evades responsibility or refuses to issue proof, records of the scene are lacking, or coworkers are unwilling to testify. What work-related injuries reveal is precisely how responsibility is acknowledged or pushed away at concrete nodes, and who ultimately bears the actual costs of bodily harm.

A small-business owner may bear rent, loans, operating pressures, and market uncertainty. A landlord, in turn, may shift housing instability onto tenants by raising rent, withholding a deposit, refusing to cooperate with a rental filing, or demanding a move at short notice. We must neither deny the risks small-business owners themselves bear nor use those risks to play down risk shifting.

The distribution of risk is a process within real relations, not class-image formation itself. Illness brings treatment and care to the fore; unemployment, time and family fallback support; work injuries, the determination of responsibility and compensation. Their relational chains differ. Class theory extracts a set of differences in risk, income, property, and domination, making the image appear stable. This is only a descriptive judgment about the differences extracted. The class image must not be written as a subject distributing the consequences of illness, unemployment, or work injuries. Risk is taken on or shifted onto others within different relations, so similar accidents have different consequences for different people. Nor can these consequences be inferred in advance from a group designation.

These differences must still be identified within the relations of concrete relational fields. Savings, care, contracts, materials, and recognition must each be traced to establish how they change the possibilities of waiting, compensation, and exit before and after an accident. Some people can obtain treatment but have no long-term income; some have work skills but no time to wait; some preserve materials yet still receive no recognition. We must distinguish which relations take on risk and which shift costs onto others.

VIII. Capacity for Domination: Who Can Arrange Other People's Time and Consequences?

Beyond resource differences, concrete differences within relations of domination must also be traced: powers to schedule shifts and deduct wages, demands for proof, control over leases, cooperation with filings, and job assignments gain weight together in concrete relational fields. The powers discussed here also include actual capacities for control; their exercise is not invariably

authorized by law. Wage deductions that violate rules still put real pressure on people. These are distinct powers of control that can alter a person's time, eligibility, income, and available exits; they cannot all be subsumed under the abstract phrase “capacity for domination.” Who can set shifts, demand materials, or decide whether eligibility can continue often comes closer to everyday consequences than a sweeping designation of strength or weakness.

A server cannot pick up their child: a supervisor's scheduling of late shifts and deductions for leave push working time into family care. After a worker is injured, workplace demands for proof, attendance records, and wage deductions turn bodily recovery into a problem within the organization of labor. For a tenant preparing a child’s enrollment materials under admission rules that do require rental-filing materials, whether the landlord cooperates with the filing again affects the conversion of the fact of residence into institutional eligibility. The three scenes differ, but in each, domination enters into consequences through time arrangements, demands for proof, or cooperation with filings.

Domination is most direct where someone can turn their own arrangements into another person's timetable. The party requiring others to wait, supply further proof, change shifts, or endure a move does not necessarily bear the costs of waiting, obtaining evidence, care, and interrupted materials; the other party's action space nevertheless contracts. The gap between who makes decisions and who bears consequences is precisely the weight of relations of domination in everyday life. It often appears first in who can delay and who must respond immediately.

These real consequences are transmitted along relational chains through specific powers of control. We must still distinguish which power is involved, who exercises it, and where it alters another person's choices. Domination must also be examined through whether those whose lives are arranged retain room to wait, refuse, recuperate, or obtain missing materials. Only when this room narrows does a specific power reveal its consequences in life. Some pressures come from scheduling, others from proof or filings. Each must be traced to the actor exercising the power and the people bearing consequences, rather than attributing all consequences to an abstract position.

Class theory extracts a set of differences in domination from this and projects them as positions of strength or weakness. But the class image is only the result of this explanatory operation. It must not be written as an acting subject that arranges time, transfers costs, or produces domination.

IX. How Families Take On Pressures of Labor, Debt, Risk, and Care

Once wages enter a family, they become rent, food, children's expenses, and parents' medicine costs. Unemployment enters relations between spouses, relatives' evaluations, and future arrangements. Borrowing after illness affects who provides care, who borrows money, and who does the housework. Labor income, bodily harm, and repayment pressures that originally fell on one person are redistributed within the family. These expenses and burdens often demand answers together in the same month: who pays, who takes leave, who provides care, and who explains matters to relatives.

Families can buffer some of this pressure. This is not abstract warmth: someone actually takes on the time, costs, and responsibilities. Parents looking after children prevent working hours from immediately overwhelming care. Relatives lending money and siblings sharing medicine costs can leave a family some time to wait and seek treatment. Spouses bearing unemployment together, and older people offering explanations for younger people in local society, may also temporarily prevent reputation and recognition from breaking down.

Families may also amplify pressure. When a lack of savings, ill parents, children at school, strained kinship relations, and debt incurred to maintain respectability coincide, a single change in income meets multiple responsibilities. It is no longer merely a lost wage payment: it becomes a problem of care arrangements, borrowing pressure, relatives' evaluations, and family shame. How much relatives can lend, whether parents still have the physical strength, and whether spouses can share care all change where the pressure ultimately falls and how long it lasts.

Housing, education, debt, care responsibilities, local evaluations, and evaluations in courtship and marriage may also enter the next generation's circumstances. What children take on is not limited to property: it may also include educational paths, household-registration materials, burdens arising from family debt, and care responsibilities. The family is a real relational node. It cannot be compressed into an appendage of the class image or a shell for class reproduction; it changes where pressure falls and how long it lasts.

Family buffering, amplification, and transmission are not steps in a fixed sequence. The same debt after illness may first be temporarily covered by borrowing from relatives, then increase family pressure through care and repayment. The key remains how concrete responsibilities are taken on or passed along. Whether a family can buffer pressure also depends on whether care, borrowing, and explanation can continue. Once these relations break off, income and bodily pressures that were temporarily buffered may concentrate again.

X. How Class Designations Disguise Projection as Underlying Reality

Designations such as worker, landlord, debtor, and middle class do not arise from nothing. “Worker” identifies relations of employment, wages, jobs, attendance, and being dominated; “landlord” identifies real property, leases, deposits, control over residence, and cooperation with rental filings; “debtor” identifies deadlines, credit, repayment, and responsibility; “middle class” identifies stable income, housing, educational arrangements, and buffers against risk. These designations of different kinds can rapidly identify some relations for particular purposes, but they cannot replace one another.

Rapid identification also cuts continuous, intersecting differentiation positions into coarser group boundaries. Once a designation is fixed, people readily leave aside different household registrations, medical histories, family responsibilities, local recognition, and widths of available exits. What remains is a position that appears already complete. Once a designation covers over materials, responsibilities, and recognition that originally required separate inquiry, group boundaries appear tidier than the actual relations.

Labels in particular cannot prove the existence of a natural group or a real community. A boss may face pressure from upstream actors to lower prices, debt, and local dependencies, and may also go on shifting risk onto employees. People who share the designation “worker” may differ greatly in household registration, medical history, care, and available exits. The same designation does not automatically generate shared memory, shared responsibility, or shared consequences. Nor does it guarantee that people have the same paths for bearing consequences when they suffer harm, wait, or need to exit. Denying class does not deny real communities, but limited classifications and labels can never serve as evidence that class exists.

Reopening a designation does not mean making it disappear or denying the pressures it captures. It means refusing to let the designation reach conclusions about reality in advance. Designations cannot replace judgment about concrete relations, nodes, and consequences. Once a designation is fixed, differences that could have corrected judgment are also readily pushed into the background.

Reopening the designation means asking what class theory has extracted, amplified, downweighted, and excluded. It also means asking in which relational fields explanations based on the group position compressed from these differences overstep their bounds, and when the same group position can no longer explain the situation, so that materials, relations, and consequences regain their respective explanatory standing.

XI. Lock-In, Room for Adjustment, and Positional Displacement within Relational Chains

In circumstances where the conditions above connect, lock-in comes from multiple relations acting together. Debt shortens waiting time; interrupted social insurance makes enrollment materials precarious; failure to recognize a work injury leaves bodily harm borne by the individual; the absence of rental filings makes urban eligibility unstable. With education and other institutional eligibility connected to these, change is no longer merely a personal choice. When these relations connect, people may still make choices, yet can hardly bear the consequences of each change.

Within these circumstances, some chains can loosen in part. Release from debt changes time pressure; making up gaps in social insurance may reopen the enrollment chain; recognition of a work injury changes responsibility and compensation; a completed filing can make residential eligibility more stable; and changes in educational paths may affect the next generation's opportunities. These changes are not the same thing. Each loosens a different link, and no single change can be mistaken for a transformation of the entire situation.

Positional displacement remains constrained. Whether new nodes recognize someone, whether old reputations can be downweighted, and whether a new community accepts them all determine whether a partial loosening can continue. Different chains do not loosen simultaneously. One relation may ease while another still holds the person in place. Making up gaps in social insurance does not necessarily eliminate debt immediately; recognition of a work injury does not necessarily change family care at once; and a completed filing may still encounter restrictions from a lease or reputation.

Whether a change in relational chains brings about an actual positional displacement for a person depends on whether it really changes the consequences. The image formed by class theory may change accordingly, but the image is not the cause of lock-in, room for adjustment, or positional displacement. Displacement is not an inspirational story or an escape from some class fate. If these conditions have not connected, a change in how the image is described does not widen a person's actual available exits. Nor can displacement be judged from the result alone. Seeing someone change jobs, supply materials, or temporarily pay off debt still requires us to ask which relations have not loosened and whether certain materials, eligibility conditions, responsibilities, and support relations have actually changed the way they connect. Otherwise, a partial change can readily be mistaken for room for adjustment across the whole situation. Changing a designation cannot constitute genuine room for adjustment.

XII. Unpacking the Class Image Back into a Network of Differentiating Units

Strictly speaking, class does not exist at all. Concrete differences and their repeated connections within real relations are what really exist. Class theory extracts a set of high-weight differentiating units from them, compresses and projects them onto axes of economic relations, labor, property, and domination, and names them, thereby forming a class image. The differences that serve as the

original material must not be confused with the result of projection. Still less can this naming and compression be understood in reverse, as if a class entity existed first and reality then supplied its content.

The image's explanatory appeal comes from real, weighty differences; it cannot prove that class exists. The task is not to assign the class image a smaller place, but to remove its central place as what society fundamentally is. Otherwise, the result of projection will still be passed off as society itself, and other differences will still be compressed into subordinate explanations. The concrete differentiating units extracted and their processing can reveal these pressures; the efficacy comes from real differentiating units and their processing, rather than from the image itself. Acknowledging this establishes only that the relevant differences carry great weight. This appeal cannot be made into a reason for retaining class as an entity.

Unpacking must return to concrete differentiating units, nodes, relational chains, weights, and consequences. Analysis must trace who recognizes differences, which subjects extract them and assign weight, which nodes preserve and pass them on, how differences travel along relational chains to change eligibility, risk, evaluation, and action, and where the consequences then reach. This requires preserving the course of when differences are extracted, when they are downweighted, and how they enter into consequences. Explanation must be placed back within concrete processes, rather than allowing a group designation to predetermine how someone ought to be understood.

Differentiating units are not new underlying particles. They acquire traceable weight only within concrete relations. Unpacking the image back into a network therefore does not mean listing labor, housing, debt, and so forth once again, still less replacing it with a longer list of nouns. Merely making the list of nouns longer may still freeze relations back into a plane.

The same wage, lease, or loss of a job does not automatically form the same circumstances. The same difference has different weights in different relational fields. Whether relatives can provide support, whether debt collection is approaching, whether the landlord cooperates with a rental filing, and whether someone can wait for appraisal all make the consequences diverge. Similar economic pressures can coexist, but cannot cancel the roles of landlords, relatives, debt collectors, workplaces, and institutional materials at different nodes. Class theory's low-dimensional image therefore cannot replace differentiation positions within concrete relations.

When organizations, institutions, or actors classify, judge, and make arrangements according to a class image, only then can these classifications, judgments, and arrangements connect the image's divisions to actual consequences. The results of this handling can be preserved through institutional nodes such as archives and official documents, or retained through nodes such as personal memory, local reputation, or community evaluations. In institutional cases, the corresponding recording must still be governed by specific powers, rules, and procedures. As long as the results of handling are preserved as differences that can be extracted again in the future, this constitutes write-back. Whether these records are later retrieved and take effect again depends on subsequent relational fields and handling by concrete actors. The image itself cannot create labor, debt, housing, or relations of domination on its own. Write-back of action undertaken according to the image reinforces the structure of total-image subsumption after that structure enters action; it is not a prerequisite for an explanatory structure to constitute Model C.

Removing the image's central place as an underlying reality does not mean playing down real pressures, nor does it require abandoning judgments about labor, property, housing, debt, and relations of domination. They gain weight together within concrete relational fields, but gaining weight together does not mean being one underlying reality, nor can it cancel other differences' explanatory standing. Unpacking the image requires every judgment to be traceable to concrete

relations, nodes, and consequences. Only then will the pressures captured by the image not become a reason to occlude other differences.

Chapter 19. National-Community Formation: How Partially Overlapping Networks Form Historical Communities

I. National-Community Formation Cannot Be Described Following the Pattern of Class-Image Formation

Why would someone call people in a distant place, whom they have never met, “our people,” while another distant worker with a similar income and similar labor circumstances cannot automatically become one of “our people”? The difference lies not in abstract classification but in whether there is an interaction network through which transmission can occur. Transmission here does not mean that an abstract name connects people by itself. Family members, people engaged in exchanges, teachers, religious practitioners, and local organizations preserve designations, explain rites and customs, and retell stories in everyday interaction. Within concrete relations, they also decide which consequences must be borne together.

Class-image formation shows how interpreters using class theory brutally project high-weight differentiating units involving economic relations, labor, property, housing, debt, risk, and capacity for domination into a class image, and pass off this image as what society fundamentally is. National-community formation cannot be described following this pattern. Class itself does not exist; the class image is a product of brutal projection, whereas a nation consists of real, partially overlapping networks. National-community formation does not place people in the same box under an abstract name, nor does it project differences onto a single axis. It presents another process of formation: how networks of small communities, similar but not identical, connect link by link through language, accent, marriage, rites and customs, place names, migration, schools, markets, religion, shared institutions, and shared consequences, forming paths along which recognition, memory, and responsibility can be transmitted.

A nation cannot be deduced directly from bloodline, registration, or propaganda. Kinship by descent, the state, and cultural symbols may all participate in national-community formation, but they are not the source of the nation. What actually stabilizes a nation is long-term interaction, partial overlap, shared memory, shared consequences, and transmission across generations. A nation is a historical community formed by partially overlapping networks of small communities through long-term interaction and transmission across generations. Someone who does not know a distant person may nevertheless be able to read their language, understand their history, recognize their rites and customs, know that they stand within certain shared boundaries, and know that certain shared consequences will fall on both of them at the same time. A nation does not mean that everyone knows everyone else. It means that paths for transmitting recognition and responsibility have formed among many local interaction networks. [S02]

A nation therefore cannot be portrayed as a bloodline entity. Kinship by descent, ancestral origins, family memory, genealogies, and burial grounds may indeed participate in national-community formation. Community members, families, and people who carry materials across generations remember where ancestors came from, where they settled, what migrations they experienced, with whom they intermarried, with whom they broke ties, and where they left burial grounds, place names, and stories. But these are not a bloodline essence. Ancestral origins are not commands in the blood; they are historical materials preserved from migration, settlement, boundaries, marriage, memory, and narration.

Nor can a nation be equated with state registration. Specific personnel in state institutions, together with procedures involving schools, household registration, archives, law, administrative divisions, border regimes, and commemorative dates, can register, classify, name, recognize, or reformat differences involved in national-community formation. But state registration is not the source of the nation. Before registration, a community may already have language, rites and customs, marriage boundaries, shared memory, and shared consequences. The relevant personnel and procedures may recognize the community, or may misread, compress, rewrite, or rename it, or freeze its institutional position. Write-back forms when these results of processing are preserved as differences that can be extracted again in the future. Only when specific people or procedures later retrieve, interpret, or assign weight to the relevant records anew does the content of write-back re-enter real consequences. The state is not the source of the national community.

Nor is a nation a cultural label. Language, clothing, festivals, food, religion, and rites and customs all matter, but they are not decorations. They matter because they enter shared life. A form of address determines who is an elder, who is kin, who may speak, and who must stand aside; a form of wedding determines how two families recognize one another and how descendants enter the kinship network.

A festival determines when people return home, to whom they make ritual offerings, what they eat, and how they recount the past. A taboo directly trains the body, determining who may eat together and who is kept apart. If these differences remain at the level of outward display, they are merely cultural symbols. Only when they enter families, marriage, schools, markets, land, boundaries, memory, and shared consequences do they become materials for national-community formation.

Overlap among small communities therefore does not consist in simply adding a number of features together. Language, marriage, markets, schools, and migration memory each provide different channels. Only when these connect through specific people's exchanges, records, and interpretations can recognition and responsibility extend beyond their original local scope.

II. Small Communities, Indirect Interaction, and Partial Overlap

A nation begins with networks of small communities, not with an abstract grand term. Families, villages, towns, schools, local markets, marriage circles, religious circles, language circles, migration routes, and life in border regions are all places where concrete interaction occurs. There people meet, trade, intermarry, help one another, come into conflict, reconcile, borrow money, repay debts, dispute land, make ritual offerings to ancestors, establish schools, serve in the military, seek refuge, migrate, and bear institutional consequences. A village is not a nation; a clan is not a nation; a local market is not a nation; nor is a religious circle necessarily a nation. A nation is not a homogeneous population first given a name and then standing neatly together. It is a historical community that gradually forms as networks of small communities repeatedly develop partial overlaps.

These networks of small communities must connect link by link through repeated interaction. A market brings people from different villages together repeatedly; a trade route establishes stable exchanges among people from different towns; a school has children from different families learn the same language and history; a marriage circle carries kinship relations across village and local boundaries; a religious organization has people from different places share rituals, taboos, and festivals; and a shared institution has people from different regions accept similar rules and bear similar consequences. Only when interaction repeatedly occurs at such positions as families, markets, schools, marriage, and religion can a community larger than the locality possibly form, along with paths for transmitting recognition and responsibility.

Community does not arise directly from abstract similarity. Belonging to the same category does not mean belonging to the same network; only membership in the same network can make shared responsibility possible. Two poor people, two workers, or two oppressed people may be in similar circumstances. But if they cannot understand each other's language, live under different institutions, have different historical memories, and bear consequences of life that do not connect, and if traceable direct or indirect interaction and paths of shared recognition and responsibility are absent, similarity alone cannot establish that they belong to the same community. Similar circumstances may bring understanding and sympathy, but sympathy is not community responsibility. Interaction may occur directly or continue through relays such as family, language, education, ritual, historical memory, institutional records, migration relations, commemorative activities, and mutual aid across localities. Shared consequences may come from historical experiences, current relations, or shared expectations grounded in real relations. The absence of one kind of shared consequence does not automatically rule out shared responsibility: real connections and paths of recognition and responsibility must still be traced.

Emphasizing interaction networks does not mean that members of a nation must know one another directly. Small villages, towns, families, marriage circles, schools, and local markets often contain direct interaction networks. People know whose child gained admission to school by examination, whose elderly relative died, who owes money to whom, who did not attend a wedding, and who helped during a famine. Yet a national community is not a simple enlargement of such a direct network of acquaintances. Most people within a nation do not know one another. They may live far apart and never meet in their lifetimes. The community therefore cannot be sustained by everyone knowing everyone else; it relies on relaying through nodes.

Families, schools, markets, marriage, and religion can become nodes. Guilds, military service, taxation systems, migration routes, and famine relief can serve as relays, as can local institutions, publishing and media, commemorative dates, place names, shared education, law, and administration. Strangers may thus recognize one another. Even without knowing a distant member of the same nation, someone may still read their language, understand their history and rites and customs, know that they share certain experiences of boundaries, and know that shared consequences will fall on them at the same time. Although this network is not a relation of acquaintance, it can transmit recognition, memory, responsibility, harm, and protection. It results from the gradual stabilization of paths of recognition, memory, and responsibility among local communities.

A structure of relaying through nodes does not operate by itself. What matters is how specific people identify, pass on, and reconnect materials. Through repeated interaction, narrators within families, teachers and students in schools, traders in markets, and those who lead and participate in rituals pass language, memory, rules, recognition, and responsibility to people who originally did not know one another. If family narratives, schooling, marriage exchanges, religious rituals, and market transactions cease to be mutually intelligible, recognition and responsibility may no longer be transmitted even when nodes remain. Material being understood at a subsequent position and reconnected to life is one important mechanism by which an indirect network continues, but it is not the only form. How connections are maintained must still be judged through actual interaction and relay relations.

Within a nation there can be differences in dialect, locality, ways of life, religion, wealth, and occupation. Community forms through partial overlap among small communities. For example, communities A and B may have similar languages, connected markets, and frequent intermarriage; communities B and C may share schools, religion, and migration memory; communities C and D may share place names, institutional experiences, and common boundaries. A and D need not

know one another directly or be completely alike. Yet through intermediate networks such as B and C, they can form paths for transmitting recognition, memory, and responsibility. It must be stressed that community A being connected to community B, and community B to community C, does not automatically mean that communities A and C belong to the same nation. Partial overlap cannot be treated as a sufficient condition that automatically carries over from one link to the next. Whether the intervening paths of recognition, memory, and responsibility actually connect and are stably maintained must still be examined in concrete context.

The continuity of partial overlap must be sustained through concrete practice. Only when people understand one another in marriage, trade, requests for help, education, and rituals, and explain place names, accents, and past events to those who come later, does overlap become more than a static list on paper: it becomes a relational path through which transmission can occur.

These overlaps develop through various channels. Similar languages and intelligible accents allow everyday expressions to be understood across localities; translatable rites and customs allow practices in different places to be understood. Place names that can be explained, histories that can be mutually recognized, and migrations that can be traced allow past experiences to be recounted together. Marriages that can connect, religion that can be shared, markets that can interconnect, schools that can link, institutions that can be shared, and risks that can be borne together reconnect families, livelihoods, and norms to concrete responsibilities. These twelve forms of overlap need not all appear at once. As long as transmission can continue and, in concrete contexts, paths of recognition, memory, and responsibility actually connect and remain stable, a larger community network will form. A nation's unity comes not from complete internal sameness but from the possibility of continuous transitions, mutual translation, and shared recognition among local differences.

III. Language, Local Life, and Mutual Recognition across Regions

Language is more than a tool of communication: it is a channel through which interaction networks extend. Forms of address are especially important. How someone addresses elders, outsiders, relatives by marriage, people from the same locality, and enemies already embodies community boundaries. A community's language often preserves its distinctions concerning kinship, older and younger people, inside and outside, the sacred, shame, courage, betrayal, land, and death. Through language, people trade, ask for help, quarrel, tell stories, establish rules, discuss marriage, hold funerals, educate children, give accounts of their ancestors, and remember place names.

Place names matter too. They are not merely words on a map: they preserve migration, land reclamation, war, sacrificial rites, markets, disasters, ancestors, and old boundaries. Writing and schools bring language into larger networks. Language within a family can preserve everyday intimacy; language in school can connect children from different places to a larger shared memory; and publishing, media, examinations, administration, and literature enable people from different places to understand one another through the same forms of expression.

Language is not the essence of a nation. Different nations may share a language, and multiple dialects may exist within one nation. Yet repeated interaction through language by specific speakers, families, schools, media, and rituals can indeed connect local networks into continuity. People far apart need not know one another personally to enter an interaction network in which understanding, recognition, and transmission are possible.

Community is not background: shared life itself is material for community formation. People in one locality use markets together, enter schools together, face land institutions together, experience

problems of public security together, and jointly bear famine, taxes and fees, road building, conscription, migration, epidemics, and external exclusion. These experiences do not automatically form a nation, but they do form shared consequences. Shared consequences matter more than shared labels. If a group shares only a name without bearing consequences together, the name can hardly form responsibility. If people repeatedly bear consequences together, a community is already forming even if the name is not yet stable.

Local life leaves consequences that can be remembered and examined, not natural sameness. In everyday life and crises, local life lets people know who can be trusted, who will flee in a crisis, who will keep commitments, who will betray them, who will help, and who will step forward when shared boundaries are violated. Family discussions of commitments kept and betrayals in crises, local reputations among neighbors, and transmission through schools and the education of later generations are all concrete ways of preserving these experiences. These evaluations, retained in such exchanges, can become materials for shared memory. When recounted or used in judgment later, they may in turn affect family reputations, local reputations, marriage choices, and the education of later generations. Not every particular judgment is retained, nor does being retained mean that it will necessarily take effect everywhere. National-community formation does not begin with grand slogans. It often begins with this local life and these shared consequences. The more often shared life recurs, the heavier the shared consequences, and the more readily shared memory reaches those who come later, the thicker the materials for national-community formation become. Whether they can be understood across localities still depends on whether the existing networks connect.

Local networks do not automatically become national networks. The key is mutual recognition across regions. People in one locality need not meet people in another every day. A language or writing system can circulate across localities. People may use similar languages and understand similar rites and customs, and their kinship rules may be mutually intelligible. Commercial exchanges and migration routes can connect different localities; marriage can also connect regions, so that kinship ties are no longer confined to a single village or town.

People in different places may enter similar school systems, follow similar institutions, and face similar external boundaries. Nodes such as schools, literati, religion, armies, guilds, markets, and state institutions can transmit shared memory among different localities. People may recognize similar accounts of ancestral origins and commemorate similar histories, while shared historical narratives can lead several localities to understand themselves as parts of the same historical community. At the same time, external boundaries or shared threats can make different localities aware that they bear shared consequences.

Paths then form among local networks. Only when these paths stabilize can a national community possibly emerge. A nation is not an enlarged village. It is a community spanning regions, formed by multiple networks of small communities through partial overlap, relaying through nodes, and the transmission of information across generations.

Nor does mutual recognition across regions remain stable forever once formed. Language use, exchanges through marriage and markets, and transmission through schools and religion may all weaken, change, or break off. Only while recognition, memory, and responsibility can still travel back and forth among different places do the paths continue to sustain the community.

IV. The Continuation of Marriage, Rites and Customs, and Religion

Marriage has never been a purely private relation. It brings community boundaries directly into bodies, families, and descendants. At the point of entry into marriage, who may intermarry and who is excluded from the range of possible marriage partners is first a matter of boundaries. When two families recognize one another face to face, whose ritual rules govern the wedding also bears on whether they can recognize one another.

After marriage, the terms relatives use for one another in everyday life, how property enters and is accepted into the new family, who cares for older people within shared life, which side the children belong to, and which language they learn as they grow up all touch and define community boundaries.

Marriage can connect networks. Two neighboring but not identical small communities may develop continuity in kinship, rites and customs, and the education of descendants through long-term intermarriage. Marriage can also sever networks. If intermarriage is not recognized, children are not accepted, rites cannot be translated between the groups, and kinship relations cannot enter community memory, the boundary between the two networks hardens. Marriage boundaries are not naturally legitimate. They can protect a community's continuity and may also produce exclusion, humiliation, and violence. For better or worse, they do bring community from an abstract designation into life. An account of national-community formation that leaves out marriage and kinship boundaries gives community too little weight.

Rites and customs are not cultural decorations suspended in the air, nor is religion merely abstract inner belief. They bring community differences into concrete everyday rhythms, bodily habits, family education, and memory across generations. The conduct of weddings and funerals, when festivals begin, how taboos are observed, and how foods are distinguished connect the pivotal moments of life and death with everyday eating and living. How children address elders, postures of prayer and worship, rhythms of vigils and fasting, procedures of sacrificial rites, clothing for particular occasions, and the songs and stories heard while growing up repeatedly reproduce differences in everyday life. It is through these concrete practices that life is organized.

As rites, customs, and religion are reproduced, specific practices are also adjusted by family members, ritual participants, educators, and migrants. They may be preserved, simplified, reinterpreted, or contested. Recognizable continuity depends on these materials remaining available for narration, practice, and recognition. But reproduction does not mean keeping everything unchanged. A custom changes through migration, is simplified in the city, is reinterpreted in schooling, is formatted within state institutions, and is emphasized anew under external pressure. A transgenerational information-continuity complex is therefore not a static specimen. It is not without change; it maintains recognizable continuity through change. Rites and customs, together with religion, matter because they keep community present in successive generations of people as something that can be seen, enacted, remembered, and contested.

V. The Transgenerational Information-Continuity Complex

A nation can outlast individual lives. A child who did not experience their ancestors' migration may nevertheless know where those ancestors came from. Without experiencing a war, the child may take up its memory through commemorative dates, textbooks, family stories, and local legends. Without participating in the formation of old boundaries, the child may know which place names belong to community memory, which boundaries once caused harm, and which people are regarded as part of “us.” This is no mystery of bloodline. It results from families, schools, rituals,

commemorative sites, and institutional records repeatedly preserving, checking, and transmitting community materials. [So3]

As an information-continuity complex, a nation involves at least six elements: preservation, reproduction, checking, variation, write-back, and retransmission. When children take up memories they have never personally experienced, the first question concerns the carriers through which materials continue. Language is reproduced in families, schools, media, and rites; rites and customs are repeatedly reproduced in the everyday practices of weddings and funerals, festivals, food, forms of address, and taboos. Place names are reproduced through migration, maps, household registration, burial grounds, and stories. Historical memory is likewise continually reproduced through preservation and reuse in family stories, commemorative dates, school narratives, museums, inscriptions, and local legends.

Yet materials being carried and reproduced through these channels is one thing; which contents still count as "our own" is another question requiring checking. Not everything that is transmitted counts as continuity of the information carried by a nation. Family elders, educators in schools, participants in religious rituals and in wedding, funeral, and festival practices, and the recorders and narrators of place names, commemorative dates, ancestral halls, burial grounds, inscriptions, museums, and local stories all participate in this gatekeeping from their respective positions. They check which languages, rites and customs, memories, boundaries, and designations still count as "our own." State archives and legal recognition also participate in checking.

This checking is not performed by a single authority. Different positions—families, schools, rituals, commemorative sites, and institutional records—may preserve different versions. Members judge which differences remain recognizable through everyday narration, concrete practice, and even disputes. Complete agreement among all versions need not be demanded. As long as they can still be translated into one another, mutually recognized, and reconnected to shared responsibility, the existence of variants does not mean that the community has been interrupted.

This information does not remain completely unchanged. It changes form, is simplified, forgotten, reordered, and mixed; in crises it is also extracted, interpreted, and corrected anew. A nation is not an unchanging bloodline, and an information-continuity complex does not keep everything in its original state. Rather, it maintains recognizable continuity amid change through preservation, reproduction, checking, variation, write-back, and retransmission by successive generations of nodes.

VI. Joining, Leaving, and Migration Memory

A nation is not a bloodline essence, so community boundaries are not absolute boundaries of descent. An outsider may gradually enter a community: they live there over time, learn the language, participate in rites and customs, and enter kinship networks through marriage. They share daily life with others, undertake defense together, and jointly bear institutional consequences. They accept shared memory and are recognized by community members. Given sufficient time and sufficiently stable paths of responsibility, they may cease to be merely an outsider and become part of "us."

This is not a simple theory of assimilation. It does not mean that changing a name or making a statement of identification allows immediate entry into a community. Entry requires connection to a network: language, life, rites and customs, responsibility, shared consequences, and recognition must all connect. Conversely, someone originally close by descent may gradually leave the community. If language, memory, responsibility, shared life, and shared recognition break off, the

network between that person and the community thins. They may retain a designation of origin while no longer bearing shared consequences or entering paths of shared memory and responsibility.

Nor is this a theory of identification at will. Leaving a community is not accomplished in a sentence; it comes from network rupture. Entry into or departure from a community is not a single change of name. Residence, language, marriage, shared life, and institutional consequences must repeatedly connect over time, while existing members grant or withdraw recognition in interaction. Only thus do the thickening and thinning of networks acquire concrete conditions. The boundaries of national communities are not walls of bloodline but paths of connection, recognition, and responsibility within interaction networks. Becoming one of "us" depends not only on origin but also on whether one can enter shared language, shared memory, shared life, shared institutions, and shared consequences.

Migration memory is not the past fact of migration itself. Migration that actually occurred becomes community memory only when it is narrated, named, commemorated, and handed down. Asking where ancestors came from and why they left preserves their place of departure and reasons for leaving. Asking who accepted or excluded them along the way and which route took them through famine preserves their encounters on the journey. Asking where they finally settled, which village name came from the old place, and which grave retains the direction of migration preserves the traces left after settlement. Asking about these details explains what, concretely, is being handed down; it does not appeal to commands of descent. It is precisely these memories that enter the process of national-community formation.

Place names are especially able to preserve historical paths. They may preserve ancestral origins, migration, or war, and also land reclamation, expulsion, and resettlement. Someone may not have experienced that history, yet may have heard the place name from childhood and know that it is connected to their community. Migration memory is not necessarily always true and complete. It may be simplified, embellished, forgotten, or rearranged, yet can still become material through which a community understands itself. National-community formation often begins not with present identification but with preserved and repeatedly narrated migration memory.

VII. The Formation, Hardening, Splitting, and Reconstruction of Boundaries

The boundaries of national communities are not lines drawn in advance. Nor can they be proved solely by descent, a name, subjective identification, state registration, a single cultural marker, or one interaction. A national community can maintain continuity through many paths: transmission across generations, mutual recognition, the preservation and renewed extraction of shared memory, relations of protection and responsibility, and language, rites and customs, family, marriage, migration, education, local life, shared harm, and shared consequences. The continuing reproduction of membership relations, boundaries, and carriers over time also supports this continuity. These items are not a fixed checklist, need not all appear together, and still less constitute a numerical threshold.

Analysts must explain, on the basis of current materials, which paths remain, which can serve as relays for one another, which have thinned, changed direction, or ceased to function, and whether together they support the same community, bridging relations, a split, reconstruction, or a new community. Community A being connected to community B, and community B to community C, does not automatically prove that communities A and C belong to the same national community. If local networks share only trade, occasional contact, a single cultural similarity, or one-way

mediation, the materials establish at most contact, bridging, or partial overlap. For bridging to become evidence of membership in the same community, it must actually carry the sustained transmission of mutual recognition, memory, protection, responsibility, membership relations, or shared consequences.

Changes in membership do not automatically cancel community continuity. If key relations, memories, recognition, responsibilities, and relays are still preserved, extracted, and renewed by real carriers, a community can outlast individual lives and changes in membership. Without having experienced past events, a new generation can take up community materials through family narratives, education, rites and customs, commemoration, local life, and practices of responsibility. Yet inheriting a name, language, memory, or institutions is only one kind of evidence of continuity. It cannot establish on its own that the new network is still the original community.

A split can form when original paths of mutual recognition, memory, protection, and responsibility thin, change direction, or cease to function over a long period, and members' principal centers of recognition and responsibility shift stably into different networks. Splitting does not require every contact to disappear. Language, marriage, trade, and historical memory may remain, yet these residual ties may not suffice to maintain the same community. After old relations have broken off or changed significantly, the renewed formation of a community network by new members, organizers, keepers of memory, and paths of protection and responsibility constitutes reconstruction. Reconstruction may take up old materials, but the new relations that actually carry them must still be explained.

The boundaries of national communities therefore require distinctions among formation, gaining weight, hardening, splitting, and reconstruction. Formation means that recognizable relations of inside and outside begin to appear stably. Gaining weight means that some channels keep thinning or forces of exclusion increase. Hardening means that mutual recognition, responsibility, membership relations, and shared consequences across a boundary face intense restrictions. Splitting involves principal centers of recognition and responsibility shifting stably into different networks. Reconstruction means re-establishing sustainable relational paths after interruption or significant transformation. These five processes may follow one another, but no single threshold criterion can stand in for all five.

Strong legal divisions, institutional coercion, sustained violence, blocked migration, educational segregation, identity registration, and exclusion from responsibility can cause boundaries to gain weight or harden rapidly while other ties have not entirely disappeared. The complete interruption of all interaction, mutual recognition, and shared responsibility is not the only condition for boundary hardening. Conversely, a difference in names or a single dispute is insufficient to establish that a network has split. Where evidence is insufficient, the judgment may be limited to bridging, inheritance, contact, partial overlap, or an inability to determine the matter. Analysts must not force a verdict of one community merely to obtain a neat image of a nation.

VIII. Shared Harm, Shared Responsibility, and the Limits of Substitution by Class

Shared harm matters, but it is not the sole source of a nation. A nation cannot be portrayed as a community defined by memories of victimhood. Mutual intelligibility of language, local life, marriage boundaries, cycles of rites and customs, religious practice, migration routes, and shared institutions are more everyday and more basic materials for national-community formation. War, expulsion, occupation, exclusion, massacre, resistance, sacrifice, and commemoration make boundaries harder. Once certain harms are preserved by families, schools, monuments, museums,

state narratives, and community rituals, they are no longer merely past events: they become materials through which later generations judge closeness and distance, boundaries, and legitimacy.

Shared harm has force because it makes shared consequences clear: who suffered together, who resisted together, who remained silent, who provided protection, and who recorded the harm. When these historical experiences are preserved through commemoration, family narratives, school narratives, institutional records, and judgments of responsibility, they can enter community memory and, when extracted later, may strengthen members' reasons to protect one another. Yet care is still needed here: shared harm can preserve boundaries and can also produce revenge and essentialization. Shared resistance can protect a community, but these complex experiences, including shared resistance, may also be compressed into a single story through later preservation, interpretation, and narration. Harm cannot be treated as the root of a nation apart from the ways it is preserved and interpreted.

A national community does not exist for the sake of a romantic sense of belonging. Its force comes from community members' long-term sharing of language, institutions, memory, boundaries, risks, and consequences. Community responsibility is not a moral demand conjured from nothing. It comes from shared life, shared defense, shared institutions, shared memory, shared risks, shared victimization, shared protection, shared recognition, and shared transmission across generations. More precisely, it comes from paths of recognition and consequences within partially overlapping networks. Who has borne consequences with whom? Who shares institutional paths? Who shares memory and language? Who protects whom, who is recognized by whom, and who bears risks in a crisis? These questions matter more than abstract slogans. Similarity does not mean connection; only connection can make responsibility possible. Community responsibility comes from real interaction networks, not abstract classification.

Interpreters adopting class theory can point out that two distant workers face similar circumstances, are both constrained by employment relations, and both confront wages, unemployment, debt, housing, and risk. These similar circumstances may bring sympathy and may also bring cooperation, but this explanation cannot automatically produce community responsibility. Abstract class classification can produce a sense of belonging to the same category, but it cannot produce a community's chain of responsibility. Class classification can say that two groups are similar; it cannot establish that they are connected. Even if a distant, unfamiliar worker resembles me in income and labor circumstances, if that person is outside my interaction network and does not share language, institutions, memory, risks, boundaries, and consequences with me, they cannot demand that I destroy my own community network merely because we are “of the same class.”

This does not mean that distant strangers are unworthy of sympathy, nor does it rule out aid or cooperation across regions in advance. Similar economic positions cannot automatically produce community obligations, nor can a class name write strangers directly into the same network of responsibility. Class classification can form a sense of belonging to the same category; it cannot thereby prove membership in the same network or shared responsibility. Whether moral, legal, contractual, or emergency-assistance obligations to strangers hold raises normative questions at another level. Each kind of obligation requires its own value basis, scope of application, conflict rules, and exceptions. As a foundational social theory, this book does not predetermine the priority of all obligations here. What it can establish here is that community responsibility must be demonstrated through relations of real interaction, recognition, protection, memory, and shared consequences; it cannot be deduced from abstract class classification alone.

IX. State Intervention, Protection, and Exclusion

The state is not the source of the nation, nor is it merely an external position of recognition. A community is initially sustained by members, families, and people who carry materials across generations through language, rites and customs, marriage, place names, and shared memory. Once specific personnel in state institutions and procedures involving schools, language policy, household registration, borders, archives, commemorative dates, law, the military, and administrative divisions intervene, they register, classify, and name existing differences involved in national-community formation, set standards and boundaries, arrange education, or form official narratives, reformatting those existing differences.

Write-back forms when these results of processing are preserved as differences available for renewed extraction in the future. Only when specific people or procedures later retrieve, interpret, or assign weight to the relevant records anew does the content of write-back re-enter real consequences. This state intervention brings two kinds of consequences. On the one hand, the state can protect languages, rites and customs, and community memory that have been marginalized. On the other, it may compress complex differences, freeze fluid boundaries into fixed identities, rewrite multiple forms of belonging as a single administrative field, and merge local differences into administrative classifications. The state cannot create all nations from nothing. But it can amplify, downweight, rewrite, freeze, and rename differences involved in national-community formation, altering how national differences are preserved, extracted, and put into effect.

Protection and exclusion are not automatically set in motion by the name “nation.” Specific institutional personnel, educators, registrars, and narrators reclassify and interpret existing materials of national-community formation. This constitutes an important chain of state intervention, further affecting how boundaries are drawn, who receives protection, the scope of exclusion, and whether internal differences can be preserved. The effects of such reclassification and interpretation always presuppose existing materials of national-community formation.

In concrete practice, community members, families, people who carry materials across generations, recorders, educators, organizers, religious practitioners, and institutional personnel can protect language and memory, keep marginalized communities from being swallowed up, make people remember migration, harm, resistance, and shared life, and enable community members to protect one another in danger. But they may also practice exclusion: portray boundaries as natural, others as dangerous, intermarriage as betrayal, language differences as superiority and inferiority, and shared harm as a reason for unlimited retaliation, or reduce internal differences to a single voice.

Acknowledging a nation as a real network therefore does not mean acknowledging it as a moral absolute or as always legitimate. A national community's responsibilities have boundaries and cannot become a pretext for unlimited expansion. A nation can be a real network and still require constraint. It is not a bloodline entity, state registration, a propaganda slogan, or a disguise for class contradictions. It is a historical community network gradually formed as networks of small communities that have similar features, partially overlap, and can sustain interaction connect through mutually intelligible language, mutually translatable rites and customs, marriage ties, migration memory, preserved place names, shared institutions, shared risks, shared recognition, and the joint bearing of consequences. A nation is not a homogeneous whole but partially overlapping networks. The boundaries of national communities are not presupposed lines; they are breaks that appear where this network continuity reaches its limit. Such a break does not mean that a boundary exists only after every other connection has vanished completely. Strong legal divisions and institutional coercion can rapidly give boundaries greater weight or make them harder while other connections have not all disappeared.

The differences formed by historical communities are further organized into an order that can be put into effect through law, administration, archives, borders, education, welfare, the military, and mechanisms of punishment. National-community formation forms historical community boundaries; state incorporation of differences brings them into chains of law, administration, archives, and implementation.

Notes

[S02] Wimmer discusses how boundaries form within relations at multiple levels; Lamont and Molnár discuss the research traditions concerning symbolic and social boundaries. See Wimmer (2008): 970–982, 1008–1011; Lamont and Molnár (2002): 168–169, 181, 186, and 188. This note indicates points of contact with scholarship only. It does not use boundary research to prove this book's theoretical judgments that national communities are real or that the state is not their source.

[S03] On the cultural transmission of shared memory and the historical sociology of memory practices, see Jan Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," translated by John Czaplicka, New German Critique, no. 65 (1995): 125–133, especially 126–132; Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," Annual Review of Sociology 24 (1998): 105–140, especially 111–112 and 123. This research supports the claim that memory must be maintained through media and practices; it does not complete this book's ontology of the nation on its behalf.

Chapter 20 State Incorporation of Differences: How Differences Are Formatted, Mutually Recognized, and Connected to Chains of Implementation

I. How State Incorporation Takes Up Existing Differences

Language, memory, locality, marriage, rites and customs, migration, boundaries, shared consequences, and shared recognition form historical communities within networks of long-term interaction. A community has language, memory, boundaries, shared life, and paths of shared responsibility. Yet when some of these differences enter the relevant state matters, specific personnel process them anew under the applicable procedures. This processing takes different forms: languages are incorporated into arrangements for official languages, languages of schooling, or examination languages; place names are fixed as administrative divisions; community boundaries are connected to registration fields, regional institutions, or legal recognition; migration leaves household-registration transfers, residence registration, or border records; and shared harm is organized into commemorative days, teaching materials, museums, or archives. National-community formation produces the boundaries of historical communities; state incorporation of differences connects differences to chains of law, administration, archives, and implementation.

State incorporation of differences is neither the state as an entity pressing down from above nor the simple sum of institutionalization, class-image formation, and national-community formation. It connects differentiating units dispersed across families, localities, markets, communities, and workplaces to a network of nodes of greater intensity, wider reach, and stronger capacity for implementation. A person's birthplace, household registration, nationality, ethnicity, age, sex, marriage, educational qualifications, occupation, tax records, eligibility for military service, records of legal violations, property, border position, welfare eligibility, and educational eligibility do not naturally become state order. They must first enter documents, numbers, fields, archives, qualifications, permits, penalties, welfare, taxation, military service, border records, and legal consequences. After differences in lived life enter state nodes, specific personnel process them under legal rules at service counters and in implementing agencies, using documents, archives, and systems to extract them anew, preserve them, recognize them across nodes, and give them form. State incorporation does not create these differences out of nothing; it enables existing materials to enter preservation, verification, and the processing of consequences across nodes.

When a child enters the education system, the fact of birth must be reported under household-registration rules. When school admission is sought, some of the materials concerning household registration, residence, rental arrangements, parents' social insurance, school districts, or applications may be examined under local policy and the relevant admission category. After enrollment is completed, the school establishes and updates the student's registration under student-registration rules. This is not one fixed chain of materials identical everywhere. A child does not naturally become a student in the state education system simply by reaching a certain age. Age is only one difference. At different stages of processing, birth certificates, household registration, residence materials, or parental materials are checked according to the applicable conditions; school places constrain resource allocation, while application counters are concrete positions for processing materials. Enrollment is not a single educational event but a process in which family differences, local differences, and state archives are connected to chains of implementation. The fact of the child's birth, the home address, the parents' employment materials,

and school places are held at different positions; they connect respectively to educational positions such as admission review, the allocation of places, and student registration established after enrollment.

A migrant worker's identity card may be valid while his household registration is elsewhere. He does live in the city, yet his residence registration is unstable. He does work on a construction site, yet his labor contract, wage records, social insurance contributions, and employer information may be disconnected. Once wages are in arrears, what labor inspection and arbitration examine is not the hardship of everyday life but whether the employment relationship can be proved, the employer identified, and the unpaid wages brought into a procedure. The difficulty facing migrants is often not a complete lack of identity but an identity dispersed across several chains of implementation that cannot readily recognize one another's materials. Residence, work, and remuneration are scattered among documents, registrations, contracts, and records. The materials connected through them may lead to determinations concerning work-related injury, remuneration, or eligibility.

Family languages, local rites and customs, migration memory, and community boundaries form historical communities through national-community formation. Once they enter state incorporation of differences, some of these differences become ethnic registration, school language policies, textbook narratives, cultural protection projects, administrative classifications, resource allocation, and eligibility for representation. National-community formation produces the boundaries of historical communities; state incorporation turns some of their differences into registrations, teaching materials, policies, administrative divisions, and enforceable qualifications. State registration is not the national community itself, but it changes the community's external position and also changes who within it is seen, represented, or suppressed. Differences of national communities are connected to family languages, local rites and customs, and community memory; the resulting registrations and materials affect positions in classification, representation, and resources.

The three chains extract different materials and produce different consequences. They cannot be reduced to a single, one-time processing of the same kind of material. In these chains, specific personnel at the relevant positions must verify differences and materials dispersed across different places, then send the parts that can be established on to the next stage of processing. Family relations, workplaces, and national communities are not created by state registration. Yet it is upon entering state nodes that differences already formed within families, workplaces, and communities acquire another form in which they can be preserved, compared, or put into effect.

For this reason, the state cannot be portrayed as one enormous person, as though it stood outside society, could see everyone at once, and could handle all differences with a single command. The state is a high-intensity network of differentiation nodes, not a unified personality or a unified consciousness. Agencies, documents, archives, laws, forms, schools, police, courts, the military, borders, taxation, social insurance, neighborhoods, and administrative divisions are all nodes in state incorporation of differences. Nodes are not subjects acting on their own but actual positions at which personnel, materials, authority, and procedures connect. Specific personnel or procedures within them extract the relevant differences and connect them to consequences.

Within these nodes, different matters and stages connect only the corresponding materials under the applicable rules. When an identity card is processed, birth certificates, household registration, photographs, addresses, family relations, or records in the public security system provide different clues for different processing and verification matters; not everyone must resubmit all these materials on every occasion. When a child enrolls, materials such as household registration, a

residence permit, parents' social insurance, property ownership or a rental filing are reviewed according to the local requirements for the year and category concerned. School-district divisions and application systems provide paths for allocation, and student registration is established after enrollment is completed.

After a worker is injured, the social insurance administrative department determines whether the injury is work-related on the basis of materials concerning the employment relationship, medical records, and other evidence. The employer's attitude affects how materials connect, but lack of acknowledgment by the employer does not amount to a veto over that determination. Social insurance contributions concern payment of the corresponding benefits; work-capacity appraisal is handled separately under its applicable conditions and cannot be listed as a common prerequisite for all work-related injury procedures and eligibility for compensation. People crossing a border undergo border inspection on the basis of nationality, passports, entry and exit records, travel purposes, and risk judgments. Visas are also checked according to the applicable status and travel matter; not everyone requires a visa. These nodes belong to different places and institutions; the structural generalization “the state” cannot replace the personnel, documents, and procedures within them.

Nodes differ in the materials they can extract, the rules they apply, the authority they possess, and the consequences to which they connect. Registration materials preserved by agencies, admission materials checked by schools, evidence handled by courts, identities and records used by police, eligibility assessed by the military, residence circumstances known to neighborhood organizations, and documents and travel materials checked at borders all have different points of entry. The fact that one position holds information does not mean that another can already extract it. What processing the same name or address can support at different positions often changes with the scope of the materials. Schools can establish student registration and process admissions; courts can make judgments within their procedures; police and border inspection handle identity, records, and passage within their respective scopes. Residence relations visible to neighborhood organizations may not directly serve as a basis elsewhere. Nodes sometimes connect and sometimes leave breaks. Even if materials have been preserved or recognized at one position, the receiving position must still judge whether they can be used under its own authority, rules, and procedures. If materials are insufficient, formats do not fit, or the scope of extraction differs, processing may stop where it is. The power of state incorporation of differences comes from relations that can actually connect nodes; it does not require the assumption that every position obeys the same will.

State incorporation of differences is the process by which state nodes format dispersed differences into an order of implementation within which they can be identified, registered, mutually recognized, allocated and coordinated, rewarded or punished, and excluded. The most important part of this definition is not the grand word “state” but how differences change form. Families, localities, nations, languages, property, labor, debt, illness, migration, marriage, education, risk, and conflict exist before state intervention. The state is not the source of all differences, but it changes how these differences are preserved, extracted, mutually recognized, and put into effect. In everyday life, “living here” may be known only to neighbors, the landlord, and people in the market; once it enters the relevant administrative matter, it may take the corresponding form of household registration, a residence permit, a rental filing, or address registration. In everyday life, “having a child” may be simply a family fact; at different stages such as reporting, school admission, or the creation of records, it is extracted under the rules in the respective forms of birth certificates, household registration, and guardianship relations; student registration is established after initial enrollment, while vaccination records are checked under their specialized provisions. In everyday

life, “having been punished” may be a single event; once it enters legal and administrative procedures, it generates a judgment or penalty record according to its nature; it connects to credit restrictions or affects future eligibility determinations only where the corresponding statutory conditions and subject matter apply. State incorporation of differences is not simple recording. It rewrites differences in lived life into forms that state nodes can preserve, compare, mutually recognize, and put into effect.

This rewriting proceeds through nine stages: identification, formatting, registration, classification, certification, mutual recognition, allocation and coordination, implementation, and write-back. Each has its own position of processing. Completion of one stage does not guarantee that the next will be established. Materials must still pass through the rules, authority, and procedures of the relevant nodes before they can possibly enter an order of implementation of wider scope. Identification gives a person or matter an entry point through which it can be extracted; formatting places materials from lived life in fields, documents, or other processable forms; registration leaves records of those forms that can be checked again. A name, address, or photograph may make an object identifiable without guaranteeing that residence, family, or employment circumstances have been fully entered in a suitable format, still less that the corresponding records have been registered and established.

Once materials enter processing, classification places them on different paths, certification judges whether they count at a given position, and only mutual recognition gives a record the opportunity to cross to other nodes. The categories used in classification may not be adopted at the receiving position, and registered materials may not yet have passed certification. Even if certification is established at one position, another may refuse to use the materials because their scope, format, or the relevant authority differs. Whether the chain can continue depends on whether classification, certification, and mutual recognition can connect at the receiving position.

Allocation and coordination then connect usable materials to the distribution of resources, responsibility, or risk. Implementation turns some of these allocations into actual consequences. Write-back forms when these results of processing are preserved as differences available for renewed extraction in the future. Only when specific personnel or procedures later retrieve, interpret, or assign weight to them anew in new matters do they re-enter real consequences. Each connection depends on whether materials can be extracted at that time, who has authority to process them, how rules apply, and whether the procedure can be completed. Not every difference passes through all the stages in sequence. Differences enter an order of implementation of wider scope only where the relevant stages actually connect in concrete matters.

II. Identification and Formatting: How Life Enters Positions of Processing

The first step in state incorporation of differences is to turn people and matters in flux into objects that can be reliably extracted. A person can be recognized in everyday life by family, neighbors, colleagues, and people from the same home area, but recognition by acquaintances does not mean that state nodes can process that person. State nodes need stable entry points for identification: a name is one, a date of birth another; sex, photographs, fingerprints, identity-card numbers, household-registration addresses, nationality, ethnicity, family relations, schools, employers, property, vehicles, and accounts can all become entry points. They allow a person to be extracted at different places. In everyday movement, names may recur, people may migrate, families may disperse, and workers may change employers; state incorporation therefore has to rely on these more stable means of identification.

Stable identification is not intended to compress a person into a single label but to enable different nodes to match the same material to a position that can be checked. Which entry points are adopted and which relations in lived life are suppressed directly affect subsequent processing. These entry points offer different clues for verification and often need to work together: names and dates of birth connect people to verifiable birth materials; photographs and fingerprints distinguish people with the same name or similar appearance; addresses place people at a residence position; identity numbers and existing documents allow previously formed records to be extracted. When one entry point is insufficient, the processor must still return to available materials to confirm the correspondence. Migration separates an address from everyday residence; family dispersal leaves relational materials at different positions; a change of employer may fragment work experience across different records. People with the same name are not necessarily the same object, nor do those bearing the same name necessarily carry the same relations in lived life.

Identification is not a neutral act. Once some differences become entry points for identification, others are suppressed: an identity-card number is easier to extract than a person's reputation in the village, a household-registration address easier than actual residence relations, and a registered name easier than an everyday form of address. This step has already changed how a person is seen. Yet an identifiable object is not the whole person. Names, photographs, addresses, identity numbers, and existing documents provide only a starting point for verification. They make processing materials possible but do not exhaust a person's relations, experience, and positions. Differences in lived life that have not entered these entry points are not necessarily absent; the current node may simply lack the materials and means to process them. Memories, care, circumstances, and community relations not extracted through these entry points continue to exert real effects in everyday life.

After identification, differences still cannot directly enter implementation: they must be formatted. Formatting is the state's rewriting of differences in lived life into forms it can preserve, compare, and put into effect. The state does not receive life as it is. It does not preserve all of a person's experience, relations, and circumstances; instead, it requires differences to enter processable formats. For someone living here, the corresponding materials concerning household registration, a residence permit, a rental filing, or address registration are required according to the concrete matter. For someone who is ill, the condition is presented through medical records and diagnoses; medical-insurance coverage lists are used to check reimbursable expenses, while disability appraisal is conducted only where the relevant matter requires it. When someone has a child, the fact of birth enters birth certification and household registration, guardianship relations are confirmed under the corresponding requirements, and student registration is established after school enrollment is completed. For someone who owns property, the relevant matters are recorded respectively in property certificates, vehicle registration, or tax records. Belonging to a community is represented in the relevant matters through nationality, ethnic registration, or identity documents. Having been punished generates a judgment or penalty record according to the nature of the case, and connects to credit restrictions where the statutory requirements are met.

Many mismatches arise between facts of life and formats. A person really lives in the city but lacks corresponding residence materials. A child really lives with the parents, but the guardianship materials are incomplete. A worker really was injured on a construction site, but the employment relationship has not been formatted into a contract and social insurance records. A community really has its own language, memory, and boundaries, but state registration leaves only one field. The key to state incorporation of differences is not simply “whether the facts exist” but also whether they can enter state formats.

Only after facts of life enter forms, fields, archives, documents, qualifications, or records do they become relatively easy to preserve, compare, and transfer. This conversion is not reception by an empty container: it selects the parts that can be entered, arranges how materials are compared with one another, and makes some differences easier to preserve, compare, and put into effect. Fields determine which parts can remain in a fixed form; documents and archives allow some materials to be extracted at subsequent positions; eligibility materials connect certain contents to consequences that can be processed. Residence, illness, kinship, labor, and property originally carry different relations and experiences. Once broken into items that can be filled in and checked, formerly dispersed differences acquire the conditions for comparison and transfer across nodes. This conversion increases the intensity of processing, but at the same time suppresses relational backgrounds, community memory, concrete circumstances, and complete experiences. Without corresponding positions, relational backgrounds, community memory, and concrete circumstances are harder to bring in fully along with the materials.

Formatting remains bounded by facts of life and the scope of the materials. Formats change which differences can be preserved, compared, and put into effect, but cannot by themselves replace facts of life. Preservable forms make the parts not entered in them harder to see at particular nodes; forms and records themselves do not produce implementation results on their own. A form can show an address without necessarily showing actual care relations. Medical records preserve certain conditions but cannot replace a person's entire situation. Employment or property materials left in archives likewise cover only the parts that can be entered and checked. Formats make processing more stable while leaving compression and omissions. Whether consequences form still depends on processing at the relevant positions in accordance with materials, authority, and procedures.

III. What Registration Leaves Behind

After formatting, differences must still be registered under their respective rules. The fact of birth enters household registration through reporting; marriage relations enter marriage information after verification by marriage registration authorities; property rights and legally prescribed matters are entered in the real-property register; schools establish and update student registration after enrollment; administrative penalties produce corresponding records under penalty decisions and statutory disclosure rules. Registration can form materials that may be extracted again in the future. Whether they become effective again still depends on subsequent events, authority, procedures, and interpretation; records themselves are not acting subjects. [F13]

Registration is not simple recording: it determines whether a difference can later be extracted, recognized, and put into effect. A fact may still exist without registration yet be unable to pass through state nodes. Registration does not necessarily make a fact more real, but it makes the fact easier for the state to extract. Yet the materials registration leaves are not a person's complete identity, and their contents may not fully match actual life. Registration gives differences a form in which they can be extracted repeatedly, but cannot settle all future judgments. Whether a record can be recognized or connected to substantive consequences must still be handled by concrete nodes under existing rules and procedures. Even where registration exists, subsequent nodes may handle matters differently because the scope of materials or review requirements differ.

Registration of births, marriages, property, student status, and penalties turns matters originally established only within the relations of the time into materials that can later be located and checked repeatedly. Birth materials can connect to household registration and later documents, providing a starting point for verification in subsequent document applications or the

establishment of student registration. Marriage materials can enter judgments about relations; property and student-registration records give residence, property, or educational positions a verifiable form; penalty records preserve traces of how particular matters were handled. Once formed and entered in a register, materials preserve not life itself but some of its contents that can be located and checked later. A birth, a marriage, an item of real property, a student registration, or a penalty each has its own time of recording and scope of matters recorded. Registration enables later processors to find these materials but does not bring all the relations of life at that time before them.

As time passes, a distance may open between records and present life. Marriage relations can change, and the actual use of property and an individual's educational position may differ from those at the time of recording. The matter to which a penalty record refers likewise cannot replace substantive identification of current circumstances. Extracting an existing registration means returning to verifiable material, not treating the past directly as the present.

Registration can send materials to subsequent nodes, but a record does not itself impose qualifications, responsibilities, or restrictions on a person. Birth registration does not directly complete school enrollment, nor does student registration settle every educational judgment. Only when relevant records are used in concrete matters can they connect to corresponding consequences. If relations in lived life have changed, registration can still establish that certain material once held true, but cannot extend the past state directly into the present. It makes differences across time traceable while retaining the distance between the scope of the record and changes in reality.

IV. Classification and Certification: Processing Paths and the Efficacy of Materials

After registration, differences are placed in categories: citizens, residents, students, workers, taxpayers, military personnel, people serving sentences, recipients of the minimum subsistence guarantee, migrants, foreigners, minors, retirees, and people at borders. These are not neutral names. Classification does not name a person; it determines the chain of implementation along which that person will be processed. Categories tell processors which materials to start from, but each path handles different matters. Someone classified as a student enters processing involving student registration, examinations, further education, financial aid, and school rules. Someone classified as a taxpayer enters processing involving income, property, declarations, inspections, and collection. Someone classified as a recipient of the minimum subsistence guarantee enters household-income and property checks, assistance eligibility, and periodic review. Someone classified as a person at a border enters processing involving passports, visas, entry and exit records, examination, and passage restrictions. Classification compresses complex life into paths that can be put into effect. This is its power and its danger.

The same person can simultaneously occupy the existing categories of resident, worker, student, or others without appearing under all those categories in every matter. Educational positions primarily use materials relevant to student registration and admission; employment matters extract the parts concerning work relations; resident or taxpayer materials operate only in the corresponding processing. Students may connect to student registration, examinations, and aid; workers to employment materials and responsibility; taxpayers, military personnel, or recipients of the minimum subsistence guarantee to different positions of eligibility, obligation, or protection. Overlapping categories show only that different directions of processing converge on the same

person. Adding several names does not produce a complete identity, still less can the relationship be reversed and those names treated as what the person fundamentally is in society.

A category can bring a set of differences onto a designated path, but cannot also explain the family responsibilities, community relations, and life experiences that path does not extract. Some care, experiences, and community relations are difficult to accommodate in existing categories or relevant only to a particular matter. They have not thereby disappeared from reality; they simply enter less often into the processing path opened by that category. Classification brings some differences onto processing paths that can be put into effect, but this does not mean that the consequences of implementation have already formed. It cannot determine a person's entire situation. Categories point toward what can be processed; they are not a person's essence, nor can they be inverted into what social relations fundamentally are.

Unlike classification, which marks out paths, certification involves the state not merely recording differences but also judging whether the corresponding materials have the efficacy required for use in a particular matter. Certification determines whether a difference can enter state consequences. It concerns concrete matters such as whether an identity card is valid, educational qualifications are recognized, a marriage is registered, property rights are confirmed, disability has been appraised, a record of legal violation is established, or a person's border status allows passage. There is a clear boundary between everyday statements and formal state certification. Saying one lives here is not equivalent to state nodes recognizing that residence. Saying one has received education is not equivalent to recognition of educational qualifications. Saying one is injured does not establish a disability grade. Nor does saying one has family responsibilities establish eligibility for assistance.

Certification hardens differences. Once certification is established, differences can connect to welfare, compensation, responsibility, punishment, qualifications, and restrictions. If certification fails, a difference may be unable to enter state consequences even though it really exists in life. Identity cards, educational qualifications, marriage, property, disability, records of legal violations, and border status may already have corresponding materials, but the existence of materials does not mean that they already count. Preservation makes verification of some content possible. Submitting materials to a specific service counter or node certainly brings them before a particular question, yet does not establish whether that position can treat them as a basis for processing.

Certification occurs at positions authorized to process matters; materials do not accomplish it by virtue of their form alone. Schools, courts, service counters, and border inspection face different matters. Schools handle education-related materials; courts judge evidence under their procedures; counters and border inspection can confirm identity, eligibility, or conditions for passage only within their respective matters. Which materials each node recognizes remains bounded by its existing scope of processing and procedural conditions. Between the existence of materials and successful certification lie at least several distinct positions: materials are first preserved, the person concerned or relevant personnel then submit them to a concrete node, and an authorized processor checks their form, content, and subject matter to establish whether they meet the rules applied to the current question.

Verification asks whether materials connect to the current matter; it does not deliver an omniscient verdict on the facts of life. A relation or experience may really exist without appearing in the form adopted at that position. If the scope and content of the materials do not correspond to the matter to be handled, certification cannot be established there. Only when materials, the matter, authority, and rules connect at that position is certification established for that question. This result can lead to corresponding consequences, but it is not a determination of the person's entire life.

Once certification is established at one position, materials can connect to consequences in that matter, but the conclusion does not naturally cover other nodes. When purpose, duration, and scope of application change, the receiving position also faces a different question and must examine the matter anew. Failure to establish certification temporarily halts that particular state consequence; it does not erase facts that have already occurred in life.

V. The Pathways and Limits of Mutual Recognition

The intensity of state incorporation of differences lies not only in a particular node recognizing you, but also in documents, numbers, qualifications, and archives being able to enter subsequent nodes where concrete rules permit. Resident identity cards are used only in matters requiring proof of identity; education authorities and schools establish and update student registration under the rules; social insurance agencies preserve contribution and benefit records; court-imposed consumption restrictions require an enforcement decision and assistance procedures; access to real-property registration information also requires a legally specified status, an investigative matter, or a legitimate purpose. Records cannot circulate freely without limits of authority, purpose, jurisdiction, and procedure. [F12]

Mutual recognition gives local records the possibility of connecting across settings. The intensity of state incorporation of differences comes from different nodes being able to extract the same set of formatted differences: the stronger the mutual recognition, the more readily differences can cross settings; the weaker it is, the more readily people become stuck between nodes. Without these connections, records often remain at the original node: what a school knows is not necessarily known to a hospital; what a neighborhood organization knows may not be used by a bank; local recognition may not allow passage at a border.

An identity card gives several positions the opportunity to identify the same object; student registration can be extracted in education-related matters; social insurance, court records, and property registration each may also be used at subsequent positions. For a local record to leave its original place of preservation and enter another node, its format must first be readable so that the receiving position can identify the material. Readability, however, does not yet mean suitability for the current question. Schools, hospitals, banks, borders, courts, and neighborhood organizations handle different matters. An address, student registration, or property registration may be relevant at one position but have no use at another. If the object, time, or content referred to by the materials cannot connect to the question at hand, even a complete record may remain within its original scope of preservation.

Even if materials are readable and relevant, the receiving position must also have authority to extract and use them, and its procedure must permit them to enter current processing. What is known at one position is not necessarily open to inspection or use as a basis for processing at another. Nodes cannot indiscriminately use one another's materials. Mutual recognition always remains subject to these concrete boundaries; it is not a condition in which all nodes share all information.

Within the established path for a particular matter, mutual recognition may extend along the entire path or take materials only to some positions. Student registration can connect to educational matters without necessarily serving banking or border matters. Property registration can be extracted in relevant matters without necessarily directly supporting other qualifications. The intensity of state incorporation of differences is manifested in how many relations materials can actually pass through. Mutual recognition thus takes the form of bounded but actual connections between concrete nodes, not the automatic passage of all information within a single whole.

VI. Allocation and Coordination, Centralized Decision-Making, and Responsibility

Certified and mutually recognized differences can enter allocation and coordination only through the corresponding processing: who enrolls, pays taxes, serves in the military, receives welfare, undergoes examination, is subject to levies or expropriation, is resettled, is restricted, is isolated, or receives assistance. Allocation and coordination connect classified and certified materials to the distribution of resources, responsibility, and risk, determining which differences become resources, obligations, or risks. This is not mere roster management, nor can it accomplish itself apart from concrete nodes, rules, and authority. Who enters which path still depends on whether existing qualifications, records, examination, and processing authority can connect within the same chain.

In concrete matters, the incorporation of differences has definite material bases and limits imposed by rules. A child's household registration, residence, or parents' social insurance is subject to the relevant admission rules according to the locality, year, and category, and connects to school-district divisions and the allocation of places. After initial enrollment formalities are completed, the school establishes student records under student-registration rules. A family's income, property, illness, and disability certificates affect the allocation of assistance resources. Yet the minimum subsistence guarantee and medical assistance are handled separately under conditions such as household economic circumstances, assistance categories, and medical expenses. Different processors act within their respective authority; these procedures cannot be merged into one unified allocation and coordination process.

The allocation of obligations and controls likewise proceeds through the corresponding materials and nodes. A young person's age, health, household registration, and political record affect the distribution of military-service responsibilities. An enterprise's registration, taxation, records of legal violations, and credit rating affect the direction of inspections, loans, permits, and penalties. These materials are retrieved only in concrete inspections, licensing, or other legally prescribed matters.

Classification places materials on a processing path; certification judges whether they count in a concrete matter; mutual recognition determines whether they can cross to another position. When these conditions are met, allocation and coordination direct resources, responsibility, and risk accordingly. These stages connect but cannot replace one another. Moreover, allocation and coordination form paths of distribution; only implementation brings permissions, restrictions, assistance, levies or expropriation, or other consequences into effect. Bringing an object within the scope of an arrangement does not mean that the specific permission, restriction, assistance, or levy or expropriation arranged in that matter has been carried out. Waiting for review within a procedure or remaining at the stage of eligibility determination may already be having real effects on a person's life arrangements and circumstances. This does not mean that the corresponding payment, restriction, or levy or expropriation has been implemented. Only when subsequent implementing positions actually act in accordance with their responsibilities are the corresponding consequences of implementation—payments, restrictions, or other measures—truly established. This distinction prevents state incorporation of differences from being written as an abstract will allocating everything on its own.

Centralized decision-making within state incorporation of differences cannot be observed only from the last service counter or implementing position. Who controls the use of assets, whether equipment and data can be brought into processing, who holds nominal ownership and where actual control lies, and which personnel and decision procedures allocate budgets, staff, time, and service coverage all constrain in advance the materials that the final position can use, the

exceptions it can allow, and the supplementation and correction it can provide. When the same rule produces different results at well-resourced and resource-poor nodes, analysts must trace the allocation decisions, rather than attributing all differences to the attitudes of frontline personnel.

Authorization between higher and lower levels must also be separated from coordination across nodes. Unified formats, database fields, review requirements, and transfer rules can maintain connections among processing at several positions. Yet those who actually set, interpret, and implement these requirements are concrete rule-makers, authorizers, data managers, reviewers, and receiving personnel. The abilities to review an existing determination, revoke consequences, correct records, and change who exercises discretion through appointments, supervision, or temporary orders may be dispersed across different positions. Formal authorization does not automatically amount to actual processing capacity: authority over materials, resources, time limits, and the documents in force when the event occurred must also be checked.

Responsibility should be distributed along the actual connections among design, allocation, authorization, transfer, discretion, implementation, and correction. Rule designers and resource allocators delimit the available paths; those who authorize and transfer carry requirements to subsequent positions; frontline personnel process matters within the established scope. Personnel with the ability to review, revoke, appoint, supervise, or correct may affect whether consequences persist. The fact that the last action is completed at the grassroots does not place all responsibility at the end of the chain. Nor can the participation of many positions allow responsibility to dissolve into an abstract state, institution, or organization.

The fact that a position continually benefits can be a clue for investigating whether it helps maintain an arrangement; benefit alone cannot establish motive, authority, or causal responsibility. Knowing the accumulated consequences but lacking the ability to change them differs, in its conditions of responsibility, from holding corrective authority yet refusing to act. Where someone can stop a transfer, raise an objection, or initiate review yet maintains the original arrangement, their choices, authority, and consequences must also be examined separately. Centralized power is formed through these traceable relations of control, allocation, authorization, and correction. There is no need to write the state, institutions, ownership, budgets, or databases as unified acting subjects.

VII. Implementation and Write-Back: Present Consequences and Future Positions

Implementation makes differences not merely visible but consequential. Even where earlier recording, classification, certification, mutual recognition, and allocation and coordination have brought differences to processable positions, this does not yet mean that the specific payments, restrictions, passage, or assistance arranged in that matter have been carried out. A judgment, once issued, can change relations of responsibility in the relevant matter; whether the specific payment or restriction is implemented must still be checked at the corresponding stages of implementation. Permissions, prohibitions, assistance, penalties, detention, judgments, migration, enrollment, welfare, border inspection, or compulsory enforcement must be carried out at the concrete positions responsible for those consequences before materials and judgments become tangible passage, qualifications, responsibilities, resources, or scope for action. The intensity of state incorporation of differences appears here: once a difference enters a chain of implementation, it is no longer merely a matter of how others see someone. It substantively affects whether that person can enroll, migrate, obtain a document, pay taxes, join the military, receive welfare, leave the country, be punished, or receive assistance. Implementation is therefore not an isolated mechanical

act at the end of a chain. It actually changes people's real positions: a document can allow passage, a record can impose restrictions, a qualification can secure assistance, and a judgment can change a person's future settings.

The formation of consequences always depends on concrete personnel, materials, rules, authority, and procedures connecting with one another. A chain of implementation cannot be treated as an abstract mechanism running on its own. What matters in implementation is not only that a result has coercive force, but also that a concrete processing position can bring an existing judgment into concrete activity. After admission materials have been checked, the school acts on the corresponding review results to process admission, enrollment, and related matters. Only then is that admission arrangement carried out, with student registration established under the rules after initial enrollment. After border materials have been checked, border inspection personnel permit or restrict passage according to the verification results and their own authority; only then does a record become an actual scope for action. Permissions, assistance, penalties, judgments, and compulsory enforcement work in the same way: preceding classification, certification, mutual recognition, and allocation and coordination prepare the path; actual action by the positions responsible for implementation brings resources, responsibilities, or restrictions into life.

Implementing positions always handle particular matters at hand, not the whole person and the person's entire life. A document is checked at border inspection, a qualification is used in enrollment or welfare processing, a record connects to consequences in punishment or compulsory enforcement: each effect comes through its materials, rules, authority, and procedures. If materials have not entered a usable form, the rules do not cover the current matter, or processing authority fails to connect, earlier records and judgments do not turn into consequences on their own. These effects have clear boundaries of subject matter and authority. One completed implementation cannot justify extending the same judgment to all of that person's qualifications, relations, and future positions. Even if the same material has been recognized elsewhere, the implementing position must still confirm its relation to the present consequence. It cannot use the previous node's judgment to exceed its own authority or directly expand the scope of effects. Implementation changes what people can do now, which positions they can enter, and what responsibilities they must bear. It rearranges the actual scope of activity but does not exhaust a person's relations, experience, and circumstances in a single instance of processing.

State incorporation of differences does not end with one act of implementation. Write-back forms when the results of processing are preserved as differences available for renewed extraction in the future. Records left by penalties, histories of eligibility formed through assistance, and records of changes made when migration involves changes in household or student registration are concrete forms of this preservation. Changes in identity, relations, and state memory brought about by military service likewise require preservation in a form available for renewed extraction before they can enter later judgments. Records left by border examinations may affect future passage under the corresponding conditions, while compulsory enforcement records may affect credit, loans, travel, and eligibility applications under the rules governing each matter. Write-back gives state incorporation an extent in time: past processing results do not naturally disappear but enter the range of what can later be extracted, becoming conditions that may be seen at the next verification. These materials can have effects later only when the conditions for their extraction in the respective matters are met; one act of implementation does not predetermine every future path.

The temporal tension established by write-back lies in a person's believing a matter has ended while the record remains in the archive. In a future relational field—for example, the next time a person takes up employment, borrows, migrates, leaves the country, enrolls, receives assistance, or undergoes eligibility review—these materials may be extracted again and regain weight in new

processing. The power of state incorporation of differences lies not only in present implementation but also in how its results return to the future. Yet what write-back preserves are conditions that can be extracted again, not a comprehensive prediction or predetermination of a person's future positions or path through life.

This temporal continuity comes from later processors being able to extract past results anew in a new relational field, not from the past remaining on a person with the same weight at all times. An assistance record may be used in a later eligibility determination to identify earlier processing; household or student registration changed by migration may also become new materials. Results left by punishment, military service, border examination, and compulsory enforcement are each bounded by the matters for which they are extracted and the scope of the nodes. The same past material does not have the same weight in different relational fields. It may be invoked again at a particular node or remain only within the scope in which it was originally processed. It does not predetermine that every future position will make the same judgment.

Preserving records keeps open paths by which the past can enter the future. It does not mean that the past can directly fix subsequent conclusions like fate. New materials in the present, the questions asked by receiving nodes, and their procedural conditions still change how old results are interpreted and assigned weight. Write-back extends the time during which differences can be processed again; it does not copy the original consequence endlessly into every later position. Nor must the same record become effective in the same way in different relational fields.

VIII. Cross-Institutionally Usable Identity and Institutional Non-Passability

In a society of acquaintances, a person can rely on others knowing them: the village knows who they are, the neighbors know where they live, relatives know whom they married, and colleagues know where they work. But in a society of strangers or an urban environment, acquaintance is insufficient when facing unfamiliar institutions such as schools, hospitals, banks, borders, courts, and welfare systems. The person must be identified through documents, numbers, archives, and qualifications. State incorporation of differences produces a form of passability across unfamiliar settings, allowing identity cards, household registration, passports, student registration, social insurance, tax numbers, driving licenses, business licenses, and property registration to be extracted before unfamiliar institutions. Passability here means the processability formed through formatting, registration, certification, and mutual recognition; it cannot be equated with abstract freedom. Whether a person can get things done often depends not on whether they really exist in life but on whether that existence has been entered in state formats and can be mutually recognized by different nodes. State incorporation turns the concrete person within relations among acquaintances into an object that can pass through and be processed by unfamiliar institutions.

The efficacy of a cross-institutionally usable identity always changes with the matter to which its materials refer. It is not a natural attribute of a person, still less the whole person. This passability depends on whether the materials are valid, their scope of application fits, and the processing node has the relevant authority. Student registration can support processing at education-related positions; property registration and social insurance are also used only in the corresponding questions. The same material does not open identical channels at different positions. A cross-institutionally usable identity is often jointly established by several materials at concrete positions, not by one document automatically taking effect in every relational field. An identity card can provide a stable entry point, while household registration, student registration, social insurance, tax numbers, driving licenses, business licenses, or property registration support different matters.

Nor can the role of a passport at a border directly replace the materials required at schools, hospitals, banks, courts, or welfare positions. What unfamiliar nodes can process is the verifiable part these materials form within their authority, not a person's complete life. Family responsibilities, community relations, work experience, and concrete circumstances that have not entered the current materials still exist in life. They cannot be subsumed under a cross-institutionally usable identity as a complete self. Materials can have different efficacy at different positions; passability is always bounded by concrete relational fields.

State incorporation of differences not only produces passage but may also leave people stuck at the entry to a procedure. Institutional non-passability is the position formed when differences in lived life cannot be identified, certified, or mutually recognized by state nodes. These people do not lack facts of life: they really do reside, work, have families, experience illness, receive education, and migrate. The problem is that the corresponding facts of life have not been correctly recognized in state formats.

Missing or expired documents, gaps in student-registration or social insurance records, errors in archives or registered matters, and incomplete eligibility materials may temporarily make it difficult for relations already existing in life to enter the corresponding nodes when the current matter actually requires those materials and they have not been lawfully supplemented and corrected. People who become stuck do not lack facts of residence, work, family, or education. Rather, those facts have not yet connected in materials and formats extractable at that position. Border status and recognition of educational qualifications have their own specialized rules and are not merged here into one uniform consequence. [F09]

Institutional non-passability often appears where a concrete chain is cut off. The break may result from insufficient materials, unsuitable formats, unsuccessful certification, or mutual recognition failing to extend. It may also arise from missing or expired documents, gaps in student-registration or social insurance records, errors in archives or registered matters, inconsistencies between registration and life, broken employment relationships, or incomplete eligibility materials. This is not an essential defect of the object itself. The threshold concerns connections between materials and procedures; people who become stuck should not be portrayed as inherently unqualified.

The same person's documents may be usable while their employment materials cannot necessarily connect. A migrant worker's possession of a valid identity card does not mean that employment relations, wage records, and social insurance materials can already support the processing of work-related injury or unpaid wages. Even where the work is real, if the fact of working has not connected to materials capable of establishing the employment relationship, or that relationship has not been formatted, it may be difficult to establish a work-related injury in the relevant matter, and processing may be blocked.

Another concrete problem appears at the point of a child's school admission. Even if the child really lives in the city and the neighborhood organization or landlord knows that fact, where local policy or the specific admission category actually requires the corresponding materials, admission review may be blocked if household registration, a residence permit, a rental filing, or parents' social insurance materials are incomplete or fail to meet the review requirements of that category. After initial school enrollment, the school establishes student records in accordance with the law; for those already registered as students, verification and connection are handled separately under the rules for progression to further schooling or transfer.

Assistance to families likewise depends on verification of specific materials. Even where a family faces real pressures and real difficulties, it may be unable to enter welfare arrangements if the materials cannot establish the relevant facts, income cannot be calculated, or relationships cannot

be certified—if income, property, illness, or family relations have not formed verifiable materials. In reviews for the minimum subsistence guarantee, the authorities accepting and reviewing applications also bear corresponding responsibilities to investigate household economic circumstances, check information, and notify applicants of supplementation or correction required. The entire burden of proof is not imposed unilaterally on families in difficulty. Yet these statutory procedures and verification channels do not guarantee that assistance will result. These experiences do not mean that the facts of work, residence, or family hardship themselves do not exist. Concrete life has not yet connected through materials extractable by the corresponding nodes.

Thus passability and non-passability are not fixed boundaries between two kinds of people. They are concrete positions formed by the same object in different matters, materials, and relations among nodes. A person can pass through some nodes yet be cut off at others because of gaps in materials. The protective and exclusionary capacities of state incorporation of differences are connected in this way: the same conditions that allow materials to pass across nodes also leave people who fail to connect outside the channels.

IX. The Different Consequences of Education, Welfare, and the Military

Education nodes turn differences of family, household registration, locality, and eligibility into future positions. Whether a child can enroll is not simply a question of age. In some areas and particular admission years, under local admission policies and categories, application materials may include some of the following: birth or household-registration information, proof of residence, property or rental materials, social insurance or work records, application information, and student-registration information. Vaccination records, school districts, and places are handled under separate concrete rules; they are not required simultaneously everywhere. Enrollment is not a single educational event. It connects family, residence, household registration, employment relations, administrative divisions, and school resources to concrete examination. [Fo5]

Birth certificates, household registration, residence permits, parents' social insurance, property records or rental filings, school districts, and student registration are not the same kind of material. In admission processing, they refer to family, residence, and educational positions respectively, connecting to school places and subsequent arrangements only after verification. What education forms is not simply an immediate determination of whether a child is of school age. It is a concrete processing path that connects family, residence, and different eligibility materials to the child's future position.

Within social assistance, welfare concerns how hardship is identified through materials, family relations, and eligibility for protection. Reviews for the minimum subsistence guarantee check co-resident household members, household income, and household property under the relevant measures. Severe disability, major or exceptionally serious illness, and the unavoidable expenditure they entail may, under specific conditions, affect applications, separate applications, or income calculations. Medical assistance is handled separately according to categories of recipients, household economic circumstances, medical expenses, and payments under basic medical insurance. Those already recognized as recipients of the minimum subsistence guarantee or as people in extreme hardship receive medical assistance directly; other listed groups are handled through an application mechanism under which the conditions are checked. The requirements of different welfare systems do not form one unified review standard. Their materials and consequences differ from those of education and cannot be replaced by education's admission path. [Fo8]

The minimum subsistence guarantee, medical insurance, social insurance, disaster relief, disability allowances, housing support, pensions, unemployment relief, and assistance to children are not simply distributions of resources. Under their respective systems, they check different facts of hardship, application materials, entitlement qualifications, or family relations. Assistance programs such as the minimum subsistence guarantee focus on verifying the extent of household economic hardship. Basic medical insurance, basic pensions, and unemployment-insurance benefits within unemployment relief, however, depend under the relevant legal rules on such grounds as lawful insurance enrollment, contribution records, fulfillment of statutory conditions, or involuntary unemployment. They cannot all be made conditional on a determination of household poverty, and requirements for continuity of eligibility apply only within the corresponding systems. Welfare can protect people and also classifies them. If actual pressures in life cannot be converted into compliant application materials and the corresponding eligibility, or if the necessary recognition is not obtained in assistance matters requiring verification of family relations, people may be unable to enter protective arrangements. Thus, while providing protection, welfare nodes also create the possibility of exclusion through eligibility checks.

Military nodes connect bodies to state responsibility. Age, sex, health, household registration, education, political records, eligibility for service, resettlement after discharge, military-family status, military merit, disability, and commemoration of sacrifice are extracted and processed in recruitment, service, resettlement after discharge, commemoration, or compensation and pension provision, as applicable. The military does not merely process individual bodies: it joins bodies, community responsibility, risk, implementing positions, and state memory. The bearing of danger, attribution of responsibility, and posthumous commemoration it handles differ both from education's arrangement of future developmental positions and from welfare's confirmation of eligibility for protection.

Education, welfare, and the military all connect current materials to consequences over longer periods, but each handles different questions. All must proceed through their respective examinations and procedures, with corresponding classification standards and eligibility thresholds. All may produce exclusion through missing materials or unmet conditions, and all may also produce protection. Yet they cannot be portrayed as performing the same function, still less as simply benevolent distribution or indiscriminate exclusion. Protection, eligibility, and responsibility have different entry points. Education is not welfare protection; welfare does not occupy the military's position of responsibility; nor can the military replace schools or welfare nodes in handling their respective matters. None can replace the others' processing relations.

X. Renewed Extraction and Implementation at Borders

A border is not a natural geographical line endowed with will or personality. It is a high-intensity node where differences incorporated by the state are extracted anew, certified, and put into effect. The intensity of border consequences comes from concentrated processing at nodes; it is neither decided by the geographical line itself nor produced by an abstract state will selecting objects on its own. The same person is a resident locally, and that position does not disappear in border processing. Yet the person may simultaneously become an object of entry and exit, visa, residence, deportation, or examination procedures requiring fresh verification. Differences that usually go unnoticed and appear inconspicuous in everyday local life may, at a border, connect to passage, staying, leaving, deportation, examination, or exclusion. They thus suddenly gain weight and connect to stronger consequences of implementation.

This change of weight comes from materials originally dispersed across different relations in life being brought together again at one position in entry and exit matters. Border inspection personnel select relevant materials for verification according to the current entry or exit matter and the applicable rules. In the border relational field, nationality, documents, passports, visas, language, destination, travel records—including past entry and exit records—kinship relations, property, occupation, and risk judgments may enter the scope of processing. Yet a document or material usable at an internal position may not directly allow passage at a border: it does not thereby cross the border automatically or automatically acquire efficacy. Nor does concentrated processing in any way give the node unlimited authority to judge all differences. Among these materials, nationality, passports, destinations, and travel records relate directly to entry and exit matters; visas are checked according to the applicable status and travel purpose, whereas language, kinship, property, or occupation are extracted and checked only when the current matter specifically requires them.

Both passage and exclusion form after concrete materials are used at implementing positions. Border inspection personnel check documents, visas, existing records, certification results, the current matter, and processing authority, identifying which contents support entry, departure, or stay, and which make examination, deportation, or exclusion possible. Whether connections can be established depends on whether the extracted materials fit the passage matter at hand and whether the processing position has the corresponding authority. It is at concrete relational positions where border personnel, documents, visas, records, certification, and authority work together that boundaries between inside and outside are realized as different enforceable consequences.

XI. How Punishment Records Continue

The intensity of punishment lies not only in the present but also in whether records enter subsequent matters under concrete rules. Once effective legal instruments enter court enforcement, consumption restriction orders may affect air travel, train seating, and other consumption not necessary for life and work. Whether administrative penalty information is disclosed, preserved, or used in later matters is subject to statutory limits of scope, duration, authority, and purpose. The consequences for local reputation in this book's composite situations cannot be generalized into nationally uniform institutional consequences. Where the corresponding conditions for preservation and use are met, the effects of a penalty can extend beyond the event itself: the record remains in the archive and may later be extracted repeatedly by specific processors. [F11]

A person who is punished may lose certain qualifications; a person subject to compulsory enforcement may face credit restrictions; a criminal record may affect employment, travel, family, and local evaluations. The relevant nodes connect violations of law, debt, risk, and identity records to state coercive power. Civil enforcement records, however, are not equivalent to records of legal violations or criminal records; they must still be handled according to their respective matters. Institutional processing such as state punishment and civil enforcement relies on mechanisms of consequences different from those of ordinary conflict. Ordinary conflict may remain in acquaintances' memories or in reputation within relations among people who know one another, whereas the former can enter archives, records, and future systems of implementation under the corresponding rules.

A present judgment, administrative penalty, or compulsory enforcement actually changes the person's qualifications, actions, or responsibilities in a concrete matter, forming the first consequence. Write-back has already formed when the relevant results are preserved respectively as records of legal violations, criminal records, enforcement records, or other archives available for renewed extraction in the future. It leaves conditions for subsequent processing and need not await

a second consequence to count as established. Later, in connection with taking up employment, loans, travel, eligibility applications, border passage, and family and local evaluations, a second consequence may arise only if the relevant records are extracted, interpreted, or assigned weight anew under their respective applicable conditions. Separating the two consequences from the preservation between them makes it possible to see how penalties extend into future relational fields, without treating preservation itself as a second punishment that has already occurred.

Yet later processing cannot automatically repeat the original penalty simply because a record exists. Past materials have continuity, but punishment is by no means an inevitable result automatically produced by records. The formation and continuation of restrictions must still pass through the relevant rules, authority, procedures, and concrete implementing positions. The receiving position must identify the matter referred to by the record, the applicable rules, and its own authority. It cannot treat one record as the sole cause of later experiences or an inevitable fate determining a life. Because archives and implementing nodes enable connections across settings, state punishment is harder than local memory. Yet this hardness comes from institutional relations that permit extraction and implementation. It does not mean that a record has already adjudicated the person's entire future. When the same record is extracted anew in different matters, the intensity and scope of the restrictions it can produce may quite well differ.

XII. How Three Different Sources Enter State Nodes

The state is not the source of these differences, but it changes how they are preserved, extracted, mutually recognized, and put into effect. The three sources entering state nodes have different mechanisms of formation. Differences produced through national-community formation come from the long-term formation of community relations. Class images are not entities within what society fundamentally is, but low-dimensional images formed by the brutal projection of multiple high-weight differentiating units. Institutional qualifications are shaped by particular organizational relations such as those of schools, hospitals, companies, or neighborhood organizations. State nodes reformat these materials according to materials, rules, and authority, but cannot flatten their mechanisms of generation into one mechanism.

Differences produced through national-community formation first form in languages, place names, shared harm, community boundaries, and experiences of boundaries. When the relevant differences among them are brought into state nodes in the corresponding matters, they take the following distinct formats through the relevant administrative and legal procedures. Languages become official languages, languages of schooling, and examination languages; community boundaries become registration fields, regional institutions, and legal recognition; place names are fixed as administrative divisions; shared harm is organized into commemorative days, teaching materials, museums, and official narratives; experiences of boundaries are distilled into passports, border inspection, nationality, visas, and state borders. This formatting changes how materials are processed, giving them the capacity to be preserved and invoked across settings, but does not make the state the source of nations. Ethnic registration leaves only part of the form of community differences in particular fields; it cannot replace the national community itself. The original formation of language, shared memory, and experiences of boundaries continues outside state formats. State incorporation of differences can connect some differences to administrative divisions, teaching materials, or border inspection, but cannot contain all of a community's relations in one registration.

Classifications, materials, or low-dimensional images formed by class theory are still processed anew after specific personnel, organizations, or institutional procedures bring them into state

nodes. When the relevant personnel use these images to classify, this too may produce real consequences. This must be distinguished from checking income, employment relations, housing, property, debt, social insurance, taxation, and assistance eligibility under concrete rules; ordinary processing of materials cannot all be attributed to class theory. In archives, taxation, welfare, education, housing, and judicial procedures, what processors actually extract and format are these concrete differentiating units, connecting them to qualifications and records that can be registered, mutually recognized, and put into effect. This process has not discovered a really existing class. Class does not exist at all, and the consequences of classification produced by adopting an image cannot, in reverse, prove its existence. Institutional processing of real differences and classification based on images can connect within the same procedure, but we must still trace the materials on which each is based, who adopts them, and how they change consequences.

Institutional qualifications, such as those of schools, hospitals, companies, and neighborhood organizations, originally depend on their respective particular organizational relations. Once connected to state nodes, they may acquire the capacity to be processed across regions, institutions, and settings, allowing local certification to produce consequences over a larger space. Yet this extension still depends on the nature of the current matter and the receiving node's authority. Different nodes may not automatically recognize one another's materials, and some qualifications are effective only within a limited scope. The original formation of institutional qualifications does not disappear upon connection to the state, nor can institutionalization at the organizational level be directly equated with state incorporation of differences.

After entering state nodes, differences produced through national-community formation, class images, and institutional qualifications can meet in the same document, archive, or processing of administrative qualifications, yet still cannot replace one another. State incorporation of differences changes the scope these materials can cross, the nodes that extract them, and the consequences of implementation to which they connect. It does not retroactively create their original sources. Only by retaining the differences among these three chains can we explain how state nodes increase the intensity of processing without conflating national communities, low-dimensional class images, and organizations' institutional qualifications as one-dimensional creations of the state.

XIII. Protection, Exclusion, and the Historical Materials Left Behind

State relations can protect people and also trap them in positions of non-passability. Resident identity cards can be used where the law specifies or a concrete service genuinely requires proof of identity; student registration records a student's enrollment status under education rules; social insurance provides statutory protection in the separate circumstances of old age, illness, work-related injury, unemployment, and childbirth; courts and other administrative procedures maintain order within their respective authority. [Fo2a] Documents give people verifiable entry points before unfamiliar institutions; student registration connects children to educational positions; social insurance and assistance give hardships such as illness, unemployment, or old age an opportunity to enter protective procedures. Courts, police, border inspection, and administrative nodes provide order and passage within their respective scopes and existing authority, and can bring some risks into an order of implementation. These protections do not fall abstractly on everyone. Specific personnel form them at particular positions according to materials, rules, authority, and procedures. When documents, student registration, and social insurance materials are checked and recognized, they can give people passage, education, or protection at unfamiliar nodes.

Yet state incorporation of differences is not inherently legitimate. It can protect or exclude, recognize or misread, provide qualifications or create gaps, stabilize order or freeze complex differences. It cannot be written either as worship of the state or as a simple theory of oppression. Where the current matter actually requires the corresponding materials, the same chain may stop before certification, mutual recognition, or implementation if missing documents, archival errors, mismatched household registration, or incomplete eligibility materials have not been lawfully remedied through supplementation or correction. The chain may also be halted when past records are extracted anew and used to impose restrictions in the relevant matters, or when misreading or incorrect handling occurs during actual processing. The person then cannot connect to paths that would otherwise allow passage, enrollment, protection, or processing. Being left outside the threshold does not mean that the person's facts of life do not exist. Concrete life has not yet connected through materials and procedures accessible to the corresponding nodes.

This shows that protection and exclusion are not two unrelated aspects of the state. There is not one state responsible only for protection and another responsible only for exclusion. Rather, the same network of nodes makes different connections in response to different states of materials. Judging the consequences of state incorporation of differences cannot stop at abstract general declarations. It requires a return to concrete processing relations: which materials are seen, which relations are suppressed, which qualifications are connected, and who is left outside the channels at the threshold of material requirements.

It is through stages such as identification, formatting, registration, classification, certification, mutual recognition, allocation and coordination, implementation, and write-back that dispersed differences enter documents, archives, law, administration, education, taxation, welfare, the military, borders, and punishment mechanisms. Depending on the requirements of concrete matters, these stages may interweave, be blocked, or terminate; not every instance of processing passes through the entire chain. Where connections run smoothly, this process gives differences passability across settings; where materials are missing or rules do not fit, it produces institutional non-passability within procedures. Documents, archives, judgments, commemorations, teaching materials, border records, records of sacrifice, administrative divisions, and punishment records retained by state nodes preserve implementation results as materials available for renewed extraction in the future, giving state incorporation of differences an extent in time beyond a single event. Only when these records are retrieved, examined, and assigned weight anew in particular future matters do they again become actual judgments and corresponding consequences.

State nodes thus leave a system of preserved materials available for later extraction. Historicization then takes up these retained materials: in subsequent processes of preservation, interpretation, forgetting, commemoration, and contestation, they may be passed to those who come later and regain weight in possible future concrete relational fields.

Notes

[F13] For births and changes in household registration, see Articles 7 and 17–19 of the Regulations on Household Registration of the People's Republic of China. For marriage registration, see Articles 4 and 7–10 of the 2025 Regulations on Marriage Registration. For real-property registration, see Articles 2, 8, and 15–16 of the Interim Regulations on Real Property Registration. For student registration, see Articles 3–7 of Jiao Ji [2025] No. 1. Administrative penalty records are also subject to the procedural and disclosure boundaries of the Administrative Penalty Law of the People's Republic of China.

[F12] Proof of identity, student registration, social insurance, court enforcement, and real-property registration enter subsequent matters under their respective specialized rules. See Articles 13–15 of the Resident Identity Card Law of the People's Republic of China; Articles 3–7 of Jiao Ji [2025] No. 1; Articles 4,

58, and 74 of the Social Insurance Law of the People's Republic of China; Articles 5–6 of the consumption restriction provisions; and Articles 27–28 of the Interim Regulations on Real Property Registration.

[F09] For the boundaries of proof and inspection involving resident identity cards, see Articles 13–15 of the Resident Identity Card Law of the People's Republic of China. For establishing and updating student registration, see Articles 6–7 of Jiao Ji [2025] No. 1. For social insurance contribution and entitlement records, see Articles 58 and 74 of the Social Insurance Law of the People's Republic of China. For changes and corrections to household registration, see Articles 17–19 of the Regulations on Household Registration of the People's Republic of China. Corrections to archives are separately governed by the Archives Law and its implementing regulations.

[F05] Central legal sources and annual local policies for compulsory-education admission must be used at distinct levels. Articles 11–13 of the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China establish the framework for enrollment of school-age children and adolescents and local guarantees. Shanghai's Hu Jiao Wei Ji [2023] No. 10, Beijing's Jing Jiao Ji Er [2024] No. 4, the guide for the 2024–2025 school year in Dapeng, Shenzhen, and Yun Jiao Gui Zi [2024] No. 1 of Baiyun, Guangzhou, establish only the material requirements for their respective areas, years, and categories, not a nationally uniform checklist. The Dapeng example follows Parts III–V and VII–IX of the Guide to Applications for First-Year Junior Secondary School Places in Compulsory Education in Dapeng New District for the 2024–2025 School Year (2024-05-30, https://www.dpxq.gov.cn/ztzl/mszt/jypx/tzgg/content/post_11320115.html). Housing materials have different submission paths; social insurance requirements and points are determined by application category. The Baiyun example follows Articles 4–9 of Yun Jiao Gui Zi [2024] No. 1 (https://www.gz.gov.cn/gfxwj/qjgfxwj/byq/qbm/content/post_9630491.html). Stable residence, stable employment, current social insurance contributions, or a child's existing local sixth-grade student registration are different ways of satisfying the corresponding provisions of Article 4. These measures took effect on 2024-05-01 and were repealed on 2025-04-10 by Yun Jiao Gui Zi [2025] No. 1; this book uses them here for the period in which they applied. The two official full texts were rechecked on 2026-09-30.

[F08] This book distinguishes the minimum subsistence guarantee, medical assistance, and basic medical insurance within the relevant jurisdiction in mainland China. For acceptance of applications, co-resident household members, income and property, separate applications by specified persons, deductions for unavoidable expenditure, supplementation and correction, investigation and information checks, and confirmation and payment under the minimum subsistence guarantee, see Articles 2, 4–25, and 38 of the Measures for Review and Confirmation of the Minimum Subsistence Guarantee (Min Fa [2021] No. 57). Materials obtainable through government service platforms are not required to be submitted again; assistance with investigations by villagers' or residents' committees does not mean that neighborhood certification is invariably required. For medical-assistance recipients, household economic circumstances, medical expenses, insurance payments, referrals, and application review, see Parts II–V and VII–VIII of the Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Improving the Medical Insurance and Assistance System for Major and Exceptionally Serious Diseases (Guo Ban Fa [2021] No. 42). Those already recognized as recipients of the minimum subsistence guarantee or as people in extreme hardship receive medical assistance directly; this does not mean that every expense has already been paid. Basic medical insurance, basic pension insurance, and unemployment insurance each have statutory conditions, with no common prerequisite of a determination of household poverty. See Articles 2, 16, 23–32, and 44–45 of the Social Insurance Law of the People's Republic of China (amended in 2018). For categories of medical treatment outside the province of insurance enrollment, filing and completion of filing at a later stage, referrals, direct settlement, and manual reimbursement, see Parts II–III of Yi Bao Fa [2022] No. 22 and Articles 2–17, 30–37, 43–44, and 57–63 of its attached Operating Procedures for Direct Settlement of Basic Medical Insurance Expenses for Cross-Provincial Medical Treatment; also consult Parts I–IV of Yi Bao Fa [2024] No. 21. These last two documents are limited to the out-of-area medical treatment matters they specify. They cannot support a uniform checklist of materials for all medical and assistance procedures. The place of insurance enrollment, place of treatment, type of insurance, category of treatment, and rules applicable at the time of processing must be checked separately. The existence of statutory channels does not mean that actual results are guaranteed.

[F11] For specific consequences of court enforcement records, see Articles 1, 3–6, and 9 of the Provisions of the Supreme People's Court on Restricting High Consumption and Certain Other Consumption by Persons

Subject to Enforcement. For disclosure and processing of administrative penalty information, see Article 48 and the relevant procedural provisions of the Administrative Penalty Law of the People's Republic of China. These legal sources do not support presenting consequences for taking up employment, loans, border passage, and local reputation as uniform across all records.

[F02a] See Notes F02, F06, and F09; this passage uses them only within the jurisdiction, period, procedure, and material scope specified in each note.

Chapter 21 Historicization: How Past Differences Become an Order of Differentiation Available for Future Extraction

I. How the Past Enters the Lives of Those Who Come Later

Why must people who never experienced their ancestors' division of the family household still face its consequences many years later? Why do people who never experienced war or migration inherit judgments and distances left by earlier generations through commemorative days, teaching materials, boundary disputes, place names, surnames, and routes? The question is not whether the past existed, but how it enters the lives of those who come later. The descendants did not sit at the table when the household was divided. They did not hear who spoke first, who remained silent, who took on debt, or who was away and could not return in time. Yet decades later, when property is divided, elder care arranged, money borrowed, or relationships and marriage considered, accounts of that division may still be extracted. “The eldest took more that year” will affect who should contribute more money later. “The second child did not look after the elders that year” will affect whether a marriage receives approval. “Her family was treated unfairly back then” may alter the allocation of responsibility among relatives. Through these entry points, the past enters later judgments, and historicization occurs.

Historicization is neither recalling the past nor lyrical reflection on history. It involves stages such as preservation, compression, indexing, triggering, interpretation, contestation, and renewed weight assignment. These stages can interweave and connect; not every instance follows a complete, fixed sequence. Through them, past differences become an order of differentiation that later people can extract. State incorporation of differences writes differences into chains of implementation; historicization then passes these preserved, compressed, interpreted, or contested differences on to those who come later, allowing them potentially to regain weight in future relational fields. What later people take up is not a past that arrives automatically, but entry points left by earlier people and the judgments current users form through them. Only when family members, people involved in local relations, or institutional personnel bring materials into the current question do old differences bear on responsibility, eligibility, evaluation, and boundaries.

The same index can be set aside, disputed, or reinterpreted by different people. If materials cannot be identified, no concrete person presents them, or the current relational field makes no corresponding demand, time alone will not make them produce consequences. Only when materials are identifiable, someone presents them, they gain recognition within relations, and they connect to the current relational field do old differences move from traces to an order available for later people to use. If later people treat old materials simply as old objects, they may remain in the background for a long time. In concrete relational fields such as property division, care, or relationships and marriage, those presenting materials must also explain why they connect to present relations. If materials exist but their connection to those relations is not recognized, the past will not directly change current judgment, and old differences may still remain only in the background.

What happened in the past and how later people remember it are not the same thing. Take the division of a family household. Many complicated circumstances may have existed at the time: the elders were in poor health; one branch of the family had cared for them for years; one branch was working elsewhere and did not return in time; one branch took on debt; one branch received

housing but also took responsibility for the subsequent funeral arrangements; a daughter contributed money but was not formally included in the arrangements for dividing property. All these details may be true. Yet a few years later, the family may retain only two or three remarks: “The eldest took an extra room that year”; “The second child did not look after the elders that year”; “The daughter who married into another family contributed money that year, but no one remembered.” These remarks are not the whole past, but they will become materials through which later people judge closeness and distance, what is owed, responsibility, and respectability.

Such compression also occurs in history at different levels. In a local famine, who opened the granaries, who hoarded grain, who fled, who saved people, who said what, who was later wronged, whose role was exaggerated, and who was forgotten may originally have been entangled. Later, the locality remembers only a place name, a monument, an elder's account, or a family's reputation. National history, faced with shared harm, migration, resistance, betrayal, protection, silence, mixed settlement, intermarriage, and changes in boundaries, may likewise be compressed into a few stories, commemorative days, passages in teaching materials, burial grounds, and names that cannot be spoken casually. The state, in turn, will enter part of the past in archives, teaching materials, laws, commemorative days, museums, rolls of martyrs, and administrative boundaries. It does not preserve the whole past, but organizes some past differences into public memory. Historical memory is therefore not the past itself. The past did happen; historical memory is the order of differences left after that past has been preserved, selected, compressed, indexed, and interpreted.

The original scene of an event contains interlinked circumstances; preserved materials carry only the parts that can be recorded, narrated, or identified. Cash-gift ledgers retain amounts, IOUs retain debts, oral accounts retain relations and evaluations, and burial grounds and place names retain belonging, migration, and spatial relations in spatial form. Different nodes leave different parts and different gaps. Formal archives may preserve determinations and procedural results without preserving lived circumstances. Family accounts and talk may preserve relations and relatives' evaluations but lack public procedures. Teaching materials and commemorations have a range within which they circulate and can be used, yet may compress local differences. Gaps thus also become part of later accounts.

Later people encounter materials that have been processed at various nodes. Only when oral accounts are brought into property division, or archives into eligibility reviews, do materials acquire weight in current relations. Even then, they cannot replace all the relations at the original scene. We must compare what each retains and omits, and the weight each carries if we are to avoid treating any one form of memory as the whole event. Once a current judgment has formed, those affected may preserve its result as a new account, providing a new entry point for subsequent use. Preserved traces, their presentation in the present, and concrete consequences must therefore be analyzed together.

Past differences enter preservation nodes such as families, localities, nations, states, archives, teaching materials, commemorations, place names, burial grounds, oral stories, and institutional records. It is through processes of selection, compression, indexing, latency, triggering, interpretation, forgetting, commemoration, education, contestation, transmission across generations, renewed extraction, and renewed weight assignment that they become an order of differentiation that later people can use; in future relational fields, these differences regain weight. This process is historicization. Put briefly, past differences are preserved, indexed, and rewritten before being passed on to later people, and can therefore still be extracted and assigned weight in the future. Overlap among the stages also changes the visibility of materials. An interpretation may affect the identification of an index beforehand; a contest may affect which records are preserved

beforehand. These changes are not additional stages, but intersections of the same mechanisms across different relations and relational fields.

The full mechanism cannot be reduced to “the past is remembered.” Preservation nodes first select and compress materials; indices retain entry points for extraction; relational fields trigger extraction; interpretation, contestation, and renewed weight assignment then connect materials back to later people's judgments. What matters is not the event that has already passed, but what entry points it left and in what relational fields they are triggered. Names, place names, surnames, judgments, burial grounds, genealogies, photographs, teaching materials, commemorative days, old homes, and migration routes can all become entry points. Yet entry points do not open themselves. Dividing a household may trigger family historical indices; relationships and marriage trigger relatives' reputations; land disputes trigger place names and migration memories; conflict between national communities brings past shared harm and resistance back into play; state commemoration brings past sacrifice, victory, and shame back into play; eligibility reviews may trigger archival records. Only when specific people or procedures extract, interpret, and assign weight to relevant materials anew in a new relational field, according to current relations, do historical differences re-enter real consequences.

The stages listed have relations of sequence, but not every case passes through them all. Transmission across generations carries entry points beyond the original people concerned; renewed extraction connects them back to new relational fields. Yet preservation may lack an index, an index may lack a trigger, and even after triggering, an effective judgment may fail to form because recognition is absent. Being preserved is not the same as having been extracted; being extracted does not mean necessarily receiving the same weight. Preservation, selection, compression, indexing, and triggering may overlap, or stages may be missing or cut off. Some differences may be renamed before being extracted, and only then may the results leave new accounts, records, or evaluations.

The same difference can yield different results at different nodes; a single sequence cannot be presupposed. Interpretation sometimes participates in identifying what kind of past difference a material represents, while contests among versions may also affect which materials can be extracted. Interpretation and contestation sometimes affect entry points before extraction, and sometimes occur together as materials enter judgment. Renewed weight assignment depends on how materials enter current judgment and whether they gain recognition within it. The role of the same material will change with the person presenting it, the procedure, and the relations; it cannot be explained in isolation from these conditions. Without this connection, an expanded memory remains only an abstract name and cannot act directly in place of actors and procedures.

II. Preservation, Selection, and Compression

For past differences to take effect across generations, they must first enter preservation nodes. Someone once helped relatives, but if no one remembers, and there is no cash-gift ledger, IOU, elder's account, or later family evaluation, the matter may soon fade away. A locality suffered a disaster, but if no place name, inscription, burial ground, local gazetteer, elder's account, or commemorative activity remains, it may later survive only in a few people's private memories. A judgment lacking documents, archives, and records can likewise hardly reappear later in hiring, loans, relocation, or eligibility reviews.

Preservation is not neutral: it gives some differences entry points into the future. Family stories preserve relatives' historical indices; genealogies preserve ancestors, generational rank, migration, and marriage boundaries; cash-gift ledgers preserve attendance, absence, and amounts; burial

grounds and place names preserve ancestral origins, sacrifice, migration, land reclamation, war, famine, and old boundaries. Archives, teaching materials, monuments, museums, and oral stories each preserve in their own ways qualifications, punishments, rewards, public narratives, and past matters absent from formal records. Only by entering such nodes can events leave their original scenes and become differences still available for later people to extract.

Preservation within families maintains identifiability through relatives' accounts, objects, and records. Local preservation is carried by place names, burial grounds, inscriptions, local gazetteers, and the use of space. Institutional preservation makes materials searchable through documents, archives, and procedures. If no one maintains the carriers, or if they cannot be identified, the chain of preservation will break. Preservation also requires someone to identify materials as something connected with past differences. An old object can be just an old object, or it can become an entry point in family evaluations, land disputes, or eligibility procedures. The difference comes from how relations and procedures identify it.

Preservation therefore provides only an entry point for the future. Whether materials can be presented, whether they are recognized, and which interpretation they support must be decided by specific users and recognition procedures in later relational fields. Preservation nodes need to maintain materials' existence and the means of identifying them. Damage to old objects, changes in place names, the departure of narrators, or the loss of rules for finding archival records may all break a preservation chain. Even when materials have not disappeared, later people may lose the path of access to them. Preservation thus leaves only the possibility of extraction; it does not guarantee that an entry point will always remain effective. The degree to which materials are recognized will also determine whether old differences become grounds for responsibility or remain at the margins. What later people encounter is only a processed entry point, not the complete re-creation of an event.

Historical memory begins with selection; not all differences will be preserved. Some suffering and contributions are remembered, while others are downweighted or omitted. Some people leave names; others become nameless. Designations such as protector, troublemaker, traitor, and someone forced to choose are likewise formed through selection. The division of family property may retain “who received the house” while omitting “who cared for the elders all along.” A local conflict may retain “which family caused trouble” while omitting the injustice in land distribution. In memory on a larger scale, records of harm suffered by a nation may emphasize external harm while downweighting internal sacrifice, silence, and gains. State commemoration may likewise retain victory, sacrifice, and heroes while omitting ordinary people's fear, migration, hunger, and nameless deaths. All preservation involves selection; that does not make it equivalent to falsification. Genuine occlusion occurs when the retained part is passed off as the whole past.

Selection is affected by positions from which records can be made and by the availability of materials. People able to leave their names, preserve documents, or enter public accounts can more readily make their own differences into shared materials. Those without positions for recording or conditions for dissemination may have their contributions retained only in family narratives or weak nodes. Differences that enter formal documents or public accounts are usually more visible to later people than those circulating only through weak nodes. Omitted contents may not enjoy equal strength of preservation. They may be reduced to a designation, a taboo, or a stretch of silence, yet old objects, reputation, or relatives' memories may still preserve an entry point. Material availability concerns not only whether something exists, but who can preserve, find, and present it. Those omitted may leave traces, but their versions may not achieve the same range of circulation and use. Later people who see only the main version may easily mistake the retained part for the whole. Only by comparing different nodes may they see downweighted responsibilities and

circumstances. The intervals between preservation, extraction, and weight assignment are precisely where subsequent differences may be contested and changed. This difference allows versions to coexist and leaves the main version always open to questioning.

The past must also undergo compression; otherwise it is difficult to transmit. Complex events involve many positions, motives, fears, misunderstandings, silences, interests, and responsibilities that later people cannot take up in full. They are therefore often condensed into names, place names, labels, stories, commemorative days, judgments, inscriptions, teaching materials, family accounts, or local reputation. Arguments, debts arising from illness, care, favoritism, silence, work elsewhere, sex differences, and elders' self-interest in a family's division of its household may ultimately leave only “The eldest took more that year.” This remark makes the past transmissible while occluding more details. Children remember their ancestors' migration through place names, students encounter war through commemorative days, and descendants remember household division through an old family remark. Meanwhile, mixed settlement, internal harm, the nameless, the background to judgments, and the difficulties of the time may all disappear from the image.

Compression changes the unit of transmission. Only when complex relations are condensed into names, place names, labels, or short remarks can later people remember and present them in everyday relations. Without portable images, differences can hardly cross time. Yet compression also changes visibility. Removing the background makes transmission easier but makes it harder for later people to work back from the image and question the background that was removed. People readily remember who received what, yet do not know who cared for others, incurred debts, or was absent; they thus connect outcomes directly to responsibility and evaluation. When background, relations, and multiple accounts are compressed into shorter images, some differences become visible while others become harder to bring forward. The convenience and occlusion of compression therefore coexist.

The results of compression can serve only as entry points and materials for judgment. They cannot replace complex relations, nor can they replace specific actors and procedures as the subjects carrying out explanation. Ease of transmission must leave room to question positions of preservation, missing parts, and different versions. Later users must ask not only whether something has been preserved, but who can see it, who can present it, and who can enable it to circulate and be used. In subsequent relational fields, judgments formed earlier may also become new materials.

III. How Indices Are Found and Triggered

The preserved past also needs indices if it is to be extracted anew in the future. Place names lead to old differences; commemorative days periodically trigger memory; written judgments can be retrieved in eligibility reviews; genealogies provide entry points into kinship order, migration, and marriage boundaries. Village names, rivers, bridges, old factories, and burial grounds may point back to the past in land disputes, migration narratives, and local identities. Surnames, burial grounds, and photographs can also bring out, respectively, clan relations, ancestral origins and sacrifice, or scenes a family is reluctant to discuss openly. Teaching materials connect part of the past to schools, examinations, and public judgments, while names in family stories may immediately evoke avoidance in relationships and marriage, old grievances, and unsettled responsibilities. Indices provide only entry points; whether they open still depends on the relational field. Preserved materials and indices are also on different levels. A photograph preserves traces of a scene; a name guides relatives toward a relation. An archive preserves a determination; it takes an eligibility procedure to connect that determination to the current question.

For indices to be usable, relatives must be familiar with forms of address within the family, institutional personnel must be able to read archives, and local people must know the origins of place names. Each relies on the corresponding position of knowledge and rules of identification to turn materials into entry points. There must be recognizable rules for identifying names, place names, burial grounds, photographs, or archives, so that later people can follow them toward the past. Yet an entry point cannot predetermine meaning: the same place name can point to a boundary in a land dispute and to origins in an account of migration. An index only provides a direction; it does not determine the question for a concrete relational field, still less take effect on its own. If materials cannot connect to concrete action, historical differences will not acquire real weight merely by having a name. Continuity across generations thus always retains concrete conditions and room for contestation; it is not a closed chain of inevitability.

Past differences must be triggered within a relational field before they re-enter reality. Family historical indices may ordinarily remain silent. The old house, cash-gift ledgers, burial grounds, and elders' remarks still exist, yet no one necessarily brings up the old household division at a shared meal. When it comes to household division, elder care, borrowing, or relationships and marriage, the old house may become an entry point into who received more and who received less. Cash-gift ledgers may become grounds for judging who contributed and who was absent. A single name may bring out an entire sequence of relatives' evaluations, old grievances, and what is owed.

In land disputes, grave relocations, land expropriation, and disputes over local identity, place names will bring out migration, old contracts, burial grounds, irrigation channels, ancestral origins, and boundaries. Past harm suffered by a nation can be brought back into play through commemorative days, boundary conflicts, educational disputes, or external pressure. Judgments in archives may reappear through hiring reviews, loans, travel, or eligibility applications. Without triggering, an index can remain silent for a long time. Once the relational field connects, the silent past may regain real operative weight.

The questions posed by a relational field change the relevance of materials. Property division concerns housing and contributions of effort; elder care concerns care and what is owed; relationships and marriage concern relatives' evaluations; eligibility reviews concern archives and determinations. The same index may therefore be brought forward or remain silent. Triggering requires not only the emergence of a relational field but also someone to present an index and its acceptance within the corresponding informal relations or institutional procedures, so that it becomes relevant material. Even if materials exist, old differences will remain at weak nodes if no one presents them or if they gain no recognition within the relations or procedures involved in that setting.

Triggering makes materials weightier, but does not mean that there is already a single conclusion. Different interpreters can connect materials to compensation, injustice, responsibility, or boundaries; consequences change with the relational field, procedures, and contests among versions. Once extracted, an index may still be challenged by other versions. Gaps between versions will affect later judgments, but the gaps themselves may also become part of the dispute.

IV. Positions of Interpretation and Latent Historical Space

Triggered differences still need specific people to interpret them; the same past does not explain its own meaning. Someone who left their native place may be described as fleeing famine or as abandoning their home. Absence from a relative's funeral may be interpreted as disregard for propriety, yet debts arising from illness may also have left the person unable to return home. Silence during a conflict can be seen as cowardice or understood as protecting one's family.

Conviction, a community's failure, and sacrifice may likewise give rise to conflicting accounts. Once an index of a family's household division is extracted, the senior branch may explain receiving more housing by its responsibility for the elders' funeral arrangements, the junior branch sees it as injustice, and the daughter who married into another family points out that her financial contribution at the time was omitted. In disputes among versions, elders' remarks, cash-gift ledgers, IOUs, burial grounds, and the old home may all be used to support the respective accounts.

Whoever gains standing to interpret can affect the meaning with which past differences are extracted later. Even when the same event is preserved, different interpretations will produce different consequences. Interpretive authority comes from a combination of positions in relation to materials, capacity for dissemination, and recognition procedures. These positions do not automatically guarantee that an interpretation is correct.

Older people and elders within a family command knowledge of experiences and kinship terms; influential local figures and clan elders have a command of local relations; teachers, textbook authors, and educational workers control circulation and use within education; personnel in archival institutions and people handling local documents control entry points into formal procedures. In addition, narrators, educators, religious figures, writers, and preservers of historical materials within national communities, together with the people working within state structures through archives, laws, teaching materials, commemorative days, museums, and administrative naming, each form interpretive positions within different scopes, thereby influencing the meanings assigned to differences.

When an interpretation enters teaching materials, archives, commemoration, or legal naming, it gains a stronger capacity to circulate and be used publicly. This does not mean that its interpreters created the past. An interpretation with greater reach is not necessarily correct. It must still confront gaps in materials, versions at other nodes, and disputes in current relations. The same cash-gift ledger or written judgment may still be connected to different judgments of responsibility; other materials, different nodes, and subsequent procedures may still change its position within the main version. Transmission across generations is therefore conditional and may still be interrupted, rewritten, or understood anew. In transmitting differences, historicization also retains room for their reinterpretation.

Forgetting is not a blank; it too is part of historicization. Some differences have not entered teaching materials, archives, inscriptions, or public commemoration, yet may still be preserved at weak, marginal, and silent nodes. Family silences, local reputation, taboos, old objects, burial grounds, place names, avoidance in relationships and marriage, kinship designations, marginal narratives, migration routes, and informal accounts may all constitute latent historical space. Old family grievances go unmentioned in ordinary times but are raised when relationships and marriage are considered. Conflicts not recorded in local gazetteers may still prompt avoidance through surnames, streets, or land. A migration occupying only one line in an archive may be known to local people through place names and burial grounds as a history of who arrived first, who arrived later, and who was pushed out. Shared harm absent from formal commemoration may also remain in taboos, designations, and silence.

The fact that explicit history has not extracted a difference does not mean it has lost its consequences. Latent historical space refers precisely to historical differences not yet extracted by the current explicit narrative but which may regain weight in future relational fields. Yet weak nodes may also break: the departure of narrators, damage to old objects, and the loss of recognition for local reputation will all make entry points disappear. Latent historical space is not a safe storehouse containing everything omitted.

Reappearance requires an identifiable entry point and a concrete relational field in which it is brought forward. Relationships and marriage, land disputes, accounts of migration, or kinship terms may make silent materials relevant again. Without a corresponding explanation of the relations involved, however, they may still be unable to enter explicit judgment. Forgetting includes suppression, silence, and possible loss. Loss differs from continued silence: weak nodes may remain silent because objects are damaged, narrators lose their positions, or surrounding relations no longer recognize them. Entry into latent historical space therefore does not mean that everything omitted has been preserved intact. Even when an index, someone to present it, and a relevant relational field are found again, what reappears may bring back only fragments, not the entirety of what was forgotten. Analysis should focus on the paths by which materials enter relations and concrete procedures, rather than personifying the past as a single force. The central questions remain who can present materials and through which relations or procedures they can gain recognition.

V. Continuity across Generations through Commemoration and Education

The past does not return to reality on its own. Archives, old family matters, or local harms may lie dormant for a long time. Specific organizers, carriers, and procedures arrange times for past differences to return repeatedly to reality. Carriers such as commemorative days, ritual offerings, inscriptions, burial grounds, museums, classrooms, ceremonies, and lists allow particular materials to appear periodically. Specific people and institutional procedures arrange venues and ceremonies and maintain inscriptions and rolls; institutions connect dates to public time. Participants then bring materials back into shared judgment by laying flowers, observing silence, reading names aloud, telling stories, paying ritual respects, or retracing old routes.

In this process, commemoration fixes not only events themselves, but also specific lists, designations, and the direction of responsibility. Who enters a list and who remains nameless; who is counted among the fallen or described as a perpetrator, a protector, or a traitor: these affect how later people define victims, protectors, perpetrators, and community members, and thus understand themselves, others, boundaries, and responsibilities. Commemoration can safeguard the memory of harms that were previously downweighted, but may also fix a complex past as a single narrative. It can enable members to remember sacrifice, yet may also pass unresolved hostility on to descendants.

As commemoration recurs, a single interpretation may be reinforced. If other materials cannot enter commemoration, complex circumstances become harder to make publicly visible. Yet although periodic appearance increases visibility, it does not thereby eliminate disputes. Carriers differ in their strength of preservation, and later people's use of them differs in scope and consequences. Participants may still form different interpretations from materials retained within families, localities, or other nodes. Only by specifying these concrete carriers and institutional conditions can we avoid abstracting history or memory into an acting subject with an independent will.

Education brings those who did not experience events into contact with preserved historical differences. Children did not experience their ancestors' migration, wars, massacres, victories, defeats, divisions, sacrifices, and humiliations. Yet they will encounter them in family stories, teaching materials, classrooms, examinations, flag-raising ceremonies, museums, film and television, commemorative days, and local narratives. Education does more than let people “know the past.” It also tells later people which sufferings deserve remembrance, which names should be

respected, and which failures must not be repeated, and gives particular meanings to boundaries, responsibility, protection, and danger.

Educators select materials, teaching materials arrange narratives, and examinations and commemorations repeatedly present contents. Together they affect which entry points become available to those who did not experience events and arrange which names, boundaries, and responsibilities are easier to extract. Disputes over education are intense and concern the future precisely because what is at stake is how the next generation will later extract the past: who will be treated as one of their own or as someone who inflicted harm, and what will be seen as shame, responsibility, something forgivable, or something that cannot be forgotten. The question must still return to materials, positions from which accounts are told, and procedures.

Family accounts, teaching materials, and classrooms connect those who did not experience events to versions already selected and compressed. What students enter here is a set of transmissible images and conditions of interpretation, not the original scene itself. Education does not automatically produce the same result. Some accept existing judgments; others compare versions or understand them anew within new relations. Students may reinterpret conclusions in teaching materials on the basis of different family experiences, local memories, or other materials. That one version circulates and is used more readily neither means that no materials remain at other nodes nor, still less, that disputes have ended.

VI. How Multiple Versions Enter into Contestation

As the past enters different nodes, it leaves different versions. Families, local reputation, state archives, and school teaching materials, as well as victims, perpetrators, bystanders, the defeated, and the victorious, each preserve materials from different positions. Oral stories and silence may also carry versions; they do not naturally converge into one. Family materials are maintained by relatives and may preserve details but lack the capacity for public circulation and use. Local reputation circulates through space and accounts, preserving reputations but potentially downweighting what preceded them. Archives and school teaching materials gain circulation and use through institutional procedures. Archives are adept at preserving times, places, and determinations, but may not preserve lived circumstances. State versions have greater public reach but readily compress local differences.

On informal or ritual dimensions, oral stories can retain suffering outside formal records, but may change shape during transmission. Silence, though not explicitly voiced, may persist through avoidance, taboos, and arrangements among relatives. Commemoration recurs through ritual. The history of household division is no exception. Senior and junior family branches and daughters who married into other families each have their own accounts, while elders' remarks, cash-gift ledgers, IOUs, and neighborhood reputation carry different forms of them. Multiple versions first indicate different positions of preservation; their existence does not yet mean that contestation among them has occurred.

The existence of multiple versions does not remove the need for analysis; different accounts cannot be treated as equally valid simply because more than one exists. Versions must still be compared in relation to their sources, recording purposes, interpretive authority, and conditions of recognition: where do the materials come from, who can present them, through which procedure are they recognized, and within what scope can they circulate and be used? Yet the authority and scope for circulation and use are not the same as valid grounds for the interpretation itself. To judge whether a version can stand, we must also examine whether it corresponds to the facts relevant to the question it seeks to explain, whether the materials corroborating one another are independent,

whether key counterexamples have been omitted, and whether the inferences withstand scrutiny. In the earlier example of household division, an oral account of care or financial contributions that can be corroborated by IOUs, cash-gift ledgers, or other independent materials may have firmer grounds than a widely circulating account, even if it is mentioned less often. Conversely, a version's ease of dissemination and wider reach do not mean that its records are accurate. Accounts offered by those in a minority or in weaker positions are not automatically true merely because of their weaker position; nor can widely circulating versions be exempted from factual examination solely on the authority that recognizes them.

Different nodes also affect one another. Local reputation enters teaching materials, family narratives enter archives, and public commemoration changes relatives' evaluations. Old versions acquire new weight in these transitions and may also lose details. Differences among versions arise from preservation nodes, kinds of material, the scope of circulation and use, and interpretive authority. Family oral accounts, local place names, archives, teaching materials, and commemorations each have different visibility. Once a public name is fixed, later interpretation becomes easier, but may still face challenges from other materials.

What historical contestation seeks to determine is which version becomes the main version most readily extracted by later people. The objects of contestation include preservation, naming, public dissemination, and which version enters teaching materials, archives, commemoration, and legal names. This is not the automatic opposition of two abstract groups. Actors in different positions use materials and procedures to contend over which version becomes the main one.

Contestation in different domains involves different rules of recognition and different consequences. Family contests concern care and property division. After elders die, siblings may argue over “who provided more care,” “who owes the most,” or “who is entitled to a share of the property,” thereby also reordering family history. Local contests concern old contracts, place names, and land. Land disputes will lead different families to extract their respective migration memories, old contracts, origins of place names, and elders' accounts. Families, recorders, educators, and participants and organizers of commemorative activities within national communities may form different versions concerning shared harm, those written into the record, those marginalized, and internal betrayal and protection.

The writing of teaching materials, establishment of commemorative days, opening of archives, museum displays, and legal naming will also change public memory. Interpretive authority, the capacity for public dissemination, and opportunities to enter teaching materials, archives, commemoration, and legal naming determine whether a version can gain a dominant position. Contestation does not aim to retrieve the bygone past intact; it points toward the future. When later people encounter a place name, personal name, identity, commemorative day, or archive, which differences will they extract, how much weight will they assign, and to what responsibilities and boundaries will they connect them?

Once the main version acquires the capacity to circulate and be used publicly, future use becomes easier. This often depends on mutual support among naming, teaching materials, archives, commemoration, and procedural positions, rather than the will of an abstract group alone. Marginal materials may still retain entry points within family, local, or oral nodes. A version with stronger public reach therefore remains open to questioning by other materials. Contestation continues to affect what descendants encounter, what responsibilities they bear, and how they draw boundaries. Concrete consequences must be put into effect by the people concerned, those involved in local relations, or procedural personnel; they cannot be attributed to abstract history.

VII. Historical Indices in Families and Localities

Family historical indices are an order of differences passed on to later people. Injustice in grandparents' division of the household may reappear at grandchildren's weddings and funerals. Relatives' past care, absence from weddings and funerals, the amount of housing property held, debts undertaken, and past matters such as a paternal aunt's financial contribution or a maternal uncle's avoidance may also be used to judge descendants' closeness and distance, responsibility, and respectability. Although descendants were not present at the original scene, they still receive indices such as old homes, burial grounds, names, wedding seating orders, amounts in cash-gift ledgers, and elders' old remarks. Household division, elder care, relationships and marriage, borrowing, and gatherings of relatives trigger these entry points, followed by interpretation and contestation. Some call receiving more housing unjust; others see it as compensation. Still others point out the difficulties at the time or remind everyone that the contributions of a daughter who married into another family have long been forgotten. An old remark that once carried little weight may thus gain weight in new divisions of property and arrangements for elder care. Family history preserves not the whole past, but old differences that descendants will still use to assess closeness and distance, what is owed, responsibility, and respectability.

For family indices to enter descendants' responsibilities, relatives must present them and current relations must recognize them. Old homes, burial grounds, seating orders, cash gifts, and designations do not automatically prescribe who should provide care or contribute more money. They act only when interpreted in concrete relational fields. Different kinship positions will change the weight of old materials. Senior and junior branches and daughters who married into other families can present materials concerning care, financial contributions, debt, or absence. Family memory can support compensation as well as opposing judgments of responsibility.

When family indices are presented in property division, care, relationships and marriage, or borrowing and lending, they connect old evaluations to the responsibilities of descendants. Who once provided care and who is thought to owe something may alter current allocation and recognition among relatives, making responsibility a result of old differences re-entering relations. If the results of current judgments are preserved as relatives' evaluations, cash-gift records, arrangements for relationships and marriage, or new accounts, they leave new conditions for subsequent use. Only when concrete users bring these preserved records back into new chains of judgment in the future will they again substantively affect later responsibility and eligibility. Family history is therefore not a constraint established once and for all: the conditions formed through preservation and subsequent re-entry into judgment are two different levels.

Local history turns disasters, migration, and land conflicts into materials through which local people judge insiders and outsiders, closeness and distance, and responsibility. Who opened granaries or hoarded grain during a famine, who fled or stayed, who saved people, and who seized land amid the disorder may not all enter formal records, yet may remain in place names, reputation, local gazetteers, inscriptions, elders' stories, and family reputations. The order of arrival, land occupation, settlement at the margins, intermarriage, and recognition brought by migration gradually enter local boundaries. Land conflicts may make old contracts, place names, burial grounds, irrigation channels, wooded hills, ancestral graves, and elders' testimony into indices for the next dispute. Local history does not sit motionless in local gazetteers. It returns to actual judgments, affecting who is seen as a local or a later arrival, which family is reliable or carries old grievances, which piece of land cannot be lightly disturbed, and which road and which name make people fall silent. Historicization brings local disasters, migration, and reputations into judgments of insiders and outsiders and the allocation of responsibility.

Local nodes need to be sustained through both space and narration. Place names, roads, old homes, old factories, burial grounds, and irrigation channels provide visible entry points. Elders' stories, local reputation, local gazetteers, and family reputations explain what those entry points mean in local relations, connecting visible things back to migration, disasters, and reputations. Materials concerning migration and disasters differ in their strength of transmission. Formal records may leave only a one-line trace, while local accounts may retain relations concerning who arrived first, who was pushed out, and who gained recognition. When the two enter a dispute, they will produce different interpretations.

Only when land, grave relocation, land expropriation, or local identity becomes an issue do these old entry points change evaluations and boundaries. If space is altered or narration interrupted, the origins of an index may become hard to identify, and local history may be unable to enter judgment. Later people may still find fragments in old routes, place names, or burial grounds. Whether those fragments can reconnect to local relations, however, depends on who preserves them, who recounts them, and whether the current relational field raises the question. Changes in boundaries, evaluations, and responsibilities all need to be carried out by actors and procedures within the current relational field.

VIII. National Memory and State Historicization

National history is not proof of bloodline, nor can it be reduced to a narrative solely of victimhood. A nation forms through long-term interaction and transmission across generations among partially overlapping networks of small communities. National history is the result of these networks preserving, interpreting, transmitting, and contesting shared memory. Shared harm can harden boundaries, but it is not the sole source of a nation. Language, rites and customs, marriage, migration, place names, religion, schools, institutions, shared risks, shared recognition, and shared consequences likewise enter national history. Once harm is preserved, it may pass on to later people through family stories, commemorative days, schooling, museums, literature, oral accounts, and state narratives. Those who never experienced it can thereby take up a sense of boundaries and responsibility, shame, vigilance, and community consciousness. What is preserved is also contested. Whose harm and sacrifice receive names, who is marginalized, how internal betrayal and protection are interpreted, and how intermarriage, mixed settlement, blurred boundaries, and shared life are situated all affect whether the boundaries of national communities harden or retain room for adjustment.

Shared memory enters later people's lives precisely through narration, education, commemoration, and recognition, making certain differences more readily seen as a shared past. The strength of boundaries thereby acquired through transmission across generations comes from concrete historical connections, not bloodline itself; it cannot be portrayed as bloodline unfolding on its own. Contests over national history determine which memory can acquire a public name and a direction of responsibility. This can harden boundaries or retain room for adjustment. Those concerned within a community occupy different positions, and which materials are presented, which harms, acts of protection, and silences are preserved, and which interpretations are recognized vary accordingly. Partially overlapping networks mean that boundaries carry intersecting relations. Intermarriage, mixed settlement, shared life, and shared risks preserve connections across boundaries, and these may coexist with narratives emphasizing shared harm. Multiple local and family versions may also resist a single boundary. National history thus contains both cohesion and dispute.

The state formats some past differences into public memory that can be taught, commemorated, and put into effect. Many memories already existed in families, localities, and national communities; the state is not the creator of the entire past. Yet archives, teaching materials, commemorative days, museums, rolls of martyrs, administrative divisions, legal names, border records, and written judgments will change how they are preserved, extracted, mutually recognized, and put into effect. The strength of state nodes comes from connections among preservation, mutual recognition, education, and implementation.

Archival institutions preserve and locate records and documents. When relevant personnel and procedures retrieve and mutually recognize archival records, parts of the past can gain recognition across institutions. Writers of teaching materials and educational procedures bring organized materials into schools and examination systems to extend their circulation and use. Organizers of commemorative activities and commemorative procedures arrange periodic public appearances, bringing some materials into public life at regular intervals. Administrative naming and legal names bring certain designations into everyday implementation and connect them to formal judgment. Other records and facilities, too, can potentially give parts of the past a stronger capacity to circulate and be used only when those records and facilities are used in concrete situations.

Formatting is also accompanied by compression. In organization and formatting, materials already held by families, localities, and national communities are reorganized and may lose local circumstances, individual circumstances, and differences among versions. Local differences may be condensed into public narratives, a past with multiple versions organized into a teachable version, fluid boundaries turned into administrative boundaries, and complex and varied individual circumstances placed under names such as reward, punishment, sacrifice, illegality, hero, or enemy. State historicization may preserve downweighted harms, but may also create new forgetting through its selection and trimming. Procedures for transmission across generations may extend recognition, or may continue to downweight versions already downweighted.

Although state nodes have a stronger capacity for circulation and use, they are neither the source of the entire past nor the sole subjects of historicization. Family, local, and national nodes may still preserve differences not subjected to public formatting, retain different versions, and contest interpretive authority. How procedures select and name is the key to understanding state historicization. The entry point for analysis remains which differences are preserved or compressed in concrete procedures, how indices form, who gains positions of interpretation, and how later people will extract these pasts anew.

IX. Renewed Extraction and Renewed Weight Assignment

The force of historicization lies in past differences being available for renewed extraction and renewed weight assignment in future relational fields, rather than retaining the same operative weight forever. Their weight depends on what kinds of nodes preserve them, what kinds of indices trigger them, and in what kinds of relational fields they enter actors' judgments.

Old family matters ordinarily carry little weight but may gain weight when households are divided, elder care arranged, money borrowed, or relationships and marriage considered. Place names and surnames also gain new operative weight in land disputes, grave relocations, land expropriation, or old clan or local grievances. Even if a local conflict has long remained outside public view, an elder's old remark, a place name, or a burial ground may become an entry point in a new conflict. Past harm suffered by a nation may be brought back into play through boundary conflicts, commemorative days, educational disputes, or external pressure. Judgments in archives may be retrieved during hiring reviews, loans, travel, and eligibility applications.

The consequences of historicization thus fall in the future: after preservation, compression, indexing, and interpretation, past differences re-enter events and acquire weight. This is not historical determinism. Without preservation, entry points, triggering within relational fields, concrete extraction, and renewed weight assignment, the past will not automatically determine the present.

Renewed extraction first requires materials that can still be found and indices that can be identified. Relatives present cash-gift ledgers, local people present place names or burial grounds, and institutional personnel present archives or judgments. The materials then enter property division, land disputes, eligibility reviews, or educational disputes. Weight forms through interpretation and recognition. Materials can be connected to responsibility, eligibility, evaluation, belonging, or boundaries. Consequences depend on who presents them, who can disseminate them, whether procedures recognize them, and whether other versions can be compared.

The standing of those presenting materials, the completeness of the materials, and the scope of procedural recognition will jointly affect the results of renewed extraction. Materials gain relevance through current relational fields involving property division, eligibility, land, or other matters. Interpretation, comparison, and recognition jointly form their weight. Even after a difference has entered judgment, subsequent actors may readjust its weight within that judgment through new records, accounts, or contrary materials.

Renewed extraction does not change the past itself, but changes present action. The results of new judgments about responsibility, eligibility, evaluation, boundaries, or action may in turn be written into accounts, records, commemoration, or naming, becoming materials for the next extraction. If the results of renewed extraction are recorded, the new records will in turn change subsequent visibility.

X. Historicization's Protection, Dangers, and Boundaries

Historicization can protect people who have been marginalized and experiences that have been suppressed. If harm is not preserved at all, later people can hardly know what happened. The fallen may also be swallowed up by the later order if they lack names, burial grounds, stories, archives, and commemorations. Place names, routes, genealogies, and accounts within families enable descendants of people forced to migrate to understand why they are where they are. Historical indices and testimony may allow families subjected to injustice to explain anew what is owed within kinship relations. Yet the force of preservation may also turn into danger. Selective memory will draw new boundaries; harm may be connected to endless revenge; sacrifice may be used as a reason to exclude others; a complex past is compressed into a single opposition between friend and enemy; community is portrayed as a pure essence; forgetting and a single version may also produce new injustice. Recognizing the force of historicization does not mean that historical memory is inherently legitimate. We must keep asking what has been preserved and compressed, who acquires interpretive authority, who is forgotten, and which indices will be triggered and assigned weight in the future.

Protective effects require materials to be seen, presented, and recognized. If names, burial grounds, place names, archives, and family testimony cannot enter current relations or procedures, they may remain at weak nodes and cannot automatically produce accountability, repair, or protection. Historical materials can support accountability, protection, and repair through archives, commemoration, teaching materials, family accounts, or procedural recognition. Yet accountability, protection, and repair all depend on specific interpretation and conditions of recognition.

Danger, too, arises through concrete processing. Fixing selective preservation as the only version, compressing complex relations into friend and enemy through commemoration, and excluding other materials through interpretive authority will all turn old differences into new boundaries and punishments. The same preservation may also be used to exclude, sacralize one version, downweight other memories, or freeze complex relations. Danger comes from how materials are organized and circulate for use, not from historicization having a single predetermined value.

Analysis of historicization must examine together whom it protects, whom it marginalizes, which materials are sacralized, and how they are extracted in subsequent relational fields, avoiding the treatment of memory as inherently just or inherently oppressive. This retains the openness of the mechanism without prescribing any historical version in advance as the final answer.

Institutionalization, class-image formation, national-community formation, state incorporation of differences, and historicization each have their own functions. Institutionalization brings differences into rules and thresholds, organizing the present. Class theory and the interpreters who adopt it brutally project high-weight differences and name them as class images. Through national-community formation, partially overlapping networks form the boundaries of historical communities, connecting memory across generations. State incorporation of differences formats differences, establishes mutual recognition, and connects them to chains of implementation, extending their circulation and use. Historicization preserves the past as an order of differentiation available for future extraction, retaining future entry points. These processes can connect, but they are not a single mandatory sequence of stages. What class-image formation produces is a result of projection and naming; no classes arise from it in reality, and the other mechanisms need not pass through it to take shape.

Institutionalization, national-community formation, state incorporation of differences, and historicization each have positions for handling preservation, classification, boundaries, and circulation and use, through which differences can acquire forms available for extraction across generations. If divisions drawn in class images are to persist across generations, they too must be adopted by concrete people, organizations, or procedures, and preserved and transmitted through carriers such as memory, reputation, and documents. These consequences require actual relations through which they are carried; images cannot be left to accomplish them on their own. These mechanisms each process differences at different stages and positions. They can connect, but cannot replace one another.

Differences do not act only in the present. High-intensity social orders formed through concrete materials, nodes, rules, and interpretive procedures all have real consequences; they are not fictitious. These orders can persist, be contested, or be rewritten. Yet persistence explains only how an order is sustained. The products of preservation and compression, low-dimensional images, formatted records, or historical versions are not what society fundamentally is, nor do they amount to legitimacy or historical inevitability. Subsequent judgments must still ask which versions were suppressed in the process. When users mistake the products of preservation and compression for what society fundamentally is, the error lies not in the need to simplify, but in erasing the boundary between the products of simplification and reality.

Chapter 22 Why Theory Must Simplify

I. Simplification Is the Starting Point of Judgment

When assessing a job, a person cannot unfold their entire life, their whole family, all their local relations, all their historical indices, and all their state qualifications at once. Someone looking for work faces more than the question of wages: there are also age, medical history, elders at home, children's schooling, rent, debt, household registration, local relations, past employment, whether their body can cope with staying up at night, and whether they have a fallback. A school receiving a child likewise cannot fully understand every aspect of the family's circumstances. School admission is not simply a question of student registration; behind it lie family migration, the parents' work, residence permits, social insurance, rental housing, household registration, school districts, school capacity, and local institutions.

Still less can a theory unfold every differentiating unit, every weight, every node, and every historical index in a single sentence. This is not because these differences do not exist. They are all there, but judgment must begin. Once judgment begins, it cannot unfold all of reality at once; it must undertake limited distinction extraction. Simplification does not abolish complexity. It is a form of compression necessary for action.

Judgments in everyday life, institutional judgments, and theoretical judgments must all proceed from limited positions. Limited extraction in everyday life lets people address the most pressing responsibilities first. If everyday judgment had to shoulder every relation at once, it could not form an immediate response. If institutional judgment rejected form fields and ordering, it too could not process materials. Rules, form fields, materials, and processing deadlines bring particular differences into judgment to be identified first, while other differences remain temporarily at the periphery. Without concepts and images, theoretical judgment could not even compare different consequences. All three need a limited beginning, but such a beginning authorizes no judgment to replace the rest of reality. All three kinds of judgment may omit important relations.

Examining erroneous explanations cannot begin by rejecting theory. If simplification is treated as an error from the outset, every explanation will be struck down, leaving only the lament that “society is very complex.” That is not theoretical clarity but the abandonment of judgment. Conversely, if simplification is treated as all-powerful, and the set of differences one has extracted is taken to be the whole of reality, explanation will move toward illusory construction. We therefore cannot reject all explanations because they simplify. Theory must simplify reality, or judgment becomes impossible. Without simplification there is no judgment; without compression there is no transmission; without limited distinction extraction there is no action.

Examining simplification and rejecting theory are two different questions. Examining how institutions extract materials does not amount to denying that institutions need simplification. To examine simplification is to ask how these selections and omissions came about, whether the extracted differences still correspond to current consequences, when the simplification ceases to work, and whether a return remains possible. The test of a theory is not whether it needs compression. Examination must instead address its particular ways of extracting: whether it knows how it compresses, what it extracts, what it downweights, and whether it still retains a channel for unfolding complex reality again. Rejecting theory cancels these questions as well, pushing every judgment back to its starting point.

II. Limited Distinction Extraction Is Not a Copy of Reality

Judgment does not copy reality; it undertakes limited distinction extraction within a concrete relational field. Take the same family of a worker from elsewhere. The differences extracted in judgment are entirely different depending on the events the family faces. When wages go unpaid, those concerned and those intervening do not begin by unfolding the family's entire migration history, marital relations, and local reputation. They first extract wages, working hours, the labor contract, the timing of wage arrears, debt, rent, and work risks.

When the occasion is a child's school admission, judgment does not begin by asking what historical indices of kinship the family has back home. Instead, according to local policy, the year, and the application category, it extracts applicable materials concerning household registration, residence permits, parents' social insurance, or length of residence. School districts and available places belong to resource allocation; existing student registration records are retrieved and verified at the relevant stages of progression or transfer, whereas for initial school entry a student registration record is created after enrollment. The scope and use of materials are bounded by the stage of processing and the application category; the materials cannot substitute for one another. If the question becomes whether the family can gain local recognition, the focus of differentiation shifts to accent, ties with people from the same place of origin, length of residence, exchanges with neighbors, participation in weddings and funerals, and local rites and customs. In relationships and marriage, family reputation, medical history, kinship responsibilities, local historical indices, and past disputes may then suddenly gain weight. None of these extractions captures the family's entire reality. Yet any concrete judgment, if it is to be formed, must first extract some differences from complex reality.

Society is not a plane that can be seen all at once, nor is an individual's social position determined by one label. The same person may be a worker, a person from elsewhere, a father, a patient, or a debtor; someone from a particular village or within a particular national community; someone outside a particular school system, a descendant within a particular family historical index, or someone with or without documents in a particular state record. These identities are not decorations. They all gain weight in different relational fields: wages in labor disputes; household registration when a child enters school; accent in local recognition; medical history in employment and in relationships and marriage; kinship responsibilities in borrowing money, elder care, and household division; national memory in boundary conflicts, commemoration, and shared responsibility; and historical indices in new distributions, disputes, and recognition.

The presentation of differences is also constrained by the positions from which materials can be obtained. Some people can present formal proof; others can preserve only oral accounts or memories within relations. Materials not yet presented have not entered the current image; this does not mean they have been judged nonexistent. If an explanation were required to unfold all differences at once, it could not begin. If an institution were required to understand a person's entire life at once, it could not operate. If a family were required to reinvestigate its entire history whenever borrowing money, considering relationships and marriage, or arranging elder care, everyday family judgment would also come to a halt. The abundance of reality is invoked to explain why judgment must be limited, not to cancel judgment. Limitation is not an error; it is a condition for judgment to occur.

Limited distinction extraction does not require everyday judgment to become a complete theory. In making a provisional judgment, people can refrain from rewriting unprocessed differences as an absence of differences, while retaining a position from which to look back and re-examine them later. Materials appear at different times, people's attention is occupied by current responsibilities,

and procedures arrange different materials at different positions. Three states must be distinguished here. Not yet extracted means that a difference has not entered the image immediately before us. Temporarily downweighted means that the difference has been seen but has not acquired relatively high weight at this moment. Denying its existence cancels its standing to re-enter the field of view. Only by distinguishing these three can we avoid mistaking the limits of our own view for the boundaries of reality without abandoning judgment.

Processing capacity also limits how many relational chains can be maintained at once. When materials exceed present capacity, some differences recede temporarily, but the positions to which they recede can still be recorded. When consequences show that the original ordering is no longer appropriate, judgment can rearrange priorities. This is fundamentally different from declaring that the differences which receded never existed. Distinction extraction does not copy the whole of reality, because every image leaves some parts unprocessed. Nor is it arbitrary selection: the extracted differences must still be capable of being brought back to the question, relational positions, and actual consequences for examination.

The questioner does not stand outside relations and cut them up at will. The question faced, the materials available, the position occupied, and the consequences to be borne constrain the direction of extraction. People within families can form judgments through care and responsibility; people within local relations can form judgments through exchanges and recognition. Everyday life need not wait for formal procedures before distinction extraction begins. Non-arbitrariness comes from examinable connections between extraction and the question, materials, and consequences, not from approval by a single procedure. Everyday judgments within families, localities, or communities can also form examinable connections. They do not have to be converted into institutional materials before they can be non-arbitrary.

Limited extraction within institutions can likewise be compared, because different ways of handling things leave different consequences. Comparing those consequences does not require an institution to shoulder the whole of life at once. It examines whether a particular extraction has hidden the positions bearing the results. Extracted materials are temporarily presented in a working image along a particular direction, enabling the questioner to judge the next action. The scope within which that image is effective must be bounded by the question and consequences faced. How materials are seen and connected affects the direction of the working image. This does not require every judgment first to gain recognition through the same kind of procedure; it requires those judging to explain their position of extraction and scope of application.

Users of theory, too, can undertake only limited distinction extraction. A working image can be formed along axes of labor, income, property, debt, housing, risk, and relations of domination. Working images addressing other questions also form along axes of documents, archives, borders, certification, and implementation, or of prices, rents, wages, consumption, and competition. None of these images is a copy of reality. Users of theory must still explain which differentiating units they extracted, which differences they downweighted, and precisely which concrete questions the image applies to.

III. Relational Fields and Weights Bound the Direction of Simplification

Simplification does not arbitrarily reduce reality, nor does it mean theory sitting on high and deciding in advance what will always matter and what will never matter. The statement that “the relational field first presents a demand for judgment” means that a concrete combination of questions, positions, materials, and consequences places definite constraints on the distinction extraction undertaken by those judging within it. These situational constraints do not mean that

the relational field chooses or acts in place of people. Different explanations extract different differences from the same family of a worker from elsewhere because the concrete questions facing interpreters differ, not because interpreters can select materials at will. They must undertake the corresponding distinction extraction on that basis.

These acts of extraction must be traced back to concrete positions: the people concerned present their circumstances, reviewers identify materials according to the procedures in which they operate, and relatives or people within the relations respond through existing forms of recognition. In a question of unpaid wages, the relational field calls for labor, wages, working hours, contracts, and risks to be extracted; the parties to the dispute and those handling it bring earnings and risks into judgment. In school-admission procedures, what must be extracted is the applicable material concerning household registration, residence permits, parents' social insurance, and similar matters that meet the relevant conditions. Existing student registration records are verified at the applicable stage, while the drawing of school districts and allocation of places are handled under the corresponding rules. Families and schools or reviewers must each identify these eligibility materials at the relevant stages.

Local recognition calls for the extraction of accent, exchanges with neighbors, ties with people from the same place of origin, and local rites and customs. Relationships and marriage call for family reputation, medical history, kinship responsibilities, and local historical indices; those concerned, together with relatives or people within the relations, reassess exchanges and responsibilities. Historical migration calls for ancestral place of origin, migration routes, old family accounts, burial grounds, and local memory.

If users of theory do not ask about the relational field, they will extract the differences most familiar to them everywhere. On seeing a family, they extract economic oppression; on seeing a school, state qualifications; on seeing a nation, they describe it as a displacement of so-called class relations; and on seeing history, they extract narratives of victimization. Such explanation may look clear, but it is already being used in the wrong relational field. When this happens, specific users have moved a familiar image to an ill-matched position; no abstract environment has made a wrong choice on its own. Different differences are extracted from the same object in different relational fields, and the same set of differences carries different weights in different fields. Different fields give simplification different directions. Without attention to the relational field, simplification turns from a tool into occlusion. Misplacing materials need not change the materials themselves, but it changes the consequences to which they are connected. Household registration can acquire weight in school-admission eligibility, but when moved into the handling of unpaid wages it cannot replace working hours and earnings. Family memory can affect evaluations in relationships and marriage, but it cannot automatically acquire the same position when moved to other questions.

The existence of differences, their extraction, and their acquisition of weight are continuous but distinct levels. Existence means that differences are already present in the world. Extraction means that concrete judgment brings differences into the foreground. Weight assignment concerns the intensity with which differences enter into consequences within current relations. If these three levels are collapsed, seeing materials will be mistaken for their always being important. Separating them makes it possible to explain why the same difference carries different weight in different relational fields. A difference may exist for a long time without necessarily being presented in every judgment. Wages can exist in life and can be brought into a dispute by those concerned, yet even after being presented, a difference may still not have entered the current relational chain. The existence of materials does not guarantee that they can change eligibility, responsibility, or evaluation. Limits arising from procedural positions are not abstract defects. They explain who can present materials, who can respond to them, and which differences will change form in

transmission. These differences of position can offer clues for later revision. The visibility of materials also changes over time. Differences not presented earlier may become entry points for renewed judgment after results have formed. Temporary downweighting is therefore not permanent exclusion.

Extracting differences is only the first step. Explanation must also judge their relative weight and assign weight to them within concrete relational fields. There is no table of weights fixed in advance, nor any single threshold through which differences acquire weight. Weight must always be observed within concrete relational fields. Wages, household registration, accent, medical history, kinship responsibilities, local relations, national memory, and historical indices may all coexist in the same family of a worker from elsewhere, but they will not be equally important in every relational field.

Weight assignment has different points of emphasis in concrete situations. When wages go unpaid, wages, working hours, labor risks, debt, and rent weigh more. When a child enters school, materials concerning household registration, residence permits, parents' social insurance, and similar matters, extracted separately according to the matter at hand, weigh more, as do school-district allocation or student registration records verified at the relevant stage. In local recognition, accent, ties with people from the same place of origin, length of residence, and exchanges with neighbors weigh more. In relationships and marriage, family reputation, medical history, kinship responsibilities, and local historical indices may gain weight. In household division and elder care, historical indices, care records, houses, cash-gift ledgers, and things elders have said may gain weight. In boundary conflicts, commemoration, and shared responsibility, national memory may gain weight.

This weight assignment is not arranged at will; it arises from the demands of the relational field. Wages gain weight in labor disputes because the current question calls for judgments about labor earnings, the bearing of risk, and fallbacks in life. This does not mean wages always override everything. Household registration gains weight in school-admission eligibility because the current institutional node is reviewing admission requirements concerning household registration, residence, and similar matters, not because household registration is always more real than wages. Nor does this make it directly equivalent to the subsequent creation of a student registration record. Family historical indices gain weight in relationships and marriage because new relations are entering an old kinship network, triggering past differences, not because historical indices always govern the family. The relative weight of wages, household registration, or family memory depends on how the current question connects them to fallbacks in life, access through eligibility, or evaluations of responsibility. The fact that a piece of material gains weight in another relational field does not mean it can govern every question forever.

Dangerous explanations often go wrong not in the extraction of differences, but in mistaking weight assignment within one relational field for eternal weight. Real differentiating units such as labor, debt, housing, and risk, together with their extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression, may form powerful explanations within a limited scope on relevant questions. But from the outset, class theory has a structure that expands such limited distinction extraction into an underlying total image. Interpreters who adopt it turn this explanation within a limited scope directly into the highest weight in every relational field. From the outset, they demote nation, locality, family, institutional eligibility, and historical indices to occlusions, appendages, displacements, or surface forms of class relations, occluding these differences' independent efficacy at concrete nodes. Interpreters using a state image may offer powerful explanations when they use it on questions of documents, archives, borders, and implementation. But if they turn it directly into the supreme explanation of all society, they will occlude family, markets, localities,

communities, and historical memory. Healthy explanation must recognize that weights form within concrete relational fields; they are not an eternal underlying reality.

IV. Explanation Must Connect Differences into Relational Images

Listing wages, household registration, accent, medical history, kinship responsibilities, local relations, national memory, and historical indices is not explanation. It merely heaps society back into a pile of materials. A list can enumerate differences such as wages, debt, housing, and family fallbacks; multifactor analysis likewise only places differences side by side. Social Differentiation Network Theory asks how these differences connect to form positions and consequences. Explanation means finding how differences connect, rather than listing more factors. A relational image must return differences to nodes, transitions between nodes, and relational chains, tracing how they jointly change positions.

When attention is limited, distinction extraction creates an order of priority, but that order is not an eternal ranking of value. A difference not given priority now may still become decisive in another question. Listing wages, debt, housing, and family fallbacks together means only that the materials are visible at the same time. Explanation also requires tracing how wages are determined at employment nodes, how debt changes the risk that can be borne, how housing constrains action, and how family fallbacks ease or worsen consequences. In judgments about such connections, counterexamples may require a fresh look at whether a connection holds or a node has been omitted; they may also require adjustments to judgments of weight or the scope of application. Whatever judgment a counterexample addresses, its grounds must be re-examined. The role of counterexamples cannot be confined in advance to one kind of revision. A single counterexample cannot automatically overturn everything, nor should counterexamples be established as a new principle governing every explanation.

Positions of transition between nodes may also change the form of materials. A piece of material may first be evaluated within a family and then enter institutional procedures, or it may first be fixed in an archive and then return to the action space of those concerned. Once old family accounts enter a record, some relational evaluations become fixed while other background recedes. When institutional results return to a family, they may become new grounds for responsibility. Different sequences of nodes and different ways of recasting may produce different consequences. If explanation misses these transitions between nodes, it can hardly show how differences actually enter into consequences for action.

Only when wages, debt, housing, fallbacks, and risk are connected do they form an image for judging a labor situation. Someone with low wages but no debt, no rent to pay, and family fallback support is not in the same situation as someone on equally low wages who carries debt, rents, supports a sick person, and has no fallback. Only when applicable materials concerning household registration, residence permits, parents' social insurance, and similar matters are connected to school-district allocation do they form an image for judging school-admission eligibility; existing student registration records enter verification at the relevant stage. A child does not abstractly “want to go to school.” The child must enter a set of institutional nodes: where they live, what their parents have provided, whether their documents are continuous, how school districts are drawn, and how places are allocated.

Only when language, marriage, place names, shared memory, and shared consequences are connected do they form an image for judging national networks. A national community is not an isolated label; it consists of paths of recognition, boundaries, and responsibility transmitted over time through partially overlapping networks. The same holds for historical images. A place name, a

grave, an old account, or an archival document does not act in isolation. They must be triggered and interpreted by concrete users within a new relational field before they re-enter current judgment; this process may also involve contestation between versions. Explanation does not place differences side by side; it explains how those differences connect to form consequences. This is also why this book opposes multifactor collage. Society is not a few factors added together. Differences are extracted, assigned weight, and connected within relational fields, forming consequences for action.

V. Compression Makes Transmission of Materials Possible

A relation of distinction extraction exists between the questioner and the materials. A question does not arise from materials naturally arranging themselves, yet neither can the questioner invent it at will. Subsequent actual consequences can be used to examine whether this distinction extraction holds up. In this process, different carriers undertake compression in different directions.

As entry points for identifying eligibility, documents point to qualifications that can be identified. Records preserve the traces of procedures and the results of handling that were once written into them. Unlike these two, family accounts preserve relational evaluations that can be retold and carried forward. Categories facilitate comparison across positions, while concepts gather dispersed differences into forms that can be discussed, laying out common threads for comparison.

Every kind of carrier downweights some of what was present at the scene, but such downweighting does not necessarily mean error. Concrete judgment requires entry points appropriate to the current question. One must neither demand that a single carrier encompass everything carried by other carriers, nor neglect to examine whether the downweighted contents affect the current question and whether other entry points remain through which they can be unfolded again.

After limited distinction extraction, weight assignment within a relational field, and the connecting and combining of differences, explanation must still compress. Without compression, judgment cannot be transmitted. Compression lets complex reality leave the scene of its occurrence and enter forms that can be transmitted, compared, and judged. Without compression, the past cannot be transmitted, institutions cannot operate, and theory cannot be expressed. Family historical indices must be compressed into a few sentences to be passed to the next generation: “The eldest took more that year”; “Her family contributed money back then”; “That branch of the family did not look after the elders.” These statements are not the whole past, but they allow past differences to move across generations.

Local history must be compressed into place names, inscriptions, reputation, and stories to circulate. State records must be compressed into archives, documents, and categories to be mutually recognized. Depending on the particular matter—admission, enrollment, creation of student registration records, or another such matter—schools compress family circumstances into the corresponding review materials or records concerning household registration, social insurance, or student registration. Theory must compress complex reality into concepts, sentences, images for judgment, and accounts before it can be discussed.

Concepts also perform compression in transmission. They make differences comparable and capable of being passed on, but do not preserve together with them the positions where things happened, the relational chains, and what remains unsaid. Using a concept still requires returning to what it extracted.

Yet compression necessarily sacrifices detail. When a family historical index is compressed into one sentence, care, debts arising from illness, work away from home, differences of sex, and elders' favoritism may be downweighted. When local history is compressed into a place name, mixed settlement, exchange, intermarriage, and conflict during migration may be downweighted. When state records are compressed into a category, people's concrete circumstances may be downweighted. When theory compresses reality into an image for judgment, differences that have not entered the image also recede. Compression itself is therefore not the error. The error comes when compression is forgotten after it has occurred. Information loss does not automatically prove a judgment wrong. What matters is to examine whether this loss obscures precisely the crucial differences in the current consequences, and whether other materials still preserve an entry point for return.

VI. Limited Explanations Can Still Be Compared

Not exhausting reality does not mean that all explanations fail equally. A common illicit substitution occurs here: since every explanation is limited, every explanation fails; since every explanation fails, effective and ineffective explanations are indistinguishable. This constitutes the “erasure of distinctions between explanations” branch of Model C. Its core is the substitution of “all fail” for “all are limited,” using an acknowledgment of limitations to erase differences between concrete explanations. Acknowledging limitation serves to enable more precise comparison, not to cancel comparison. Limited, erroneous, and ineffective are not synonyms. Still less can limitation entail that all accounts have the same value. Ordinary limited explanations can indeed retain their explanatory power provided they state their scope, accept counterexamples, and permit comparison.

The provisional character of a working image is not weakness. It allows the image to enter concrete comparison with other materials and consequences. The more clearly an image specifies its scope, the easier it is to know when it needs to be reopened. Ordinary limited explanations can be compared by what they extract: what they extract, what they downweight, and whether this is proportionate to the weights of the current question are all differences open to concrete examination. Accuracy in identifying materials is one measure of comparison here. Accuracy does not mean piling up quantities of material within an image; it concerns whether the extracted materials can explain the consequences now occurring. Whether nodes and relational chains are seen affects an explanation's accuracy. Merely listing materials without tracing how they pass between nodes, leaving crucial nodes and transitions out of the image, may yield an image whose wording is clear but which cannot explain consequences.

Fit with the relational field is another important measure of comparison. Fit is not an abstract verdict of good or bad; it concerns whether an image is placed in an appropriate relational field. The same image may explain consequences in one kind of question yet occlude relations when moved to another. We must therefore return to the corresponding scope to examine its capacity to explain consequences. Its effectiveness in the former does not allow us to presume equal effectiveness in the latter. Connected with this is the capacity to revise in response to counterexamples. Such capacity does not mean changing one's account at will. It concerns whether interpreters acknowledge difficulties when contrary materials appear, whether they can adjust the scope, and whether they specify which weights, nodes, or connections need re-examination. An explanation can be compared with others as long as it states its scope and makes clear what it extracts, what it downweights, the relational fields in which it is effective, and whether it can face counterexamples and permit revision. A limited explanation is not an ineffective explanation.

As a tool for comparison, analysis often provisionally calls two limited explanations Model A and Model B. Here A and B refer only to explanations on the same level that undertake distinction extraction in concrete questions, each selecting a limited number of dimensions. Both extract certain key units from a potentially infinite range of differentiating units. Real society and the operation of its institutions are the objects that both confront and seek to explain; real society or institutions themselves must not be called A or B. The grounds for comparing the two lie in the evidence they rely on, the consequences they actually explain, and comparison of the concrete relational chains involved. Limited explanations may diverge by extracting different differentiating units or establishing different boundaries of application or main lines of explanation. They may also diverge in how they order weights, connect nodes, or compress the same materials.

No distinction in standing is assigned to the two in advance. Neither is presumed correct or incorrect, simple or complex, elementary or advanced. Nor do they correspond to fixed doctrines, such as official or moral doctrines, and neither is inherently a supplement to or an upgrade of the other. In substantive examination, an explanation involving more factors, occupying more pages, or appearing more complex in construction is not necessarily better than one whose distinction extraction is concise. Without the tracing of concrete relational chains, simply piling up factors creates only an illusion of explanatory substance. Comparison does not require the two to face exactly the same materials in every situation. Yet when examining a concrete disagreement, placing both within the same question and testing them against materials makes it clearer how judgments change with evidence.

Consider the review of school-admission materials for a child from a mobile family. First fix the question at a specific stage: why were this family's residence materials not accepted for processing within the designated period of this round of applications? This question concerns the procedural outcome of whether the service counter accepted the materials in time. It cannot be shifted backward into whether the family had actually lived in the locality for a long time, nor forward into whether the family's eligibility for school admission had been recognized or a place obtained. Still less is it equivalent to whether the child will ultimately have a formal student registration record and access to education. Actual residence, acceptance of materials, recognition of eligibility, obtaining a place, creation of a student registration record, and subsequent educational opportunities are connected but distinct consequences. Conflating them would only deprive explanation of a basis for comparison. This example is a composite scenario constructed for analysis, not a single real case. What is currently known is that the family has a low income, the parents are constrained by working hours, and the residence materials involved were not accepted in time within the designated period. What remains to be established is where the interruption occurred: in the timing of the family's preparation of materials, the landlord's cooperation, or the actual response of the procedure for accepting materials. The requirement for proof issued or filed by the landlord is stipulated specifically for this example; it is not a universal practice across localities.

Within this bounded scenario, suppose Explanation A holds that the crucial obstacle lies in the family's insufficient capacity to manage taking leave and preparing materials. Through delays in preparation, communication, or submission, pressures from working hours and cash flow became the main cause of the materials not being accepted at this stage. Explanation B holds instead that the crucial obstacle lies in the review procedure's requirement for specific proof of residence that depends on the landlord's cooperation, which the landlord failed to provide. Even if the parents have the time and willingness to handle the matter, the materials still cannot be accepted at this service counter as long as the proof controlled by the landlord cannot be obtained and no timely alternative route for remedying the deficiency is available. Both explanations acknowledge

differences such as income, working hours, material requirements, the landlord's cooperation, and the deadline. They differ in their judgments of the obstructing node and the causal connections.

At this point, the degree of support for the two explanations depends on how concrete materials corroborate their respective relational chains. Suppose subsequent materials show that the landlord cooperated in time, the required proof was ready and valid, the channel for accepting materials remained normally open within the deadline, and the notice explaining how to proceed had reached the family. Suppose also that the parents' work arrangements and cash flow did in fact prevent them from completing, within the deadline, the matters still requiring their personal action, and that the corresponding notices, leave records, and processing records all support this connection. Explanation A's account of the obstacle to acceptance at this stage would then receive stronger support. Explanation B's judgment that the landlord failed to cooperate would have to be revised. An open channel here shows only that the procedure can receive materials; it does not mean this family was actually able to use it successfully under its work and living conditions. But if investigation establishes that a genuinely usable route through a representative or online processing was available at the time, we must further examine whether that route changes the explanation based on difficulties in taking leave. We cannot presume, without checking, that personal attendance was the only option.

Conversely, suppose the materials retrieved show that the family asked the landlord to cooperate in time, the parents had all the other required materials in this example ready, and the family had an actual opportunity to submit them. Yet the proof controlled by the landlord was missing, with no timely alternative route, and the service counter's record of refusing the materials matched the timeline of the landlord's delay exactly. Explanation B's causal connection would then receive stronger support. If Explanation A had asserted that the main cause was the family's delay in handling the matter, it would now have to reduce the strength of or change that judgment.

This support, too, is strictly limited to the current stage. Support for B from the materials does not directly warrant the conclusion that the landlord should bear all responsibility for the family's entire situation. It does not negate the continuing pressures already imposed on the family by low income and working hours, still less establish the review procedure's normative legitimacy. Even if the later submission of the proof eventually leads to acceptance of the materials, that result alone is not sufficient causal proof. We must still check whether review requirements, the personnel accepting materials, deadlines, or other materials changed during the same period. Temporal succession cannot be taken directly as grounds for establishing causation.

Testing against materials may also yield several other outcomes. If the parents were initially delayed for several days by genuine difficulties in taking leave, and subsequently faced the landlord's delay in providing proof, stages in both relational chains may be supported by the materials. The fact that both played a part does not establish that their weights were equal, still less justify assembling the fragments into an all-encompassing total image. We must investigate further the actual effects at each stage, whether room to remedy the deficiency still remained afterward, and precisely which juncture led to the materials not being accepted in this round.

If the materials currently available are insufficient to distinguish between the explanations—there are no definite leave records or evidence of contact, nor any specific records of returned materials at the review counter, and all that is known is that the materials were ultimately not accepted—strong judgment about the dominant cause should be deferred, with the missing evidentiary links explicitly identified. This disciplined suspension of judgment identifies gaps in the evidence. It does not cancel the procedural outcome known to have occurred, and is fundamentally different from the erasure of distinctions between explanations that invokes complexity to cancel comparison.

If further investigation confirms that all the parents' materials were ready and submitted on time, that the landlord's proof was also present, and that the obstacle arose solely because staff at the review counter mistakenly judged the materials incomplete and returned them at the acceptance stage, then both A's and B's specific causal judgments were wrong. Difficulties in taking leave and maintaining cash flow do not explain why the materials were rejected when complete. Explanation B's original claim of a missing link in the landlord's provision of proof receives no support in this case, and cannot explain an operational error occurring solely at the counter. Both explanations must be revised in light of the established facts. A and B are only provisional designations for limited explanations. They do not exhaust all possible explanations, and social reality need not resolve into a choice between the two.

Under these explicit constraints, ordinary limited explanations taking different approaches can indeed be compared with one another. Interpreters using a state image, for example, can trace documents, archives, borders, certification, and implementation; those using a market image can trace prices, rents, wages, consumption, and competition; those using a historical image can trace how past differences are preserved, triggered, and assigned weight anew. These ordinary limited explanations can be compared using the measures set out above, rather than relying on closed systems that cannot be compared.

Unlike these approaches to ordinary limited explanation, class theory presents a radically different explanatory structure. A worker finds life hard. Before analysis, the various forms of oppression may appear scattered and difficult to articulate: low wages, high rent, pressing debt, dangerous work, no fallback, and dependents at home. When these differences exist separately, they are simply many burdensome pressures, each borne separately. Along the axes of labor, income, property, debt, housing, risk, and capacity for domination, class theory and the interpreters who adopt it place these materials within the same image. People can then see concretely the interconnected structure of a burdensome situation. The formation of this explanatory capacity within a limited scope depends on the extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression of real differentiating units in the analytical process. Its efficacy belongs entirely to the concrete materials and the process of analysis, never to the class image itself. The class image is merely the low-dimensional output of this process. It can neither see reality independently nor think or mobilize on its own.

The existence of the product does not prove that class entities themselves exist. This book does not recognize the existence of classes. Classification can exist, and similar economic pressures can exist, but the existence of classification does not in the slightest prove the existence of classes. Nor does any of this negate the real communities people form through blood ties, locality, and historical memory.

Class theory does not belong to ordinary limited models such as Model A or Model B. From the outset it is Model C in its total-image subsumption form; it does not become Model C only after being overused as an ordinary limited model. It does indeed extract real, burdensome differentiating units such as concrete labor, wages, property, debt, housing, dangers at work, domination, and the costs of exit. But this does not change its basic structure: from the outset it expands such limited distinction extraction into an underlying total image, monopolizes authority over causal explanation, and demotes in advance all other real differences—nation, locality, family, institutional eligibility, historical indices, and others—to occlusions, appendages, displacements, or surface forms of class relations. The concrete materials extracted by class theory can still be re-examined and tested. It can adjust internal details and even engage in debate, but refuses to let materials change the explanatory standing of the total image. Yet demoting other independent

dimensions in advance and monopolizing explanation through a total image have already destroyed the possibility of open comparison available among ordinary limited explanations.

VII. The Same Object Requires Multiple Limited Images

The same person or family exists simultaneously within relations of labor, institutions, kinship, locality, and history. Different questions give different differences within these relations greater weight. Faced with the same family of a worker from elsewhere, someone handling unpaid wages can first trace wages, working hours, debt, housing, and risk. Someone handling the children's school admission must, according to the specific conditions of the matter concerned, trace the relevant household registration, residence permits, parents' social insurance, existing student registration records, and administrative eligibility. When the question concerns local recognition, relationships and marriage, or historical memory, accent, exchanges, kinship responsibilities, migration routes, and historical indices come to the foreground. Each image has its own scope of materials and consequences. One cannot require any image to shoulder all relations at once, still less let any of them decide the answers for every relational field in advance.

Simplification has force because it brings dispersed differences into a single image through which judgment becomes possible. Consider, for example, a constructed composite scenario in which the category under which a mobile family applies in that locality and year does have the relevant residence and social-insurance requirements. The family meets obstacles everywhere in the city and may be unable to say where the problem lies: materials are required for the child's school admission, renting cannot prove stability, social insurance is insufficiently continuous, household registration is elsewhere, and the residence permit falls a few months short. Interpreters using an image of state incorporation of differences place documents, archives, borders, certification, mutual recognition, and implementation within the same image. People can then see why they cannot readily pass through the procedures of many institutions.

In local society, the unwillingness of people in a locality to accept marriages involving a particular family may likewise have more than one cause. Accent, old grievances, ancestral place of origin, migration, wedding and funeral exchanges, local reputation, and kinship designations are all at work. Only by connecting these differences can interpreters using an image of local networks explain why the obstacles facing this family cannot be reduced to “low income” or “a different culture.”

And when relations become tense again on a national community's commemorative day, the past has not returned automatically. Only when language, place names, shared harm, shared resistance, education, commemoration, external pressure, and shared responsibility are triggered together do they produce the consequence of hardened boundaries.

Images enable dispersed materials to be named, compared, and transmitted, and allow people at different positions to coordinate action around a consequence. Family accounts can arrange responsibilities; records and documents can support procedural handling; concepts can guide theoretical comparison. This power takes shape through these uses. This does not mean that an image has become an autonomous entity. In concrete operation, comparison makes dispersed circumstances visible on a common scale; transmission lets materials cross their original nodes; coordination enables people at different positions to connect their handling of matters; and action brings judgment back to responsibilities, qualifications, and choices. Each kind of power depends on concrete practice. None proves that the image has revealed an underlying reality that need not be unfolded further. If a successful image is applied repeatedly after leaving its original question, convenience in use may occlude the differences it has not processed.

Multiple limited images of the same object therefore cannot simply be added together, still less directly combined into a total image. Images capable of complementing one another usually each retain a clearly defined partial scope. Interpreters using a labor image can trace earnings and risk; those using an institutional image can trace eligibility and certification; those using a historical image can trace preservation and triggering. If one partial image addresses earnings and risk and another addresses access through eligibility, they can complement one another at their interface and check one another where they connect, rather than either image encompassing the whole.

Differences in weight assignment may also be affected by changes in relations. When new responsibilities, qualifications, or risks appear, materials that once seemed slight may acquire a new position, but this does not make them a fixed highest weight. Different explanations can extract different differences from the same object. The key to theoretical comparison is not which explanation can encompass everything, but which better fits the dominant weights in the current relational field. The error lies in passing off a set of differences as the whole, not in extracting that set. If users all claim that the images they employ grasp every consequence, their judgments may conflict. Conflicting images must return to the question and consequences. If one image elevates weights within a limited scope into the highest weights for every question, differences retained by another image will be downweighted. Merely placing their names side by side in writing cannot remove this conflict.

Even after a difference enters an image, we must ask along which relational chain it acts. If intermediate nodes remain unseen, the distance between differences and consequences will be improperly shortened. When judgments conflict, the solution is to compare materials, relational fields, and relational chains, not to invent another model encompassing every image. Complementarity requires users to acknowledge the partial scopes addressed by the different images. When conflict occurs, they must judge which image has been pushed beyond its scope of application. If labor differences really change school-admission or family consequences, interpreters can trace how they connect across nodes. Without that relational chain, however, two images cannot be combined directly merely because they address the same object.

VIII. Healthy Simplification Must Retain a Return Channel

Transitions between nodes turn a list into an image. Who preserves materials, who recasts them, and who accepts them affect whether they can enter subsequent judgment and how they return to the positions of those concerned. Transmission cannot universally be treated as moving content unchanged. Materials may be preserved in full or may be downweighted in recasting; concrete transitions between nodes can also maintain existing content and weights. Only with this understanding can users of carriers avoid mistaking form for complete reality. The danger of simplification arises not from failing to exhaust every detail, but from cutting off paths to what remains unprocessed. Forgetting boundaries lets a partial image expand outward; denying remaining differences rewrites the unprocessed as nonexistent; reification lets a tool of judgment masquerade as reality itself; using an image in the wrong relational field connects valid materials to erroneous consequences; and excluding counterexamples closes the entry point for renewed examination.

These forms of overstepping have concrete mechanisms in different images that cannot substitute for one another. One danger cannot stand in for the others. The risk of the class image lies in its brutal projection masquerading as underlying reality: differences of labor, income, property, housing, debt, and risk are projected into the sole underlying reality. National-community networks, however, are real historical relations. Their members, families, and those who transmit

things across generations, record keepers, educators, organizers, or disseminators also simplify in practice, compressing intricate interactions into names, boundaries, designations, and responsibilities. This simplification is itself useful. Its distinctive danger lies in detaching long-term interaction, shared memory, boundaries, and responsibility from their historical course, then turning them into an essence, a matter of bloodline, and something eternal. This differs in origin from the danger of class theory's ontologizing projection.

Interpreters using state, market, or historical images likewise face different risks of overstepping. Those using a state image extract nodes such as documents, archives, borders, and implementation. Their danger lies in expanding institutional nodes such as certification and implementation into the whole of society and compressing them into a single personality. Users of a market image may expand exchange and prices into all of society, elevating them into the sole governing force. If users write historical materials as causes that automatically govern the present, they too overstep the concrete conditions of preservation, triggering, and renewed extraction. Identifying where these different images begin to overstep serves here to mark their respective limits, rather than to develop their subsequent mechanisms in advance.

Healthy simplification must therefore retain a return channel. A return channel is defined as what allows a compressed image to be reopened. Healthy explanation does not reject simplification; it knows where simplification occurs. It extracts some differentiating units from complex reality, assigns them weight within a concrete relational field, connects them into an image for judgment, and further compresses them into an account that can circulate and be transmitted. A return channel requires interpreters to specify three things together: which differences were extracted, which contents were downweighted, and which relational fields the image applies to. Only when the scope is clear can later users know where new materials can re-enter. Differences that did not enter the image have not disappeared; they may gain weight again in other relational fields. As long as an explanation retains the capacity to reopen its image, a route back remains available through which it can be compared and calibrated. Once it cuts off the return channel and treats itself as reality itself, it begins moving toward illusory construction.

When an explanation begins to harden, first ask which differences it extracted and which contents it downweighted, then whether those differences have gained weight in the current relational field. In this examination, overlooked records and relational positions that never entered the procedure may both alter the weights originally assigned and the consequences derived from them. Re-examining records previously given little attention can fill gaps in the materials.

The next questions are which crucial nodes have gone unseen and which relational chains have been cut off. Severed paths of transmission may likewise alter the original weights and consequences. Identifying where materials were preserved and by whom they were recast allows a return to nodes; tracing the process through which consequences cross different positions allows a return to relational chains.

Whether historical indices have been misread, whether counterexamples have been treated as noise, and whether revision remains possible when materials cannot be accommodated are also crucial to unfolding the image again. Historical indices make it possible to examine how old differences are triggered in the present. Place names, old accounts, archives, and memories are not the past itself. Only after they have been extracted, connected, and assigned weight within new relational fields is it possible for them to change current judgment. The existence of counterexamples forces interpreters to confront materials their images cannot accommodate. If contrary materials, once examined, make the original judgment untenable, the explanation must be revised accordingly. Such unfolding again may change the concrete bearing of responsibility, judgments of eligibility,

existing evaluations, and the starting point of subsequent explanations. But it does not predetermine that existing conclusions will necessarily be overturned every time, or that the entire original image will be overturned. The new explanation thus formed will still serve as an entry point for later people to continue examining.

An explanation that cannot be reopened will increasingly resemble a closed image. Only an explanation that can be reopened retains the capacity for calibration. The boundary of healthy simplification concerns whether omissions can still be opened up through materials, nodes, relational chains, historical indices, and counterexamples, rather than whether an image omits details. Once simplification no longer states its boundaries, no longer acknowledges remaining differences, and no longer retains a return channel, it enters dangerous compression. By elevating validity within a limited scope into validity for the whole and treating downweighted differences as nonexistent, compression exceeds its working scope, turns boundaries that should be clear into occlusion, and hardens an image into underlying reality. This is precisely the beginning of explanation's movement toward illusory construction.

Chapter 23. Dangerous Compression

I. How Necessary Compression Oversteps Its Bounds

Compression makes judgment possible in the first place. Without compression, people could not judge, institutions could not record, history could not be transmitted, and theory could not be expressed. The problem is not compression itself, but the fact that compression is so useful. An image that is wholly ineffective is difficult to believe for long; what is truly dangerous is often an image that carries locally effective distinction extraction. Through an image, users develop a partial grasp of part of reality and are therefore willing to keep using it. Yet the more this local explanation captures part of reality, the easier it is for users to mistake it for an explanation of reality as a whole. This is the entry point of dangerous compression. Ordinary limited explanations may lose their bounds through such use. Class theory, however, places local distinction extraction within a total image from the outset, thereby subsuming other explanations; the role of real materials in it cannot prove that class theory was once a limited model that became distorted only after overstepping its bounds.

The local effectiveness of an image needs particular clarification because it is both the reason the image can be used and a condition under which it may overstep its bounds. In a case involving a family of a worker from elsewhere whose wages have gone unpaid, an interpreter can form an image along the lines of labor, wages, working hours, debt, housing, and risk, thereby capturing the severe consequences unfolding. In a child's school admission, a handler can form an image along the lines of documents, files, eligibility, and mutual recognition, thereby identifying how institutional nodes constrain passage. Weddings and funerals, accents, interactions, and historical indices within a local community can in turn reveal boundaries of recognition and responsibility. The danger does not lie in these extractions having once been effective, but in users forgetting what the image had downweighted and then treating a local image as reality in its entirety. When users repeatedly see wages and labor risks in an unpaid-wage dispute, they may carry this effective extraction into different relational fields, such as school admission, local recognition, or kinship responsibilities. If a weighting arrangement suited to one question is no longer re-examined, a limited image may be treated as a fixed entry point.

The question, then, cannot be merely whether an explanation made through an image was once effective. We must ask who uses it, in what relational field, what materials it relies on, and whether it allows other differences to re-enter. Users of theory, institutional personnel handling cases, and disseminators may all continue the same image, but what they continue is a mode of distinction extraction, not reality itself. Only when the bounds of local distinction extraction are forgotten does the image's clarity turn into occlusion of the remaining differences.

When the same image is used from different positions, we must also distinguish sameness of materials from sameness of weight. Wages, documents, or local reputation may all be present, but those handling unpaid wages, school-admission procedures, and community members face different questions and cannot use the same ordering. If a user preserves one effective judgment as an answer applicable in every relational field, the image begins to detach from the conditions that formed it. Keeping those conditions visible allows limited acts of distinction extraction to remain comparable; erasing them may give a local image an unrestricted explanatory standing. Thus, if two explanations extract different materials, one must not be allowed to predominate in advance merely because it was effective for a particular question. Comparison must return to the current relational field and establish which nodes, relational chains, and remaining differences each

explanation sees. Whether it can accept counterexamples and revision is an important criterion and basis for calibrating a limited explanation.

II. Compression Loss and the Loss of Entry Points

Any compression causes some differences to recede; receding is not disappearing. Calling a family a "low-income household" may capture its income hardship, but it does not mean that income is the family's only problem. The family may also face elder care, medical history, migration, debt, a child's school admission, family historical indices, local relations, household-registration eligibility, and marital pressures. If an explanation looks only at "low income," the other differences recede, but they do not disappear: the sick still need medical care, the elderly still need care, debts still fall due, children still need to enter school, family historical indices will still be retrieved when money is borrowed, a household is divided, or a marriage is considered, and local relations still matter in finding work, renting housing, school admission, and wedding and funeral visits.

Likewise, calling a community a "backward culture" does not mean that its circumstances are in fact determined only by culture; institutional pressures, historical injuries, state boundaries, economic circumstances, educational resources, and external hostility may all have been downweighted. Calling a state an "oppressive machine" does not mean that the state does nothing but oppress; passage through documents, public order, relief, education, border protection, disaster coordination, and resource allocation may also be downweighted by that label. Writing a historical community as nothing but a victim does not mean that it has no internal disagreements, mixed residence, protection, intermarriage, boundaries of responsibility, or real interests. Differences do not disappear because an explanation has not extracted them; they have merely not entered the image used for the current judgment. The danger begins here: an explanation treats differences that have not entered its image as if they had never existed.

The distinction between downweighting and disappearance must also be identified through materials. Medical records, debt deadlines, kinship interactions, local reputation, and institutional records may remain preserved at different nodes even when an explanation has not extracted them. When events change, these materials may become visible again along new relational chains. If the interpreter acknowledges this possibility of renewed extraction, the earlier omission remains a selection within a limited judgment.

The real risk arises when users treat differences that have not been extracted as having no real-world efficacy. At that point, people whose differences have been downweighted may present medical histories, care responsibilities, migration, or historical indices and still be told that such materials are irrelevant to the question. What has been excluded is not an abstract abundance of detail, but concrete differentiating units that could originally have changed eligibility, responsibility, risk, and the consequences of action. A difference regaining weight does not mean that the earlier judgment was necessarily wrong: income may be the dominant weight in a case of unpaid wages, while other materials may acquire greater force in questions of care, school admission, or local recognition. A healthy explanation permits this shift in weight and can explain why the judgment changed. A closed explanation instead fixes an earlier extraction as a permanent trait of its object, reducing later-emerging materials to exceptions. The boundary between them lies in whether users acknowledge that a change in the relational field calls for renewed distinction extraction.

If downweighted differences merely recede temporarily, the problem is not yet at its most severe. So long as an explanation still allows the image to be reopened, those differences may return in a new relational field. The real danger is compression loss: some differences lose their entry point back into the explanation. Healthy compression temporarily downweights differences while

preserving an entry point for reopening. Heavy compression does more than downweight differences; it makes them increasingly difficult to re-enter the explanation. Closed compression treats the image as reality itself and does not allow counterexamples, remaining differences, or other nodes to re-enter. Dangerous compression downweights differences and cuts off their entry point.

The obstruction of the naming entry point appears when a difference that has no name is difficult to articulate. A family faces low income, medical history, elder care, migration, family historical indices, and pressure over school-admission eligibility all at once. If it is named only a "low-income household," the other differences struggle to speak. Elder care is classified as a "private family matter," medical history becomes a "personal health problem," migration is described as "choosing to move," family historical indices are filed away as "family affairs," and a child's school-admission eligibility is reduced to "incomplete paperwork."

The loss of the indexing entry point means that a difference without place names, archives, stories, records, or evidence is difficult to retrieve again. If a local conflict leaves behind only the reputation that "outsiders caused trouble," without records of land allocation, the course of migration, or old contracts, later people will find it difficult to reopen what came before. They can only continue judging along the surviving reputation: who caused trouble, who is unruly, and who is not local.

The loss of the explanatory entry point occurs when a difference that a theory does not recognize cannot readily enter judgment. If a theory recognizes only labor, income, property, debt, and capacity for domination, nation, locality, family, kinship responsibilities, and historical indices are liable to be demoted to subordinate differences. Even when people see them, they may say that they are merely superficial, secondary, masking, or displacing factors.

The loss of the action entry point means that a difference that cannot enter institutions, public opinion, or community action can hardly change how a case is handled. After a person is compressed into a "management object," their care responsibilities, historical circumstances, local relations, and community recognition may find it difficult to enter actual handling. When an institution handles the person, it sees only records, documents, risk categories, and management requirements; when public opinion discusses the person, it sees only trouble, order, and cost; when community members avoid the person, they see only a label rather than a relationship. The deepest loss caused by dangerous compression is that certain differences no longer have a name, an index, an explanatory position, or an entry point for action. These differences have not disappeared; they are trapped outside the image.

These four entry points are not an isolated list. Compression loss may accumulate along nodes and relational chains, but not every instance of compression necessarily loses the four entry points in sequence: a difference without a name is difficult to record; a difference without records and indices is difficult for users of theory to extract again; and a difference that cannot enter explanation is also difficult to use to change how institutions, public opinion, or communities handle a case. So long as any one entry point remains open, materials may reappear in a new relational field.

These entry points are maintained from concrete positions, and different people may control the naming, indexing, explanatory, and action entry points. Family members can articulate care burdens; files can preserve medical histories or eligibility; local stories can preserve migration and contracts; and record keepers decide whether these materials are preserved. Interpreters recognize national, local, and kinship relations, while users of theory decide whether materials can gain explanatory standing. Institutional personnel handling a case then allow materials into judgment

and decide whether they can change the actual handling. Only by distinguishing these actors can we determine where a difference lost its entry point and from which node it can still return.

The loss of an entry point also changes who is able to present a difference. When records preserve only management categories, people being handled may know about their own care responsibilities, migration, and local relations yet be unable to bring those materials into institutional or public positions; later people can read only the existing classifications. Downweighting then becomes more than an omission in a single judgment: it changes the possibility of materials being transmitted between nodes. If naming, recording, theoretical, and action positions accept only existing labels, remaining differences will be trapped outside the image.

III. Image Hardening and Fixed Labels

A judgment image initially helps people grasp a set of differences within complex reality, but use and transmission may gradually harden it. Saying "they are the bottom stratum" circulates more easily than spelling out wages, debt, household registration, medical history, kinship responsibilities, and local relations. "This is a backward culture" leaves out institutional pressures, historical injuries, state boundaries, and economic circumstances. "The state is an oppressive machine" also has more force than tracing documents, archives, borders, relief, public order, and enforcement chains. Administrative management favors categories, mobilization relies on slogans, disputes look for opponents, and dissemination needs short phrases. Through these practices, an image once used provisionally acquires the appearance of reality itself. Once users forget that the image is only a provisional, low-dimensional tool, they no longer use it to return to complex reality and may instead use it to prevent other differences from entering explanation.

Image hardening is brought about by the operations of concrete carriers at different nodes; it cannot all be attributed to one abstract force. Disseminators select short phrases that are easy to repeat, relying on repeatability. Administrative procedures require stable categories, relying on ease of classification. Mobilizers prefer clear boundaries, while disputants need to identify opponents and classify them quickly. Each position extracts part of the differences and, through repeated use, assigns greater weight to the same name, continuing to use the same compression.

The format of materials also affects this process. Short phrases can be transmitted quickly; categories readily enter forms and records; labels readily connect with existing reputations. By contrast, medical histories, kinship responsibilities, migration processes, and historical indices often require a longer explanation. When a handling position accepts only formats that are easy to transmit, differences that resist compression into a short phrase are more likely to recede. Different positions harden images in different ways; they may connect with one another or operate only locally. What matters is tracing, as materials pass from one position to another, which differences are preserved and which leave because of format requirements.

A judgment image can remain a provisional tool on the condition that users know when it needs to be reopened. If new materials can change existing weights, counterexamples can compel interpreters to revise, and other nodes can bring a relational chain that was cut off back into the explanation, the image has not closed. Hardening occurs when users stop checking these conditions and treat only one question as worth answering: whether the object fits the established category.

Dangerous compression cuts continuous differences into labels. Income is not divided by a single knife-edge: whether monthly income is slightly lower or higher, whether a person carries debt, rents a home, has elderly or sick family members, or has any fallback all change the person's

circumstances. Yet dangerous compression cuts this set of continuous differences into "the bottom stratum," "the middle class," "the poor," or "the weak." People with similar incomes may face different risks because their debt deadlines, housing stability, care burdens, and breadth of fallback options differ. What the label omits is precisely these variable weights.

Local recognition is not divided by a single knife-edge either. How long someone has lived in a place, whether they take part in weddings and funerals, whether they understand the local dialect, whether they have hometown ties, whether their children attend school locally, and whether their relatives are local all change their position. Yet dangerous compression divides these continuous relations into "locals" and "outsiders." People all called outsiders may nevertheless occupy different relations because of differences in length of residence, participation in weddings and funerals, and local recognition. Historical processes are not divided by a single knife-edge either: migration, mixed residence, conflict, intermarriage, protection, betrayal, allocation, and mediation all shape later relations. Yet dangerous compression cuts complex processes into "victims," "aggressors," "outsiders," "the unruly," or "the backward." Labels were originally meant to help judgment; the danger is that they turn around and swallow continuous differences. The differences swallowed by labels often do not disappear at once; they become difficult to state, locate, explain, and act upon.

The act of division is carried out by those who name and use the labels. When a disseminator, institutional handler, or community member receives an object under a name, that person often also sets which materials are worth asking about. Intermediate conditions falling outside the label's boundaries are difficult to record, and later people can continue understanding them only through the classifications already left behind. A label may serve as an initial entry point, but it cannot be the endpoint of judgment. So long as users continue asking how income, debt, local relations, migration, and historical materials combine, continuous differences can be unfolded again. If a name directly replaces those questions, the label does more than compress information: it limits which differences can gain explanatory standing.

Continuity also reminds interpreters that materials near the boundaries of a label are especially important. A slight change in income, a longer period of residence, the resumption of kinship interactions, or the appearance of new historical materials may all change an object's concrete position in reality. If an existing classification system allows only a choice between preset extremes, these subtle dynamic changes cannot alter how the case is handled. Looking again at these intermediate conditions does not abolish classification; it prevents classification from occluding relations that are changing as they happen.

IV. Default Extraction and a Single Position

Once a label stabilizes, it predetermines which differences later people should extract. Once dangerous compression stabilizes, later people stop making distinctions anew and automatically extract familiar differences as soon as they see a label: seeing "the bottom stratum," they automatically extract poverty, oppression, propertylessness, and subordination; seeing "outsiders," they automatically extract accent, household registration, instability, and nonlocal relations; seeing "a backward culture," they automatically extract ignorance, conservatism, and tradition while downweighting institutional pressures, historical injuries, state borders, and economic circumstances; seeing "an oppressive machine," they automatically extract control, violence, and deprivation while downweighting passage through documents, public order, relief, and protection.

Default extraction is not simply prejudice. It is a habitual form of distinction extraction that takes shape after a compressed image hardens. Prejudice may be an individual's attitude; default extraction goes deeper. It means that explanation no longer returns each time to the concrete

relational field, no longer asks anew which differences in the object are gaining weight, but automatically extracts familiar differences along the old image. When default extraction is repeated, explanation no longer faces new relational fields; it repeats the same act of distinction extraction across different objects. This is how differentiation bias takes shape.

Default extraction relies on later users trusting inherited names. Someone newly entering a handling position may never have seen the original materials, yet can receive a completed judgment through archives, reputations, classifications, and short phrases. A label does not choose differences by itself; it gives users a route for skipping renewed distinction extraction. Once that route is repeatedly adopted, users assign greater weight to familiar differences: seeing "the bottom stratum," they ask first about wages and domination; seeing an outsider, they ask first about household registration and accent; seeing a management object, they look first at records and risk categories. These extractions may be effective in certain relational fields, but if the current question is no longer examined, their original fit becomes inertia.

The inertia of distinction extraction also affects how questions are framed. If later users accept a label first, their questions often merely ask for details that fill out the existing image, such as wages, household registration, or risk categories, without asking about medical history, local relations, or kinship responsibilities. Who sets the question and what answers it permits determine whether new materials can gain weight. Once default extraction takes hold, even new materials that are mentioned may be placed back into the categories already present in the old image. If local relations, care responsibilities, and institutional eligibility can be described only as superficial, secondary, or subordinate differences, they have not genuinely gained the power to change weights. It is concrete interpreters and handling positions, not labels, that carry out this process. Identifying the explanatory position into which materials are placed allows us to judge whether they have genuinely entered the image and changed the existing distinction extraction. Renewed distinction extraction must therefore include re-examining the questions being asked.

Correcting default extraction does not mean forbidding the use of names; it means requiring later users to face the materials again. They need to establish which nodes this event involves, which differences are gaining weight, what the existing label has downweighted, and whether new counterexamples can change the judgment. If these questions are retained, a label remains an entry point; if they are dropped, the label closes off other entry points in advance.

A family of a worker from elsewhere does not occupy a single position. An interpreter adopting a class-theory image may extract its labor, wages, housing, debt, and risks. An interpreter adopting a state image may extract household registration, residence permits, social insurance, student registration, and administrative eligibility. An interpreter adopting a local-network image may extract accent, hometown ties, neighborly interactions, and local recognition. An interpreter adopting a historical image may extract migration routes, family historical indices, and local memory. The same family displays different differences in different relational fields, but after default extraction is repeated, the family is compressed into a single position: the bottom stratum, outsiders, the floating population, a backward culture, the market's weaker party, or a state management object.

Any of these designations may capture part of reality, but once any one of them claims to be the whole, it occludes other differences. Speak only of "the bottom stratum," and household registration, local recognition, national memory, a child's school admission, and kinship responsibilities are downweighted. Speak only of "outsiders," and labor risks, debt, housing, and capacity for domination are downweighted. Speak only of "management objects," and care responsibilities, migration processes, community recognition, and historical circumstances are

downweighted. Dangerous compression crushes a complex differentiation position into a single position, so that a person can be understood only through one label.

A differentiation position is formed through the joint operation of multiple differentiating units within a concrete relational field; it is not the simple sum of identity labels. A family of a worker from elsewhere occupies different positions in questions of unpaid wages, school admission, renting housing, weddings and funerals, and relief as different materials, nodes, and relational chains change its position. An interpreter adopting any one image can extract only part of this and cannot rewrite the rest as subordinate. To reopen a differentiation position, an interpreter must return to the event taking place. Who is handling it, which materials have been submitted, which eligibility conditions have been compared, and which relational chains have changed the consequences all need to be re-established. This does not mean arranging all differences equally; it allows differences that are gaining weight in the current matter to revise the fixed weighting created by a single label.

V. Historical Processes Must Not Be Compressed into Fixed Labels

Historicization necessarily compresses the past; without compressing the past, it cannot be transmitted. Yet dangerous compression turns complex historical processes into fixed labels: migration becomes "outsider status," mixed residence becomes "unclear boundaries," collective harm becomes "eternal victimhood," state punishment becomes "a person who will always be a problem," and a family historical index becomes "that branch is indebted." Such labels may preserve certain differences from the past, but they can also sever the process. When a household is divided, one branch may have contributed less money because someone was ill, away working, caring for elders, or carrying other debts. If the history is compressed to "that branch is indebted," later judgments about marriage, lending, ancestral rites, and land division will continue to follow the label. If a local conflict is compressed into "trouble caused by migrant households," the indexing entry points for migration routes, land allocation, old contracts, marital ties, and local mediation may be lost. Once a historical label severs the process, complex differences in the past become rigid judgments in the future. The past does not press down on the present by itself; rather, an image of the past, once compressed, is repeatedly extracted in later relational fields.

Historical materials need to be transmitted through names, stories, archives, and shared memory; otherwise, later generations cannot approach the past. Yet preserving some indices may also erase the conditions that existed at the time. Once the reasons for migration, land allocation, care burdens, debts, and mediation are no longer recorded, those who come later receive only conclusions such as outsider, indebted, or unruly.

When fixed labels are carried into a new relational field, users take an image of the past as the default point of entry for present judgment. Marriage, lending, ancestral rites, and land division each involve different materials and relational chains, yet the same historical name may predetermine who is trusted, who bears responsibility, and who should be excluded. These consequences arise because later users repeatedly extract compressed records, not because the past acts on its own.

Preserving historical indices must be kept distinct from fixing historical conclusions. Place-names, contracts, migration routes, divisions of family labor, and local mediation can make the past open to re-examination. So long as these materials can be retrieved again, concrete evidence may correct a fixed label. Family stories can likewise reopen the past to examination. Names such as outsider, indebted, or unruly leave only a judgment if they are no longer connected to the processes that formed them. Members of a community, record keepers, and later interpreters may all take part in

this transmission. A theory must trace which materials they use rather than let an image of history replace the actual positions where materials are preserved and extracted. Only when records preserve conclusions while severing their antecedents does historical compression constrain new judgments over the long term.

VI. Write-Back Through Action and the Image's Self-Reinforcement

Dangerous compression does not merely misread reality; users reorganize action according to the compressed image. Once a person is labeled "the bottom stratum," their ties to a national community, locality, and family, along with their medical history, debts, and kinship responsibilities, may be downweighted. The person may also be told to understand themselves through a class image: when they speak of local exclusion, others say it is merely the surface of class contradictions; when they speak of kinship responsibilities, others say they are merely old family relations; when they speak of national memory, others say it is merely ideological obscuration. These real differences have not been eliminated, but they have lost their entry points into explanation and action.

When a community is called a "backward culture," its institutional pressures, historical injuries, state boundaries, and economic circumstances may be downweighted. External action then becomes an effort to transform its culture, while internal defense is forced to revolve around culture; institutional questions, boundary questions, resource questions, and historical questions are pushed aside.

When a state is called an "oppressive machine," its protective functions, the production of passability, public-resource allocation, relief, and border protection may be downweighted. Later users then default to extracting control, violence, and deprivation whenever they discuss the state. Dangerous compression not only occludes reality; it also determines how later users continue to extract differences.

Interpreters, institutional personnel, or procedures that adopt dangerous compression do more than explain reality: they also produce new records, actions, and evidence according to the image, then use those consequences to prove the original image. If someone is compressed into a "management object," institutional personnel handle that person as one. After the person is restricted, scrutinized, or excluded, the archives and public opinion then show that this person does indeed come into frequent contact with the management system, making the original label appear confirmed. In reality, users first organize action through a compressed image and then treat the consequences of that action as evidence for the original image.

This brings out the distinction between an image as an explanatory output and an image carried into action. When users carry a compressed image into action, that use produces concrete consequences in reality. Write-back is formed only when those consequences are preserved as differences that can be retrieved again in the future. If later users then treat them as independent evidence, a loop that reinforces the image may arise: users extract distinctions through the image; that extraction guides action; the action leaves records; the records are retrieved; and, in turn, they support the image. This is a possible reinforcement after dangerous compression enters action; dangerous compression itself does not depend on such a loop having formed.

For an image to enter action, it must first pass through concrete handlers. Institutional personnel handling a case decide what to do in accordance with management categories; positions in public opinion select materials that fit existing labels and can be disseminated; community members decide whether to approach or avoid someone on the basis of reputation. An image has no will of its

own. It is these users, within the procedures in which they operate, who carry compression into its consequences. Actions taken from different positions may connect to one another, or may leave records only at the local level.

Action in turn leaves new materials. People who are repeatedly scrutinized accumulate more management records in the archives; evidence of interaction diminishes for people whom a community avoids; and people forced to defend themselves around culture leave more culture-centered expressions. These are all real materials, but their formation has already been influenced by the prior image. Write-back has formed once these consequences are preserved as differences that can be retrieved again in the future. Any resulting loop does not require a central controller: different nodes that continue to use the same image may separately carry out extraction, handling, recording, and reinterpretation.

The consequences of handling also change how an object can be seen; the portions that are preserved and later extracted enter the next round of judgment. Measures such as restriction, scrutiny, and cultural reform may alter the person's interactions, records, and expression. If later interpreters fail to ask how those records were produced and treat them as original evidence independent of the handling process, they may take consequences produced by action as proof that the object had always fit the label, thereby obscuring the image's role in producing those consequences. Tracing the conditions under which records were formed is necessary to prevent the loop from closing in on itself.

Write-back through action may also change how responsibility is allocated. When someone is handled only as a management object, institutional personnel are liable to exclude care, migration, and local recognition from their assessment of responsibility. When a community is understood only as a backward culture, external actors push institutional and resource questions aside. The concrete personnel who adopt a compressed image thus do more than arrange what is seen; they also affect who is asked to explain, bear responsibility, or change.

What must be retained is the conditional character of the loop. After users carry an image into action, concrete handling may leave records that reinforce the original image, but new nodes, counterexamples, and materials may still break the connection. Breaking the loop requires new materials and counterexamples to enter at one of its positions, allowing later users to see that records are evidence and may also be consequences left by earlier forms of handling. If institutional personnel review how a record was produced, or community members add interactions that had been omitted, later explanations need not close around the original image. Write-back has real force, but it is not an irreversible automatic determination.

VII. The Dangerous Compression of the Class Image

The class image is one of the most typical forms of dangerous compression, but this must be made clear: class is not an entity at the bottom of society, nor an underlying reality waiting to be discovered. No class entity exists. Real differentiating units such as labor, income, property, debt, housing, risk, fallback options, and capacity for domination provide the material basis. The extraction, weighting, linkage, and compression of these differentiating units produce local explanatory power; the class image is a low-dimensional output of this process. These differences are real and can profoundly alter people's lives. A person may live by selling their labor, earn low wages, carry debt, lack stable housing, face dangerous work, have no fallback, and be subject to others' domination. These differences are plainly weighty. Rejecting the ontologization of class must not be understood as diminishing the weight of real pressures: unpaid wages, debt, dangerous work, unstable housing, and a lack of fallback options still produce severe consequences. What

must be rejected is allowing a single low-dimensional projection to monopolize the entire explanation of those consequences.

The class image is so tempting precisely because the partial distinction extraction of these real and weighty differences is not fabricated from nothing; it is not wholly wrong. Yet local explanatory power comes from real differentiating units and the processes of extracting, weighting, linking, and compressing them. The class image itself is only a crude projection of high-weight differentiating units along the axes of economy, labor, property, and relations of domination; it is not what society fundamentally is. Because it presents part of the reality that has been extracted, it is all the easier to mistake it for society itself. But the local explanatory power produced by concrete differentiating units and their processing is one judgment; the existence of class as an entity is another. The former does not establish class as an underlying reality, nor does it establish that a social entity called class exists even in part. Class theory remains, from the outset, a structure of total-image subsumption within Model C; the class image therefore does not acquire the status of an ordinary limited tool.

An interpreter who adopts class theory treats this crude projection as the underlying reality of society, using the projection along economic, labor, property, and domination axes as a premise for explaining other differences. Household registration, locality, nation, gender, age, medical history, kinship responsibilities, institutional eligibility, historical indices, and community networks are downweighted, so differences such as local recognition and national memory are readily demoted to superficial or subordinate status. In this explanation, which treats the image as reality, differences not extracted by class theory are described as subordinate, secondary, obscuring, false, or displacing. This is the most dangerous feature of class theory: it is not dangerous because it is wholly wrong, but because its extraction of real pressures makes it easier to believe that it explains everything.

The projection relation of the class image also requires a distinction between extraction and naming. Real differentiating units such as wages, labor, property, debt, housing, risk, fallback options, and capacity for domination can change people's eligibility, choices, and consequences in concrete relational fields. They therefore warrant extraction and appropriate weight; each can also be substantiated through materials and acquire high weight in different relational fields. But projecting and naming them as "class" does not discover a shared entity hidden behind the materials. Once this distinction is erased, interpreters who adopt class theory may demand that household registration, nation, locality, family, and historical differences all be reinterpreted along the same axis.

The danger in assigning weights does not lie in continuing to track wages and debt; it lies in refusing to let other differences that are gaining weight change the image. Wages, debt, and capacity for domination can indeed alter a person's circumstances more directly in certain relational fields, but their greater weight in those fields cannot be turned into the only weight. Once medical history, household registration, local recognition, or kinship responsibilities regain weight in an event, interpreters must allow them to revise both the existing explanation and the projection it presents. This requires dismantling the total image and re-identifying concrete relations; such revision cannot be described as preserving a safe form of class theory.

VIII. The Compression Boundaries of Other Images

Class theory is, from the outset, a structure that places local distinction extraction within a total image and subsumes other explanations. Images of the state, the market, and culture, by contrast, can be used for bounded questions, though they too may undergo dangerous compression.

Concrete materials, nodes, and handling processes involved in state certification and enforcement can produce local explanatory power: a document can change passage, a file can change eligibility, a border can change status, and a record of punishment can change the future. An interpreter using a state image extracts materials and nodes such as documents, files, borders, eligibility, mutual recognition, and enforcement, and traces how these differences explain passage, education, relief, or punishment. But once the interpreter lets the state image masquerade as society in its entirety, family, market, locality, community, national networks, and historical memory are downweighted. Every consequence is then attributed to the will of the state, and family responsibilities, market conditions, local networks, and historical memory can no longer alter the judgment. This boundary limits the image's scope of application; it does not deny the actual role of state nodes.

The market image revolves around prices, wages, rent, debt, and purchasing power. Concrete differences and the processes through which they are handled can produce local explanatory power for some resource pressures: a family may be evicted because of rent, afraid to fall ill because wages are unstable, or forced to accept dangerous work because a debt is due. Yet this local explanation cannot automatically account for care, institutional eligibility, local responsibilities, or national boundaries. Once an interpreter adopting the market image lets it masquerade as society in its entirety, family care, institutional eligibility, local responsibilities, national boundaries, and historical indices are downweighted.

Concrete differences involving language, customs, education, values, and orders of meaning can likewise produce local explanatory power through the ways they are handled. What language a person speaks, which customs they observe, whom they recognize as kin, and how they understand marriage, death, education, and responsibility may all alter their relations. But once an interpreter lets a cultural image masquerade as society in its entirety, institutions, the economy, the state, risk, violence, history, and concrete interests are downweighted. An interpreter adopting a cultural image may extract language, customs, education, and orders of meaning, but must not reduce violence, risk, state enforcement, economic conditions, or historical materials to irrelevancies.

These three images connect materials in different ways. The state image depends on nodes of certification and enforcement: documents and files enter into consequences through certification and enforcement. The market image depends on relations of prices, wages, rent, and debt: prices and debt alter choices through exchange deadlines and capacity to pay. The cultural image depends on language, customs, education, and orders of meaning: language and customs influence action through relations of recognition, education, and responsibility. The differences each image downweights and the relational chains through which each produces consequences are not the same; they must not be written up as if they contained the same things. This comparison excludes class theory, which belongs to Model C's total-image subsumption from the outset. The shared danger of these three images is not that they extract false materials, but that users expand a range suited to a local problem until it claims to explain society as a whole.

Calibration must specify, for each image, which nodes its users rely on, in which relational fields it fits, and what it downweights. This preserves the local explanatory power produced by relevant differentiating units and the processes through which they are handled, while preventing any single image from excluding other explanations. Clarifying these relations serves to limit each image's scope of application; it is not an attempt to create a checklist of factors that can be substituted for one another.

Explanations concerning the nation require particular care. The nation is not a crude projection like the class image, nor a subjective fantasy, an invented label, or an appendage to the class image.

A national community arises from locally overlapping networks, long-term interaction, shared memory, language, customs, boundaries, and paths of shared responsibility.

Within national networks, members, families and intergenerational transmitters, record keepers, educators, organizers, and disseminators also compress complex interactions into names, designations, boundaries, responsibilities, and shared memory. This compression is useful: a name connects relations dispersed across language, customs, boundaries, and long-term interaction. It can preserve intergenerational memory, responsibility, and paths of protection, allowing members of a community and later generations to recognize why they are connected. Without names, many intergenerational responsibilities cannot be transmitted; without names and boundaries, much shared memory, protection, responsibility, and harm become difficult to transmit; without shared memory, later generations can hardly know why they are connected to people far away.

But this compression is also dangerous. A national community is a path of recognition, memory, and responsibility transmitted over time through a locally overlapping network. Such compression may turn a real network into an essence, reduce it to bloodline, and render it eternal. Dangerous compression says that the community is this way by nature, in the blood, and forever. In doing so, it downweights migration, intermarriage, shared life, institutional recognition, changing boundaries, and historical contestation, depriving the materials of those processes of a place from which to correct the image. So long as users can still extract migration, intermarriage, shared life, institutional recognition, and changing boundaries, the compression preserves the historical process. The danger of class lies in a crude projection masquerading as underlying reality; the danger concerning the nation lies in essentializing a historical community network, reducing it to bloodline, and treating it as eternal. These are different dangers and must not be conflated.

A national name may preserve responsibility and memory, but that does not mean the name can replace the community network. The community's actual efficacy still comes from relations formed through long-term interaction, recognition, protection, harm, and intergenerational transmission. Conversely, treating the name as pure fiction would also erase these actual pathways. When shared memory is transmitted, users must preserve the interactions and responsibilities it connects: if only a name remains, without shared life, protection, harm, or paths of recognition, the name is liable to be essentialized; if all shared memory is deleted out of vigilance against essentialization, a real community loses its historical index.

Calibrating compression concerning the nation must therefore protect two boundaries at once: it must neither portray a historically formed network as an inborn, unchanging essence nor, in opposing essentialization, erase the community as a fictional label or deny its real relational basis. Users of theory must explain which paths of recognition, memory, and responsibility actually exist, while allowing new interactions and boundary-related experiences to change their weight. A sound account can unfold how compression is useful and how it oversteps only between these two boundaries.

IX. How the Return Channel Is Cut Off

Dangerous compression ultimately cuts off the return channel, no longer allowing people to reopen the image used for judgment. Once an image hardens, people stop asking which differences have been downweighted, which are gaining weight in the current relational field, which nodes have not been seen, which relational chains have been cut, which historical indices have been misread, and which counterexamples have been dismissed as noise. They ask only whether an object fits the image: is it the bottom stratum, an outsider, a backward culture, an oppressive machine, or a management object? Once the image can no longer be reopened, explanation increasingly

resembles a closed image. A closed image is more than stubborn: it turns counterexamples into exceptions, remaining differences into noise, other nodes into irrelevancies, and new relational fields into places where the old image is repeated. Explanation no longer learns from reality; it searches reality for differences it has already prepared to find.

The return channel consists of a set of acts of distinction extraction that can be performed again. These enable interpreters to ask about downweighted differentiating units, locate materials that did not enter the image, add omitted nodes and relational chains, reread historical indices, and let counterexamples alter existing weights. The return channel is not an additional, hypothetical legal procedure; it is the capacity of a limited explanation to keep learning from reality. The channel is cut off when concrete users refuse these acts: users of theory call counterexamples accidental, management procedures accept only existing categories, disseminators treat remaining differences as noise, and later users look only for materials that fit the label. At these points, the image's boundary is treated as reality's boundary, and new relational fields can only be explained as repetitions of the old image.

Whether the return channel remains open cannot be determined merely by whether interpreters verbally acknowledge complexity; the question is whether materials can truly enter. When medical histories, local relations, kinship responsibilities, historical indices, or new nodes appear, their relation to the original proposition must be examined. They may support the original judgment, or they may reveal a connection previously missed and change the basis of judgment. Where the evidence is unresolved, judgment may be deferred; where grounds exist, an objection may also be rejected, but the reasons must be stated in a form open to review. If materials show that the existing distinction extraction, weighting, or scope of application needs adjustment, yet handling and judgment remain unchangeable, openness is only formal. Return has practical force only when a counterexample can trigger revision. The return channel also depends on whether different nodes can correct one another. Records in archives, family members' accounts, local reputation, and historical materials may conflict; an open explanation allows these materials to be compared, while a closed image accepts only the parts that confirm its existing classification. Rejecting counterexamples is not an action performed by theory itself; users carry out the exclusion when they select materials, set formats, and handle objections.

After the channel has been cut off, supplementary materials may still be seen, but only in a status prescribed in advance: medical history is called a personal matter, local relations are called secondary background, and historical indices are called accidental exceptions. If materials have shown that the existing distinction extraction, weighting, or scope of application should be adjusted, yet interpreters still call counterexamples irrelevant details and refuse to change their conclusions, the materials have only been mentioned formally; they have not genuinely entered the weighting. To verify whether the return channel is open, one must therefore ask whether materials with adequate evidentiary grounds can actually bring about a revision in the explanation, not merely whether they appear on a list.

X. Reopening and the Misaligned Next Step

Calibrating dangerous compression does not mean abandoning compression; without compression, there can be no judgment. Calibration means reopening the compressed image and starting from the selections it has already made. First establish what users extracted through the image and what they downweighted; list the extracted differences and the weights assigned to them. Then examine which differences and materials did not enter the image, and which naming, indexing, explanatory, and action entry points have been obstructed by the ways things are named, indexed, theorized, or

acted upon. These questions do not form a fixed sequence; they can correct one another. If an explanation can still accept them, it can still be reopened. If it refuses them, it is becoming closed compression.

Next, return the question to its concrete relational field. Examine which downweighted differences are gaining weight again; which nodes and relational chains have not entered the image or been seen; which relational chain has been interrupted by an existing label; and which historical indices have been misread. New medical histories, debt deadlines, eligibility materials, local relations, or historical indices may now be gaining weight and may change the original basis of judgment. Adding these materials does not mean assigning equal weight to every difference; it means allowing actual changes to regain an explanatory position.

Whether calibration is complete cannot be judged by the quantity of materials alone. If the same label still predetermines the status of many added details, the return channel remains closed. The key test is whether users allow a counterexample to enter and have consequences. If verification establishes that it is a valid counterexample to the original judgment, yet it can only be renamed as noise, accident, or exception, the image remains closed. If it can lead interpreters to adjust distinction extraction and weighting, expand the scope of materials, revise their assessment of nodes or their understanding of relational chains, or redraw the boundaries of the explanation, compression has recovered the character of a limited, revisable image. Effective calibration requires corresponding adjustments when new materials truly change the basis of the original judgment. It also requires interpreters to explain which counterexamples would compel them to revise, thereby preserving a limited image's capacity to be corrected by reality rather than preserving complexity without bounds.

Reopening also requires specifying the scope of revision. A counterexample may require only an adjustment to the weights in the current relational field, or it may expose a node or relational chain that has long been omitted. One must not declare the image wholly invalid because of a single revision, nor refuse any adjustment on the ground that the image was once effective. The calibrating capacity of a limited explanation lies precisely in its ability to determine, on the basis of materials, how far it must be revised. A general limited explanation may thereby recover a bounded use; the total-image structure of the class image, by contrast, must be dismantled so that the real differences it compressed can be brought back into analysis. A prolonged refusal to reopen supplies an antecedent mechanism for differentiation bias.

If a compressed image is not reopened over a long period, explanation becomes habituated to repeatedly extracting the same kinds of differences and downweighting others that are gaining weight. Once default extraction is repeated, explanation no longer faces new relational fields; across different objects, it repeats the same set of distinction-extraction operations, and differentiation bias becomes stable.

Chapter 24. Differentiation Bias: The Misalignment of Explanation and Reality

I. From Default Extraction to Systematic Misalignment

Dangerous compression is not compression itself. It occurs when users forget that a compressed image is only a low-dimensional output, forget what they have downweighted, treat downweighted differences as nonexistent, and let labels decide in advance what later people should see. Once labels stabilize, default extraction readily occurs in explanation: on seeing “the bottom stratum,” it extracts wages, labor, debt, housing, and risk; on seeing “people from elsewhere,” it extracts accent, household registration, instability, and nonlocal relations; on seeing “objects of management,” it extracts records, risk, order, and costs. These extractions are not necessarily all wrong. The problem is that explanation no longer faces the concrete relational field anew.

Default extraction deserves to be identified because it turns a previously convenient entry point into the starting point of later judgments. That interpreters first see familiar labels and existing records does not mean that other differences have no effect; the question is whether subsequent inquiry can still bring those differences back into the concrete relational field. The visibility of materials is also conditional. What recorders preserve, what users consult first, and what processing positions require all affect what explanation extracts first. Unless these steps are made clear, a familiar image readily replaces the relational position currently occupied by the object.

Consider again the family of a worker from elsewhere. The husband works on a construction site, the wife does casual work at a restaurant, the child has reached school age, the elder's medical records are at a hospital back home, the rent is nearly due, wages are two months in arrears, the social-insurance record has been interrupted, and the family still owes money borrowed from a relative. If an explanation first sees this family as “workers in the bottom stratum,” it may have grasped real differences: unpaid wages, labor risks, housing instability, and debt pressure are all real differences, and they do carry great weight in the problem of unpaid wages. But if, whatever the later problem, explanation extracts differences only along the lines of the “workers in the bottom stratum” image, default extraction begins to recur. When the child seeks school admission, it still sees only wages and labor relations; when the family is refused a rental, it still sees only poverty and a weak market position; when relationships and marriage meet obstacles, it still sees only income levels; when the elder's medical records affect assistance, it still sees only labor circumstances; and when local reputation affects recognition among neighbors, it still sees only the class image.

If default extraction occurs only occasionally, it is still just a single error; if it occurs repeatedly, inertia in distinction extraction forms. Inertia in distinction extraction means that explanation repeatedly extracts familiar differences along the lines of an old image, rather than facing the concrete relational field anew. Once this inertia stabilizes, explanation no longer asks what other differences in this object are gaining weight at this moment. It asks only whether the object can be placed within an image I already know. Differentiation bias begins here: it is explanation repeatedly extracting the differences it knows while downweighting other differences gaining weight in reality. It is not a difference of opinion, but systematic misalignment in distinction extraction, weight assignment, fit to the relational field, nodes, relational chains, and historical indices.

Ordinary accounts understand bias as a matter of attitude: some sympathize with the poor, others dislike them; some trust the state, others dislike it; some value the nation, others are wary of it; some value the market, others criticize it. These certainly affect judgment, but the concern here is not prejudice at this level. Differentiation bias does not mean "I have my position, and you have yours," nor "all viewpoints have limits, so they are much the same." It goes deeper. It occurs in how explanation extracts differences, distributes importance, enters relational fields, identifies nodes, traces relational chains, and reads historical indices. Ordinary prejudice can take the form of likes and dislikes, whereas differentiation bias may occur in handling considered fair by those performing it. Even without ill intent, interpreters will bring familiar judgments into different problems if they cease examining the steps of distinction extraction, weight assignment, and fit to the relational field.

An explanation can be sincere in attitude and still exhibit differentiation bias. Out of concern, it may always extract only labor and poverty; out of a sense of order, only documents and risks; out of a wish to protect the community, only boundaries and identities; out of a critical spirit, only oppression and domination. Bias comes not only from ill intent, but also from a well-practiced operation of explanation. The more practiced explanation becomes, the more readily it skips differentiating anew; the more it has a ready-made set of images, the more readily it pulls reality back into familiar images. Differentiation bias is not a single mistaken perception, but an inertia of explanation formed through repeated distinction-extraction operations.

A temporary lack of information does not necessarily constitute bias. When materials are insufficient, those handling matters can acknowledge what is unknown, investigate records further, and leave room for revision. Bias arises when available or already present differences are consistently downweighted and no longer allowed to affect judgment. Different positions can still be compared in terms of their scope of distinction extraction, their reasons for assigning weights, and their treatment of counterexamples. The danger of differentiation bias is not that someone takes a position, but that the position is fixed as the sole entry point, preventing new materials and relational-field conditions from changing the existing conclusion. Prejudice, insufficient information, and differences of position can all impede judgment, but none can substitute for examining systematic misalignment. Those handling matters need to return the question to concrete operations: have the wrong materials been extracted, has the wrong weight been assigned, or has a judgment applicable in one place been carried into another? Identifying this allows criticism to move beyond attitudes and return to revisable steps of explanation.

Differentiation bias can therefore be examined concretely. Have those handling matters explained what they extracted and what they downweighted? Have they identified the materials and rules underlying the judgment? Have they allowed consequences that differ from the existing image the possibility of changing the conclusion? When these points are missing, even a sincere attitude cannot guarantee that explanation is free of misalignment. Whether judgment can be calibrated also depends on whether those handling matters explicitly leave uncertainties open. Insufficient materials can be investigated further, the application of rules can be checked, and existing images can be limited by counterexamples. These different responses free explanation from a false dichotomy between sincerity and bias. Inertia in distinction extraction has not yet closed explanation completely. New relational fields, supplementary materials, and counterexamples capable of changing consequences may still re-enter. Calibration begins precisely when interpreters acknowledge that entry points can reopen, rather than treating the scope of the first extraction as permanent.

II. Bias in Distinction Extraction: Familiar Differences Monopolize the Entry Point

Viewed from the position of distinction extraction, differentiation bias appears as bias in distinction extraction. Bias in distinction extraction is not the extraction of a certain kind of difference, but the constant extraction of only that kind, making it the preliminary filter for every explanation. An interpreter adopting class theory may grasp real pressures by extracting wages, labor, debt, housing, risk, and capacity for domination; an interpreter adopting a state image may likewise grasp real consequences by extracting household registration, documents, archives, eligibility, borders, and implementation; an interpreter adopting a cultural image may likewise offer a partial account by extracting language, rites and customs, education, values, and habits of life. These partial accounts arise from real differentiating units and the processes of extracting, assigning weight to, connecting, and compressing them. The error involved in bias in distinction extraction is not that the interpreter sees part of reality, but that in every setting the interpreter extracts only familiar differences, asks first whether the materials can prove the old image, and no longer asks first which differences and consequences the current relational field actually brings into play, thereby making reality conform to an existing presupposition.

Consider again the family of a worker from elsewhere. When wages are in arrears, extracting wages, labor, debt, and risk has force. But when the child seeks school admission, extracting only wages and labor relations will overlook household registration, residence permits, years of social-insurance coverage, school places, and local policies as applicable in that locality and year, for the application category and the particular stage; it will also overlook the role of student registration in the relevant procedures for progression to a higher level of schooling, continuity when transferring schools, or handling after initial enrollment. When the wife is refused a rental, extracting only insufficient income will overlook local reputation, a nonlocal accent, deposit rules, the landlord's assessment of risk, and relations among neighbors.

When the elder needs assistance, extracting only poverty will overlook where the medical records are preserved in the relevant program, how eligibility for assistance is certified, and whether materials from the place of household registration and the place of residence can be accepted and used under the applicable rules. When family historical indices affect borrowing, extracting distinctions only along the lines of so-called class circumstances will overlook kinship relations, family memory, the earlier division of the household, and who once cared for the elder. The error of bias in distinction extraction does not lie in seeing part of reality, but in refusing to see other realities anew. It does not ignore reality altogether; precisely because it has grasped some real pressure, it lures interpreters into continually believing that they are still explaining reality.

The same material can occupy different positions in different problems. Wage records may carry great weight in handling unpaid wages, yet may not take priority in school eligibility or certification for assistance. Whether household registration, medical records, reputation, or exchanges among relatives are extracted depends on current rules and processing positions. Extracting other differences anew does not deny the truth of the earlier materials. What needs adjustment is the order and conditions under which materials enter explanation, so that one kind of real pressure does not repeatedly occupy the entry point and other differences that have already gained weight in the present are not excluded.

Once the scope of distinction extraction is fixed, the same kind of difference continuously occupies the entry point. Even when later materials are present, they are easily treated merely as incidental details or footnotes that prove the existing image. To avoid this, interpreters should return, one by one, the material sources, certification requirements, and relational positions of the current

problem to their proper place, rather than replacing fresh identification with familiar categories from before. In this way they preserve the limited boundary of a partial image instead of treating it as all of reality. Writing out the extraction process separately does not deny the role of real materials. It lets users see that the steps of extraction, comparison, and weight assignment, together with the real materials, determine which differences can enter the judgment of consequences.

III. Weight Bias: Fixing Temporary Weight in Place

Weight is not a permanent rank carried by a difference itself, but the intensity with which it enters consequences in a concrete relational field. If interpreters omit this condition, they turn a once-effective ranking into a fixed hierarchy across relational fields. Real pressures often make weight bias harder to detect. Precisely because wages, debt, or housing risks do carry great weight, users more readily overlook whether they still occupy key positions in the immediate judgment about eligibility, procedures, or relations. Reassessing weights does not flatten differences; it brings current materials, rules, certification positions, and visible consequences back into judgment together. This preserves the force of explanation within a limited scope while preventing what is temporarily weighty from being written as the highest weight everywhere.

Overlooking some differences during distinction extraction may still be corrected. But when the familiar differences that have been extracted are also fixed as having the highest weight, the bias deepens, although not every problem necessarily follows this fixed sequence. Explanation then does more than always extract familiar differences: it fixes those differences as the most important ones. Weight arises from the concrete relational field; it is not an eternal underlying reality. In labor disputes, wages, working hours, wage arrears, and workplace-injury risks carry great weight; in school admission, household registration, residence permits, years of social-insurance coverage, the relevant handling of student registration, school places, and local policies involved in the specific applicable matter and stage may carry more; in relationships and eldercare, kinship responsibilities, medical history, local reputation, and family historical indices may carry more; at the boundaries of national communities, language, shared memory, shared consequences, and paths of responsibility may carry more.

Weight bias occurs if explanation carries the high weight found in an unpaid-wages problem directly into every problem. The family of a worker from elsewhere does indeed face labor and income pressures, but a child's inability to enter school is not necessarily mainly due to low wages. Low wages will worsen the predicament, yet are not necessarily the key node in school eligibility. A rent increase carries great weight, but refusal of a rental may also concern nonlocal status, deposit rules, local reputation, and the landlord's imaginings about risk. Nor is the effect of the elder's medical records on assistance merely an income problem: it also involves medical records, the places of household registration and residence, the assistance system, and certification nodes. Weight bias mistakes high weight within one relational field for the highest weight in every relational field. This bias is subtle because the differences fixed at the highest weight often do carry great weight. The problem is not that they lack weight, but that they are written as the weightiest everywhere.

Weight bias makes those handling matters mistake one kind of weighty consequence for the sole source of other consequences. A sounder judgment must distinguish which difference is worsening the predicament from which material or rule is determining immediate eligibility. The two may be connected, but cannot therefore be merged into a single permanent ranking. This also requires seeing which positions actually bear the consequences. Income pressures can deepen the

predicament, while eligibility restrictions can directly block immediate options. The relationship between them must be explained through materials, rules, and certification procedures. A fixed name cannot be used to erase differences of intensity across relational fields.

Judgments of weight therefore need to explain their grounds as relational fields change. When new documentary requirements, certification results, or relational positions change actual consequences, those handling matters cannot merely restate the original pressures. They must also identify which differences now genuinely occupy important positions in affecting consequences.

IV. Relational-Field Bias: Using a Partial Judgment in the Wrong Field

Relational-field bias requires the effective scope of an explanation to be made clear. When an interpreter identifies important differences through an image in a particular problem, this does not authorize users to carry the same extraction and ranking directly into other problems. A fixed ranking may facilitate use in the wrong field, causing explanation to leave the setting in which it was originally effective while still demanding that reality conform to it. Use in the wrong field usually does not occur because the original image has no content. It occurs because the interpreter has not checked whether the materials, rules, certification nodes, and consequences in the new problem have changed, and continues to use the original judgment when the new conditions no longer support it, allowing the original image to cross the boundary of what it could explain. Returning to the relational field does not require starting from zero each time, but it does require rechecking the entry point when conditions change: once household registration, student registration, local reputation, or kinship responsibilities have gained weight, explanation cannot simply carry over the ranking used for unpaid wages.

In the problem of unpaid wages, class theory's partial distinction extraction may grasp real differentiating units such as labor relations, wage arrears, risk-bearing, the width of available exits, and capacity for domination. These units provide the material basis; the processes of extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression form partial explanatory power, while the class image is a low-dimensional output, and explanatory power does not belong to the image itself. Class theory places these partial acts of extraction within the total image from the outset. In school admission, if the immediate result is determined by eligibility review and mutual recognition, an explanation tracing institutionalization and state incorporation of differences may be more effective than carrying over the ranking used for unpaid wages. The key factors may be household registration, residence permits, social insurance, student registration, school places, local policies, and chains of certification. For local recognition, if the disagreement lies in interaction and trust, an explanation tracing the local network may be more effective. The key factors may be accent, length of residence, relations among neighbors, ties to people from the same place of origin, participation in weddings and funerals, and local reputation.

For relationships and marriage, if choices are pulled by existing responsibilities and memories of interaction, an explanation tracing family nodes and historical indices may be more effective. The key factors may be medical history, kinship responsibilities, family historical indices, local reputation, who has been indebted to whom, and who has cared for an elder. These comparisons must still be supported by concrete materials; an entire domain cannot be assigned in advance to one image. If an explanation uses the image from the unpaid-wage problem to explain school admission, local recognition, relationships and marriage, and migration memory, and continues to use the original ranking when the conditions no longer fit, it has left the relational field in which it was originally effective. Use in the wrong field is an important way in which an explanation effective within a limited scope moves toward an overall misjudgment. Many mistaken

explanations are not wholly ineffective: they work in their original setting, but their problem is that they cross the boundary of their effectiveness. A relational field is not an abstract background, but a concrete relational state in which certain differences have already been extracted and entered into consequences. Only by checking whether the matter concerns unpaid wages, school admission, renting, relationships and marriage, assistance, or local recognition can an interpreter determine whether the original image remains in its effective position.

An explanation effective within a limited scope can continue to be used only while its materials and consequences remain supported by the current relational field. Users wishing to retain the original image should explain which segment of relations it can still explain and which new materials require supplementation through other distinction extraction, rather than demanding that reality remain forever in the original setting. Correcting use in the wrong field does not replace one total image with another. It confines the original explanation to the relations it can still explain. The remainder must be identified anew through the materials and procedures of the new relational field, preventing limited force from being mistaken for universal authority.

V. Node Bias: Concrete Processing Positions Are Occluded

Node bias readily writes differences as abstract forces that directly produce consequences. Node bias occurs when an explanation sees a difference but does not see where it is preserved, who extracts it, who certifies it, or through which node it enters consequences. In entering institutional and social consequences such as eligibility, evaluation, and action, differences need to pass through the relevant stages at concrete positions, according to the matter at hand—preservation, extraction, certification, transfer, or implementation—rather than transform directly in the abstract. But this absolutely does not mean that actual pain, bodily injury, or material deprivation must await institutional recognition in order to exist. Records, documents, medical records, judgments, and reputation are not autonomous subjects of action. School personnel, medical personnel, employing units, senior family members, landlords, intermediaries, reviewers, or enforcers use them within existing rules and procedures, and the corresponding consequences for eligibility, evaluation, or action then appear.

Nodes are not merely places where differences are preserved. They also determine who can extract differences, who can certify them, and who can make them produce consequences. Node bias also includes recognizing only materials that certain nodes can process while failing to see differences preserved in other relations. The problems of the family of a worker from elsewhere cannot be seen only as “low income.” If explanation says only “these are the circumstances of the bottom stratum,” it will see a grand image but not how differences are preserved, extracted, certified, and implemented through nodes.

The household-registration system can bring differences in residence into the consequences of school admission. When the child of a worker’s family from elsewhere seeks admission, the household-registration system, residence permit, social-insurance records, student-registration system, and the school’s processing position for determining and allocating places are all nodes. Yet under local admission rules, the school may review only part of the household-registration, residence, social-insurance, or student-registration materials, while disruptions in the family’s migration history, care responsibilities, and its actual housing predicament may not be directly converted into formal eligibility requirements.

Hospital records can bring bodily differences into consequences for employment, relationships and marriage, and assistance. When the elder in the family of a worker from elsewhere seeks medical care, hospital records, medical-insurance relations, assistance at the place of household

registration, and proof of residence are nodes. Depending on the particular matter of treatment, reimbursement, or assistance, they involve the corresponding positions separately rather than forming one uniform mandatory pathway. Hospital records preserve bodily differences; the employing unit must still handle leave, work capacity, or job matters according to applicable law and corresponding lawful employment rules, and may not arbitrarily decide statutory eligibility. A court judgment is another general institutional node of this kind: in the relevant matter, it can bring a past event into eligibility review and can also become material for social evaluation.

Local reputation can bring migration and reputation into local recognition, while family elders can bring historical indices into consequences for relationships and marriage, household division, and elder care. When the family of a worker from elsewhere is refused a rental, landlords, neighborhood reputation, intermediaries' records, and deposit rules are all nodes. When relationships and marriage meet obstacles, family elders, local reputation, kinship historical indices, medical records, and exchanges of ceremonial cash gifts are all nodes. These family historical indices and local reputations belong to informal relations and do not automatically enter state archives.

Different nodes may preserve or recognize different materials, and those materials may conflict. Formal institutions do not necessarily preserve family responsibilities, nor does local recognition necessarily amount to formal eligibility. If explanation recognizes only one kind of node, it downweights reality at other nodes. To miss the nodes is to miss how reality takes effect. Making these branches clear can prevent a grand image from occluding concrete responsibilities and positions open to revision.

Examining nodes serves precisely to identify the distribution of concrete responsibility and the positions open to revision; node bias occludes that very distribution. Who registers materials, when they are retrieved, under which rules they are recognized, and who makes the determination: these differences determine which positions can be examined and corrected. If a result comes from documentary requirements, medical-record certification, student-registration records, or local reputation, those handling matters can distinguish whether missing materials, rule restrictions, certification methods, or acts of use brought differences into consequences. They need not compress every result into abstract circumstances. Speaking only of abstract circumstances omits the procedures and actors in actual handling that could be questioned.

VI. Relational-Chain Bias: Paths of Consequences Are Cut Off

Relational-chain bias is not a matter of listing a few too few conditions or considering a few too few factors. It cuts an already connected path of consequences into unrelated fragments and fails to see how differences connect with one another, intensify consequences, trigger them, and transmit them. If explanation stops at income, identity, or medical history, it cannot see how what follows is intensified or recast through other positions; overlooking relay nodes also makes it difficult to trace how differences transmit consequences. Low income does not in itself equal any fixed circumstance. It can give rise to onerous circumstances when concretely connected with rent, debt, medical history, care responsibilities, household registration, a child’s school admission, or the absence of an exit. Nor does nonlocal status in itself equal any fixed circumstance. It can form continuing exclusion when connected with accent, household registration, renting, social insurance, school eligibility, local relations, and work risks.

Within the same family, wages in arrears make rent harder to pay, and difficulty paying rent may make moving more frequent. In the specific circumstances where continuity requirements constrain residence materials and school eligibility, frequent moves make proof of residence and

school eligibility less stable, and the child's admission may consequently be delayed. The burden of care then returns to the mother, who reduces her working hours, and household income continues to fall. When the elder needs money because of illness, a kinship historical index is reactivated and borrowing becomes more difficult; the tighter the debt deadline, the more likely the husband is to accept dangerous work. This is not merely "many factors"; differences are transmitting consequences. Relational-chain bias is not the omission of one factor. It is that explanation sees one difference but does not trace how it connects with other differences to form consequences, thereby cutting the path of consequences between them. When tracing a relational chain, the actions must be returned to concrete positions: who delayed wage payments, who demanded proof, who certified according to the rules, who adjusted working hours, and who assumed care within the family. Only then can one explain how consequences are transmitted, rather than letting the relational chain move on its own.

Nor is a relational chain a single line of causation. The same material may be amplified, attenuated, or temporarily halted at different nodes; calibration requires looking back at actual paths and branches. When consequences travel along a relational chain, a change in an earlier link does not necessarily determine the final result directly, but may change the materials and options available for processing at later nodes. Each position may alter the direction and intensity of consequences. Once a piece of material has been supplemented, certification may succeed; applying a rule may also restrict a previously viable option. Explaining these relays and retaining intermediate positions does not add scattered details. It prevents a complex path from being misrepresented as a set of consequences caused entirely by a single difference acting on its own, and avoids falsely attributing consequences to a single image.

Examining relational chains also requires distinguishing consequences that have already occurred from conditions that may still change. Interpreters cannot portray a link as the sole cause of every subsequent result merely because it once worsened a predicament. They should see how materials are passed on, how rules are applied, and which positions can still change the path. Such tracing preserves the intermediate conditions in paths of consequences and prevents a single image from replacing concrete transmission.

VII. Historical-Index Bias: Treating the Past as Automatic or Excluding It

The way past differences enter the present likewise requires concrete examination. Historical-index bias is not an ordinary problem of historical memory. It has two common errors. The first is historical determinism, which treats the past as a fixed cause, as though old injuries, old boundaries, old victories, and old punishments automatically determined the present. The second is the thesis of historical irrelevance, which treats the past as irrelevant background, as though reality could be explained by looking only at current interests, current institutions, or current attitudes. Both views are wrong. Historical-index bias consists in failing to see which current events are triggering past differences. Once preserved, past differences do not automatically dominate the present; they must be found again, triggered again, and assigned weight again through an index in a new relational field.

Past differences do not return to reality on their own. They are extracted anew by triggering conditions in the current relational field. Excluding the past altogether also causes misalignment. Family members, members of local communities, archive custodians, or institutional processing positions may extract old records, past exchanges, and shared memories anew in current procedures, allowing them once again to change judgments and consequences in concrete events such as borrowing, school admission, relationships and marriage, elder care, eligibility applications,

or local conflicts. National memory, local memory, and family history all need to re-enter through concrete relays, materials, and current conditions. Detached from these conditions of interaction, preservation, and triggering, historical communities are mistaken for essences of descent, fictional labels, or automatically continuing forces.

Family historical indices may be triggered by borrowing, relationships and marriage, elder care, or household division. Local memory may be triggered by grave relocation, land disputes, school catchment zoning, or local conflicts. National memory may be triggered by commemorative dates, external pressures, boundary conflicts, educational disputes, or shared protection. State records may be triggered by pre-employment screening, eligibility applications, loans, travel, or border checks.

The migration route of the family of a worker from elsewhere need not matter every day. But when the child's school admission, renting, relationships and marriage, borrowing, or local conflicts arise, it may suddenly gain weight. Where they came from, why they came, how long they have lived locally, whether they have participated in weddings and funerals, whether they have had past exchanges with local people, and whether they have been recognized through place names, accent, or ties with people from the same place of origin will all change present judgments. Nor do family historical indices always carry the same weight: they may be extracted anew in borrowing, household division, elder care, relationships and marriage, and caring for an elder. Local reputation is not an abstract background either. It may be brought back into the current relational field through a neighbor's remark, a landlord's judgment, a school's certificate, or a relative's reminder.

The same past episode need not have the same weight in different events, which is why a historical index must be identified anew in the current relational field. Even when an episode from the past is preserved, that does not mean it will automatically produce later effects. The key is whether it is brought back into the current event, by which person, procedure, or relationship, and on the basis of which materials it is recognized. Making these concrete paths of triggering and recognition clear both identifies the real effects of shared memory, responsibility, and local relations and prevents the past from being written as an untestable abstract fate, or the present handling from being written as a situation with no past conditions at all. An interpreter may not refuse to look merely because the material belongs to the past; the interpreter must still check how it enters the current judgment and its consequences.

VIII. How Misalignment Forms and Persists

The six biases are interconnected and mutually reinforcing; they are not six isolated, parallel errors. But this does not mean that every problem will neatly pass through every link. Misalignment can appear with different speeds and combinations in different problems: some first reveal an omission of nodes, while others first reveal use in the wrong field. In concrete analysis, however, there is a deepening path of progressive mutual reinforcement: repeated distinction extraction narrows the entry point, fixed weights deepen the existing ranking, and use in the wrong field together with omissions concerning nodes, relational chains, and historical indices gradually stabilizes the misalignment. This path appears as follows: explanation always extracts the same familiar differences and then fixes them as having the highest weight; it carries that ranking into an unsuitable relational field; it then fails to see the concrete nodes at which differences are preserved, certified, and implemented; next it fails to see how differences connect and transmit consequences; finally it misreads how past differences are found again, triggered, and assigned weight in the present. As these misalignments accumulate, explanation moves farther and farther from the

concrete object. It does not at that point lack materials altogether; it recognizes only the materials with which it is familiar. It does not fail to see reality; it sees only the reality it has already prepared to extract. This is the state reached when differentiation bias stabilizes.

Although an omission at an earlier link readily facilitates a later link—once the entry point has narrowed, a fixed ranking is easier to accept, and once the ranking is fixed, use in the wrong field and omissions of nodes are harder to notice—this does not eliminate the concrete positions that each of the six biases must be checked against independently. Whether a causal path has been cut must be examined in the relational chain; how the past enters the present must be examined through the historical index; and who preserves, extracts, certifies, and implements differences must be examined at the node. Every link may leave an entry point for calibration: materials can be restored, rankings adjusted, procedures examined, and consequences questioned. Continuity does not mean irreversibility. As long as explanation still permits new materials to change the entry point, the chain of misalignment can be interrupted. Interpreters therefore need to ask concrete questions at every point of misalignment: why did the entry point narrow, why was the ranking fixed, which relational field was used wrongly, which nodes and relations went untraced, and how was the past misread?

Differentiation bias persists not only because errors go undetected, but also because it can save processing costs in concrete use. See a family and say “bottom stratum”; see conflict and say “class”; see a community and say “backward culture”; see the state and say “machine of oppression”; see market consequences and say “free competition”—and interpreters need not face complex materials anew each time. Through familiar images, interpreters, disseminators, and mobilizers can more quickly supply names, causes, and positions, yet may thereby skip identifying the concrete relational field anew. Labels circulate and spread more readily than complete circumstances. Terms such as “workers in the bottom stratum,” “people from elsewhere,” and “objects of management” are very short, whereas the wages, household registration, medical history, local reputation, school eligibility, kinship historical indices, and migration memory of the family of a worker from elsewhere cannot easily be fully explained in a single sentence.

Mobilization likewise needs clear causes, objects, and courses of action. Compressed accounts can prompt people to take sides quickly, act, and find enemies or victims. During dissemination, short labels are readily extracted again by later users; the clear designation of objects in mobilization also readily leads to the downweighting of materials that are difficult to incorporate into the existing image. We should recognize that these are practical acts by concrete users, not active powers of choice and action belonging to labels or bias themselves.

Interpreters may also use this effort-saving mechanism to shield existing theories from pressure for revision. Overlooked nodes, relational chains, and historical indices are downgraded to secondary, superficial, or special circumstances, or blamed on insufficient materials, so that the original explanatory framework need not be reopened. Users trade on effectiveness within a limited scope to keep saving effort, and this inertia in distinction extraction is readily mistaken for explanatory power. Saving effort does not necessarily lead to bias. But when it becomes a reason to stop examining materials, the existing image grows more firmly established through dissemination and use. Once an effort-saving explanation is adopted repeatedly, it may leave clues in records, dissemination, and action that facilitate repeated application. If later users simply follow these clues and carry on using it, they will treat the existing image as a completed judgment.

Repeated adoption of an existing explanation may also bias subsequent material collection itself toward familiar clues. If recorders, disseminators, and users of theory preserve or recount only what fits the image, it becomes harder for other differences to enter the next judgment. Materials

have not vanished into thin air on their own. Concrete positions of use repeatedly determine which materials can be seen, cited, and assigned weight. Persistent bias also leaves traces that can be examined: certain materials always receive priority in citation, certain problems are always called exceptions, and certain nodes are never questioned. Examining which materials are repeatedly omitted makes effort-saving inertia visible again. Asking exactly who cites, who adopts, and who actually implements brings abstract persistence back to repeated actions that can be examined. These traces allow habits of saving effort to be turned back into judgments open to comparison and revision.

IX. Counterexample Exclusion and the Turn Toward Illusory Explanatory Construction

Counterexample exclusion still retains an important boundary: counterexamples have not yet been rewritten as proof of the existing theory; they have merely been pushed outside explanation. As long as materials can re-enter, bias may still be open to calibration. If interpreters, users of theory, or those handling matters dismiss concrete institutional conditions, local memory, or community responsibilities wholesale as exceptions, they are in effect preventing counterexamples from changing existing distinction extraction and weights. It is these concrete users who exclude them, not the counterexamples themselves that have lost their effect.

Whether something constitutes a counterexample must be determined by checking the relation between the materials and the original judgment, together with the scope in which that judgment applies. A well-grounded judgment that a case is an exception, or a temporary deferral because information is insufficient, does not amount to excluding a counterexample. One must not treat every change in information as a reason that the original conclusion must change. Differentiation bias is not yet illusory explanatory construction; it may still be calibrated. As long as explanation is willing to return to the concrete relational field, reassess weights, examine nodes, trace relational chains, and reread historical indices, counterexamples can still change it. If explanation refuses to do so, it begins to exclude counterexamples. At the stage of differentiation bias, when explanation encounters a counterexample it first pushes it away, calling it chance, an exception, noise, a special circumstance, or insufficient materials.

A family is plainly barred from school admission by household registration and the number of school places, yet explanation still says these are merely isolated institutional details and that the essence of the matter is still the family's labor circumstances. A local conflict is plainly triggered by family historical indices, place names, burial grounds, and local reputation, yet explanation still says these are merely old ideas and that the essence of the matter is still economic interests. A national community is plainly sustained through language, memory, shared protection, and paths of responsibility, yet explanation still says these are merely manufactured surface identities. Once counterexamples are pushed away, explanation need not revise itself. In counterexample exclusion, counterexamples have not yet been rewritten as materials supporting the explanation, so entry points for calibration may still reopen. In counterexample digestion, however, they are incorporated into the explanation's own structure, made part of the theory's self-verification, and presented as proof that the theory is correct at a deeper level, bringing explanation into a more closed state. If differentiation bias refuses to let counterexamples change it, it slides toward illusory explanatory construction.

The role of a counterexample is to test whether an existing entry point can acknowledge that it has missed differences that are gaining weight, and, where necessary, change the ranking of materials, the relevance of rules, or its understanding of the relational field. When counterexamples are

excluded, interpreters may still claim that they are merely preserving the main judgment. But if every piece of material that does not fit is easily pushed aside as chance, an exception, or noise, the main judgment no longer undergoes testing against the relational field and consequences. Only by allowing counterexamples to exert a constraining force can effectiveness within a limited scope be prevented from hardening into a closed conclusion. Yet calibrating differentiation bias does not require explanation to abandon judgment or treat all differences equally. Without judgment there is no theory; without weights, explanation cannot act. The problem is not that explanation has extracted certain differences, but that it has forgotten that it has also downweighted other differences.

Facing the relational field anew requires examining the weight of different conditions in a particular context. Interpreters need to return to the materials themselves and ask whether they are always extracting the same kind of difference, whether they are fixing it as the highest weight, and whether they have misapplied a judgment with a limited scope to a new relational field.

This examination must go further into the concrete mechanisms of transmission. It must ask where differences are preserved, who extracts, certifies, and implements them, how differences are transmitted as consequences along relational chains, and which historical indices are currently being triggered again. Only by clarifying the actual roles of nodes, relational chains, and historical indices can explanation take root in materials again instead of sinking into empty labels.

On this basis, counterexamples cannot simply be pushed away. If, after examination, a counterexample genuinely changes the basis of the original judgment, explanation must make a corresponding correction in light of the materials. Adjusting distinction extraction and weights is not a declaration that every earlier judgment is invalid; it is a renewed delimitation of their scope of applicability on the basis of new materials. Nor need interpreters decide in advance to overturn every conclusion whenever an objection is raised. As long as explanation can still be changed by counterexamples and concrete conditions, a return channel remains. But if explanation not only excludes counterexamples, but also incorporates them into its own structure and rewrites them as self-verification of the theory's deeper correctness, it slides toward the more closed state of illusory explanatory construction.

Establishing a return channel does not guarantee that a complete and flawless explanation will be reached at the first attempt. Its significance lies in preserving the capacity for calibration. When new materials, rules, or counterexamples change the entry point of explanation, those handling matters should explain again which judgments remain valid, which rankings require adjustment, and which questions still need to be pursued. In this way, while taking responsibility for judgment, they prevent an existing image from escaping examination in the concrete relational field.

Chapter 25. Illusory Explanatory Construction: Internally Coherent but Distorting Reality

I. From Counterexample Exclusion to Counterexample Digestion

Counterexample digestion first changes the position of materials within an explanation. Someone presenting a counterexample was originally pointing out that a node, a piece of material, or a relational chain does not fit the existing image. If those defending the image, without an evidence-based verification, rewrite this mismatch as a wrongly framed question, misplaced material, or something awaiting a deeper account, the counterexample no longer requires the original conclusion to give ground; it is instead accommodated within the original main line. Pointing out with evidence that a question is wrongly framed, that material is doubtful, or that judgment should be suspended because a key link remains unclear still belongs to normal verification. Counterexample digestion, by contrast, makes material that should limit the original proposition serve to preserve the original image merely by renaming or repositioning it.

The difference between exclusion and digestion becomes clear here: exclusion leaves materials that do not fit outside the image; digestion turns them into resources for keeping the image intact. Chapter 24 explained that differentiation bias initially responds to counterexamples by excluding them. Counterexamples are called chance occurrences, exceptions, noise, special circumstances, or insufficient materials. Explanation neither truly stops nor returns to concrete relational fields to extract distinctions anew. It merely pushes unsuitable materials away so that the original image can keep operating. If the closure of an erroneous explanation develops further, it moves from excluding counterexamples to incorporating them into its own framework and turning them into proof that the original image is correct at a deeper level. Explanation then begins to enter illusory explanatory construction. This is a path of deepening closure, not a process that every erroneous explanation necessarily completes. Calibration occurs only when interpreters allow counterexamples to re-enter judgment, change weights, and open up relational chains; renaming by itself cannot replace calibration.

Illusory explanatory construction is neither an ordinary error nor careless nonsense. It often has materials, concepts, causes, enemies, a main line, and a course of action. It can even explain part of reality. Precisely for this reason, it is dangerous. An explanation with no materials from reality at all can hardly sustain itself for long. Illusory explanatory construction can endure because it does grasp certain parts of reality: suffering, oppression, conflict, interests, and the scars left by history. The problem is not that it has seen nothing. The problem is that it allows reality to appear only in the form of the differentiating units it has already extracted.

II. How Limited Materials Are Overorganized

When extracting differentiating units, interpreters also arrange how visible they are. Wages, housing, or documents enter judgment both because they are seen and because certain people connect them to eligibility, responsibility, and consequences. These connections help trace events; yet weights may become fixed at this point if other nodes have not been examined. Weight assignment occurs in concrete relational fields, making a difference easier to record, transmit, and cite. It is not an abstract ranking. A set of differentiating units repeatedly placed at the start of judgment gains explanatory priority. Other differences still exist, but may be treated as supplements only after the conclusion has formed.

Repeatedly extracted differentiating units also gradually become stabilized in the formats of materials. Forms, archives, and existing classifications make a particular difference easier for the next user to see, but cannot prove that it has the same weight in every relational field. While helping with tracing, existing nodes and records may still fix earlier biases as later premises. When write-back also participates in closing off distinction extraction and connection, overorganization deepens through mutual reinforcement: a classification left by one judgment becomes material for the next, and the next judgment treats the original classification as an already proven starting point. This loop gradually gives limited distinction extraction the appearance of a whole. When different nodes repeatedly use the loop, limited judgments acquire authority beyond what the original materials support.

Illusory explanatory construction does not lack differentiating units; it overorganizes a limited set of them. No explanation can extract every differentiating unit in reality at once. Explanation always has to select a portion. It must first see some differences and then judge how much weight they carry in the current relational field. Limited distinction extraction is not itself an error. When a family faces unpaid wages, extracting wages, labor, debt, housing, and risk is necessary. When a child applies for school admission, it is necessary to extract, from household registration, residence permits, years of social-insurance contributions, school places, and local policies, the items that apply in the relevant locality, year, category, and stage of schooling; at the relevant stages, such as school transfer, student registration must also be extracted in accordance with the applicable rules. When members of a local community exclude someone, extracting accent, years of residence, neighborly relations, local reputation, and past conflicts may also be crucial. After a set of differences enters an image, one must still return to the source and formation procedures of the materials: establish at which node and when the set was preserved, who cited it, whether later judgments changed its weight, and whether it can withstand a change in relational field.

The problem arises when extracted differentiating units are treated as the whole of reality. Once interpreters handle them in this way, they no longer ask what differences remain unextracted, which differences are gaining weight in the current relational field, or whether downweighted differences are changing the consequences of events. They extract labor, income, debt, and housing, then write society as a class image; extract documents, archives, borders, and implementation, then write society as a state image; extract language, rites and customs, and education, then write society as a cultural image; extract harm, commemoration, and historical indices, then write society as a historical image. Each image has a basis within a limited scope: interpreters adopting class theory can extract labor, income, property, debt, housing, risk, and capacity for domination; interpreters adopting a state image can extract identification, formatting, registration, certification, mutual recognition, allocation and coordination, and implementation; interpreters adopting a cultural image can extract language, rites and customs, education, values, and habits of life; interpreters adopting a historical image can extract harm, commemoration, historical indices, and community memory. All these differentiating units may be real and weighty.

The danger of illusory explanatory construction lies precisely in the fact that the distinction extraction within a limited scope on which it relies is not entirely ineffective. Interpreters extract some real differentiating units and connect them into a seemingly complete explanation. The explanatory capacity within a limited scope comes from the real differentiating units and the processes of their extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression; it cannot be attributed to the image. Class theory organizes these extractions into a total image from the outset; state, cultural, and historical images, by contrast, may have limited uses and overstep their bounds when users erase those boundaries. The explanation in an illusory construction exceeds what the materials can support: it no longer acknowledges that other differentiating units remain

unextracted, no longer permits downweighted differences to re-enter, no longer examines nodes, relational chains, and historical indices, and no longer lets counterexamples change it. Differentiating units drawn from a limited scope are thus expanded into an image of the whole; broken relational chains are filled in as smooth causality; and unextracted differences are described as secondary or superficial, as occlusion or noise, or as not yet having developed to a sufficiently clear stage. Illusory construction does not lack reality. It compresses a small number of real differentiating units excessively, assigns them excessive weight, and connects them excessively, finally passing itself off as the whole of society.

Illusory explanatory construction is easily mistaken for explanation because it has the appearance of material support. It does extract some real differentiating units. It can name wages, debt, documents, archives, borders, language, rites and customs, historical indices, and historical harms. It is not an empty fiction but a lifelike image of the whole. Differences such as wages, documents, language, and historical indices really exist. Listeners therefore readily transfer the truth of the materials to the entire causal line, forgetting that nodes in between have yet to be traced clearly. The truth of materials proves only that those materials exist; it does not automatically make the entire causal line accurate.

The appearance of causality comes from the arrangement of the story. This smoothness can connect complex reality into an easily told main line, organizing multiple nodes, intersecting relations, and paths not yet fully investigated as the unfolding of one overarching cause. Materials from different positions can be placed in a clear sequence in the narrative, yet the relational chains may not have been traced clearly. Narrative order cannot replace the actual order of transmission. Making a story hang together does not mean that the effects between nodes have been established.

The appearance of certainty can reduce unease. Complex reality leaves people unsure what to look at, what to hate, what to sympathize with, what to exclude, or what to act on. Illusory explanatory construction supplies a definite image, enabling people to know causes, objects, and courses of action quickly. The appearance of certainty can reduce the burden of judgment; shared language can also allow members to affirm one another and rearrange different materials. Both serve organizational functions, yet neither can replace calibration against reality. A vocabulary's stable circulation cannot be treated as proof of accuracy.

The more it resembles explanation, the more readily it replaces explanation; the more it resembles reality, the more readily it occludes reality. Genuine explanation retains entry points for returning to reality. Illusory explanatory construction blocks those entry points, replacing calibration with a sense of completeness.

III. Gap Completion: Explanation Refuses to Stop

The key to illusory explanatory construction lies not in what it has already seen, but in how it handles gaps. Materials from reality are often incomplete: not all nodes have been fully investigated, not all relational chains have been traced, and not all historical indices can necessarily be found. A gap indicates not only insufficient information, but also that materials have yet to find a position within a relational chain. A result has appeared, but the path behind it remains unclear. Someone has been harmed, yet one cannot immediately judge whether that harm came from labor relations, institutional qualifications, local relations, family historical indices, medical history, debt, or the joint effects of several relations. If a result and the path that produced it are mixed together and directly attached to a familiar cause, the work of investigation becomes confirmation of an existing image. The existing main line replaces every unseen intermediary position.

Blanks between nodes are particularly easy to overlook. Documents may already exist without necessarily showing who preserves them, who certifies them, or who refuses to recognize them. Even when a medical history has been recorded, it may not directly explain how that history enters an eligibility judgment. Completion compresses these procedures into seemingly natural causes, making it difficult for later judgments to identify when and where completion occurred. Materials are thus treated as causes, procedures arranged as a natural sequence, and unextracted differences left with only the position of exceptions. A genuine pause requires keeping unfinished parts within judgment, preventing a larger image from hiding them.

A healthy pause must retain the possibility of renewed distinction extraction. It can provisionally acknowledge that no judgment has yet been made, marking a gap as a relational position that needs tracing. This is not evading responsibility; it avoids using a familiar image to answer in advance on the materials' behalf. Stopping does not mean abandoning explanation. Stopping means acknowledging that the differentiating units extracted so far are insufficient, that current weight judgments still need calibration, that some relational chains have not been traced clearly, and that counterexamples may really change the original image.

Closed completion does the opposite: it turns the unknown into the known, and what has not yet been connected into what is already connected. Illusory explanatory construction does not fabricate out of nothing. It refuses to pause at gaps in reality, using familiar images to complete reality. Without knowing the concrete nodes, it assumes an overarching cause; without tracing relational chains, it joins them into familiar causality; without finding historical indices, it writes the past as an eternal cause. Even when counterexamples appear, it does not let them return for calibration, but transforms them into proof that the theory is correct at a deeper level. When this practice is adopted repeatedly, later people see only complete conclusions. It becomes difficult to discover which differences in between never actually entered judgment.

Consider again the same family of workers from elsewhere. Their child's failure to gain school admission may in reality involve household registration, residence permits, years of social-insurance contributions, the student-registration system, school places, rental registration, the timing of migration, local policies, and the school's implementation practices. If explanation has not traced these nodes, it may use a familiar image to complete the account: an illusory class construction will call this an expression of class oppression; an illusory state construction, a result of state control; an illusory market construction, competitive failure and the consequences of choices; an illusory cultural construction, a problem of ideas about family, educational ideas, or habits of life; an illusory historical construction, the inevitable continuation of past historical indices or historical harms. Once the family's materials are placed in a total image, originally different paths of transmission between nodes are easily compressed into the same kind of proof.

These accounts are not necessarily groundless. The family does have problems of labor and income, is blocked by institutional qualifications, must face the distribution of urban resources, and may indeed be looked down on because of accent, habits, local relations, and migration history. But if explanation places the event directly in a familiar image without tracing how these differences connect concretely, it is not explaining the event. It is using the event to complete itself. Once the gaps are filled, explanation looks more complete, but that completeness has been filled in with familiar images. Reality has not re-entered explanation; explanation has spoken the remaining words on reality's behalf.

IV. Causal-Line Infilling: Making Relations Not Yet Fully Traced Run Smoothly

After gap completion, explanation does something else: causal-line infilling. Causal-line infilling occurs when explanation joins relational chains that have not been traced clearly into a familiar causal line of its own. Relational chains in reality are often not straight lines. A family's difficulties may arise simultaneously from unpaid wages, renting, interrupted social-insurance contributions, a child's school admission, an elder's medical records, historical indices of kinship, local reputation, and migration paths. These differences have sequences, intersections, and breaks between them, as well as points at which they amplify one another.

Unpaid wages make rent harder to meet, and difficulty paying rent in turn affects residential stability. Where school-admission materials are in fact affected by continuity of residence, unstable residence affects the completeness of those materials; if social-insurance contributions are an applicable condition, a record of interrupted contributions may also change an eligibility judgment. Where an elder's medical records are held back home and the materials need to be retrieved, this affects the handling of assistance and care arrangements. Historical indices of kinship that remain unclear affect borrowing and trust within the family; a poor local reputation may affect recognition by neighbors and opportunities to rent. These relational chains need to be traced patiently. They cannot simply be swallowed by a single line. Healthy explanation acknowledges that relational chains have not yet been traced clearly. Illusory explanatory construction joins relations not yet traced clearly into smooth causality.

Branches in relational chains do not merely add details to a story; they may change the attribution of consequences. Unpaid wages and housing can amplify one another, and housing and school admission may also affect one another. Yet every connection still needs confirmation through concrete materials and nodes. Arranging them directly into a single line makes some intermediary positions that actually exert effects disappear. Infilling often borrows a familiar subject. When all difficulties are assigned to one grand image, the people and procedures that concretely register, review, refuse, or recognize are hidden. This not only obscures responsibility that ought to be questioned; it also leaves subsequent correction unable to find nodes to return to.

An illusory class construction connects failed school admission, being refused rental housing, the inability to establish mutual recognition of medical histories, poor local reputation, and historical indices of kinship as subordinate expressions of the class image. An illusory state construction connects these difficulties as unified consequences of state control; an illusory market construction, as competitive failure and insufficient adaptation; an illusory cultural construction, as backward ideas or problems of lifestyle; an illusory historical construction, as the continuation of old harms. This kind of causal-line infilling is not without materials. Its real danger lies in making complex relations too smooth. An excessively smooth explanation often omits reality's most crucial branches. It does not ask how a particular node actually works, which relational chain actually exerted an effect, which difference is gaining weight at this moment, or whether the differences it downweighted have already changed the result. It wants only a line that can be made to hang together. Once that line hangs together, explanation believes its work is done.

Smooth causality also changes the shape of counterexamples. Materials that originally negated only one connection are described as merely failing to see a deeper cause. The relational chain is thus not taken apart; it receives still more infilling. Smooth lines also hide branches of responsibility, covering what is borne at different positions with the same overarching cause. Making an account hang together does not mean tracing it clearly, nor does a complete sequence mean that its nodes have been confirmed.

V. Counterexample Digestion: How Conflict Is Turned into Proof

At the stage of illusory explanatory construction, counterexamples are no longer merely pushed away. They are renamed, repositioned, and transformed into proof that the original image is correct at a deeper level. Renaming first changes a counterexample's identity. Materials that originally pointed to the image's limits are renamed surface phenomena, isolated biases, or evidence not yet mature. Once the name changes, the materials no longer require the original conclusion to give ground. An explanation that incorporates every difficulty into a class image, using axes of economy, labor, property, and domination to govern other differences, must face materials showing that people with the same income encounter entirely different consequences under different household registrations, local relations, medical histories, and responsibilities to kin. Equal income by itself does not mean equal property, debt, risk, or available exits, nor can it by itself refute an analysis that includes these differences. What must actually be traced is whether household registration, local recognition, mutual recognition of medical histories, and responsibilities to kin change concrete qualifications, channels, and consequences. If the materials show that they have effects the existing main line cannot fully contain, the original explanation must adjust its weights and boundaries. Faced with such a counterexample, an explanation that merely excludes it calls it an isolated case; an explanation that begins to digest it claims that these seemingly different consequences precisely prove the deep domination of other differences by the so-called “class relation.”

Repositioning places counterexamples in positions reserved by the original image. Different results no longer mean that the main line has failed; they are interpreted as expressions of that main line at different levels, times, or in different forms. Differences that could originally be compared are thus absorbed into the same conclusion. Distinguishing levels, times, or forms of appearance is not in itself an error; the difference lies in whether corresponding evidence exists or whether a line is merely being filled in at a gap to preserve the conclusion. Suppose an explanation claims that all difficulties come from state control. It encounters the fact that some difficulties come from market rents, local reputation, family historical indices, and community exclusion. If it merely excludes counterexamples, it calls these materials unimportant. Once it begins to digest them, it says that these so-called market, local, and family problems are actually more concealed expressions of state control.

At the deepest point of closure, counterexamples too are turned into proof. The clearer the counterexample, the more readily those defending the image can claim that it reveals a deeper mechanism. The image thus need not bear failure; it instead obtains new defensive materials from conflict. Even preserved counterexamples may acquire meaning only in positions permitted by the original image, without truly opening new entry points for comparison. Suppose an explanation claims that all difficulties come from cultural backwardness. It encounters phenomena that culture cannot fully explain, such as school admission, interrupted social-insurance contributions, mutual recognition of medical records, housing eligibility, and unpaid wages. When excluding counterexamples, it says that opponents see only the surface. When digesting them, it declares that these institutional and economic problems occur precisely because this culture is ill-adapted to the modern order.

Once renamed, counterexamples can no longer hurt the explanation. The less they fit the original image, the more they are called evidence that the image is correct at a deeper level. Within illusory explanatory construction, counterexamples cease to exert pressure for calibration. Instead, they become materials through which the illusory construction expands itself. The more counterexamples there are, the busier it becomes adding patches; the more patches there are, the

more closed the system becomes. At this point, explanation does more than see things wrongly. It has gained a defensive capacity: it no longer fears reality's failure to fit, but can describe even a failure to fit as a fit.

VI. Coherence Does Not Equal Accuracy

As long as renaming suffices without any need to answer how materials change weights, counterexamples lose their comparative function. A coherent explanation can arrange its starting point, causes, enemies, and actions neatly, but these arrangements prove only that its parts can support one another. If every part is produced through the same set of naming practices and write-back, internal consistency cannot establish whether the explanation still makes contact with downweighted differences.

Once gaps have been completed, causal lines connected, and counterexamples digested, explanation develops internal coherence. It looks complete: it has a starting point, causes, objects, conflicts, and solutions. It can explain why the problem occurred, why people failed to notice, why opponents oppose it, why counterexamples are not counterexamples, and why action should unfold in this way. Such an explanation gives people a strong sense of stability. But coherence is not accuracy. Internal coherence shows only that an explanation runs smoothly within itself. Being capable of calibration against reality is the condition for an explanation to remain effective; calibration against reality is what shows that reality can still change the explanation.

Calibration against reality requires explanation to accept a reordering brought by external materials. New nodes may change weights; unextracted differences may gain weight; results originally treated as exceptions may force relational chains to be reconnected. An entry point for reality is not a modest phrase that leaves room for qualification. It is a concrete position at which revision is possible. One must know which material can change the conclusion, which relational chain remains unconfirmed, and who can bring counterexamples back into the judgment procedure.

The blanks left by completion do not disappear. They are merely placed inside the conclusion, making it harder for later people to recognize that they were once blanks. Once blanks are placed inside a conclusion, tracing anew requires taking it apart to recover the materials, nodes, and procedures one by one. Adding another qualification outside the conclusion is not enough.

An explanation can therefore have complete concepts, smooth causality, clear enemies, and a definite course of action, yet still distort reality. It may organize some real differentiating units tightly while depriving still more differences that are gaining weight of an entry point. It may be adept at handling counterexamples without ever letting them truly change it; adept at describing causality without tracing how concrete nodes preserve and certify differences, and put them into effect; adept at describing history without asking which present events are triggering past differences anew. The problem with illusory explanatory construction is not incompleteness, but excessive completeness: it is so complete that it leaves reality no entry point.

Healthy explanation leaves entry points open. It acknowledges that the differentiating units it extracts are limited, that current weights are only judgments within the current relational field, that nodes, relational chains, and historical indices still need tracing, and that counterexamples may change the original image. Illusory explanatory construction closes these entry points. It is not incapable of explaining any reality; it no longer allows reality to change it. After colliding with reality, an ordinary error may still retreat and undergo correction. After colliding with reality, illusory explanatory construction writes the collision itself into its proof.

VII. How Different Illusory Constructions Subsume the Same Event

Entry points must lie in concrete materials and procedures to which one can return. They cannot be merely a qualifying phrase expressing humility. Consider again that family of workers from elsewhere: the husband works on a construction site, the wife does casual work in a restaurant, their child has reached school age, the elder's medical records are at a hospital back home, rent is nearly due, wages are two months overdue, social-insurance records have been interrupted, and the family still owes a loan to relatives. This family is not a single label. Multiple sets of differentiating units intersect within it: wages, labor, debt, housing, and risk do carry great weight; household registration, residence permits, social insurance, student registration, and administrative qualifications are also weighty; accent, ties with people from the same place of origin, years of residence, recognition by neighbors, and local reputation also exert effects; responsibilities to kin, medical history, historical indices, care, and romantic relationships and marriage are not external details; migration routes, family memory, and old local events may also suddenly gain weight in a particular event.

Differences within the same family intersect because they acquire weight at different nodes. Unpaid wages may first change residential stability, and housing may in turn affect school-admission materials. Yet care within kinship relations, local recognition, and mutual recognition of medical histories do not necessarily run along the same line. If only one set of differences is selected as the overarching cause, other differences are forced to be rewritten as subordinate expressions. Such rewriting does not simplify the family's experience. It merely makes that experience expressible in only one language. An image's overstepping of its bounds also affects how family members understand one another: when every difficulty is assigned to the same overarching cause, members' responsibilities, constrained positions, and available exits at different nodes can no longer be judged separately. Concrete materials can show the explanatory power within a limited scope yielded by distinction extraction, as well as the boundaries of this explanation. If local reputation changes opportunities to rent, this does not automatically negate the weight of labor and income. If social-insurance records affect school-admission eligibility, this does not mean that family relations and historical indices lose their effect.

How does illusory explanatory construction handle this family? It does not fail to see the family altogether. It sees, but permits the family to be explained in only one way. Interpreters adopting class theory do extract labor and income. Yet the illusory class construction treats a limited image drawn from economic, labor, property, and domination relations as the whole of society itself, describing unpaid wages, the child's school admission, local recognition, the elder's medical records, household-registration restrictions, historical indices of kinship, and migration memory as subordinate expressions of the class image.

Interpreters adopting a state image do extract documents and implementation. Yet the illusory state construction expands formatting, certification, mutual recognition, allocation and coordination, and implementation into the sole image for explaining the whole of society, describing all these difficulties as results of state control and institutional oppression. Interpreters adopting a market image do extract rent, competition, and capacity to consume. The illusory market construction expands prices, competition, and capacity to consume into the sole image for explaining all social consequences, describing all these difficulties as competitive failure, consequences of choices, or insufficient adaptation.

Interpreters adopting a cultural image do extract language, rites and customs, and ideas. The illusory cultural construction expands language, rites and customs, education, values, and habits of life into the fundamental cause of every circumstance, compressing income, household registration,

medical history, school places, and local exclusion into habits of life, educational ideas, or cultural backwardness. Interpreters adopting a historical image do extract old wounds, memory, and enduring boundaries. The illusory historical construction miswrites the renewed triggering of past differences as the past's absolute rule over the present, writing current difficulties as the inevitable continuation of past historical indices, historical harms, or old boundaries.

No form of illusory construction begins without materials. Rather, interpreters expand limited materials into a closed image. This closure manifests itself in no longer allowing other differentiating units to enter, no longer permitting nodes and relational chains to be retraced, and no longer letting counterexamples change the original judgment. Illusory explanatory construction has not failed to see the event. It uses a familiar image to supply the event's missing causes. It does not refuse to look at its object; it allows that object only to prove the image of the world it has already prepared.

Illusory class, state, market, cultural, and historical constructions differ in content but share a mechanism. The distinction extraction within a limited scope on which they rely may be effective, but this does not mean that every one of these theories was once an ordinary limited explanation: class theory is, from the outset, Model C in its total-image-subsumption form, whereas other limited explanations may be pushed into a total image in use. These illusory constructions all expand limited differentiating units into an image of the whole, complete reality at gaps, and digest counterexamples into proof of themselves; they may also produce new materials through action to reinforce themselves. Effectiveness within a limited scope must remain connected to a concrete relational field. Once detached from that field, it cannot automatically acquire weight for the whole. Only by preserving both the effective scope and the procedures that formed it can one prevent a judgment within a limited scope from passing itself off as carrying weight for the whole in the next relational field.

A shared mechanism does not cancel differences in content between images. Labor and income; documents and implementation; prices and competition; language and rites and customs; harm and memory—each pair brings different materials into judgment. The problem is that each image may elevate its own position of distinction extraction into the sole entry point. A shared mode of closure does not erase differences in the materials users extract through different images, their effective scopes, or the consequences they produce. Actual mobilization and action write-back are possible subsequent links, not conditions necessary for Model C or for illusory explanatory construction to exist. If different interpreters all complete gaps, reinforce their accounts when counterexamples arise, and retrieve materials after action, surface differences in position cannot hide the same closed procedure. Comparison should focus on how they handle nodes and relational chains, not on their respective slogans. To judge whether an explanation enters illusory construction, one should examine whether its users elevate limited materials into an unrevisable image of the whole and then use it to complete gaps and digest counterexamples. Which set of names they adopt is not itself a sufficient criterion.

VIII. How Action Write-Back Produces Self-Verification

Illusory explanatory construction may also be carried into action. Interpreters, organizations, and processing personnel arrange matters according to the image, and action produces new materials; when these materials are preserved as differences that can be extracted again in the future, write-back is formed. If later actors retrieve them as proof that the image is correct, the illusory construction is reinforced. This loop brings cognitive closure into reality. Even if action and write-back have not yet occurred, a closed explanation is not thereby exempt from being Model C or an

illusory explanatory construction. But materials after write-back are not purely new reality. They are reality already shaped by actions organized through the illusory construction. The consequences produced by those actions cannot directly be taken as neutral proof that the illusory construction itself is correct.

The key to write-back is that action leaves materials that can be cited again. An eligibility judgment, a risk record, or an act of exclusion may change the conditions under which the person concerned later obtains resources, trust, and passage. Write-back is formed when materials of this kind are preserved as differences that can be extracted again in the future; if they are not later extracted, they do not automatically take effect in subsequent stages. A later judgment that sees only the record will treat a shaped result as an original state.

Action therefore needs to be traced at concrete positions: who makes the determination, which node preserves it, who extracts it in the next procedure, and how it affects new eligibility and risks. If any part is omitted, write-back is easily described as a natural consequence. Reviewers must examine the record together with the conditions under which it was formed, identifying which person or institution set the threshold, which procedure preserved the result, and how the later reading takes effect. Otherwise, the procedure leaves only the result and obscures how action shaped the material.

The defense and resistance of those excluded may also be renamed. Conflict originally produced by thresholds is described as instability in the object itself; insufficient materials caused by breaks in records are used to prove that raising thresholds is reasonable. If a group is interpreted as a dangerous object, those handling it will treat it as such. New conflicts produced by exclusion, surveillance, provocation, and forced self-defense will in turn be taken as evidence that “it really is dangerous.” This is not reality proving the illusory construction. The illusory construction first participates in producing reality, then retrieves the consequences it produced to serve as evidence.

A locality that regards all incoming families as unstable risks keeps raising thresholds in renting, school admission, neighborly relations, and job opportunities. This makes it harder for the family to become stable. When it does move frequently, have intermittent social insurance, and struggle to enroll its child, the local explanation says: Look, they really are unstable. An institution that sees certain people mainly as management costs likewise adds obstacles involving documents, review, assistance, and passage. The more obstacles there are, the harder it becomes for those concerned to establish continuous records; the fewer continuous records they have, the more readily the institution says that their materials are insufficient, their risks higher, and that relaxing requirements for them would be inappropriate.

Market explanations, cultural explanations, and illusory historical constructions may also produce similar write-back. If users of a market explanation describe every failure as insufficient adaptation, they attribute low wages, long working hours, rental pressure, and debt deadlines to individual choices. If users of a cultural explanation describe difficulties as backward ideas, they turn institutional thresholds, economic pressure, and local exclusion into educational problems. If users of an illusory historical construction write present conflict as the inevitable continuation of old harms, even new interactions are forced to be understood along the lines of those old harms. If users of these closed explanations alter concrete handling accordingly and preserve the resulting consequences as differences that can be extracted again in the future, write-back is formed. If later actors retrieve these preserved materials as self-verification, the illusory construction is reinforced further; but these actions and write-back are not prerequisites for a closed explanation to become an illusory construction.

Action write-back makes illusory explanatory construction more stable. It no longer merely explains existing reality; it begins to participate in producing reality. Interpreters, organizations, and processing personnel arrange people, resources, trust, eligibility, boundaries, and punishments according to the image. Action leaves records, conflicts, failures, exclusion, resistance, and new fears, and the explanation then retrieves these new materials as proof that it was right all along. At this point, illusory construction has formed a loop: it extracts a small number of differentiating units and organizes them into an image of the whole; organizes action according to that image; action changes reality; and it extracts the changed reality anew. It thus looks increasingly true. Write-back is not one-way accumulation. New materials must still be extracted anew by people, institutions, and procedures before they can enter the next round of judgment. Precisely for this reason, calibration must return to the nodes that preserve and transmit materials, rather than examine only the final conclusion.

IX. The Appeal of Illusory Explanatory Construction

If illusory explanatory construction were simply an error, it might not endure so long. It also meets several real needs. Complex social relations cause unease; a definite image enables people to orient themselves quickly and believe that the real cause has been found. An enemy provides a focus for responsibility. When responsibility is too dispersed, a clear enemy also provides a focus for anger, fear, and discontent. A course of action establishes a sequence of actions, telling people what to transform or eliminate, whom to mobilize or obey, whom to struggle against, whom to punish, and what to wait for. Together, these arrangements can turn complex relations that cannot be dealt with immediately into instructions for action that can be disseminated.

People sharing the same image use the same vocabulary, identify the same enemy, and tell the same causal story. They also affirm one another as a community. Shared language allows members to affirm one another and incorporate different materials into the same vocabulary. Such affirmation has real social effects, but cannot be taken to mean that the image has passed calibration against reality. Once vocabulary is fixed, heterogeneous materials may instead be forced into the same direction of interpretation. Equally important is the security of being exempt from revision. If counterexamples can be renamed, users need not bear the pressure of pausing, checking evidence, and changing direction, while the existing community can more readily maintain agreement. As long as the original image can digest every counterexample, the pressure to revise disappears.

Certainty, enemies, a course of action, community, and the security of exemption from revision make illusory explanatory construction more than an intellectual failure: it also serves concrete social functions. Precisely for this reason, its need to return to reality for calibration is all the greater.

X. Dismantling Illusory Construction and Restoring Entry Points for Reality

Calibrating illusory explanatory construction does not mean adding patches to a closed image. It means allowing excluded reality to re-enter explanation. Patching is not calibration; patches may make an illusory construction more closed. Dismantling illusory explanatory construction means recovering the differentiating units that have been overorganized, taking apart causal lines that have been made smooth, releasing digested counterexamples, and examining biased materials produced by actions organized through illusory construction.

Recovering differentiating units does not mean listing all differences equally. It means re-examining which differences were extracted in concrete relational fields and how they were assigned weight, why they gained weight, and which differences were downweighted before and after the result formed. This avoids writing weight as a fixed ranking.

Such examination must enter substantive relations. Beyond labor, income, debt, and housing, are household registration, medical history, local relations, responsibilities to kin, and community recognition also exerting effects? Beyond documents, archives, and implementation, are market rents, the family's provision of a safety net, local reputation, and historical indices also changing consequences? Beyond language, rites and customs, and ideas, have institutional qualifications, resource distribution, the bearing of risks, and the width of available exits been downweighted? Relations not yet confirmed must also be retained. Incomplete tracing does not mean that a relation does not exist. The approach is to mark positions still needing to be traced, allowing new materials to change current weights, rather than set those relations aside and ignore them.

Taking apart infilled lines requires returning to nodes one by one, investigating where the explanation completed a gap, where it assumed an overarching cause without tracing nodes, where it joined relations into smooth causality without tracing relational chains, and where it wrote the past as an eternal cause without finding historical indices. Who preserves a piece of material, who certifies it, and in which procedure it is cited: these concrete positions can explain how results form better than an elegant account of overarching causality. Dismantling also requires establishing who has the ability to change how records are read. If materials can be cited only along existing classifications, even preserved counterexamples may lose their effect again before entering judgment. This is also why calibration must examine materials and procedures together.

Releasing counterexamples does not mean treating every objection as valid. Counterexamples must point to concrete differences, nodes, or relational chains and explain how they force the original image to change distinction extraction and weights. This requires examining which counterexamples should have changed the explanation but were called noise, occlusion, a failure to awaken, insufficient information, or proof of correctness at a deeper level. Examining write-back requires verifying whether new materials were shaped by actions previously organized according to the image, and the conditions under which they were formed. Having been shaped by action does not automatically make materials invalid; records are not transparent windows, and how a record was formed may itself become a difference in subsequent judgment. One must establish what actions the explanation organized, whether those actions produced new biased materials, and whether the explanation retrieved the new materials left by action as proof of its own correctness.

These questions are not intended to cancel explanation, but to let it regain entry points for reality. The result of calibration need not be another closed total image. It can retain a limited scope, provisional weights, and relations not yet traced clearly, while specifying what materials would prompt revision. Being limited and calibratable preserves the possibility of examination and revision; it does not guarantee that every judgment will be correct. If, after verification, a counterexample truly changes the basis of the original judgment, the explanation should adjust the corresponding weight, connection, or boundary. An explanation that can accept such change is not yet completely closed; if it continually rewrites valid counterexamples as proof of its own correctness, it has already begun to turn into an illusory construction. Explanation cannot extract all of reality, but it must know what it extracted, what it downweighted, where it completed gaps, where it made relational chains run smoothly, where it turned counterexamples into self-verification, and where it produced new biased materials through action. Only in this way can explanation avoid becoming trapped by its own completeness.

XI. Turning to Model C and Complexity-Based Conflation

Keeping entry points for reality open allows judgment to continue within a limited scope, but unfinished work cannot be described as complete. Limited judgment must still specify the objects, materials, and conditions of comparison, explain which counterexamples, nodes, or relational chains would prompt revision, and offer provisional distinctions and weights within its present scope rather than flattening all relations. Faced with excessive certainty and excessive uncertainty, one must return to concrete materials and relational chains to see whether counterexamples can still move judgment forward. Excessive certainty ends comparison prematurely, refuses to acknowledge that other differences may change the conclusion, and thereby closes the entry point for reality; the erasure of distinctions between explanations instead invokes the inexhaustibility of reality to cancel effective comparisons already available, making comparison unable to begin at all. Normal evidentiary insufficiency, acknowledgment that materials are incomplete, or temporarily withholding judgment does not constitute such an erasure of distinctions between explanations.

For an explanation to remain effective, judgment must remain traceable, refutable, and revisable within a limited scope, and must retain an account of which new material would prompt a revision of weights. The movement traced above—from dangerous compression through counterexample digestion to action write-back—describes a process in which closure may deepen; the two mechanisms of Model C, total-image subsumption and the erasure of distinctions between explanations, do not jointly follow this as a necessary stage sequence. Judgment must guard simultaneously against limited distinction extraction masquerading as all of reality and against using reality's inexhaustibility to cancel comparisons already available.

Chapter 26: Model C, Complexity-Based Conflation, and Explanatory Calibration

I. Class Entities Do Not Exist; Class Theory Belongs to Model C from the Outset

Concrete differences such as wages, labor, property, debt, housing, risk, domination, responsibility, and available exits are real. Statistical classifications made for particular purposes can exist, as can similar economic pressures. But compressing, projecting, and naming these differences does not establish that classes exist. This book does not recognize the existence of classes. The status of a natural community, unified interests, unified consciousness, unified responsibility, a unified capacity for action, and a historical mission—the attributes class theory assigns to classes—are all fictitious. Real communities and actual connections continue to exist.

The class image must first be distinguished from class theory. A class image is formed when high-weight differentiating units such as labor, income, property, debt, housing, risk, available exits, and capacity for domination undergo low-dimensional compression, projection, and naming along axes of economic, labor, property, and domination relations. The real differentiating units involved provide the material basis; the processes of extracting them, assigning them weight, connecting them, and compressing them yield explanatory capacity within a limited scope. The class image is the low-dimensional output of this process. It can present some of the circumstances extracted, but it is not society itself, still less a subject that judges and acts on its own.

The class image is readily mistaken for an entity precisely because class theory and its interpreters compress multiple, not entirely identical relations into a recognizable name. The name allows people to recognize certain shared circumstances quickly, but it also occludes how differences are preserved and recast at different nodes. When two people with similar incomes face different consequences because of household registration, medical history, caregiving responsibilities, or local recognition, the image cannot replace tracing these differences. The image's ease of recognition and dissemination comes from compression; it does not exist prior to compression.

This distinction also preserves the proper target of criticism. Criticizing class theory does not mean denying unpaid wages, housing pressures, debt, or relations of domination. Those differences can force any explanation to adjust. What the criticism rejects is compressing a set of differences capable of producing consequences into the name of an entity, then using that name to replace inquiry into other differences, nodes, and relational chains. Conflating the two makes it easy to misrepresent criticism of the total image as denial of real harms.

Within the mechanism of total-image subsumption, Model C's structural appeal comes from the ability of interpreters who adopt it to extract materials from real suffering. Unpaid wages, debt, and housing instability force people to seek quick, certain answers; interpreters who adopt a total image may use this to name harms, connect materials, and divide friends from enemies. This appeal does not prove the total image correct. Critics must still face the consequences it captures. If they ignore those consequences, their own arguments against the total image will also lose their grounding in real materials. The most dangerous feature of Model C in its total-image-subsumption form is not fabrication of materials out of nothing, but the ability of interpreters who adopt it to grasp real suffering and then compress that suffering into a total image that refuses revision. Overdue wages, approaching rent payments, debts falling due, and unstable labor relations do indeed simultaneously change a family's capacity to wait, room for negotiation, and residential stability.

These consequences are not illusions. Precisely because they are weighty, interpreters who adopt a total image can readily appropriate them as evidence for a closed explanation.

An entirely ineffective account is unlikely to develop into an illusory explanatory construction. It has no materials to retrieve and can hardly demand that people act according to it. The power of closure in total-image subsumption comes from interpreters who adopt it first extracting a part of reality and then turning that part into the sole entry point. Thereafter, differences not extracted within this account cease to be regarded as materials requiring renewed comparison. Instead, they are required to prove that they ultimately still belong within the total image.

Class theory is a typical instance of Model C. Interpreters who adopt class theory can extract real differentiating units such as labor, wages, property, housing, debt, risk, available exits, and domination, and can identify their high weights in certain relational fields. The reality and real-world efficacy of these concrete differentiating units neither prove the existence of class entities nor give class theory the standing of Model A, Model B, or an ordinary limited tool. Class theory's basic structure is Model C from the outset. It does not first exist as an ordinary limited model and become Model C only when overused. Its ability to extract a set of weighty differentiating units does not change its basic structure: from the outset, it expands distinction extraction within a limited scope into a total image, compresses the complex differentiation network into a total class image, prearranges the explanatory positions of other differences, and uses this image to monopolize explanation.

Extraction, weight assignment, compression, naming, ontologization, and demotion are operations performed by class theory and the interpreters who adopt it. Class theory presents this image as society's underlying structure and uses it to decide what is fundamental, what is superficial, and what is merely occlusion or displacement. The class image is the result of these operations. This cannot be reversed into a claim that the image itself sees differences or itself expands them into what society fundamentally is.

Thus, within class theory's closed account, nation, family, locality, religion, culture, historical indices, institutional eligibility, medical history, accent, kinship responsibilities, and community recognition are assigned positions as occlusions, appendages, displacements, or surface layers of class relations. Interpreters who adopt this theory no longer begin by asking: Do these differences enter into consequences through different nodes? Are they gaining weight at this moment? They hand the answer to the total class image in advance. This is precisely total-image formation; it cannot count as ordinary limited explanation.

II. The Ontologizing Closure of Total-Image Subsumption

Limited explanation necessarily extracts distinctions and necessarily downweights certain differences. It need not pretend to see everything, but it must state what it has extracted, what it has temporarily downweighted, and which counterexamples would force it to revise. Limited distinction extraction and downweighting are not in themselves Model C, nor is compression itself an error. Dangerous compression occurs when compression forgets what it has downweighted and refuses to let counterexamples rearrange weights, nodes, and relational chains. In this kind of explanation through a total image, the danger is taken to an extreme: the boundaries of limited distinction extraction are erased, and the image's boundaries are disguised as those of reality.

Interpreters who adopt this kind of total image refuse to take responsibility for limited explanation. They present the results of their distinction extraction as reality's underlying structure and a crude projection as what society fundamentally is. Downweighted differences thus cease to pose a

problem. Once a model is presented as underlying reality, limitation is shifted onto reality. If materials do not fit, the question is no longer what the explanation has downweighted. Instead, reality is said not yet to have revealed the truth, the people concerned not yet to have recognized their circumstances, or relations still to remain at the surface. This allows the theory to wait forever for another layer of proof without having to answer for counterexamples that have already appeared.

Ontologization in total-image subsumption is more than a theoretical declaration; it substantively changes how questions are asked. What should have been an inquiry into which differences produced this result through which relational chains is rewritten as a question of how this result displays the established structure. The former allows materials to change the explanation; the latter requires materials to supply the proof needed by the established structure. Once the boundaries are hidden, distinction extraction no longer answers for its omissions.

This self-exemption has direct practical consequences: interpreters who adopt this kind of total image are exempted from the obligation to explain. They no longer need to explain why they extract only labor, property, or domination relations in a particular event, nor acknowledge that household registration, medical records, local recognition, kinship responsibilities, or national memory may change the consequences. They can describe unprocessed materials as secondary, not yet manifest, or proof of a deeper total image. Explanation thereby acquires a capacity for closure.

III. Model C's Two Mechanisms

Model A and Model B represent two limited explanations that enter into concrete comparison. Model C, by contrast, designates a structure that destroys the conditions for such comparison, revision, and calibration; it is not an ordinary third explanation available for selection alongside A and B. Model C contains two mechanisms that move in opposite directions but serve related functions. Total-image subsumption closes explanation through excessive certainty: a limited image produced through distinction extraction is elevated into society itself, while other valid explanations are demoted or canceled. The erasure of distinctions between explanations cancels judgment through excessive uncertainty: it illicitly substitutes the claim that society cannot be effectively explained for the fact that society cannot be exhausted and explanation is necessarily limited, then places valid models, limited models, erroneous models, and junk models on the same level. Only when complexity-based conflation uses complexity as grounds for canceling valid comparison does it constitute this mechanism for erasing distinctions between explanations.

Total-image subsumption prevents comparison from leaving the established image; the erasure of distinctions between explanations prevents comparison from beginning at all. The former co-opts counterexamples; the latter treats them as proof that no judgment can hold. The two mechanisms cannot be reduced to the same psychology, the same historical process, or the same method of argument. Both destroy the conditions for comparison, revision, and calibration.

Ordinary acknowledgment that society is complex and explanation limited does not constitute Model C. What is limited can still be effective, and compression is not necessarily dangerous. The question is whether distinction extraction preserves channels for comparison and revision. Healthy explanation must reject both total-image subsumption and the erasure of distinctions between explanations. Otherwise, it is either locked within a single image or abandons judgment amid infinite complexity.

Opposing Model C therefore does not require establishing a symmetrical 'counter-total image.' If critics say only that every generalization is dangerous, they will cast limited distinction extraction

itself as suspect and end up alongside complexity-based conflation. This chapter demands a more difficult position: putting forward judgments that can be compared while openly stating in light of which materials they could be revised.

These two forms of overstepping also often borrow each other's rhetoric. Defenders of a total image can use 'reality is extremely complex' to explain any unprocessed materials and thereby postpone calibration. Complexity-based conflation, in turn, can misrepresent the demand to oppose a total image as abandonment of all judgment. Distinguishing the two prevents criticism of the total image from sliding into the thesis that judgment is impossible.

IV. The Mechanism Chain of Model C in Its Total-Image-Subsumption Form

The structure of Model C in its total-image-subsumption form can be unfolded through six interconnected operations: extraction of a limited set of differentiating units, fixation of weights, total-image formation, demotion of other differences, counterexample digestion, and mobilization for action. These six operations present the structural unfolding of class theory as Model C in its total-image-subsumption form from the outset. They are not a fixed sequence of stages that must occur in empirical history. Still less does this structure require all six operations to occur, or action write-back to take place, before it can exist. Class theory is Model C from the outset; it does not first exist as an ordinary limited model and degenerate into Model C only when overused.

Extracting a set of differences from a potentially infinite range of differences can itself be effective. Wages, labor, property, debt, housing, risk, and relations of domination can indeed enter into real consequences. When wages are overdue, labor relations, contracting chains, project timelines, and debt deadlines may immediately gain weight. These concrete differentiating units can enter into and explain consequences, and the analytical processes that handle them have corresponding explanatory power. But that power belongs to the real differentiating units and the processes that handle them, not to the closed total class image. This operation of distinction extraction must still be tested against the event, and it cannot establish that class theory here constitutes Model A or Model B.

Class theory presupposes that differences carrying great weight in certain relational fields universally carry the highest weight, turning weights generated in a relational field into a prior hierarchy. It no longer asks whether overdue wages, a child's school admission, refusal of rental housing, or assistance for an elder are directly determined by the same set of differentiating units. Nor does it allow household registration, student registration, medical-record preservation, local reputation, or kinship responsibilities to gain weight anew in different events. Changes in project timelines, contracting chains, residential circumstances, document validity periods, mutual recognition of medical records, or caregiving responsibilities could rapidly move previously peripheral differences to the center. Yet interpreters who adopt a total image can evade these shifts in relational-field weights as conditions change simply by naming those differences in advance as derivative forms of the same root cause. This fixation of weights directly encourages the total image's expansion.

Total-image formation and the demotion of other differences are closely connected. Class theory and its interpreters compress the extracted differences into a class image and use it to prescribe the ultimate form of social relations. Other differences are demoted accordingly: nation can be described as an occlusion of class relations, family as an apparatus of reproduction, local recognition as an expression of structure, and religion and culture as ideology. Such operations need not deny the existence of each difference. Demotion is already accomplished simply by

denying their independent explanatory power in advance; it then leaves counterexamples without a place to enter calibration.

When people with the same income encounter different consequences because of household registration, medical history, local recognition, or kinship responsibilities, interpreters who adopt a total image do not treat these counterexamples as pressure for calibration. Instead, they rename them as a deeper unfolding of the total image, thereby accomplishing counterexample digestion. Organizations, institutions, and actors identify friends and enemies, allocate eligibility, deal with communities, rewrite history, or remodel families according to the total image. They then preserve and retrieve the new materials produced by action as self-verifying evidence that the total image was correct all along. Action write-back supplies materials to the closed structure, but the structure does not depend on action write-back in order to exist.

Total-image subsumption does not merely ‘explain too much.’ It embodies a particular order for processing materials: first fixing certain differences as the universal center, then allowing the remaining materials to appear only in subordinate forms, and finally turning whatever does not fit into proof. This closed order is not eliminated because individual interpreters occasionally retain details. What matters is whether those details can genuinely change the standing of the total image. When differentiating units within a limited scope are used to cancel the renewed extraction and comparison of other differences, the structure of subsumption and the danger criticized here become apparent.

V. Model C in Its Total-Image-Subsumption Form and Illusory Explanatory Construction

Illusory explanatory construction is not devoid of real materials. It organizes materials drawn from part of reality into an image of the whole that refuses revision. Total-image subsumption is a strong form of illusory explanatory construction. An abstract image cannot itself see, act, or mobilize. Concrete acts of naming, recording, mobilization, processing eligibility, and making arrangements for communities are always performed by organizations, institutions, and actors. Model C in its total-image-subsumption form designates the closed structure through which these actions acquire direction and legitimacy in relation to one another. Restoring concrete subjects makes it possible to investigate how the structure enters real procedures, while avoiding the reduction of structural criticism to a question of personal moral character. When organizations, institutions, and actors act according to this account and preserve the results as records that can be extracted again in the future, write-back is formed. Action write-back reinforces the closed structure after it enters action; it is not a necessary condition for Model C in its total-image-subsumption form to exist. When future interpreters and institutions extract these records again for explanation and weight assignment, the structure takes effect again.

When organizations, institutions, and actors assign friend or enemy status, eligibility, and responsibility according to the total image, newly created records are very likely to be retrieved again as materials for the theory's self-verification. Evidential closure does not mean an absence of debate. A closed structure can absorb large quantities of material, generate intricate debates, and even allow limited adjustments to details. What it refuses is to let materials change the total image's standing. Debate then takes place only within the image: which phenomena prove it more convincingly, and which strategies are better suited to realizing it, rather than whether the image has downweighted differentiating units that are changing consequences.

The circumstances of the family of a worker from elsewhere already discussed in this book suffice to show how this closure works. When wages are overdue, labor relations and contracting chains

may indeed carry great weight. When rent is coming due, deposits, income, landlords' risk judgments, and residential stability may all enter into consequences at once. Within the closed structure of total-image subsumption, these differences cannot enter calibration. Instead, they are required to return to the same total class image, as surface forms of that image in different domains rather than materials whose weights need reassessment.

Likewise, when a child enters school, household registration, residence permits, years of social-insurance contributions, available school places, and local policies may bear more directly on the event, depending on local policy, the admissions year, the application category, and the stage of processing. Institutional procedures must distinguish the creation of a student registration record after initial registration from the continuation of that record when moving to the next stage of schooling or transferring schools: an existing student registration record is not a universal prerequisite in every case. When an elder needs assistance, medical-record preservation, mutual recognition of materials between the place of household registration and the place of residence, kinship responsibilities, and institutional eligibility gain weight in turn. Which of these materials need to be retrieved and checked, and whether materials from one place can be accepted in another, must be judged according to the relevant assistance program; cross-locality mutual recognition or preliminary procedures cannot be written as requirements common to every matter. These materials are all required to return to the total class image. Local reputation, accent, neighborhood relations, historical indices of kinship, national memory, and community responsibilities may also be treated in the same way.

Counterexamples thus lose their proper function. They should force interpreters back to the relational field to ask anew what nodes have preserved, which relational chain has transmitted consequences, and which differences were previously downweighted. Yet closed explanatory procedures that adopt total-image subsumption digest counterexamples into self-verification: the harder a piece of material is to incorporate directly, the more it is said to show the total image operating at depth. Reality does not enter the explanation; reality is forced back into the same explanation.

VI. How the Erasure of Distinctions Between Explanations Cancels Comparison

The erasure of distinctions between explanations is not another error outside Model C. It is the mechanism at the other extreme through which Model C cancels comparison. Comparison does not require every explanation to use the same materials. It requires interpreters to be able to state which consequences they answer for, which materials have temporarily been placed outside the relational-field window, and when materials outside that window would constitute counterexamples. An account that fails to delimit the question yet demands that every account explain the whole has not raised the standard. It has merely made the standard impossible to meet.

Complexity-based conflation often begins with correct reminders: society is indeed complex, no explanation can exhaust reality, and any limited relational-field window may leave out differences. The problem arises when it turns these reminders into an unlimited burden of proof. As long as an explanation does not simultaneously account for nation, state, family, medical history, local relations, wages, debt, market, and historical indices, it is judged one-sided and therefore invalid.

This demand appears more rigorous, but it actually cancels comparison. A limited explanation can answer only for the key relational chains of a particular event; it cannot prove that it covers all of society. If the ability to explain everything is made a condition of validity, every explanation will fail,

leaving only the conclusion that 'they are all much the same.' Complexity-based conflation does not deepen calibration. It removes calibration's starting point altogether.

Genuine calibration asks: Which differentiating units has this explanation downweighted? Has it omitted nodes? Has it cut off relational chains? Has it misread historical indices? These questions are not intended to stop judgment, but to make it revisable within a concrete relational field. An unlimited burden of proof, by contrast, rejects any provisional judgment because it demands that every judgment first complete an impossible account of the whole.

VII. Healthy Complexity Does Not Belong to Model C

Healthy humility requires interpreters to state the conditions for revision clearly: which materials suffice to support a provisional judgment, and which counterexamples, once they appear, must lead to a rewritten conclusion. It acknowledges explanation's limits without using them as a reason to evade judgment. It is willing to specify which event it is addressing, which differentiating units are gaining weight, which materials have not yet been traced clearly, and which counterexamples may change the conclusion. Normal evidentiary insufficiency, acknowledgment that materials are incomplete, or temporarily withholding judgment does not constitute Model C. Healthy humility still preserves the possibility of reaching a judgment, makes explanatory boundaries public, accepts counterexamples, and takes responsibility for revision. It also preserves the possibility of withdrawal, revision, and renewed comparison.

Nor does healthy humility turn revisability into arbitrary vacillation. It does not overturn every existing judgment whenever a new piece of material appears. It examines what the new material has actually changed: weights, nodes, relational chains, or the relational field itself. This gives revision a clear basis and direction and allows limited judgment to continue bearing consequences without closing itself off. Calibration sustains precisely this kind of limited judgment, for which responsibility can be taken and which can be revised, rather than canceling comparison in the name of complexity.

Complexity-based conflation, by contrast, illicitly turns humility into a refusal to compare. In a school-admission event, different kinds of materials take effect according to the specific matters to which they apply; years of social-insurance contributions or the continuation of student registration are not prerequisites that apply uniformly to everyone. Yet complexity-based conflation need not examine how household registration, residence permits, years of social-insurance contributions, student registration, and available school places directly change consequences along a concrete path. Pointing out that wages, debt, family relations, and local reputation also exist is enough for it to declare any judgment within a limited scope merely one-sided, thereby forcing judgment to stop. Respecting complexity must never flatten all differences. It requires interpreters to acknowledge, in every event, that materials remain unextracted and to explain under which concrete conditions those materials would change the judgment.

VIII. The Two Mechanisms Move in Opposite Directions but Serve Related Functions

Model C's two mechanisms also create escape routes for each other. If critics counter the compression of a total image only by saying 'reality is complex,' its supporters can say that the critics have offered no judgment open to comparison. If one counters complexity-based conflation only by proposing a larger image, one falls back into subsumption. Calibration must retain both concrete judgments and boundaries that can change, so as not to shuttle between the two extremes.

Model C's mechanism of total-image subsumption and its mechanism for erasing distinctions between explanations move in opposite directions, yet undermine calibration at the same point. The former does not allow other differences independent explanatory power and swallows counterexamples into the total image, subsuming calibration. The latter does not allow valid distinctions to be established between explanations and turns counterexamples into evidence that all explanations fail, canceling calibration.

Consider again the existing materials concerning the family of a worker from elsewhere. When a child enters school, the applicable items among household registration, residence permits, years of social-insurance contributions, student registration, available school places, and local policies may bear more directly on the event than other differences. When wages are overdue, labor relations, contracting chains, project timelines, debt deadlines, and risk-bearing may enter into consequences first. Faced with these two shifts in weight, interpreters who adopt class theory use total-image subsumption to pull school-admission eligibility or the chain of unpaid-wage consequences back into the total class image in advance, occluding the roles of different nodes and relational chains in their respective events. The mechanism that erases distinctions between explanations, by contrast, invokes the multitude of factors involved to refuse to identify which set of differences bears more directly on the current event, thereby canceling judgments of weight.

When rental housing is refused, deposit rules, income, local reputation, accent, landlords' judgments, and neighborhood relations may work together. When an elder needs assistance, medical-record preservation, the conditions for mutual recognition in the relevant program, kinship responsibilities, and institutional eligibility may be more crucial. In this pair of relational fields, interpreters who adopt a total image likewise pull the different circumstances of rental refusal and assistance back into the same total class image, refusing to ask how kinship responsibilities, local recognition, or the procedures for handling matters each enter into consequences. The mechanism that erases distinctions between explanations again flattens the various differences into incomparable materials and declares that no limited model can weigh them.

Neither mechanism has truly returned to the event. Both evade the question of why different materials gain weight in different relational fields. Calibration requires a return to the event: it neither forces every question into one image in advance nor refuses comparison because materials are numerous.

IX. Calibration Must Return to Concrete Relational Fields and Relations

Calibration must return to concrete relational fields, differentiating units, weights, nodes, relational chains, historical indices, write-back, and counterexamples. These are not a fixed checklist, but entry points through which explanation can once again be examined against materials, procedures, relational positions, and real consequences. Calibration neither forces every question into a total image in advance nor refuses comparison because materials are numerous.

Calibration begins by delimiting the question and the relational field. Unpaid wages, school admission, renting, assistance, romantic relationships and marriage, migration, boundaries of national communities, and historical indices are not the same question. They involve different nodes, relational chains, preserved materials, and consequences. Delimitation does not shrink reality; it makes an explanation aware of which part of reality it is tracing.

The relational-field window must be constrained by materials. If it is too narrow, differences already operating along relational chains will be mistaken for background. But if the window is expanded without limit and the inexhaustibility of reality is used to cancel valid comparison, this

falls into the mechanism that erases distinctions between explanations, leaving no judgment a place to stand. Ordinary wide-ranging investigation or the inclusion of more materials for examination does not itself amount to the erasure of distinctions between explanations. Only when complexity is used as a pretext for canceling valid comparison does it constitute Model C's mechanism for erasing distinctions between explanations. Delimiting the question is not arbitrary cropping. It establishes provisional boundaries according to the nodes, materials, and consequences already implicated in the event, with readiness to adjust those boundaries when counterexamples appear.

Delimiting the relational field also means distinguishing the specific roles of the same material in different events. Household registration may directly restrict eligibility in school admission. In assistance, it acts indirectly through mutual recognition between two localities or the rules determining which locality accepts an application, according to the specific program and application rules. In an unpaid-wages event, it need not lie on the main relational chain. Without this distinction between relational fields, interpreters can readily misrepresent a piece of material's real weight at a particular gateway as its fixed domination over all events.

In an unpaid-wages event, contracts, wage slips, construction-site records, contracting chains, project timelines, and debt deadlines may form the principal entry points. In school admission, household registration, residence permits, years of social-insurance contributions, student registration, available school places, and local policies may bear more directly on the event. Renting and assistance, in turn, bring deposit rules, medical records, conditions for mutual recognition, kinship responsibilities, local reputation, and institutional eligibility into different relational chains. These differences cannot be arbitrarily spliced into lists of equal length. Whether they gain weight and how they enter relational chains depend on the event's actual consequences within institutional and everyday-life networks.

Without a delimited question, the mechanism of total-image subsumption can pull all events back into the established image. The mechanism that erases distinctions between explanations by canceling valid comparison in the name of complexity, in turn, declares all events incomparable. The relational field deprives both forms of overstepping of their excuse: it requires interpreters to specify a concrete state of relations instead of replacing the event with a grand name.

Comparison must also distinguish ‘being downweighted’ from ‘not yet having gained weight.’ The latter does not necessarily mean omission; a difference may simply not yet have been triggered by an event. The former means that, within an explanation, a difference's weight, visibility, opportunity to enter comparison, or access to explanatory standing is compressed, restricted, or excluded. These states must not be conflated. Whether a difference has actually entered into consequences, whether an explanation acknowledges or traces it, whether its current weight is relatively low, and whether it has been excluded from explanation all require separate judgments. The problem with Model C in its total-image-subsumption form is precisely that it often directly demotes differences not absorbed by the total image to the surface level. Healthy explanation preserves the possibility that they may gain weight anew, while not misrepresenting that possibility as a current conclusion.

Nor must a downweighted difference disappear entirely before it deserves examination. It may not yet have produced visible consequences, even though it has already been preserved at nodes and is accumulating along relational chains. Calibration must recognize this possibility without elevating all materials that have not yet gained weight into the current center. This is precisely why the relational-field window must be limited yet capable of adjustment under pressure from counterexamples.

Calibration must also compare what different explanations have extracted and downweighted in the current event. Labor, debt, housing, and risk can form one set of entry points; household registration, documents, archives, and institutional implementation form another. Local relations, accent, neighborhood recognition, and community boundaries, as well as kinship responsibilities, medical history, historical indices, and care arrangements, may also change consequences. Arranging these names into lists of equal length does not complete comparison. Explanation must still follow the concrete event and trace how each difference enters into consequences.

Consider an illustrative comparison concerning an obstacle to a child's school admission. Suppose Explanation A and Explanation B both consider income, debt, and eligibility materials. A holds that unpaid wages affect admission through termination of the family's tenancy and a break in its residence record; B gives greater weight to the current shortage of school places and holds that unpaid wages have not yet entered the main relational chain of this review. The factors they extract may be similar, while their weights and connections differ. If admission in the relevant locality, year, and application category does indeed depend on continuous residence and rental documentation, and records show that places in the relevant category remain available but the application is blocked because unpaid wages led to the termination of the tenancy and a break in the required residence record, then the connection traced by A fits this result more closely than B's account. If the residence materials have remained compliant throughout and the obstacle is indeed caused by a shortage of the relevant school places, then B's judgment of the current weights is better supported; A cannot establish unpaid wages as the cause of this obstacle merely because they exist. These are comparisons under hypothetical conditions. Actual materials must determine which situation holds.

A and B here refer only to two limited explanations. They carry no fixed distinction of correctness or error, complexity or simplicity, superiority or inferiority; society, institutions, and results are the objects they explain. Comparison must both examine results and trace the concrete nodes and relational chains through which those results arose. The relative merits of the explanations cannot be judged by which lists more factors.

After a family experiences unpaid wages, labor relations and debt deadlines may gain weight first. Once rent payments break down, rental nodes change in turn. If residential instability affects a child's school admission, household registration, residence permits, student registration, and school places acquire new positions. In relevant matters such as assistance for an elder, where materials genuinely need to be retrieved, checked, and used, the preservation of medical history and institutional eligibility may in turn become constraints if medical records cannot be mutually recognized. This does not mean that mutual recognition of medical records is a universal prerequisite for every assistance program. Differentiating units change weight along nodes and relational chains; they do not obey a total image fixed in advance.

Comparing explanations therefore does not mean finding class theory a place in an ordinary toolbox. Some differentiating units extracted by class theory may have explanatory value within a limited scope; class theory itself remains Model C. Calibration compares whether concrete differences, nodes, and relational chains actually change consequences. It does not give class, state, market, nation, or family a share of society apiece.

Weight is not a rank that a difference carries by nature. It is the intensity with which the difference enters into consequences within a concrete relational field. When wages are overdue, low income may occupy the center. Contracts, wage slips, construction-site records, and coworkers' testimony can preserve and certify differences involving labor; overdue wages may reduce the capacity to pay rent. When a child enters school, household registration, residence permits, years of social-

insurance contributions, and student-registration nodes may bear more directly on the event. The relevant personnel use administrative records and school systems, in accordance with local policies, to process household-registration materials and student-registration matters. Residential instability may make school-admission materials difficult to maintain, while interrupted social-insurance contributions may directly change eligibility judgments on paths that require continuity of such contributions.

When an elder needs assistance, medical-record preservation, institutional eligibility, and kinship responsibilities may change the result in turn. The place responsible for accepting an assistance application must be determined according to the specific system. Staff at the hospital back home preserve medical records; medical-insurance personnel retrieve and check the relevant information from the medical-insurance system within their authority; and relevant assistance personnel in the place of residence may also take part in investigation and verification. This does not mean that the place of residence invariably replaces the place of household registration as the place that accepts the application. How medical records are preserved may affect whether assistance can be certified.

Historical indices of kinship may affect borrowing and caregiving responsibilities. Neighborhood relations, landlords' impressions, networks of people from the same place of origin, and community reputation preserve local recognition.

A node is not an abstract dot. One must explain which differences it has processed and how it has brought them into consequences. Relational chains seldom exhibit smooth linear causation in transmission. Materials may be recast or used to maintain existing determinations; they may also be blocked or rejected in transmission; this does not mean that every transmission necessarily changes the form or weight of a difference. At the same time, asking ‘who preserves the materials, and how are they verified?’ serves to establish where they are carried and who is responsible for verification in concrete handling. It does not require every objective fact of life or instance of interpersonal suffering to obtain official or institutional certification before it can exist. Actual hardship cannot be directly equated with institutional recognition of eligibility.

Reassessing weights, examining nodes, and tracing relational chains cannot substitute for one another. If one says only that a difference is weighty without knowing at which node it is carried and processed, the judgment cannot be grounded in real procedures. If one merely lists nodes without tracing transmission and blockage, materials remain on a static list. If one traces only a single relational chain without reassessing weights, partial causation is readily misrepresented as the entire cause. Together, these three checks constrain explanation's impulse to expand arbitrarily.

These three checks can therefore distinguish explanatory power from the imposing sound of a name. A grand name may encompass many materials without explaining at which node those materials are concretely formatted or how they affect eligibility or livelihoods along relational chains. Conversely, an apparently small record, condition for mutual recognition, or instance of local recognition must not be downweighted for lacking a grand name if it sits precisely at a critical gateway to consequences. Total-image subsumption swallows these concrete mechanisms into grand concepts; the mechanism that erases distinctions between explanations by canceling comparison in the name of complexity invokes the tangle of details as a pretext for abandoning substantive efforts to trace them.

Calibration must also examine historical indices. Past differences govern the present neither automatically nor forever, but neither are they mere background unrelated to it. They must be located and extracted anew through current events, memory, archives, institutional records, local reputation, or community boundaries. A piece of kinship history may ordinarily be inconspicuous, yet it gains weight when a family borrows money. Memories of migration may become materials for

judging stability and trustworthiness in school admission, renting, or neighborhood conflicts. This influence depends on prior preservation. In the current event, concrete actors use the relevant records or memories to locate and extract the differences again and assign them weight. An index does not have to await a new act of preservation by the people concerned.

Old local events, national memory, religious recognition, and community responsibilities do not bear on all events with the same intensity either. Family memory, medical records, local reputation, religious recognition, or national commemorations must be extracted anew at concrete nodes and take effect in the corresponding relations before they can change people's eligibility, responsibilities, or risks in the present. Certification or transmission must be traced according to the concrete path; one cannot prescribe that every item of material invariably pass through the same set of stages. A historical index is not a total image that hands the present over to the past. It requires asking in what form, through whom, and along which relational chain the already-preserved past returns to this moment, while strictly distinguishing this from new write-back formed by present action.

Finally, counterexamples must be allowed to enter explanation. If a counterexample shows that an important set of differentiating units has been downweighted, interpreters must extract those differences anew. If it shows that a judgment of weight was miscalibrated, they must reassess weights. If it shows that the relational field was wrongly delimited, they must return to the event. If it shows that nodes or relational chains have not been traced clearly, they must follow up with the tracing still needed.

Counterexamples also matter because they force interpreters to acknowledge that consequences may arise from intersections not previously seen. A counterexample does more than add a new factor. It may show that the same differentiating unit is reformatted through different nodes, or that a relational chain previously cut off is in fact still operating. Such reopening can change an explanation more than adding a footnote beside an existing image. Total-image subsumption prevents counterexamples from entering calibration. The mechanism that erases distinctions between explanations by canceling valid comparison in the name of complexity uses counterexamples to declare every judgment a failure. Calibration rejects both treatments.

X. Calibration Is Not Compromise, nor Does It Reserve a Place for Class Theory as a Tool

Calibration's rigor lies precisely in allowing uneven conclusions. In one event, labor relations may bear more directly on consequences than local reputation. In another, local recognition, student registration, or medical-record preservation may change a judgment originally inferred from income and debt. There is no need to favor any one domain, nor is an even distribution sought. Consequences, nodes, and relational chains determine the direction of comparison. As long as a total image can still decide the answer in advance, such an uneven judgment cannot genuinely occur.

Explanatory calibration rejects moderate compromise. Nor does it list class, state, market, nation, family, culture, and history in turn and then say they all have some truth to them. Compromise places different explanations on an equal footing without answering which differentiating unit is changing consequences at this moment, which node has preserved key materials, which relational chain has been cut off, or which counterexample would suffice to change the judgment.

Calibration can establish that certain differentiating units extracted by class theory carry high weights in the current event. This judgment concerns concrete differences; it does not retain the total class image. In unpaid-wages cases, labor relations, contracting chains, project timelines, and

debt deadlines may need to be traced first. This does not mean that the class image acquires the standing of an ordinary limited tool, still less that class theory can be placed alongside Model A and Model B and freely selected according to the event. Class theory remains Model C. Likewise, household registration, medical records, local recognition, kinship responsibilities, or historical indices gaining weight in another event gives no reason to allot a share to every grand concept. Calibration does not retain the class framework and then add other variables. It requires a return to the concrete relational field each time, to judge which differentiating units, nodes, and relational chains actually change consequences and to let counterexamples revise that judgment.

It is precisely these two illicit substitutions that calibration rejects. One account appears to acknowledge that labor, wages, housing, and debt carry great weight in certain events, then immediately demands that the class image be retained as the overall framework, with household registration, locality, family, or nation added to it. This is still not calibration. It decides the total image for the event in advance, allowing only some differences to be added or removed at its edges. Calibration does not accept an arrangement in which the center is fixed first and materials supplied afterward.

Another account lays all materials out flat: labor relations, household registration, medical history, local recognition, kinship responsibilities, and national memory are all present, so each is said to be equally important. This too evades judgment. Differences can coexist without entering into consequences at the same intensity within the same relational field. Calibration neither gives them an eternal ranking nor refuses to rank them. It asks which are changing eligibility, risk, responsibility, and action space.

Calibration can neither remove class theory from its position as Model C nor establish any other grand concept as the permanent center in advance. It addresses how concrete differences are preserved by nodes, transmitted through relational chains, and certified by institutions, and how they change existing judgments when counterexamples appear. This work does not provide a common answer for every domain, but requires every answer to state its materials and boundaries.

XI. Bringing the Theory Together and the Responsibility of Application

This restriction also allows theoretical criticism to reach concrete consequences: instead of asking who holds the sole key, it asks what kinds of naming, recording, and handling are pushing people into which differentiation positions and what materials they leave in the network that can be extracted again in the future. Such self-limitation does not reduce Social Differentiation Network Theory to a neutral list of tools. It holds that society takes form, is sustained, and exists as a differentiation network. It still advances the judgment that social consequences require tracing differentiating units, weights, nodes, relational chains, historical indices, and write-back within concrete relational fields. But it does not allow this judgment to subsume any event in advance. A theory's strength should come from its capacity to be moved by real materials, not from its refusal to let materials change it.

Limited explanation cannot do without simplification. If simplification occludes key differences and forgets its own distinction extraction and what it has downweighted, it forms dangerous compression. Once dangerous compression stabilizes, distinction extraction, weights, relational fields, nodes, relational chains, and historical indices develop differentiation bias in relation to real consequences. If that bias proceeds further through gap completion, causal-line infilling, and counterexample digestion, it may close itself off into an illusory explanatory construction. Action write-back can reinforce this construction further, but it is not a prerequisite for either illusory explanatory construction or Model C in its total-image-subsumption form to exist. This path of

possible reinforcement is not a sequence of stages that both branches of Model C must pass through. Through excessive certainty, total-image subsumption conflates differentiating units effective within a limited scope with the total image and subsumes other valid explanations. Through excessive uncertainty, the erasure of distinctions between explanations cancels comparison, illicitly substitutes equal failure for limitation, and uses an unlimited burden of proof to cancel judgment and calibration. It does not need first to establish a complete illusory explanatory construction. The two move in opposite directions but serve related functions; they cannot be reduced to each other, nor should they be reconciled through compromise. Maintaining the responsibility of limited explanation lies precisely in rejecting both extremes at once.

The limited image produced by Social Differentiation Network Theory itself must not masquerade as society itself or claim to be a new total image. The theory must not reject counterexamples or demote concrete relational fields, nodes, and relational chains to illustrations of what it already knows. In every analysis, it must face the same questions: What has been extracted? What has been downweighted? Which consequences have not yet been traced clearly? Which materials would force it to change? If it loses these constraints, it too will degenerate into a new Model C.

What application retains is precisely this responsibility for testing the theory's limits, not a scheme and a set of answers that precede the question, nor a reproducible template or formula. If, when faced with concrete materials, a theory can only repeat existing names and cannot explain why the materials gain weight at this moment, how nodes process them, or which counterexamples might bring about change, it has not truly entered reality. Nor need a concrete question provide proof that a particular theory is forever correct. It requires only that interpreters answer for the judgments they make. Different domains do not reveal problems in the same order: some problems first appear between caregiving responsibilities and medical-record preservation; others, between household-registration eligibility and available school places; still others, between labor records, contracting chains, and debt deadlines. The responsibility of application is to begin from their respective contradictions and consequences, rather than turn every domain into an exercise in the same set of concepts.

Application must still take on calibration anew: asking how differentiating units gain weight, how weights are misjudged, which nodes preserve key differences, which relational chains are transmitting consequences, which historical indices are triggered anew, and which counterexamples require explanation to change. Only when a theory can still explain its boundaries, accept counterexamples, and revise its distinction extraction in concrete questions does it remain within its own limits.

Chapter 27. Family: Preservation, Responsibility, and Historical Indices in Kinship Networks

I. Family Cannot Be Swallowed Up by a Fixed Image

The father works on a construction site away from home, and his wages are two months overdue. The mother does casual work in a restaurant and has to rush back to their rented home in the afternoon to pick up the child. The child has reached school age. Under local policy, the family needs to prepare whichever of the materials concerning residence permits, social insurance, rental contracts, and related matters apply; the subsequent student-registration procedures also need to be carried through after school enrollment. The elder back home is in poor health: the medical records are at the hospital in the county town back home, while health-insurance enrollment remains in the home locality. Rent is due at the end of the month, and an old loan from a relative has not been fully repaid. Just then, the young adult proposes moving out. The parents say the family is going through a hard time and that doing so would mean neglecting the family.

All these matters extend beyond the scope of what is "internal to the family." Unpaid wages affect rent and the child's school admission; the elder's medical care affects leave from work, transport, and who can advance the money. The personal bonds left by the loan will be brought out again the next time someone asks for help. Moving out seems to be a housing arrangement, yet it connects to care, property, judgments around the dinner table, and whether one can return for help in the future. Familial affection, property, care, control, and personal wishes are all at work. None is sufficient on its own to pass judgment on this family.

In these events, relations of kinship, care, property, memory, and responsibility continually preserve, extract, certify, transmit, and write back differences, and the order of the family network changes accordingly. To understand a family, one must first examine how the matter at hand brings these relations into play, and which relations have not yet been voiced. One person holds a property deed, another has transfer records, and another retains only the everyday facts of long-term care. A record's being visible does not mean it has already gained equal recognition.

Nor will this family's predicament resolve itself simply because all the materials have been assembled. The residence permit, social insurance, rental contract, and student-registration materials each serve a purpose, but they cannot answer the questions concerning the elder's medical records, borrowing from relatives, or care arrangements. If the father's wages continue to be withheld, the time when the mother rushes back to their rented home to pick up the child, whether the child can stay and attend school, whether the elder can receive care, and whether the young adult will still have somewhere to turn after moving out will all become new questions of responsibility in different people's hands. Family relations thus preserve not only what has happened, but also what remains unresolved, leaving it at the entry point to the next allocation and dispute.

II. Family Is a Network for Preserving Differences, Not an Undifferentiated Whole of Warmth and Affection

Describing family as a natural community most readily occludes the differences long preserved within it. In this account, familial affection, blood ties, care, and responsibility seem naturally given: parents should love their children, children should care for their elders, siblings should help one another, and relatives should honor personal bonds. The problem is that a family is not a

community without differences. It is precisely where many differences are preserved longest, in the greatest detail, and in forms hardest to escape.

Who was favored from childhood, who was called considerate, and who was said to be a disappointment are ways in which a family remembers a person. Education and work leave other differences: who went out to earn a living early, and whose education cost the family more. Marriage and subsequent dealings leave further differences: who received more support on marrying, who once cared for the elders, who failed to repay a loan in full, and who was thought to have gained an unfair advantage when the household was divided. Even if these differences go unmentioned for years, they do not simply disappear as a result. Family members remember and preserve them in different ways, but this does not warrant the claim that every fact will be preserved in full.

Written documents are not the only places where differences are preserved. Property deeds preserve ownership, household registration booklets preserve kinship relations and institutional connections, medical records preserve bodily conditions and care arrangements, IOUs preserve debt relations, and transfer records preserve traces of financial contributions. Yet a family does not operate through documents alone. Each kind of documentary proof serves particular institutional purposes and cannot encompass every detail of family relations.

Differences also continue to be preserved and assigned weight at positions of interaction in everyday life. Remarks repeatedly made by elders, messages passed among relatives, seating at the dinner table, the order of visits to relatives at New Year, who is called into the kitchen, who can speak at family meetings, and who is assumed to look after the children all preserve weights within the family over the long term.

When someone is called "filial," "inconsiderate," "unreliable," "capable," "heartless," "good at managing a household," or "neglectful of the family," these are not ordinary evaluations. They circulate through the family network and take effect again in borrowing, care, romantic relationships and marriage, household division, and crises. Once a reputation forms, it affects how others trust that person, make demands of them, exclude them, or push responsibility onto them. Preservation does not guarantee fairness. Matters repeatedly raised readily retain weight, while care and wrongs suffered for which there are no documents and no one to testify may remain downweighted for a long time. This is precisely why family can offer support and also impose constraints.

A family has boundaries of its own, but it is not an undifferentiated whole of warmth and affection. This is not to portray family as a cold machine. Quite the contrary: in a crisis, it is precisely through this mechanism of preservation that a family provides support. When someone falls ill, family members may advance money, stay at the bedside, look after the children, and contact doctors. When someone loses a job, the family may provide a place to stay, money for food, connections, and time to wait. Yet family is also a finely woven network for preserving differences. It preserves side by side love and favoritism, care and absence, help and unresolved responsibilities, as well as shared life, differences in past property allocations, differences in past care, and traces of responsibility. In another event, the same mechanism of preservation may turn into demands, blame, shame, and constraint. Family protection and oppression often come from the same network.

III. Family Is a Network for Allocating Responsibility, Not Merely a Private Sphere

The expression "private sphere" seems to respect personal life, yet it readily occludes the allocation of responsibility within the family. Responsibility for elder care does not naturally fall equally on every child. Staying at the bedside, taking leave, advancing money, making hospital trips, signing documents, and contacting relatives in caring for the sick are not naturally shared equally. In borrowing, who makes the request, who guarantees the loan, who repays it, and who is said to be obliged to help all depend on differences long preserved within the family.

Even among children of the same parents, responsibility is assigned through earlier evaluations: one is considered wealthy, another nearby, another softhearted, another unfilial; one is thought to have had more education and therefore ought to be considerate, while another is said to have received the family's help before and now owes something in return. These judgments are not mere expressions of feeling but concrete assignments of responsibility. Family responsibilities thereby shape members' room to act: whether someone can leave the city or change jobs, divorce or refuse to lend money, take an elder to hospital or keep a child with them may all be changed by family responsibilities.

Individual members' circumstances diverge accordingly. A daughter works away from home; after her father falls ill, relatives may say that, although she lives far away, she is his daughter and must still come back to see him. A son earns little, yet is assumed to be responsible for hospital trips because he lives nearby. A daughter-in-law has no control over family property, yet is required to provide care. A young adult wants to change jobs, but the family says the elder is unwell and the children need looking after, so they cannot go upsetting things. Family responsibility is not abstract morality. It enters commuting, shift schedules, income, housing, marriage, and physical depletion.

Family responsibility does not remain within the family alone. Whose signature the hospital requires, whether the workplace approves leave, whether someone's earnings allow them to stop working, whether health insurance reimburses expenses, and whether relatives can advance money all enter this allocation of responsibility. Here, family is not an enclosed space but a relay node connecting institutions, markets, hospitals, and kinship networks to the individual.

Who is assigned responsibility also changes, in turn, whether that person can accumulate income, maintain a place to live, and retain choices within marriage. These consequences are not incidental circumstances outside responsibility, but actual traces it leaves on work, housing, and the body. A caregiver who adjusts shifts to fit hospital schedules may lose wages. Someone required to stay at home may lose the opportunity to change jobs or move elsewhere. Someone who refuses to take on responsibility may consequently be reevaluated the next time money is borrowed, the household divided, or romantic relationships and marriage considered. Once the allocation of responsibility enters these concrete arrangements, it changes how long someone can wait, how far away they can go, and how much risk they can bear. [S04]

If family is seen only as a private sphere, these chains of responsibility will be missed. Someone's refusal to lend money is not simply a matter of a cold disposition; debt deadlines may already be pressing on them. Someone's unwillingness to provide elder care is not simply selfishness; they may already have provided long-term care, with their body and work tied down by it. Someone's moving out is not simply a pursuit of freedom; it may be an attempt to escape the order around the dinner table, control across generations, and traces of responsibility repeatedly extracted.

Family certainly includes private life, but it is not simply a matter of private choice. Through nodes of kinship, care, property, memory, and responsibility, family continually changes a person's actual position.

IV. Family as a Relay Node

Many things that seem to happen inside the family are in fact external institutions, market pressures, local relations, and kinship responsibilities entering personal life through family nodes. Caring for the sick may connect a family to hospitals, health insurance, medical records, transport, leave from work, and wages. A child's school admission may, under local rules, connect to household registration, student registration, rental materials, and school places, while also being affected by family care and the capacity to provide fallback support. The housing property, property arrangements, rent, relatives' evaluations, local reputation, and future care to which romantic relationships and marriage, borrowing, and moving home connect fall across the distinct domains of formal institutions, market transactions, and informal relations; they cannot substitute for one another. Family is both a domain of analysis and a relay node through which external differences enter personal life. It is through this channel that society outside the family comes to bear on the individual.

Family members' actual circumstances are rarely determined by the family alone. They also depend on how the family connects to external nodes. When a worker from elsewhere is owed wages, the matter originates in labor and market relations. Once wages stop, rent, the child's school admission, the elder's medication, the couple's working hours, and debt deadlines are all affected together. Through family relational chains, unpaid wages enter housing, education, care, and marriage.

When an elder becomes seriously ill, what appears to be a problem of care likewise connects to medical records, health insurance, the distance to the hospital, transport costs, time spent attending the patient, workplace leave, wage deductions, and relatives' signatures. Who stays at the bedside depends not only on who is free, but also on who can take leave, advance money, and communicate with doctors, who has a position from which to speak within the family, and how past responsibilities for care are remembered. Family members are therefore not facing two entirely separate sets of problems. Wages, rent, household registration, and school and hospital procedures interact, within the same event, with who can speak up, who must go back, and who is expected to take on responsibility.

Nor do romantic relationships and marriage concern only two people. A family evaluates someone's romantic or marriage partner through housing property, household registration, education, work, medical history, local relations, kinship responsibilities, and expectations of future care. Parents may say they are concerned for happiness, while what they actually extract is future risk, property arrangements, local reputation, the family's social standing, and relatives' evaluations. Romantic relationships and marriage connect an emotional relationship to two family networks.

Borrowing begins with an amount of money but does not stop there. From whom the money is borrowed, who asks, who acts as guarantor, who knows about it, who will bring it up later, and who gains a say through the loan all enter the relational chain. Debt enters family memory, becoming a trace of responsibility that can be extracted again in the future. Family and the outside world have never been two mutually isolated spaces. External pressures come to bear on individuals through family, while differences preserved within the family also enter school, hospital, market, local, and state nodes.

V. Authority to Extract Differences, Interpretive Authority, and Historical Indices in Household Division

Differences preserved from the family's past do not enter the event at hand on their own. Elders, parents, those who control housing property, those who have contributed money, long-term caregivers, relatives who pass messages, or institutional procedures concerning hospitals, schools, household registration, and housing property may all raise a past experience, record, or responsibility anew and give it greater weight in the present. Those with greater authority to extract differences and greater interpretive authority can often influence which parts of the past are presented as grounds for what someone ought to bear. "We helped you back then," "You were the most favored as a child," "You did not look after the elders," and "Moving out now means neglecting the family" are not ordinary remarks. Those who say these things are extracting differentiating units, assigning weight, interpreting the past, and pushing responsibility toward concrete people.

Once responsibility falls on someone, their room to act changes too. One person gives up work shifts to stay at a bedside; another is assumed to make hospital trips because they live nearby; another controls property but does not provide everyday care. These arrangements continue to affect income, housing, marriage, and physical depletion. Authority to extract differences and interpretive authority are not always in the same hands: those holding documents may not control reputation, and caregivers may not be able to speak at family meetings. If only one person can turn the family's past into a version everyone recognizes, that person holds not only materials but interpretive authority, with which they can make some differences weigh more and others less.

When a household is divided, differentiating units long preserved within the family emerge together. Houses, land, money, elders, siblings, marital relations, ordering by seniority, divisions of labor by gender, who is at home and who is away, who is thought to have contributed much, past care, past loans, and children's education all receive renewed weight assignment. Matters that can ordinarily go unspoken become difficult to keep silent about when the household is divided. Who received a little more, who a little less, who cared for the elders, who did not return, who earned money away from home, who worked at home, who received support on marrying, and whose education cost more are all placed in new narratives.

Household division most readily triggers family historical indices. Past labor, care, financial contributions, favoritism, absence, forbearance, and what is owed are reinterpreted. Some differences left from the past, previously held only in memory, become grounds for allocating property and responsibility when the household is divided. Both the name on the property deed and who contributed money matter. A daughter who has long cared for the elders may not have her name on the deed. A son who has worked away for years has sent money home; if no records remain and he is described as "never having been at home," his contribution, like hers, may be discounted.

In disputes over household division, some say they spent years at home caring for the elders and therefore deserve a larger share; others say they earned money away and sent it home, so they should not be described as having contributed nothing. Someone says a brother received money when he married and should not now receive an extra share of housing; someone else says a daughter has married into another family and should receive no housing share. What matters here is not just how much property there is, but who can interpret the past as grounds that can gain recognition. Each statement extracts different differentiating units and downweights others.

The allocation left by household division does not remain confined to that moment. It does not end family relations; it writes them anew. Who receives the house, who is said to have gained an unfair advantage, and whose care was not counted may all be raised when an elder falls ill again or relatives borrow again. The new arrangements have already begun to alter the terms of the next dispute. Who is thought to have benefited unfairly, who is thought to have been wronged, who stayed silent during the division, and who turned hostile at a crucial moment: if these outcomes and evaluations are preserved in family memory, written records, or reputation among relatives, they become a past that can be extracted again in later elder care, borrowing, and relatives' evaluations. Preservation does not guarantee that every matter will leave a trace, or that preserved materials will necessarily be used later. Yet once they have been preserved as traces available for renewed extraction, they supply further grounds that can be raised in the next dispute. Write-back does not have to wait until they are actually used in the future to take form.

VI. Elder Care: How Responsibility Is Reallocated through the Past

When concrete arrangements are made for elder care, distance, income, housing, gender, working hours, bodily condition, past closeness and distance, sibling relations, elders' favoritism, medical resources, and institutional qualifications are extracted together. Who lives near the elders, who has more freedom over their time, who has a steadier income, who is considered more filial, who received the elders' help before, and who has a poor relationship with them may all change the allocation of responsibility. Elder care concerns not only who is capable now, but also who is thought to have incurred responsibilities in the past. In the family described earlier, the elder's medical records remain at the hospital back home. What is actually extracted is not merely the illness, but distance, the ability to take leave, transport costs, and who provided more care before.

Among siblings, the arrangement is rarely just an equal division of shifts. Present conditions and past history are often joined in assigning responsibility. Someone living nearby is assumed to make more hospital trips; someone with stable work is required to contribute more money. Someone favored since childhood is said to owe something in return; someone who quarreled with the elders in the past may be called unreliable. A daughter may be considered more attentive; a son may be considered to have a more formal responsibility. These judgments are often packaged as filial piety, but they are more than ethics. They reorganize distance, income, divisions of labor by gender, differences in past care, elders' favoritism, and reputation among relatives into actual responsibilities.

In such a process, family protection and oppression appear together. Some receive care through family; others are forced by family to give up work, marriage, migration, and personal life. Care cannot be summed up in a word about filial piety. Making hospital trips, taking leave, advancing money, looking after children, and bearing losses at work fall on different people and produce different forms of exhaustion and different available exits. Some receive support through this, while others are fixed in the position of those who should always take on responsibility in the future.

Family can keep elders from being abandoned entirely by institutions and markets; it can also make one member bear unseen depletion over the long term. To understand elder care, one cannot ask only who is filial or only who has money. One must examine which differences the family network extracts in this event, who interprets them, which nodes certify them, and along which relational chain responsibility is transmitted to concrete people.

VII. Borrowing Money: How Debt Becomes a Trace of Responsibility

Borrowing can suddenly make family responsibility heavier. Who has money, who is stable, who owes a favor, who received family support before, who is considered obliged to help, and who is considered unreliable are all extracted anew. Borrowing brings out reputation among relatives, differences left from the past, personal bonds, social standing, marital relations, sibling ordering, elders' evaluations, and expectations of future mutual help. An IOU may be only one of the nodes. Even if no one habitually mentions the money that the family described earlier owes its relatives, it will reappear when rent, school-admission materials, or the elder's medical care becomes an issue. Differences are also actually preserved by relatives' memories, messages, evaluations, and the looks exchanged at every later gathering.

Borrowing changes who has a say in the family. Those who provide money may later have greater standing to speak; those who borrow may find it harder to refuse demands; guarantors may be drawn into new responsibilities; and relatives who know about the matter may extract it again in the future. The outcome of handling a loan may be preserved by relatives as "I helped you back then," as "He never fully repaid it afterward," or as "He embarrassed everyone that time."

Once debt enters the family, it often ceases to be merely an amount. It enters reputation among relatives, evaluations of romantic relationships and marriage, reasons given for household division, and responsibilities for elder care. Someone who borrowed money may later be expected to speak in a more deferential tone. Someone who fails to repay may long be called unreliable. Someone's refusal to lend may be preserved as coldness or disregard for familial affection. What forms after a loan is not merely a creditor-debtor relation. How relatives pass messages, who knows about the guarantee, and who mentions the past at gatherings all change how easy or difficult it will be for someone to refuse later demands. These relational traces often outlast the amount itself.

Borrowing most readily triggers family historical indices. Who received money before, who failed to repay, who helped whom, who failed to lend a hand in difficult times, and who once received family support are all brought out again. Borrowing thus becomes a setting in which the family network preserves and writes back traces of responsibility.

VIII. Caring for the Sick: How Bodily Events Enter the Family Network

Illness is first a bodily event. Once it enters the family, it rapidly connects to institutions, markets, kinship, and historical indices. Medical records, health insurance, hospitals, bedside attendance, leave from work, advances of money, relatives' signatures, time spent caring, travel distances, lost income, and arrangements for children at home all enter the relational chain. Who stays at the bedside depends not simply on who is free, but on who is considered obliged to take responsibility, who can take leave, who can communicate with doctors, who has money to advance, whose word carries weight within the family, and who has left traces of responsibility for care in the past.

The relations brought into play by an elder's serious illness do not unfold along a one-way sequence. The illness connects both to medical records, health insurance, hospitals, and travel distances and to who takes leave, advances money, stays at the bedside, and contacts doctors. It also brings out differences left from the past among siblings: who received more family support before, who lives near home, who has a good relationship with the elder, who was favored by the elder, and who was absent. Illness changes more than the body. It reallocates responsibility along family relational chains.

One occasion of bedside attendance may be extracted again years later; one absence may also be preserved as material for later judgments of someone's reliability. Who signed at the hospital, who

advanced money, who merely posted a few remarks in the relatives' group chat, and who actually took leave to keep watch through the night: these differences may enter family memory, but there is no guarantee that all will be preserved in full. Illness makes facts of care particularly easy to preserve and particularly easy to omit. Some leave signatures, payments, and medical records; some leave nights of keeping watch and journeys back and forth; others have only accounts circulating among relatives. These different materials may later support one another or conflict.

Care for the sick is especially liable to be psychologized: someone unwilling to continue caring is called cold; someone who breaks down is said to be in a bad mood; someone proposing a paid caregiver is called heartless. Such evaluations may make the concrete burdens borne in providing care disappear from the account. Emotions certainly exist, but they cannot stand in for working hours, lost income, medical expenses, medical records, health insurance, divisions of labor among relatives, gender expectations, and past traces of responsibility.

IX. Moving Out, Romantic Relationships, and Marriage: How Private Choices Enter Family History

Moving out is often described as a private choice, yet within the family network it touches responsibility, care, property, social standing, power across generations, and local reputation. A young adult who moves out may be called independent or neglectful of the family. Particularly when wages are overdue, an elder is unwell, and debts to relatives remain unpaid, moving out will not be understood merely as a housing arrangement. The family asks where the rent will come from, who will care for the elder, what arrangements will be made for the children, whether the family home still counts as a fallback for that person, what relatives will think, whether they will return at New Year, and whether they will still help when something happens. These questions connect a housing choice to a network of responsibility.

The same applies to romantic relationships and marriage. A family evaluates someone's romantic or marriage partner through housing property, household registration, education, work, medical history, local relations, kinship responsibilities, and expectations of future care. Romantic relationships and marriage involve feelings as well as economic arrangements; they are the mutual extraction and renewed weight assignment of differentiating units between two family networks. Whether a woman continues to care for elders in her natal family after marriage may affect both networks. Whether a man is willing to live near the woman may likewise affect housing property, elder care, local reputation, and relatives' evaluations. A person's medical history, debts, family relations, parents' health, and siblings' circumstances may all be extracted anew in romantic relationships and marriage. Family evaluations in these matters often appear as concern, yet risk judgments, property arrangements, expectations of care, and local reputation may all lie behind that concern. Concern about housing, romantic relationships, and marriage may offer real protection, or it may place the burdens of future care, housing-property arrangements, and local reputation on someone in advance. These relations must be examined separately if those bearing risk are not to be labeled outright as people who neglect their families.

Beyond asking whether two people love each other, families also judge whether the two networks can bear the consequences each brings to the other. Moving out, romantic relationships, and marriage therefore cannot simply be written as individual choices. They reorder family networks in housing, property, care, social standing, and future responsibilities.

X. Nodes: How Family Preserves and Certifies Differences

Household registration booklets, property deeds, medical records, IOUs, and transfer records preserve different facts in family events. A household registration booklet connects to kinship relations and household-registration position; a property deed to ownership; medical records to bodily condition and care arrangements; IOUs and transfer records leave traces of debt and financial contributions. Once these documents enter household division, elder care, borrowing, or care for the sick, they affect whose account is accepted and who is required to bear responsibility. Their role is therefore not limited to preserving materials. Documents also have unseen boundaries: a property deed records ownership but not necessarily years of care; medical records document illness but not necessarily whose working hours were sacrificed; transfer records state amounts but not necessarily why someone has never been able to refuse relatives' demands.

There are also positions of preservation and certification beyond paper. Past events repeatedly recounted by elders, messages among relatives, seating at the dinner table, arrangements for ancestor worship, weddings, and funerals, who can speak at family meetings, and who is called into the kitchen all leave certain evaluations behind. Reputations such as "filial," "unreliable," and "neglectful of the family" are raised anew in crises. An occasion of bedside attendance, a signature, or an advance of money, just like an absence, may become material for later judgments of responsibility.

Facts preserved at different positions often conflict. A property deed may name one person while another has provided long-term care. Transfer records can prove a financial contribution without necessarily recording who rushed back to the rented home every day to pick up the child. Medical records can prove an elder's poor health but cannot prove who took leave to keep watch at night. Silence, too, preserves differences: some matters are not repeatedly narrated but forbidden to be narrated. Family conflicts often do not lack facts. The difficulty is that different facts are preserved at different positions, with different people and procedures deciding whether to recognize them. Such conflict does not mean that all accounts are beyond comparison. On the contrary, it calls for asking what each piece of material can and cannot prove, and who is downweighted because materials are absent. Only by placing documents, memory, reputation, silence, and actual care back within the same event can one see why a particular version is recognized as fact, and what it excludes.

XI. Relational Chains: Family Problems Are Not Factors Set Side by Side

A complete relational chain becomes visible when unpaid wages enter the family. The father's withheld pay first puts pressure on rent. Pressure on rent changes whether the family can remain in the city. Once housing becomes insecure, the child's school admission and care arrangements must be reorganized. Whether the child is sent back home in turn affects the elder's health, care by relatives, school eligibility, and the couple's working hours. Changes in working hours affect income, which then affects debt deadlines and whether dangerous work is accepted. Unpaid wages in the market enter housing, education, care, migration, and marriage along family relations.

Other events, too, are transmitted through their respective entry points. Illness moves from medical records, health insurance, hospitals, and travel distances into leave from work, advances of money, and bedside attendance. Romantic relationships and marriage move from emotional relations into two families' arrangements concerning housing property, care, and reputation. Borrowing moves from amounts into guarantees, messages, having a say, and later traces of responsibility. There is no need to elaborate each again here. The point is that consequences do not

stay where they began: they are passed on, amplified, or downweighted through different positions in kinship, care, property, markets, and institutions.

If family problems are written as a set of factors placed side by side, relations are severed. What must be traced is how a matter crosses different positions, where it changes responsibility, and where it returns to another person's room to act.

XII. Family Historical Indices and Write-back: Bringing the Past into Play and Generating New Differences

The past within a family does not disappear because it goes unmentioned for a time. It may remain in household-division agreements, IOUs, medical records, and transfer records, or in elders' accounts, reputation among relatives, and a silence people avoid addressing. Only when a new event occurs do these preserved differences have an opportunity to re-enter the present. Whether the past gains weight does not depend on how important it "inherently" was. Some retain records, some are willing to testify, and some have accounts that relatives or institutional procedures accept. Others, despite providing long-term care, have left no materials that can gain recognition. Household division, elder care, care for the sick, borrowing, and romantic relationships and marriage thus bring not only present allocations, but a renewed reading of past labor, absence, favoritism, help, and what is owed.

Family write-back shows that family is not simply determined by the past. Historical indices do not automatically decide who is right or who should bear responsibility. People in the present still choose which record to trust, whose testimony to accept, and how to handle a debt or an episode of care. Once the results of handling present actions are preserved as differences available for renewed extraction in the future, family write-back has already formed. It may settle into new family memory and may change the historical indices available for future extraction; it does not have to wait for actual extraction in the future. After an event ends, its handling results may enter documents, memories available for renewed extraction, reputation, or designations. Everyday silences, looks, and ordinary continuing effects do not automatically constitute write-back. This does not deny that silence can preserve differences within concrete relations that carry them.

Once family members preserve the results of someone taking on care, different subsequent directions open up. The same preserved undertaking of care may later be extracted as grounds for demanding a return from others or reducing one's own responsibilities. It may give that person a say in the future, or, conversely, fix them as the long-term bearer of responsibility: "From now on, it should always be you who handles this." Absence from care for the sick, by contrast, leaves the evaluation "He is unreliable."

In contrast to taking on care, refusing to bear responsibility in response to family demands changes how the family network performs distinction extraction concerning that person in the future. The outcome of choosing to move out may be preserved by family members as neglect of the family, or as finally becoming independent. Refusing to lend in response to a loan request may bring exclusion later, but it may also force the family to recognize that person's boundaries anew. Boundaries and exchanges within the family are rooted in relational networks: borrowing becomes a trace of responsibility in later romantic relationships and marriage, household division, and reputation among relatives; conflicts over romantic relationships and marriage change trust and risk judgments between two family networks; and household division also becomes a historical index for the next round of elder care. Household division is just one example; these relations are not confined to the division of property. Across different kinds of family responsibility, fair

allocation may reduce lingering differences in the future; discounting someone's contribution may instead generate deeper conflicts.

Write-back is not merely recording what happened. It changes who is more readily believed next time, who finds it harder to refuse, and who is expected to take on what again. Relatives do not necessarily spell out these old matters every time, but may raise them anew in a single evaluation around the dinner table, at family meetings, when borrowing, or when seeking medical care. If an act of handling downweights the facts of care, only when that result is preserved and extracted anew in subsequent handling will the downweighted result enter later allocations of responsibility. What seems in the present to be no more than a concession, refusal, or silence becomes a trace of responsibility if its handling result is preserved as a difference available for later extraction. When these contents are identified, extracted, interpreted, or assigned weight anew in subsequent handling, they may once again restrict or expand someone's room to act. Within events, family continually preserves, extracts, interprets, and writes back, and the relational network changes accordingly.

XIII. How Family Is Compressed into Fixed Images

Conflicts within the family are often quickly compressed into a single explanation. Some explain conflict through familial affection, private choice, or psychological feelings; others adopt the total class image. Some see only familial affection and care, so forbearance, sacrifice, and taking on excessive responsibility are said to be what one ought to do, while the heavy costs behind care are occluded. Some treat it only as private choice, and rent, elder care, debt, and available exits disappear from the account. Psychologization uses "selfish," "cold," "rebellious," and "immature" as explanations: those unwilling to provide care are called cold, those wanting to move out rebellious, and those refusing to lend heartless. These words sometimes describe feelings and sometimes downweight other differences, making debt deadlines, long-term care, housing-property arrangements, and who has standing to interpret the past cease to be seen. Feelings are real, but they cannot replace inquiry into responsibility, property, power, and past differences. Tears, silence, quarrels, avoidance, and anger all occur within the family, but family relations cannot all be recast as individual psychology.

Class theory can extract real differentiating units that may carry high weights, such as property, wages, labor, housing, debt, educational opportunities, and resource buffers. The unpaid wages, rent, school-admission materials, and medical expenses a family faces are indeed connected to income and labor relations. This explanatory power within a limited scope comes from real differentiating units and the processes of extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression applied to them. The class image is only the output of low-dimensional compression, projection, and naming. It can depict parts of actual circumstances, but this does not make it the source of that explanatory power; class does not exist. This explanatory power within a limited scope cannot recast class theory as Model A or Model B. Class theory is Model C in its total-image-subsumption form from the outset; it does not first exist as a healthy, ordinary limited model and only later become Model C through overuse. When class theory and interpreters who adopt the total class image use the real weight of these differences to reduce care, favoritism, medical history, silence, reputation among relatives and their evaluations, the order around the dinner table, local recognition, and emotional responsibilities to appendages of the total class image, other relations preserved at the various nodes of the family network are subsumed and occluded. It is class theory and its interpreters that perform compression, demotion, and subsumption, not the class image itself. Familial affection, private choice, and psychological feelings do not have to be excluded. The

problem is that once any total image is treated as the sole answer, those using it decide for people what may be seen and what need no longer be asked.

XIV. Comparison and Explanatory Calibration within the Family Relational Field

Family is indeed complex. In household division, property, past care, and ordering by seniority may gain weight. In elder care, bodily condition, residential distance, income, divisions of labor by gender, and past traces of responsibility are extracted anew. The relations brought into play on these two occasions differ, and the weights of the various conditions shift accordingly. Likewise, borrowing, care for the sick, romantic relationships and marriage, and moving out each involve different records, relatives' evaluations, and institutional qualifications. Acknowledging these differences, acknowledging that any concrete explanation may omit something, and maintaining theoretical humility do not in themselves prevent judgment.

The real problem arises when someone uses the coexistence of familial affection, interests, tradition, institutions, and markets within the family as an excuse to abandon comparison, asserting on that basis that every explanation is equally limited and that counterexamples cannot require a theory to revise itself. Only when complexity is used in this way to cancel valid comparison, revision in light of counterexamples, and explanatory calibration does it constitute Model C in the form of the erasure of distinctions between explanations. Acknowledging complexity does not in itself constitute this form of Model C.

Valid comparison remains possible within concrete relational fields. Comparison does not require an answer that takes charge of everything. It requires, in the face of the disagreement at hand, clarity about which differentiating units each explanation has extracted, which records and relations make them gain weight, which materials support the claim that these differences have entered into consequences, along what paths the consequences are being transmitted, what each explanation omits, and which counterexamples would require the existing account to change. Calibration must therefore stay close to the relations brought into play by the concrete event. One must first identify what the event at hand has preserved, who can extract the past anew, whose account gains recognition through documents, reputation, or family meetings, and on whom responsibility has fallen. Familial affection brings care, property records can explain part of an allocation, and institutional qualifications also alter room to act. No single line can replace the other relations. An explanation of family therefore cannot become a fixed checklist. Each event requires renewed examination of which relations are present, how records are raised, and which responsibilities are deferred or passed on. The same kinship designation may, in different acts of handling, bring protection or turn into pressure.

After an act of handling ends, the consequences of allocating responsibility continue. Who advanced money, who stayed at the bedside, who remained silent during household division, and who refused a loan request: as long as the results are preserved as differences available for renewed extraction, traces of responsibility have already formed. They do not have to wait until actual use in the future. Only when these traces are identified anew, extracted, or assigned weight in subsequent events do they re-enter actual consequences. Family can provide somewhere to turn, and it can also impose constraints. Both outcomes must be judged through how concrete responsibilities are allocated, how the past enters the present, and how the present writes back into the future.

Notes

[S04] On relational networks as sources of both resources and exclusion or excessive demands, see Alejandro Portes, "Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology," Annual Review of Sociology 24 (1998): 1–24, especially 1–7, 15–18, and 21–22. On obligations, expectations, information channels, and relations within and outside the family forming concrete resources, see James S. Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital," American Journal of Sociology 94 (1988): S95–S120, especially S98–S105 and S109–S116. This book does not replace the differentiation network with "social capital," nor does it reduce family to class reproduction.

Chapter 28. Local Society: Local Recognition, Relational Nodes, and the Generation of Positions

I. Locality Is Not Background

Someone lives in a city and rents a home in a residential neighborhood; a child goes to a school to apply for admission, an elder goes to the hospital for treatment, a vendor sets up a roadside stall, and a worker from elsewhere works on a construction site. If we look only at where things happen, locality is easily written as background. Concrete life presents a different picture. The same person is a familiar face back home but may become an outsider in the city; recognized among people from the same place of origin, they may go unrecognized at the community service counter. After several years in one neighborhood, the neighbors know when the person's child gets out of school. In another neighborhood, they become a stranger whom nobody knows. Their body has not changed as a result. Landlords, agents, neighbors, community personnel, or schools extract or downweight different kinds of difference in events involving renting, registration, interaction, and school admission. Which materials they believe also changes the person's local position.

Nor can locality be written as merely an administrative division. Subdistricts, communities, school catchment areas, places of household registration, and places where residence permits are processed certainly matter, but local society is not identical with these boundaries. Someone may comply with administrative documentation requirements yet remain a stranger among neighbors; they may also be familiar to neighbors and accepted by a landlord yet fail to gain institutional recognition because of missing materials. Still less can locality be written as the expression of a class image in a particular area. Income, occupation, rent, job opportunities, and resource buffers gain weight in local society, but local society cannot be compressed into a local version of the class image. Whether landlords, neighbors, community personnel, school personnel, or people from the same place of origin recognize, exclude, or remember someone, or whether that person's materials cease to be preserved and retrieved, depends not only on income and occupation but also on how these people handle leases, registration, testimony, reputation, and everyday contact.

Landlords, agents, neighbors, community personnel, schools, people from the same place of origin, and local businesses each preserve, extract, assign weight to, certify, transmit, or write back differences on the basis of contact, records, and procedures. They interact as finite carriers, forming real local relational networks. Accents, acquaintances, and length of residence can serve as entry points; so can landlords, agents, neighborhoods, communities, schools, and networks of people from the same place of origin, as well as local rumors, memories, reputation, and channels to resources. This is far from an exhaustive list: the differentiating units in local society are potentially infinite. Understanding locality requires asking how the parties in concrete events recognize and remember someone, whether they are willing to bear witness for that person, and how they come to suspect, exclude, or accept them. It cannot stop at an abstract judgment about whether a locality is an acquaintance society, an administrative area, or a cultural community.

These differences are not selected by "locality" acting on its own. It is when the parties encounter leases, residences, accents, registration, or everyday conduct that they give some of these differences greater weight and bring them into consequences of belief, suspicion, acceptance, or refusal. Local relational networks are not entities capable of acting independently of concrete nodes, yet they constitute real relational structures that affect consequences. In judging local relations, cities, communities, or subdistricts cannot be treated as already fully formed communities. We must examine whether concrete interactions connect materials, evaluations, and consequences,

returning analysis to people, records, and procedures rather than letting place names, space, or networks bear real consequences in their stead.

II. Local Recognition Is Not Feeling but Certification of Position

"Outsider" is not a natural identity. Someone who is not treated as an outsider back home may become one upon entering the city. People from the same place of origin do not see them that way, yet a community service counter may still treat them as part of the population from elsewhere. Even after ten years of residence, a person may have gained recognition among neighbors while remaining in an outsider position in certain institutional materials. This position is not something carried within the body. Rather, in concrete events, landlords, neighbors, community personnel, schools, coworkers, or people from the same place of origin extract, assign weight to, and certify differences on the basis of materials and interactions. Accent, the address on an identity card, household registration, rental contracts, social insurance, residence permits, a child's student registration, workplace, a landlord's evaluation, familiarity among neighbors, and ties with people from the same place of origin thus participate in the generation of positions.

Being a local is likewise not an identity defined by an inherent essence. A position enjoying greater recognition forms only through the continued remembering, testimony, and certification by residents, landlords, local businesses, schools, community personnel, relatives, or others involved in long-term interaction. Someone with local household registration may have weaker local relations after a long absence. Those living in a new district where neighbors do not know one another may also lack recognition among acquaintances. When a bad reputation weighs too heavily, landlords, neighbors, local businesses, or others involved in long-term interaction may still refuse to bear witness for, introduce, or accept the person. Locals and outsiders are not two fixed populations; they are different positions of recognition generated by multiple finite nodes on the basis of materials, interactions, and procedures.

People often explain local recognition through a feeling of warmth, a sense of belonging, or ties among acquaintances. These feelings do exist, but they cannot adequately explain its real effects. Local recognition directly affects real positions and cannot be treated as sentimental decoration. A person's name, face, accent, residence, work, family, past conduct, and degree of reliability may be preserved and certified at local nodes. Landlords, neighbors, schools, local businesses, or community personnel each hold only some of the materials. The landlord can prove that the person lives here; neighbors know what the person is usually like; community personnel have seen them; the school knows that the child really lives nearby. People from the same place of origin know where the person comes from and whether they are reliable; nearby businesses know whether the person has ever owed money. These certifications need not be formal, yet they still affect whether someone can rent a home, obtain a certificate without difficulty, or borrow money. They also affect whether a child's admission materials are believed and whether anyone will speak for the person when a conflict arises. Position forms through whether these limited certifications can connect with one another; it is not decided once and for all by place of origin or the body.

Recognition involves both the process of being seen and certification that can be called upon. Local recognition is not accomplished in a single act. In a particular context, a person may gain progressively deeper recognition along a path from being seen to being known, remembered, testified for, and vouched for, eventually acquiring standing to speak in local affairs in certain events. But not every case passes through this entire sequence in order. A local position is not a fixed identity attached to someone; it is generated through repeated appearances, repeated evaluation, or repeated certification.

As the same person enters different localities, the differences they carry are reordered. Back home, kinship relations, village evaluations, past experiences, and the parents' reputation may weigh more heavily; in the city, rental contracts, continuity of social insurance, filing by the landlord, the child's school, and community registration may weigh more heavily; on the construction site, labor contractors, coworkers, people from the same place of origin, and wage-settlement records may weigh more heavily. No single resident, landlord, staff member, or person from the same place of origin can complete the certification of position in one act. Positions are generated and adjusted only as different people's limited judgments connect across the nodes of renting, registration, school admission, work, and interaction. The weight of such a position changes with events, but this does not mean that birth, place of origin, migration experience, or historical communities are fictitious. This chapter discusses only positions of recognition as local or outsider within concrete local networks; new testimony, interactions, or materials can still adjust existing evaluations.

III. How a Family of Workers from Elsewhere Enters Local Networks

Once this family of workers from elsewhere enters local relations, it faces another set of problems. The father works on a construction site away from home, and his wages are two months overdue. The mother does casual work in a restaurant and has to rush back to their rented home in the afternoon to pick up the child. The child has reached school age. Under the local requirements for the particular year and admission category, the family needs to prepare whichever of the materials concerning residence permits, social insurance, rental contracts, and related matters apply. For first-time school entry, student registration must be established after enrollment; progression to another level of schooling or transfer involves carrying forward an existing student registration. The elder's medical records are at the hospital in the county town back home, while health-insurance enrollment remains in the home locality. Rent is due at the end of the month, and an earlier loan from a relative has not been fully repaid. The young adult wants to move out, but the parents say the family is going through a hard time and that doing so would mean neglecting the family.

When the scope of observation shifts to renting, schools, communities, construction sites, and ties with people from the same place of origin, neither responsibilities within the family nor the market and state institutions suffice to encompass the entire situation. Local position also depends on how specific people act and how procedures handle materials: whether the landlord cooperates with filing, whether neighbors know that the family really lives here, whether the community recognizes this rental relationship, and whether the school believes that the child has long lived nearby. Whether people from the same place of origin can introduce the family to more stable work, and whether local relations between coworkers and labor contractors can help recover overdue wages, also enter into the consequences. If the family moves because it cannot afford the rent, the child's admission materials, the mother's working hours, the father's position on the construction site, ties with people from the same place of origin, and care among relatives will all be rearranged. In the city, this family is not an abstract migrant population. Landlords, agents, neighbors, community personnel, school personnel, coworkers, labor contractors, and specific people from the same place of origin variously observe, extract, evaluate, register, certify, or refuse on the basis of wages, rent, accent, length of residence, leases, registration, school materials, and existing evaluations. The handling undertaken by multiple people and procedures, each limited in scope, jointly affects this family's position of local recognition. No single person can determine it at will.

Nor does this family inhabit only one local network. Relatives back home, hospital records, creditors, and village acquaintances preserve or relay kinship relations, medical records, debts to relatives, village evaluations, past experiences, and local reputation. Landlords in the city, schools,

community personnel, coworkers, agents, and neighbors preserve or handle renting, work, social insurance, community registration, school materials, and neighborhood evaluations. Specific people from the same place of origin, intermediaries, and labor contractors also bring evaluations from back home, accents, places of origin, and degrees of reliability into the city. Wages, rent, the child's school admission, and elder care in the city in turn determine whether the family returns home, continues to stay in the city, or can still maintain relations in both places. Local society is not a network enclosed within one location. Relatives, landlords, schools, community personnel, coworkers, intermediaries, and labor contractors relay evaluations, handle materials, and leave records across the place back home, the city, circles of people from the same place of origin, communities, schools, and construction sites, recasting local positions back and forth. The outsider's position is not generated by one place alone, but through repeated extraction, certification, and write-back at multiple finite nodes. [So5]

These local relations have not recast the family's existing difficulties as another set of problems internal to the family. What is traced here is how wages, renting, registration, school admission, and job referrals pass in their different ways through landlords, schools, coworkers, labor contractors, and people from the same place of origin, becoming local consequences of remaining in the city or being forced to leave. The place back home, the city, the construction site, and circles of people from the same place of origin are not mutually enclosed backgrounds either. Specific people, materials, and exchanges recast the same family's situation in different localities. Connections across places change how local consequences are transmitted; they do not cancel the family's own responsibilities, care, or historical differences.

IV. Authority to Extract Differences and Interpretive Authority in Locality

The difficulties that families from elsewhere face in the city often arise not from a complete absence of materials, but from materials lacking local certification or being difficult to bring into procedures. The family has a rental contract, but the landlord will not cooperate with filing; the child really lives nearby, but the neighbors do not know the child; the social-insurance contribution period falls a few months short of what the applicable policy requires, and the school service counter will not accept an explanation; wages really are overdue, but the labor contractor is better connected locally. The facts of everyday life already exist objectively. Whether the same person counts as an acquaintance, is considered reliable, or has standing to receive support, and whether facts of everyday life can be converted into outcomes accepted by institutions, depend on who extracts and interprets differences in which procedures, and who certifies them. Many local difficulties arise precisely when facts of everyday life cannot readily be turned into materials that can gain recognition.

Authority to extract differences, interpretive authority, authority to bear witness, and certification authority must not be conflated as a single kind of power. In concrete affairs involving people, a landlord or neighbor may first notice a residence, lease, or daily routine. People from the same place of origin evaluate someone's reliability; coworkers know whether wages really are overdue. People from the same place of origin and coworkers may explain the degree of reliability and how the wage arrears unfolded, while local relatives may explain whether the person is one of their own. The landlord can establish that the person really lives here; neighbors know what the family is usually like. Some are willing to bear witness, while others refuse. Community personnel judge whether materials meet the requirements; schools examine the various supporting documents and admission materials that meet the requirements within the specific scope of their admissions; service counters then handle the matter according to procedure. These statements participate in

extracting differentiating units, assigning weight, interpreting positions, and certifying relations. They are therefore more than ordinary opinions.

Power in locality is expressed not only in who has money, housing, or a formal post, but also in who has standing to bear witness for someone. The fact and duration of residence, the stability of work, whether a child has long lived here, whether someone has caused trouble in the past, and whether a person is reliable: if these facts of everyday life are to enter substantive evaluation within a local network, they need to be substantiated by the relevant people, records, or history of interactions. To enter institutional certification, however, they must be converted into compliant materials under the specific rules. Authority to bear witness intersects with the boundaries of documentary review; together they participate in the generation of local positions.

Local recognition and administrative certification are often misaligned. Neighbors know someone well, yet institutional materials may still contain no trace of them. Someone whose materials meet the requirements may still be a stranger in local relations. Recognition within a circle of people from the same place of origin may not gain community recognition. It is precisely the lack of alignment among formal certification, recognition among acquaintances, spatial familiarity, assurances from people from the same place of origin, and reputational evaluations that makes local relations complex. Even when a landlord knows perfectly well that a tenant lives there, they may still refuse to file the rental. Even if a school knows that a child has long lived nearby, missing materials may prevent it from completing certification. When extraction, interpretation, testimony, and certification fail to align, facts of everyday life may fail to become administrative outcomes.

Exclusion does not always take the form of open expulsion. Not filing, not bearing witness, not offering reminders, not making introductions, not explaining, or not vouching for someone all gradually narrow that person's local position. Refusal or silence in concrete events on the part of landlords, neighbors, community and school personnel, agents, people from the same place of origin, and others involved in long-term interaction may turn someone already familiar into a stranger again. Administrative certification can draw procedural boundaries, but it cannot replace the familiarity, testimony, or refusal of landlords, neighbors, schools, and people from the same place of origin in their respective positions.

V. Renting and School Admission: The Misalignment of Local Recognition and Administrative Certification

In rental situations, rental contracts, filing, or residence registration may form part of the application materials in certain areas, admission years, and admission categories. Whether the landlord cooperates may affect whether the relevant materials can be produced. Rent, deposits, agents, neighborhood relations, and local reputation, by contrast, are market or informal conditions within the composite situation. The two must be understood separately: familiarity among neighbors or a landlord's attitude must not be written as an administrative rule uniform across all areas. [F05c]

The node in renting is not the house itself. A contract is more than a monetary transaction. Only through such matters as whether a landlord renews a lease or files it, whether an agent relays existing evaluations, whether neighbors confirm the facts of residence, and whether community personnel can register residence on that basis do contracts, deposits, and places of residence enter a child's school admission, work arrangements, and residential stability along subsequent relational chains. Market pressure is real, but the consequences of renting cannot be compressed into the single result of price. Unpaid wages affect rent; rent affects lease renewal; renewal and

filing in turn change registration and admission materials. Every link has specific people handling it, and every link can change direction.

A child may indeed walk from the rented home to the school gate every day. Neighbors have seen the child, and the restaurant owner knows that the mother needs to pick the child up in the afternoon. Yet whether these long-standing facts of everyday life can enter administrative certification, in certain areas and particular admission years, depends on the limits set by local policy and admission category. Whether household registration, residence permits, the duration of social-insurance contributions, or rental materials enter the review depends on the relevant category and housing route. Different routes may involve different or alternative materials; there is no uniform requirement to assemble them all. Progression to another level of schooling or transfer may involve carrying forward an existing student registration; for first-time school entry, student registration is established after enrollment. These two stages must not be conflated. Available places may also affect the particular arrangements. Although the parents' working hours and the degree of familiarity among neighbors are real circumstances of life, they are only informal conditions, not formal admission requirements. A community explanation or a landlord's cooperation has procedural significance only when expressly stipulated by policy or needed for the actual production of materials. [Fo5d] Thus, within the scope in which the relevant documentary requirements apply, if the landlord will not cooperate with filing, social-insurance contributions fall a few months short, or the rental contract does not conform to requirements, this actually existing everyday life has difficulty entering administrative certification.

Conversely, even fully compliant materials may not bring a family acceptance by the people around it at the same time. The child may be able to apply without difficulty, yet neighbors, the landlord, or classmates' parents may still see the whole family as "only here temporarily." The misalignment of local recognition and administrative certification is most readily apparent in school admission. Even if the school knows that the child lives nearby, this does not mean the materials will pass review without difficulty. And passing the documentary review does not guarantee a place, just as it does not mean that neighbors, the landlord, classmates' parents, or others involved in everyday interaction have already accepted the family into their relations.

The school-admission situation therefore cannot be reduced to a binary of whether the materials are complete. The child's and parents' everyday residence, the landlord's filing, neighbors' testimony, the school's handling of the materials, and community certificates may fail to connect in reality. In the composite situation described in this book, household registration, residence permits, social insurance, contracts, student registration, and available places do play a role, but they are by no means qualifications that automatically deliver results. All materials must pass through concrete service counters, personnel, and procedures before they can enter an outcome. What is outlined here is the internal mechanism of this misalignment of recognition, not an admission policy generally applicable everywhere.

VI. Neighborhood Recognition and Spatial Nodes

Neighborhood recognition need not be written on paper, yet it affects a sense of safety, the handling of conflicts, and everyday care. Whether neighbors know you, know your routine, are willing to help keep an eye on a child, speak for you in a conflict, or see you as a temporary tenant rather than a long-term resident will all change your local position. Neighborhood recognition can also turn into exclusion. Accent, daily routine, children crying or making a fuss, occupation, overdue rent, and the use of shared spaces can all enter local evaluations. Once neighborhood

reputation turns bad, renting, children's playmates, communication with the community, and the everyday sense of safety will be affected.

Local space is not an empty container. The entrance to a residential compound, a school gate, a market, a construction site, a corridor, and a community service counter can become spatial nodes because neighbors, local businesses, landlords, parents, staff, and people who repeatedly pass through observe, remember, record, relay, or bear witness there. They remember who comes often, who has lived there how long, who knows whom, who has had conflicts, and who can be found. The same everyday route may accumulate familiarity or leave negative evaluations after a conflict. The mother picks up the child at the school gate every day; the restaurant owner knows what time she must leave; neighbors have seen her returning with groceries in the corridor; the landlord knows how long the family has lived there. These scattered appearances gradually form local familiarity. Overdue rent, a noisy child, or a conflict in the corridor may likewise lead neighbors, local businesses, landlords, or staff to form and relay negative evaluations. These differences enter local recognition only when specific people can identify, remember, bear witness to, or handle matters on their basis. Space itself does not automatically preserve, evaluate, or certify anything; it merely provides a site where activity and observation repeatedly intersect.

VII. Networks of People from the Same Place of Origin: Protection, Opportunity, Debt, and Evaluation

The father found work on the construction site through people from the same place of origin. Once his wages go unpaid, he faces more than the employer. The intermediary, labor contractor, coworkers, and specific people from the same place of origin also evaluate how he responds. If he protests too forcefully, these people will reassess whether to continue introducing him to jobs. If he remains silent, the unpaid wages will enter the family's rent and the child's school-admission problems.

For outsiders in an unfamiliar locality, ties with people from the same place of origin often form an important relay network, but they are never a network that only provides protection. Interactions among intermediaries, coworkers, labor contractors, relatives, acquaintances, and particular people from the same place of origin connect evaluations, opportunities, debts, and responsibilities. As specific people relay evaluations across work, housing, lending and borrowing, and information, they can bring opportunities: referring someone to a job or a home, providing channels for borrowing money, passing on news, or warning of risks. Bringing trust from back home into the city may offer a person protection. Yet their evaluations, refusals, and retellings can also create new bonds of constraint, transmit restrictions, and produce exclusion. After someone incurs debt, breaks trust, fights, or absconds, these people relay evaluations to one another, carrying a bad reputation in the city back home, or bringing old evaluations from back home into the city. When making introductions, lending and borrowing, or relaying accounts, they draw on histories of coming from the same place, accents, kinship relations, past evaluations, village reputations, and shared experiences.

The effects of ties among people from the same place of origin are not produced by an abstract network acting on its own. The network is simply the real relational structure through which these consequences pass; it does not autonomously evaluate, disseminate, constrain, or exclude. Specific people still decide, within events, whether to continue making job referrals, offering loans, vouching, bearing witness, or maintaining contact. It is their retellings and refusals that bring evaluations into subsequent opportunities and relations through existing ties. Transmission across localities does not erase differences. Each introduction, refusal, loan, or evaluation requires asking

who drew on which past materials in what event. Whether an old evaluation can take effect still depends on whether particular people from the same place of origin extract it anew in the current event. Whether it is accepted after extraction, and how much weight it carries, still depend on how it is handled in subsequent concrete interactions.

VIII. Local Relational Chains: How Differences Transmit Consequences

Listing accents, acquaintances, landlords, communities, and schools side by side is not yet an explanation of local relations. Differences transmit consequences along networks of residence, work, family, schools, communities, and people from the same place of origin. Unpaid wages entering local networks form a typical relational chain. Wage arrears first make rent difficult to pay and then affect whether the landlord renews the lease. Once residential stability is disrupted, residence registration, filing by the landlord, residence permits, and related steps may all be affected under the documentary requirements applicable to the relevant year and category. Familiarity among neighbors may also weaken, and a break in the relevant residence materials will also make the child's admission materials unstable. Whether the child can remain in the locality in turn affects the mother's working hours, whether the family continues to live there, and whether ties with people from the same place of origin can be maintained. What is traced here is whether specific people's testimony, filing, registration, evaluation, and handling of materials can remain continuous; the issue is not a renewed discussion of family responsibility itself. A change of residence, the cessation of filing, an interruption in community registration, school materials becoming invalid, or neighbors ceasing to bear witness may all break this continuity, turning someone back into a stranger within local networks.

A rental contract concerns more than a place to live. It may also connect to subsequent steps involving residence permits, community certificates, school applications, explanations concerning social insurance, and whether a child can stay. Within the scope of the applicable policy, a landlord's refusal to cooperate with filing may leave gaps in a child's admission materials. Even offering an explanation concerning social insurance does not in itself waive the policy's applicable conditions. If the community does not recognize the facts of residence, the school may also refuse an application. Renting thus transmits consequences step by step to education and residence through specific people's handling, testimony, and records.

Accent also enters trust. In some local events, people in interaction extract the sound difference of an accent and assign weight to it. In negotiating rent, finding work, neighborhood conflicts, evaluations of romantic relationships and marriage, and market transactions, a person may thereby be identified as an outsider. The result is not necessarily always negative: an accent may also connect to a network of people from the same place of origin and bring help. The key remains this: in the concrete relational field, who extracted the accent, what weight did they assign to it, and which relational chain did they connect it to?

Relations with people from the same place of origin also enter debt and work. When someone finds work on a construction site through such relations and wages go unpaid, pursuing the wages means facing more than the employer. It also means facing the intermediary, labor contractor, reputation among people from the same place of origin, and the prospect of finding work again. Specific people from the same place of origin can provide opportunities; they also preserve traces of responsibility through memories of lending and borrowing and their relaying of accounts to one another. If someone breaks trust, the next attempt to find work, borrow money, or rent a home may be affected. Following these concrete relays shows that locality is not only a place; it is also a

relational network through which consequences are transmitted by people, materials, and procedures.

The point of a relational chain is not to arrange factors in a list, but to explain how the handling at one node changes the materials and choices available at the next. Unpaid wages, lease renewal, filing, registration, school admission, job introductions, and lending and borrowing are relayed through different people's hands. When continuity is broken, the position of local recognition also changes. A relational chain can pass help onward, but it can also amplify risk. Analysis must trace the handler, materials, and consequences at every link while preserving the possibilities of interruption, branching, and correction. It must not write the preceding link as an inevitable determinant of the following one.

IX. Local Historical Indices and Local Write-Back

Landlords, agents, neighbors, community personnel, school personnel, local businesses, and people from the same place of origin preserve the past through memory, records, or reputation. These past materials include length of residence, neighborhood evaluations, community records, rental disputes, reputation among people from the same place of origin, how long shops have been operating, local rumors, and previous conflicts; they are not confined to personal memory. Current events such as renting, school admission, lease renewal, or bearing witness prompt specific people to extract length of residence anew. How long someone has lived here is then no longer merely a duration: it may affect whether neighbors know you, whether the community is familiar with you, whether the school believes that the child has long lived here, and whether the landlord is willing to renew the lease. A rental dispute becomes material for an agent's or landlord's next judgment. When the landlord, agent, or neighbors raise unpaid rent, damage to the home, or neighborhood conflicts again at the next rental, distrust forms. A neighborhood conflict becomes a later reputation that "this family is trouble." Even without formal records, a new local position may still be affected as long as specific people extract the evaluation anew in the current event.

When school admission, assistance, renting, or the handling of conflicts occurs again, school and community personnel may also retrieve records of community registration, proof of residence, complaints, volunteer participation, and neighborhood disputes. The records themselves may be modest in scope, but when schools, community personnel, landlords, agents, or parties to a conflict retrieve them anew, their weight rises in the corresponding event. New handling is also leaving consequences. Obtaining a community certificate without difficulty establishes a relationship between the family and the community that can continue to be used; a child's failed admission changes whether the family stays in the locality. These are effects the events have already brought about. Only if their handling results are preserved as differences available for renewed extraction in the future does write-back form. An occasion on which a landlord helps with filing may also become a basis for future demands upon one another.

In seeking work, borrowing money, renting, or pursuing romantic relationships and marriage, intermediaries, relatives, coworkers, or other people from the same place of origin remember and relay who has referred someone to a job, who has owed money, who has absconded, and who keeps their word. When specific people extract evaluations anew in a current event, this may bring opportunities or produce exclusion. The network of people from the same place of origin is only the relational structure through which evaluations circulate; it does not preserve the past on its own. Past lending and borrowing and old reputations must be preserved or relayed by specific people. When someone from the same place of origin borrows money and fails to repay it, this becomes a basis for judging risk in future job referrals and lending and borrowing.

If local historical indices explain how the past re-enters the present, local write-back explains how the present becomes a local past that can be extracted in the future. Local relations are not a static background. Landlords, agents, neighbors, schools, community personnel, and people from the same place of origin process matters, refuse, help, or make evaluations in renting, school admission, work, borrowing money, neighborhood conflicts, and community interactions. As soon as the results of such handling are preserved as records or reputation available for renewed extraction in the future, they constitute write-back. Historical indices are not a fate that the past imposes automatically. Past residence, disputes, registration, lending and borrowing, or evaluations must be extracted anew by specific people in new events involving renting, school admission, seeking work, conflict, or bearing witness before they can take effect. Nor does write-back mean that matters are fixed once and for all: later explanations, supplementary materials, renewed testimony, or new interactions may still change the weight of old evaluations in a current event.

X. How Locality Is Compressed into a Fixed Image

The most common mistaken explanation of locality compresses it into a fixed image. Treating it solely as geographical background cannot explain why the same person is believed here and suspected there, why a home can be found here but filing cannot be completed there, or why the same accent connects to help from people from the same place of origin here and to exclusion there. Location can show where differences occur; local relations must also explain how people are recognized, refused, or accepted here.

Administrative divisions can explain some institutional boundaries: subdistricts, communities, school catchment areas, places of household registration, and places where residence permits are processed all change consequences. Yet within a single administrative area there are also different networks of neighbors, landlords, agents, people from the same place of origin, schools, and reputation. Writing locality solely as an administrative division overlooks informal certification and acquaintance nodes. Locality is a network of relational processing; a single administrative boundary cannot tell its whole story.

Interpreters using class theory compress locality into a local version of the class image. Income, rent, occupation, and resource buffers do matter; wages, rent, labor position, housing, debt, risk, and resource pressures are all real differentiating units. Extracting, assigning weight to, connecting, and compressing these differences can produce explanatory power within a limited scope. But that power does not belong to the total class image, still less does it prove that class exists within a limited scope. Class does not exist. Class theory is Model C in its total-image-subsumption form from the outset; it cannot be recast as Model A or Model B. By reducing accents, length of residence, neighborhood recognition, local reputation, community certificates, ties with people from the same place of origin, local silence, and past conflicts to subsidiary materials of the total image, class theory occludes the effects of local relations themselves. Real resource pressures cannot be ignored. Yet income, rent, and labor position do not automatically explain why a landlord will not file, neighbors will not bear witness, the community will not explain more, or people from the same place of origin will no longer refer someone to work. Local recognition, testimony, reputation, spatial familiarity, and local memory must not be subsumed on that account.

Local sights and customs and nostalgia for home can produce another form of compression. Dialects, snacks, old streets, festivals, the bustle of everyday life, local culture, habits, and memories all matter, yet they are only entry points to local differentiating units. They cannot replace analysis of recognition, exclusion, certification, reputation, relational chains, and write-back. Landlords, neighbors, local businesses, school personnel, community personnel, and people

from the same place of origin can help, bear witness, and provide opportunities. The same people and procedures can also refuse, spread negative evaluations, or break off relations. Mutual aid, bad reputations, belonging, and a sense of unfamiliarity all form through concrete interactions and their records. Each of the four fixed images has some basis in materials, but none can use that partial basis to occupy the whole. Once testimony, silence, reputation, filing, and relational transmission recede beyond the picture, local society is flattened.

XI. Calibration and Boundaries of Explanations of Locality

A family's success in renting a home does not mean that it has gained recognition among neighbors. Even fully compliant materials may fail to secure neighbors' testimony and acceptance; acquaintances' willingness to help likewise does not guarantee that the family can get past rental prices and administrative review. These two counterexamples challenge, respectively, the specific inferences that "materials alone can secure testimony" and "acquaintances alone can get one past prices and procedures." They do not automatically negate all the validity of the relevant explanations within their own boundaries.

For this same family, rent, contracts, the landlord, filing, and neighborhood evaluations may weigh more heavily when renting; residence permits, social insurance, rental materials, school places, and community certificates may weigh more heavily in school admission. How available places and materials are assessed depends on specific policies and circumstances, not on a fixed checklist that applies everywhere. In neighborhood conflicts, length of residence, local reputation, knowing one another, and testimony may gain weight. In relations with people from the same place of origin, place of origin, accent, past lending and borrowing, job referrals, and evaluations of reliability may be extracted anew. Seeking work, borrowing money, evaluations of romantic relationships and marriage, and obtaining community certificates each involve their own concrete differentiations and possibilities. The coexistence of several relations cannot be made a reason for declaring judgment impossible.

Landlords, neighbors, community personnel, school personnel, local businesses, and people from the same place of origin each rely on records, reputation, testimony, or procedures to preserve materials and carry out certification. A person may be seen and known, testified for or vouched for on some occasions, yet suspected, excluded, or included at other nodes. These forms of handling each have their own independent real effects; they cannot be summarized merely as acceptance or its absence. Past differences may gain weight again when the people involved raise them anew. If the results of present processing, refusal, or evaluation are preserved as records and reputation available for later retrieval, they become a new past. Whether consequences can continue to be transmitted also depends on how specific people handle matters and how materials enter subsequent nodes.

Comparing explanations of locality requires identifying which key differences each extracts and what it downweights, which nodes it traces or occludes, and where it cuts off relational chains. Geographical explanations can use spatial conditions to explain some distributions, but must not subsume concrete local relations. Administrative explanations can explain procedural differences, but the testimony, reputation, and silence of landlords, neighbors, and people from the same place of origin must still be accounted for. Cultural explanations must not attribute exclusion, channels to resources, and conflicts of certification indiscriminately to custom. Explanations in terms of acquaintance society must not occlude institutional boundaries, market pressures, or outsiders' positions. Market explanations must not erase institutional constraints, local relations, or informal certification either. All must specify what they extract and which actors and consequences they

omit, and allow counterexamples to enter judgment. Which counterexamples require revision of which inference must be assessed against the scope originally claimed by the explanation. Merely declaring acceptance of counterexamples is not enough.

Making boundaries explicit, acknowledging omissions, and revising in light of counterexamples constitute healthy caution. It is when the coexistence of accents, acquaintances, administration, schools, markets, and networks of people from the same place of origin is used to declare all explanations equally ineffective that complexity is being used to cancel valid comparison, moving toward the erasure of distinctions between explanations. Social Differentiation Network Theory itself cannot replace concrete explanations or be elevated into an exclusive total image. How differences are extracted, connected, transmitted, and written back must still be traced in each case. Recognition and testimony at the local level form through these relations; the boundaries of nations and communities must also be examined within the corresponding long-term relations.

Notes

[S05] For differences in how relations bridge information, see Mark S. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," American Journal of Sociology 78(6) (1973): 1360–1380, especially 1360–1369 and 1373–1378. For specific empirical evidence on neighborhood cohesion and collective intervention, see Robert J. Sampson, Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton Earls, "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy," Science 277 (1997): 918–924. The latter is limited to 343 neighborhoods in Chicago in 1995 and its research variables; it does not extend to all local communities.

[F05c] See Note F05. Here it is used only within the jurisdiction, period, procedures, and material scope specified in that note.

[F05d] See Note F05. Here it is used only within the jurisdiction, period, procedures, and material scope specified in that note.

Chapter 29. Nation and Community: Long-Term Interaction, Shared Memory, and Boundary Generation

I. A Nation Must Not Be Swallowed by a Fixed Image

It is easy to speak too hastily about nations. At the mention of a nation, some people think of descent, ancestors, language, customs, and shared origins. Others turn to state registration, identity cards, household registration, policy classifications, and administrative identification. Still others describe the nation directly as a concealment of class contradictions, regarding it as a false community formed when class contradictions are concealed. Another account portrays the nation as a pure victim, as if the community consisted only of harm and humiliation. Interpreters who adopt these images have each extracted certain real differences. The problem arises when users give any one image a monopoly on explanation, allowing it to occupy the place of the national community itself.

Closely related ancestry does not automatically generate a shared language, shared memory, shared protection, or demands of responsibility. The state can identify, name, register, administer, or protect certain positions within national communities, but administrative fields cannot substitute for community. Interpreters using class theory can extract differences in labor, property, power, and resources, and can point out how those wielding power may exploit national narratives. But they cannot reduce a national community to a class illusion. Differences of region, language, social stratum, religion, way of life, political position, and generation also exist within a nation. The real existence of a community has never depended on its members being identical. National communities may form through long-term interaction, multiple layers of relaying, language, rites and customs, shared memory, shared harm, shared protection, demands of responsibility, experiences of boundaries, and intergenerational write-back. Migration routes, marriage networks, family education, local communities, commemorative rituals, and external pressures are common entry points through which differences enter this network; they are not an exhaustive list. The reality of a nation does not depend on a fixed essence. It can be traced along concrete nodes and relational chains: how differences are preserved over time, where they are translated, extracted, or certified, and how they enter into consequences.

II. A Nation Involves Interaction Through Multiple Layers of Relaying, Not Direct Interaction Among Everyone

A nation is a network of long-term interaction; it does not require all its members to know one another. Once a community grows in scale, no one can interact directly with every other member through meetings, conversation, mutual assistance, or conflict. It is through the relaying of differences across multiple layers of nodes that the community can continue. Within these processes, family members preserve forms of address, ancestral memories, and experiences of boundaries. Members of local communities and those who keep records preserve accents, rites and customs, marriage networks, burial grounds, and local history. School personnel and procedures preserve language norms, institutional classifications, and official accounts. Traders in markets preserve mutual translation, trading practices, relations of trust, and contact across groups.

A child hears his grandmother repeatedly mention certain place names at the dinner table, takes examinations using standardized written language at school, is registered under a particular ethnic

category on forms, and translates for his elders at the market. What he encounters are not repeated versions of the same content. Nodes such as family, school, market, and state registration each extract, format, or downweight different differences, so that several relational chains handle his position in the community at the same time. Meanwhile, organizers and participants in rituals and commemorations preserve harm, protection, heroes, failures, and shared shame. Migrants and those who help one another along the way preserve routes, places to settle, relations of mutual assistance, and external pressures. Marriage networks bring boundaries into evaluations among kin and long-term responsibilities.

Abstract classification can also place many people in the same classification field without necessarily involving interaction that can continue. Real communities usually require relational chains, preservation nodes with concrete carriers, mechanisms of mutual translation, demands to bear responsibilities together, and memories that later people can extract anew. Even members of a nation who have never met may enter into connected consequences through the multiple layers of relaying described above. Such connection does not guarantee solidarity, still less does it eliminate conflict. But it differs from belonging to an abstract category whose members share only a name.

III. A Child in a Small Border Town

In a small border town, several languages may be present at once: older people bargain in one language at the produce market, young people take examinations in another at school, government service counters use standardized written language, and weddings and funerals preserve yet another set of forms of address and rites. Schools use uniform teaching materials, while families still teach children the stories of their forebears. When a commemorative date arrives, some attend public ceremonies, some light lamps at home, and others remain silent. These are not the background to questions concerning nations. They are the concrete relational fields in which differentiating units concerning nations are preserved, extracted, certified, and written back.

What the child hears from his grandmother is not a complete history, but recurring place names, a few sentences that must not be forgotten, a name connected with the loss of kin, an escape, and an experience of being protected by others. He may not fully understand, yet these words have already left differences at the family node that can be extracted later. The school requires him to write history according to its teaching materials, enter an ethnic category on forms, and answer questions in a uniform language. It also provides channels to examinations, further schooling, opportunities in the city, and public expression. School does not merely suppress family memory, but it does recast a complex community into forms that can be managed, graded, and registered.

At the market, the child translates for his parents and older people. On commemorative dates, he hears public accounts during the day and relatives' memories at night. When romantic relationships and marriage come under evaluation, relatives remind him which names must not be forgotten and which relationships will provoke comment. If conflict breaks out at the border, he may also be required to declare a position. The same position within a national community is thus repeatedly extracted, downweighted, translated, certified, and written back through family, school, market, commemoration, romantic relationships and marriage, state registration, and conflict. It neither grows fully formed from bloodline all at once nor is decided once and for all by a registration field; it gradually acquires real weight along multiple relational chains.

The temporal sequence in the small town also matters. First, at home, the child hears fragments about migration and being protected; later he learns institutional classifications at school, then repeatedly practices negotiation across languages at the market. Commemorative dates and discussions of romantic relationships and marriage extract anew the names he heard earlier, while

border conflict may change the weights of these differences within a short time. Traces left by an earlier node become materials that a later node can use, revise, or reject.

More concretely, the grandmother chooses which names to repeat, teachers decide which answers earn marks, staff at service counters confirm institutional status according to form fields, and stallholders and border traders decide in each transaction whether to switch languages. Relatives reaffirm or relax boundaries in discussions of romantic relationships and marriage; ritual organizers arrange who stands at the front and whose names are read out. The community does not operate on its own apart from these people. It is their individually limited, potentially conflicting actions that give differences different weights and make the child bear concrete consequences concerning further schooling, trust, romantic relationships and marriage, and declarations of position.

IV. How a National Community Preserves Differences

A form of address may preserve an order of seniority; a place name may index migration; a story may preserve an experience of being harmed or protected. Language preserves not only vocabulary but also kinship relations, forms of politeness, a sense of shame, jokes, taboos, prayers, and judgments about life. Language is not the sole essence of a nation, but it is often an important node of community. The continuity of a national community depends on the preservation of differences. These differences do not exist only in books; they also enter language, forms of address, place names, stories, rites and customs, burial grounds, markets, schools, family education, commemorative rituals, and state registration.

Family education allows migration, war, famine, humiliation, protection, flight, marriage, taboos, and kindness received to leave traces across generations. These do not necessarily enter formal history, yet may gain weight again on commemorative dates, in conflicts, in choices about romantic relationships and marriage, or in language disputes. Rites, customs, and commemorations preserve shared rhythms: when to gather, how to mourn, how to offer blessings, which names are read out, and which harms must not be forgotten all make community memory available for repeated extraction. Villages, neighborhoods, small border towns, temples, markets, burial grounds, and monuments are likewise not passive spaces, but nodes at which differences can be seen, remembered, and certified.

State registration is another powerful node. Household registration, identity cards, school forms, policy classifications, language education, local autonomy, cultural protection, and administrative boundaries may all change the institutional visibility of a national community and its consequences. After registration, a language may enter the curriculum, certain rituals may receive protection, and people able to connect with policy provisions may gain standing to represent others. At the same time, complex internal differences may be compressed into a uniform label, while marginal members whose registration is unclear may find it difficult to obtain resources. The state can format differences pertaining to national communities, but it cannot exhaust the community networks that precede or lie beyond registration.

This formatting also changes modes of preservation in turn. School procedures may bring a language into the curriculum. Families may explain their origins anew for registration, further schooling, or migration. Organizers of rituals and commemorations may also adjust forms of preservation in accordance with protection or registration procedures. Some thereby gain the conditions for public transmission across generations, while others fall at the margins of a label because of accent, mixed marriage, or missing documents. Preservation has never meant sealing up

the original unchanged. Every act of telling, registration, teaching, or commemoration may preserve one part and rewrite another, leaving new entry points for the next extraction.

Family members decide which language children speak at home, and people at the market continue to use familiar forms of address for regular customers. People and organizations that maintain burial grounds, organize stories, or carry out protection procedures enable inscriptions, place names, and elders' memories to continue. These everyday actions give preservation continuing carriers and show that the same difference takes different forms at different nodes.

V. Who Can Extract Shared Memory, and Who Can Interpret Boundaries?

Shared memory does not speak automatically, nor do boundaries harden on their own. Organizers of commemorative activities decide which names enter public rituals: specific people and nodes always carry out extraction, naming, interpretation, and certification. Defining an event as shared harm, naming a particular act as betrayal, judging that someone does not sufficiently belong to "us," and deciding what to commemorate, what to remain silent about, and who may speak for the community are determinations of standing. They are more than differences of opinion: they assign different weights to memories, draw boundaries, and allocate demands of responsibility to specific members.

Within families, elders may interpret ancestral stories, while those who educate children at home choose which words to pass on. In ritual and local life, religious figures interpret rites and taboos, and local elders explain burial grounds, place names, marriage, and kinship boundaries. These forms of standing to interpret are not the same. Schools and teaching materials provide official accounts; state registration personnel use form fields to format complex communities into institutional categories; intellectuals and writers organize scattered memories into texts that can circulate. Witnesses to disasters, migration, protection, and conflict may also gain strong interpretive authority. Who recounts a memory and the form in which it circulates therefore bear on standing to interpret the past, certify responsibilities, and draw boundaries. Power within national-community networks is not expressed only through possession of resources.

Interpretive authority is not held stably by any single node. Young people may reject elders' accounts; local memory may not fully coincide with teaching materials; women's experiences may be downweighted in public commemorations; and representatives may overlook the memories of marginal groups. Struggles over shared memory themselves change the community: certain harms become public, while other experiences retreat into the family; certain names become representative, while other members become difficult to see. Acknowledging the national community as a real network also requires acknowledging certification, downweighting, contestation, and revision within that network.

VI. How Demands to Bear Responsibilities Together Are Extracted

Members of a national community, families and those who pass things on across generations, recorders, educators, organizers, and participants in commemorative activities do more than preserve memory: they also put forward demands to bear responsibilities together. This is not an inborn obligation deduced from the name of a nation, still less does it mean that as soon as someone belongs, they are naturally obliged to meet every demand the community makes. The pressure of responsibility usually forms in concrete events. Shared memory, shared harm, shared protection, and experiences of boundaries are extracted anew, bringing certain differences that previously carried less weight into present consequences. Demands of responsibility have relational

sources and must also have boundaries; they cannot expand without limit in the name of community.

External insults may extract shared humiliation, protection, and pressure to respond, while boundary conflicts may rapidly give demands for shared defense greater weight. Prohibitions on the use of a language, or attacks on burial grounds, monuments, schools, and religious sites, may likewise assign renewed weight to shared protection. Dangers during migration, mutual assistance during disasters, and protection under pressure also become grounds for later demands to bear responsibilities together. These events cannot create a community out of nothing, but they can push long-preserved differences into the foreground along existing nodes and relational chains.

Family members, local communities, school procedures, religious organizations, and people and organizations providing protection may all put forward or transmit demands. Those who make demands command different capacities for certification and different resources, so the weight of their demands differs accordingly. The same statement, "Everyone should bear responsibility," imposes different costs on members facing the pressures of care, schooling, poverty, or mixed marriage. Whether a demand is valid also depends on whether those to whom it is addressed can respond, refuse, or propose alternative ways of bearing responsibility.

Demands to bear responsibilities together can protect people and can also oppress them. They can give members support in danger, but may also force individuals to accept a single narrative, downweight internal dissent, or bear obligations beyond their relational positions. To judge whether a demand is valid, one cannot consider only whether it is made in the name of the nation. One must also ask: which memory has been extracted, who extracted it, which nodes certify it, along what relational chains the demand travels, who bears the burden, and which counterexamples and internal differences call for calibration. The reality of a community cannot provide advance justification for any boundless demand of responsibility.

VII. Bridging Nodes and Boundary Hardening

The appearance of differences does not mean that the boundaries of national communities must harden. Bridging nodes within the network allow many differences to coexist over time. Bilingual people sustain translation between languages, and intermarried families allow kinship relations to cross certain boundaries. Market transactions maintain everyday contact among people with different rites and customs; shared schools allow children to learn about one another within the same institutional space; and mixed communities allow ways of life gradually to adapt in streets and markets. Kin across localities, migration routes, border traders, translators, and experiences of shared defense may also reconnect relational chains that were previously dispersed.

The child translating for his parents in the small border town is a tiny bridging node. He has not eliminated differences; he merely allows them still to pass through. He understands his grandmother's speech and can use the written language required at school. He knows the silences in family commemorations and the standardized accounts used in public rituals. When bridging works, different languages can be translated into one another, different rites and customs can accommodate one another, historical memories that do not fully coincide can temporarily coexist, and marriage networks still leave room for negotiation among kin. Connections between communities do not require their members to become the same kind of people.

The boundaries of national communities do not arise directly from abstract definitions. The generation and hardening of boundaries are consequences that call for explanation; they carry no inherent legitimacy. While languages remain mutually translatable, forms of address, jokes, rites,

and stories still have a chance of being understood. After mutual translation fails, misunderstandings accumulate, forms of address become insults, stories can no longer be shared, and differences may acquire greater weight. Shared memories, too, may fail to gain mutual recognition: the harm remembered by one side is denied by the other, and the sacrifices commemorated by one side are mocked. The past then re-enters the present through historical indices.

When bridging nodes come under suspicion or attack, are severed, or are forced to declare a position, this makes it easier for differences to turn into hard boundaries. In ordinary times, trade can take place in markets, people can coexist in schools, and local mediators can still speak. After conflict arises, translators may be viewed with suspicion over where they stand, intermarried families may face pressure from both sides, and previously overlapping networks of life may be forced to choose sides. Whether differences lead to exclusionary consequences cannot be assessed merely by comparing the magnitude of the differences themselves. One must also examine whether mutual translation continues, whether bridging remains effective, and whether everyday relational chains still allow members to maintain multiple connections.

When demands of responsibility cannot extend further, boundaries are redrawn as well. When the same event occurs, some consider protection necessary, while others regard it as none of their concern; some understand it as shared humiliation, while others recognize only victimization within a limited scope. Once the joint bearing of responsibilities goes unrecognized, the existing "we" may shrink or split. Pressures such as external insults, expulsion, prohibitions on language use, and deprivation of commemorative space do indeed rapidly draw a normally loose community tighter. Yet what these pressures extract is still memory, experiences of protection, and boundary differences preserved within existing networks.

Boundary hardening cannot be summed up in a single phrase about collective emotion. What pushes differences toward different consequences may be school procedures, state registration and enforcement procedures, local mediators, family members, and the people and organizations that enforce language bans, carry out attacks, exclude, or protect. These actions sometimes amplify one another and sometimes offset one another. Only by tracing who made which decisions and how those decisions traveled to the next node can we adequately explain why soft boundaries turned into real exclusion. People who are expelled, members whose romantic relationships and marriages are obstructed by boundary evaluations, and students forbidden to use their language experience boundary hardening as a contraction of their concrete action spaces.

The rupture of bridging nodes makes the processes described above harder to buffer. Once the aforementioned bridging nodes cease to function, differences that could previously be negotiated may become boundaries requiring a declaration of position. Boundary hardening can sometimes provide necessary protection; it can also produce exclusion, misrecognition, and new illusory explanatory constructions. Explaining how boundaries form does not mean accepting every boundary as reasonable. Analysis must also examine which real harms a boundary has extracted, and which internal differences and still-existing bridging relations it has downweighted.

VIII. National Communities and Internal Differences

Acknowledging that a national community really exists must not be turned into the claim that a nation is completely homogeneous internally. Differences of social stratum, gender, region, language, religion, political position, and generation may coexist within a community. Under external pressure, "solidarity" may become a demand carrying high weight, while women's circumstances, differences between rich and poor, local conflicts, internal domination, and young

people's dissent are downweighted. These differences do not disappear because the community faces an external threat; it may simply be temporarily difficult for them to enter public accounts.

Nor can the existence of internal differences prove, conversely, that a national community is false. The reality of a community does not require its members to have the same interests, memories, or positions on every issue. It depends on whether long-term relational chains, shared memory, recognition and boundaries, demands of responsibility, and the capacity for write-back can be extracted in concrete events and change consequences for members. A community can be deeply divided internally and still form real connections through external harm, shared protection, or disputes over commemoration. The same member may also move closer to or farther from the community's center in different relational fields.

Calibration must resist two forms of compression at once: one swallows internal differences because it sees the community; the other cancels the community because it sees internal differences. The former readily treats representatives' voices as those of all members. The latter reduces to fiction relations that can be transmitted across generations and enter into consequences. A more reliable judgment should trace concrete nodes: which differences find expression, which members can participate in certification, which responsibilities are distributed unequally, and which dissenting views are preserved or erased. A national community is a real network. Explanations of that network, and judgments of certification and responsibility within it, must also remain subject to calibration through internal counterexamples.

IX. How National Communities Write Back: The Past and Individual Positions

National communities depend heavily on the preservation of past differences. Migration, war, humiliation, protection, alliances, turning away, disasters, heroes, failures, language bans, boundary conflicts, and shared commemorations may ordinarily be scattered across language, stories, place names, burial grounds, festivals, family education, school teaching materials, local rumors, and state archives. These aspects of the past do not carry forward automatically. They acquire present weight only when located and extracted anew through historical indices in new events.

A language dispute may extract memories of prolonged suppression; a boundary conflict may bring ancestral experiences of victimization back into judgment; a dispute over commemoration may evoke shared humiliation and shared protection; and a choice about romantic relationships or marriage may trigger boundary evaluations preserved in kinship networks. A historical index is not history itself, still less the past's automatic domination of the present. Different nodes can extract different parts of the same past and give them different weights. Some memories become public, some circulate only within families, and others may remain silent for a long time.

If the results of present handling are preserved by members, families and those who pass things on across generations, recorders, educators, organizers, or institutional personnel as differences that can be extracted again in the future, write-back has already formed. Preservation does not guarantee that they will take effect in the future. Conflict may change the next generation's understanding of boundaries, and protection may become grounds for later demands of responsibility. Turning away may leave lasting distrust, while adjustments to registration or the cancellation of commemorations may form new shared memories. Individual positions change in this process as well. A person's declaration of position in a dispute, silence, protection, romantic relationships or marriage, or identity registration may all be preserved and reevaluated by these

specific people. Those involved thus not only inherit the past but also continually leave behind new pasts.

Only when specific people or procedures identify, extract, interpret, or assign weight to these contents anew in later events does the content of write-back take effect again, bringing today's determinations into tomorrow's qualifications, risks, recognition, and action spaces. It is not the abstract noun "community" that accomplishes write-back. Family members tell children about experiences of protection; local community members and commemorative organizers preserve names; school procedures handle public accounts; registration personnel adjust identity records; and marriage and kinship networks preserve who once stepped forward to mediate.

Deleting a name, rejecting a document offered as proof, or interpreting silence as turning away also narrows the recognition and action space available to the person concerned later. Versions left by different nodes may not agree. What future events extract is then not a single past, but competing historical indices. Someone remembered as a protector may acquire standing to speak; someone remembered as having turned away may encounter distrust when seeking help, pursuing romantic relationships or marriage, or when public representatives are selected. If new testimony, mediation, or shared cooperation emerges later, old evaluations may also be recalibrated. Write-back can reinforce positions while also preserving the possibility of changing them.

X. How Nations Are Compressed into Fixed Images

The image of a bloodline essence writes the nation as a natural, eternal whole defined by descent, occluding language, education, migration, shared memory, demands of responsibility, and experiences of boundaries. The image of state registration treats classifications on forms as the community itself. Interpreters who adopt this image can see institutional consequences, yet may overlook long-term interaction before and beyond registration. Interpreters who adopt the pure-victim image can extract real harms, but if they write the community as an eternal victim, they downweight internal domination, differences among members, harms inflicted on others, and the possibility that members, organizers, or narrators within the community produce illusory constructions. Fixed images also erase actors from the account, as if "the nation" itself remembered, demanded, excluded, or suffered harm. One then need no longer ask which registration officer handled the fields, which elder downweighted dissent, which organization chose what to commemorate, or which members refused to harm others. Restoring actors to the account does not mean reducing consequences to individual intentions. What must be traced is how individual decisions draw on institutional, kinship, language, and ritual nodes to acquire force beyond the individual.

Real and weighty differentiating units such as labor, wages, employment, property, debt, housing, risk, relations of domination, and the width of available exits provide a material basis. The processes of extracting, assigning weight to, connecting, and compressing them produce explanatory power within a limited scope. The class image is only the output of this process after low-dimensional compression, projection, and naming, and derives its explanatory appeal from this. What is formed is a class image, not class itself. Class does not exist; this does not deny real labor, relations of domination, or community structures. Class theory is Model C in its total-image-subsumption form from the outset. It elevates a limited image into society itself, reducing language, rites and customs, shared harm, shared protection, migration memory, experiences of boundaries, commemorative rituals, and demands of responsibility to subsidiary materials of the total class image. The explanatory power within a limited scope described above cannot change this Model C structure.

Grouping people in similar circumstances into the same class image can form an abstract sameness of category. It cannot thereby generate sustained interaction or interaction that can be relayed, shared memory, mutual recognition, demands of responsibility, and a long-term capacity for write-back. Belonging to the same abstract category does not mean belonging to the same network. Model C in the other direction uses complexity to cancel judgment, placing valid models, limited models, erroneous models, and junk models on the same level and producing an erasure of distinctions between explanations. The two mechanisms work in opposite directions, yet both destroy comparison, revision, and calibration. Acknowledging the complexity of nations, the limits of explanation, and the need to attend to counterexamples does not belong to this erasure of distinctions. The move into Model C occurs only when complexity is used to cancel valid comparison.

XI. The Limits of Explanations of Nations and Calibration Through Events

The fact that language, history, registration, internal differences, and external pressures all enter into questions concerning nations does not mean that they carry the same operative weight in every event. Even when an explanation cannot exhaust everything, it can still distinguish which differences enter into consequences, which nodes have effects, and along what relations pressures are transmitted. It is only by making boundaries public and accepting counterexamples that comparison can continue and materials can revise the original judgment.

The child in the border town bears different burdens in the family, at service counters, and in the streets and markets. Judgments about community, too, must be examined in relation to events. A language dispute may give greater weight to language nodes, schools, family education, state policies, and shared memory. In a boundary conflict, shared harm, shared protection, external pressures, state enforcement, and local networks may transmit consequences more directly. Disputes over commemoration involve historical indices, public space, state recognition, and demands of responsibility; disputes over romantic relationships and marriage may unfold along kinship networks, rites and customs, local evaluations, and experiences of boundaries. In dealing with state registration, schooling, conflicts involving migration, or external insults, one must likewise determine the relational-field window according to the circumstances. The same set of weights cannot cover every question concerning nations.

Once the event has been identified, valid comparison requires assessing which key differences an explanation has extracted, which nodes and relational chains it has traced, and what it has downweighted. It must explain how differences are preserved, translated, certified, and written back: who extracts which differentiating units, which nodes preserve or certify them, and along what relational chains consequences travel; which historical indices are gaining weight again in the present; and which evaluations within the community are being preserved by members, recorders, organizers, or procedures for future extraction. When existing evaluations are retrieved, interpreted, or assigned weight anew in the present, interpreters must also explain who thereby receives protection and who pays the price of being downweighted or forced to declare a position.

Testing an explanation means examining how it calibrates itself against its own scope when faced with counterexamples. If an explanation claims that everyday interaction between two groups has ceased completely, yet bridging nodes such as bilingual translation or intermarriage continue to function effectively, that counterexample requires a revision of the inference of complete separation. If an explanation assumes that a community has a unified will in a crisis, yet opinions within it have split, its assertion of overall unity must be reexamined. If an explanation directly equates institutional classifications with actual relations, yet the boundaries of state registration

and lived networks do not coincide, the explanatory weight of administrative labels must be adjusted. The appearance of a counterexample does not require rejecting an entire explanation wholesale. It requires comparing the counterexample with the boundaries within which the specific proposition is valid, and revising the relevant weights, connections, or scope of judgment on the basis of the materials. Equally, maintaining one's judgment on sound grounds does not amount to rejecting counterexamples.

Among ordinary limited explanations, an explanation in terms of bloodline can address certain kinship accounts, but it must not swallow long-term interaction networks. An explanation in terms of state registration can account for institutional positions, but shared memory and demands of responsibility beyond registration must still be retained. A cultural explanation can extract language, rites, and customs; if it writes a nation as a static display of customs, it oversteps its own boundaries. A narrative of victimization can preserve real harms, but it cannot dismiss internal differences, internal domination, or the risk of illusory construction within the community. These ordinary limited explanations must all make their boundaries public and accept counterexamples.

The real weight of differences in resources, labor, and domination must likewise be examined within the relations described above. Even when interpreters using class theory extract these materials, the explanatory power they gain within a limited scope still comes from differentiating units and their extraction, weight assignment, connection, compression, and testing. Reducing a national community to something that conceals class contradictions cannot be inferred from these materials. Class theory's structure of total-image subsumption distinguishes it from ordinary limited explanations. This criticism must itself also undergo testing against materials; invoking the name of Model C cannot dispense with argument. No image may occupy the place of the community itself.

Explanations of nations must ultimately uphold both reality and non-essentialization. Reality requires acknowledging the community consequences formed through long-term interaction, multiple layers of relaying, language, rites and customs, shared memory, shared harm, shared protection, demands of responsibility, experiences of boundaries, and intergenerational write-back. Non-essentialization rejects the confinement of differences among members within total images of descent, registration, culture, victimization, or class; at the same time, it does not permit non-essentialization to be used to deny the community's real existence. Demands of responsibility must be traced to their relational sources and kept within boundaries. History can enter the present only through historical indices. Nor can boundary generation be directly converted into legitimacy. Only by proceeding according to these standards can we understand how a community is established, how its members, organizers, and related procedures provide protection or cause oppression, how community relations split, and how they are revised in new events.

Chapter 30. The State: Identification, Registration, Certification, Implementation, and Write-Back

I. The State Cannot Be Portrayed as One Enormous Person

The state is often spoken of as a person: it sees, decides, punishes, and also protects. This way of writing saves effort, but it readily leads readers to imagine the state as an enormous subject standing outside society, as though it could see all people and facts clearly at once and then issue commands through a single will. The actual procedures for obtaining official documents, school admission, labor matters, medical care, adjudication, and passage do not operate this way.

The combination of materials depends on the particular matter, the area concerned, and the statutory eligibility conditions; the same checklist is not required in every situation. The public-security systems and document-production procedures involved in obtaining an identity card use materials such as birth certificates, household registration, photographs, addresses, or family relations according to the circumstances. In different areas, a child's school admission may involve application and review using materials such as household registration, residence permits, parents' social insurance, or rental filing. Only after admission and initial enrollment is a student-registration file established. Carrying forward an existing student registration when progressing to another level of schooling or transferring is a separate matter.

Labor and medical events likewise pass through their own concrete stages. After a worker is injured, confirming the employment relationship, obtaining medical records, applying for a determination of work-related injury or the corresponding work-capacity appraisal, and checking social-insurance contributions and workplace information belong to different stages of determination, verification of materials, or processing; they cannot be conflated into a single step. When an elder seeks medical care away from home, insurance-enrollment information, medical records, and itemized expenses must be connected to reimbursement nodes according to the relevant category of treatment. Filing or referral formalities are handled under the rules that actually apply; different categories of treatment cannot uniformly be required to supply the same set of materials.

In these events, the state's role is jointly formed through concrete agencies, personnel, documents, registration systems, certification procedures, and implementing nodes. This does not redefine the state as a "network" conceived as the sole underlying reality, nor does it deny the reality of state organizations and their procedures. Precisely because service-counter personnel can accept or reject materials, and nodes of schools, hospitals, courts, public security, communities, borders, taxation, social insurance, and assistance can form, preserve, and retrieve records, relevant determinations can become qualifications, restrictions, protection, penalties, or consequences of implementation. The state is not an enormous personality, but the consequences formed through these organizations and procedures have real and often very high intensity.

In concrete events, personnel or the corresponding procedures may extract various differences anew. These include birthplace, household registration, nationality, age, sex, marriage, and ethnic registration, as well as educational qualifications, occupation, tax records, social insurance contributions, records of legal violations, medical records, and property. Eligibility for military service, facts of residence, migration routes, eligibility for assistance, educational eligibility, and judicial status may likewise be retrieved in such procedures. Analysis need not begin by debating whether the state is a subject. More important is to distinguish each action along the procedures: who identifies differences in life, who registers materials, who certifies their validity, how different

nodes achieve mutual recognition, how determinations enter implementation, and who then preserves the results for renewed retrieval in future events.

II. The State Is Not the Source of Differences but a Mechanism for Formatting Them

Many differences already exist before state agencies intervene. Family, locality, nation, market, illness, migration, marriage, debt, labor, and conflict are not created out of nothing by registration or administrative procedures. Interactions with neighbors and landlords and in food markets can confirm that someone lives here. A child's birth, a father's unpaid wages, and an elder's illness are likewise, first of all, things that have already happened in life. When these matters enter the relevant service counters, personnel and procedures extract particular differences from them. The fact of residence may be entered into household registration, a residence permit, rental filing, address registration, or a community certificate; the fact of birth may be entered into a birth certificate, household registration, guardianship relations, vaccination records, and student-registration materials.

This recasting involves several actions that must not be conflated. Service-counter personnel, reviewers, or case handlers first extract from facts of life differences relevant to the current event: this is identification. Only when the content enters forms, certificates, files, or databases does it become registration. Authorized nodes judge, according to materials and procedures, whether an identity, relation, or qualification can be established: this is certification. Only when the corresponding personnel further put certification or adjudication into effect as school admission, reimbursement, assistance, penalties, permission to pass, or restrictions does it enter implementation. Registration is not a neutral transcription of life in its entirety. Facts that do not fit the fields may be downweighted, and materials may be cut off, misread, omitted from registration, or rejected. The distinctive role of state procedures is to turn some differences in life into formats that subsequent nodes can read and act on with consequences, not to create all differences.

The concentration of data at state nodes does not mean that information is complete. Databases can preserve only content accepted by the fields as designed, while personnel remain limited by access permissions, the timing of updates, and correction procedures. Centralized preservation can improve the capacity for connection across nodes, but it may also amplify erroneous records. Analysts must also trace whether synchronization and correction actually occur.

III. A Family of Workers from Elsewhere Enters State Nodes

The mother does casual work in a restaurant and rushes back to their rented home in the afternoon to pick up the child. Behind her is a family of workers from elsewhere, facing pressure at multiple nodes at once: rent is due at the end of the month, and a loan from relatives has not yet been repaid; the father works on a construction site away from home, and his wages are two months overdue; the child has reached school age, and local policy may require some materials concerning residence, social insurance, or renting, while progression to another level of schooling or transfer may also involve existing student-registration materials; the elder's medical records are at the hospital in the county town back home, while medical-insurance enrollment remains in the home locality. These are not abstract labels of poverty. They are the materials, qualifications, nodes, and time pressures that this family faces simultaneously along multiple procedural chains.

The mother occupies the position of an actor who prepares, submits, explains, supplements, and corrects materials. At the same time, she bears the consequences when the results of these procedures come to bear on the family's cash flow and care arrangements. Whether she has signed a contract, whether social-insurance records have been established, whether her working hours can be adjusted, and whether taking leave reduces her income change her ability to visit service counters, prepare, supplement, and correct materials, and care for family members.

Labor or care that has already occurred in life does not automatically bring the corresponding consequences within state procedures. Care among family members, traces of responsibility, and past support, as well as local recognition formed through landlords, neighbors, the community, and people from the same place of origin, certainly play their roles before or outside connection to state procedures. State procedures cannot replace family responsibility or local recognition, but they can change the positions from which family members obtain qualifications, assistance, and consequences of implementation.

The same mechanism—“the existence of a fact does not mean that the consequences have materialized”—also operates in a child's school-admission procedure. The child does live here; that is a fact of everyday life, but such a fact does not automatically amount to eligibility for admission. In concrete procedures, admission reviews for particular areas or years may require rental materials issued by the landlord, community certificates, or the parents' residence and social-insurance records. Personnel reviewing applications judge whether to accept an admission application on the basis of the relevant materials. Under the Measures for the Administration of Student Registration in Primary and Secondary Schools as revised in 2025, after initial enrollment formalities have been completed, the school collects and enters student-registration information using the student's valid identity document and establishes a student-registration file within two months, updating it promptly at start-of-term reporting and after transfers [F02]. Materials concerning renting, residence, or social insurance are requirements for admission review in particular areas, not a nationally uniform checklist for establishing student registration. Once a student registration has been established, the family may take this record into account again in later migration, changes of rental accommodation, and work arrangements. If materials are not accepted at a review node, the child may be unable to attend school smoothly in the locality, and the resulting consequences may also prompt changes to the family's care and work arrangements.

The father did the work. In law, an employment relationship is established from the day actual employment begins. Yet in a dispute concerning a particular construction site, whether the relationship between a worker and the party engaging the worker constitutes an employment relationship must still be verified against the concrete relations and materials. In unpaid-wage disputes requiring inspection, arbitration, or adjudication, the relevant personnel verify these facts and relations on the evidence and deal with the corresponding claims for payment. In concrete procedures, contracts, wage records, and workplace information can serve as proof of actual labor; testimony from coworkers or others with knowledge of the matter may also become evidence. Which evidence is needed must be determined according to the dispute and the relevant procedure; this must not be understood to mean that every item is indispensable. Whether labor inspectors accept the materials, whether an arbitration body or court determines that an employment relationship exists and issues a ruling, and whether enforcement personnel initiate and complete enforcement when obligations remain unfulfilled are distinct stages, not a single path that every case must follow in sequence. [F04]

Reimbursement for the elder's medical expenses likewise depends on connections between concrete nodes. The elder is indeed ill, and hospital personnel produce medical records and itemized expenses. Yet these materials must still connect with insurance-enrollment information

and the applicable materials for out-of-area treatment before reimbursement can be completed. Take direct settlement for cross-provincial medical treatment in mainland China: the administering agencies and networked medical institutions at the place of treatment upload and process expense information according to their respective responsibilities. The information is transmitted through the national information platform to the place of insurance enrollment, where payments from insurance funds and the amount personally payable are calculated under the applicable policies. The resulting payment information is then sent back to the networked institution. Family members help present proof of insurance enrollment and prepare the filing or referral materials actually required for the category of treatment. Filing can be completed under the rules before discharge settlement; out-of-area emergency rescue treatment is treated as already filed. At settlement, only the personal share of expenses needs to be paid under the rules. If direct settlement is unavailable for some reason, an application for manual reimbursement can be made under the rules of the place of insurance enrollment. Approval of eligibility does not mean that expenses have already been settled. Breaks at any of these stages may still affect who accompanies the elder, who advances payment, who takes leave, and who bears the pressure of care; these arrangements cannot be presented as a fixed procedure followed in every area. [Fo8]

The multiple procedural chains facing the family thus affect one another, but they cannot be compressed into a unified process automatically advanced by “the state.” What matters for recognition that can be put into effect is not only whether someone knows the facts, but also whether materials can be accepted, qualifications certified, and mutual recognition achieved between nodes, and whether someone initiates and completes implementation. If rent payments or the connections between materials are interrupted, residence registration, admission applications and subsequent student-registration processing, and eligibility for assistance may also affect one another within certain procedures.

IV. State Recognition Is Not Merely Seeing but Recognition That Can Be Put into Effect

Local recognition can make a person known among neighbors; family recognition can make a person subject to demands or afford them protection within kinship relations; recognition within a national community comes from the intergenerational write-back of long-term interaction, shared memory, shared harm, shared protection, responsibility, and experiences of boundaries. State registration cannot create this kind of national community, nor can it make a registration field equivalent to an actually existing national community. What distinguishes state procedures is that personnel can enter identified differences into records, certification nodes can judge whether materials or qualifications are valid, and implementing personnel may turn the results into school admission, reimbursement, assistance, penalties, permission to pass, or restrictions.

In concrete operation, recognition that can be put into effect involves distinct levels such as acceptance, certification, mutual recognition, and implementation. These must not be conflated, nor do they mean that every matter must follow the entire four-step path in a fixed order. Application personnel seeing a child's residence materials does not mean that eligibility for admission has been certified; labor inspectors accepting unpaid-wage materials does not mean that a ruling has been issued; a ruling being issued does not mean that enforcement will necessarily be completed. State recognition appears “harder” because certain determinations can connect to coercive force and chains of implementation, directly changing the qualifications and action spaces of those concerned, not because it has greater ontological reality than family, local, or national-community recognition. Where connections between different nodes are involved, the crucial

question is whether mutual recognition can be achieved. A fact already recognized at one node may still encounter a failure of mutual recognition at another.

V. Authority to Extract Differences, Certification Authority, and Authority to Initiate Implementation within the State

Differences do not turn into institutional consequences on their own. In the concrete operation of organizational power, nodes differ in the actions and authority they control: service-counter personnel can accept materials but do not necessarily have authority to make a final certification; content uploaded to a database by personnel is not necessarily mutually recognized at another node; even when an arbitration body or a court has produced a legally effective instrument, if its obligations remain unfulfilled, whether enforcement can lawfully be initiated and completed will in turn affect whether wages or compensation are actually received. Authority to extract differences, register, certify, supplement and correct, upload, refuse, and initiate implementation must not be conflated. Describing all of this as “the state decides” conceals breaks in procedures and the positions at which responsibility lies.

These differences in power appear in specific divisions among legal sources. In the legal sources cited in this book concerning procedures for school admission, student registration, determination of work-related injury, labor arbitration, civil litigation, and administrative reconsideration, the relevant personnel accept, extract, preserve, or judge particular materials only within their respective matters and authority. The specific authority to extract differences at public-security, community, social-insurance, border-inspection, civil-affairs, taxation, and other service counters must still be established separately under their own legal sources; it cannot all be established by the sources just mentioned. Who can extract what is not an ordinary judgment of fact but power actually allocated within procedures. [Fo6a]

As concrete procedures unfold, the difficulties confronting a family of workers from elsewhere often do not lie in a complete absence of facts. The child lives here, the father did the work, the elder has medical records, and the mother works at the restaurant every day. The problem is whether materials supplied by landlords, coworkers, family members, or workplace personnel can be accepted at a service counter, supplemented and corrected as required, certified by authorized personnel, and read by subsequent nodes. When facts of life cannot readily be turned into usable materials, a person may exist in reality yet lack a position from which to initiate consequences within a particular institutional procedure.

Whether materials can be extracted, recognized, and corrected further involves the actual allocation of resources and time. The capacity for centralization at state nodes includes arranging these conditions: budgets determine how many people can handle applications, how soon a review can take place, and where entry points for supplementation and correction are available, while appointments and supervision affect the positions at which discretion lies. These arrangements do indeed change whether materials can be extracted, recognized, and corrected. Yet the words "the state" cannot directly yield an account of all responsibility.

Understanding this actual allocation also requires examining whether ownership and control over use coincide. The nominal owner of equipment, data, or an account is not necessarily the person who decides who can use it, who can change it, and who can benefit from it. Actual control may be shared among managers, authorizers, technical personnel, or those allocating resources. Only by separating nominal title, control, use, benefit, and the capacity to correct can we avoid portraying ownership as a subject that acts on its own.

The analysis of responsibility must therefore examine concrete control, knowledge, and capacities for correction. When institutional personnel maintain arrangements despite knowing their accumulated consequences, responsibility must be judged in relation to their actual capacities. People who can raise objections, stop passing matters on, initiate review, or adjust resources are in a different situation from those who merely receive results and have no corrective authority. Allocating responsibility requires preserving distinctions between levels of authority, rather than treating everyone alike because they share an organizational name.

VI. The Costs of State Recognition

Bringing facts of life into procedures of registration, certification, and implementation often requires time, travel, filling out forms, preserving proof, operating digital systems, and repeated supplementation and correction. Getting facts of life before those who certify them already entails real costs. A child's admission procedure involves not only eligibility and whether applicants can understand application requirements, but also whether parents can take leave to visit service counters and whether the landlord supplies filing materials. If the mother cannot take leave, she may miss the time for submitting materials; a landlord unwilling to supply them may make it difficult for the real fact of residence to enter the application.

Thresholds formed by processing costs and concrete obstacles also arise when seeking medical benefits and labor rights. Reimbursement for the elder involves not only illness and the medical-insurance relationship, but also whether family members can help complete the filing or referral formalities actually needed for this episode of care and organize the itemized expenses. Even where offline channels such as service counters are provided under the rules, if the elder cannot operate digital systems, the availability of a family member to act on the elder's behalf may still affect arrangements for processing. The existence of offline counters does not automatically eliminate the costs of travel, leave from work, and waiting. For the facts of unpaid wages to enter a determination procedure, it matters whether the father can establish the workplace information, obtain coworkers' testimony, and preserve wage records. If wage records have not been preserved, the person concerned may have to provide supplementary evidence repeatedly.

The costs of recognition therefore do not fall equally on everyone. These concrete difficulties do not prove that a class entity is acting behind the scenes. They show how real differentiating units, such as working hours, income, housing, digital skills, caregiving responsibilities, resources for providing proof, and available exits, change people's ability to enter procedures. The more elaborate the materials and procedures, the more likely it is that the costs of recognition become a new filtering mechanism.

An explanation of the state must further distinguish the existence of rules from the capacity to handle matters. A law or procedure providing an entry point for review does not mean that the person concerned is certain to obtain materials, time, and personnel support, nor that the responsible position has sufficient resources to complete a correction. The distance between a formal entry point and an actual one changes whether rights can enter real consequences.

VII. The State Is Not a Seamless System

The initial formation of a record, its becoming readable at other nodes, mutual recognition, and eventual implementation are distinct stages of judgment and handling. Not every matter necessarily passes through all of them in sequence. After hospital personnel confirm an illness and produce medical records, the related reimbursement materials may still be rejected at medical-insurance review nodes; certificates issued by community personnel may not receive mutual

recognition from school reviewers. In law, an employment relationship is established from the day actual employment begins. Yet when a particular dispute enters procedures such as inspection, arbitration, or litigation, whether the relationship qualifies as an employment relationship must still be verified against the available materials. The parties do not necessarily have to pass through inspection, arbitration, litigation, and enforcement one by one. Even after a court has issued a judgment, the result may not materialize because enforcement personnel have not yet found the conditions that would allow enforcement. For a judgment made within a limited scope to produce wider consequences, connections, transfers, and mutual recognition between nodes are required. Materials valid at a service counter may, after entering a database, be unusable at another node because of problems with fields, permissions, or connections. The existence of a record does not mean that subsequent personnel can read it in the current event or will assign it the same weight. State organizations have real capacities, but they cannot be imagined as a unified brain that knows everything, synchronizes everything, and automatically completes everything.

The difficulties of a family of workers from elsewhere often arise at the seams between these stages. The landlord, community, and neighbors know that the family lives here, yet school review may still require a different set of acceptable materials; the hospital back home has preserved medical records, yet personnel at out-of-area reimbursement nodes may still require supplementation and correction; coworkers and the labor contractor know that the father did the work, yet inspection, arbitration, or adjudication nodes must still verify the employment relationship on the basis of the usable materials actually accepted in the case. These situations show that the existence of a record does not necessarily produce the expected consequences. When contrary materials, erroneous records, or failures of mutual recognition change the concrete result of handling, the explanation that “the existence of a record automatically produces consequences” must be revised.

The same centralized policy may be implemented differently at different nodes through similar paths of relaying. Requirements from above must pass through the relevant applicable channels, such as notices, database fields, assessments, and personnel training, to reach the end of the chain gradually; not every requirement must pass through every channel. In this process, intermediate positions can delay, interpret, resist, or selectively pass things on. Analysis therefore needs to compare how commands are relayed across nodes, identify which positions have the capacity to review, revoke, or correct, and examine which consequences are rewritten in the course of being passed on.

Stable state capacity across regions and departments must be demonstrated through repeated acts of mutual recognition and implementation. A document's being recognized in one place does not establish that all nodes can read it. Nor does an order from above being carried out in several places erase resistance, delays, and exceptions elsewhere. Judgments of capacity at the macro level should specify regions, institutions, periods, and visible counterexamples. Formal unity does not guarantee uniform implementation either. The same forms and rules may produce differences when they enter different regions, depending on staffing, budgets, training, local materials, and supervision from above. State capacity at the macro level requires support from these concrete configurations; a uniform format cannot be directly equated with uniform consequences.

VIII. Protection and Exclusion Come from the Same Set of Mechanisms

The state cannot be portrayed as a machine of pure oppression. Administration of the minimum subsistence guarantee may enable eligible applicants to obtain support for living. Assistance review can admit those who meet the conditions, but it may also reject those unable to provide proof. Basic medical insurance, medical assistance, and the personnel administering them can handle

illness and expenses under their respective rules. Medical-insurance review can allow expenses to enter reimbursement, but it may also refuse to accept them because materials fail to connect.

Schools connect educational eligibility through admission and student-registration rules. Courts handle debt or labor disputes through adjudication and enforcement procedures. They can enforce rights, but evidence, procedural costs, or enforcement conditions may also leave those concerned unable to obtain a result. These procedures belong to different systems. They do not constitute a set of rules through which a single agency uniformly connects education, employment, passage, and welfare. These forms of protection are not the automatic benevolence of an abstract institution; they are results achieved by concrete personnel working with materials, authority, and procedures. [F05e]

Border-inspection personnel may permit or restrict passage according to documents, existing records, and judgments of risk. Protection and exclusion through state power may come from the same set of capacities. Unified certification can allow rights to travel across regions, but it may also cause people who could not enter the format to be rejected in several places. Centralized implementation can deliver assistance, and it can also amplify erroneous determinations. Analysts must trace concrete uses and entry points for correction; they cannot infer a single character directly from the concentration of capacity.

Protection and exclusion are not two unrelated states, but different consequences produced for different materials and positions by the same chain of identification, certification, and implementation. Analysis cannot stop at blanket judgments such as "the state is good" or "the state is bad." What actually needs tracing is which staff member extracted which differences, which materials were accepted or rejected, at which node mutual recognition broke down, who gained entry to eligibility, and who was excluded from the chain of implementation. The reality of state consequences lies precisely in these locatable acts of admission, refusal, protection, restriction, and implementation, not in the benevolence or malice of some abstract personality.

IX. State Relational Chains: From Facts of Life to Implementation

In particular local systems—such as applications for first-year junior secondary school places in Dapeng New District, Shenzhen, for the 2024–2025 school year, and points-based admission for children accompanying people who have moved to Guangzhou under Baiyun District's 2024 measures—applicants submit some of the materials concerning housing, residence, social insurance, or work according to their category, and the relevant departments accept and review them under that year's procedures. Review of materials, determination of eligibility and points, admission, and enrollment formalities each have their corresponding stages. The establishment, transfer, and preservation of student registration are handled separately under the student-registration rules applicable at the time of processing. The particular combinations of materials and review procedures belong to specific institutional settings. They must not be extended into a nationally uniform checklist, nor may concrete cases be expanded into universal rules. [F05f]

In an unpaid-wage event, the father, coworkers, workplace personnel, and relevant records supply materials on labor and wages. Labor inspectors decide whether to accept them, and an arbitration body or court judges the employment relationship and the unpaid-wage claim under the relevant procedure. When the obligations under a legally effective instrument remain unfulfilled and the matter lawfully enters enforcement, enforcement personnel then handle it to put the consequences into effect. In an illness event, hospital personnel produce medical records and itemized expenses, while family members prepare proof of insurance enrollment and referral or filing materials according to the actual category of treatment. Administering agencies at the place of insurance

enrollment and the place of treatment check the scope of covered expenses and policies on cost sharing under their respective rules. They connect with networked hospitals through information systems to achieve direct settlement or, when direct settlement is unavailable, proceed to manual review and reimbursement. Each chain may branch, break off, or require supplementation and correction; they cannot be presented as fixed, inevitable linear sequences.

Records formed through penalties, judgments, student registration, reimbursement, or border processing must be retrieved again by authorized personnel in subsequent relevant events before they can change judgments concerning credit, employment, passage, loans, administrative permits, or other matters. A record does not cross all domains on its own, nor does the past automatically determine the present. Whether a record can lead to new consequences depends on whether it is still preserved, whether subsequent nodes have authority to read it, and whether personnel extract it in the current event. Contrary materials or supplementation and correction may also change its original weight.

When centralized arrangements produce long-term consequences, responsibility is still allocated along concrete paths. Participants who design rules, allocate resources, reject objections, maintain records, and initiate implementation may differ in capacity and in how much they know. Those carrying out implementation at the end of the chain, those authorizing it from above, and those with review authority cannot all be treated alike. Judgments of state incorporation of differences at the macro level must compare whether these positions recur across several events and retain materials concerning resistance, exceptions, and failures.

X. State Formatting Produces New Differentiating Units

Concrete procedures for registration, review, adjudication, and implementation not only preserve existing differences; they may also form new institutional records. In the legal sources cited in this book concerning procedures for school admission and student registration, labor, work-related injuries, administrative penalties, and civil litigation, household-registration or residence materials, student registration, employment relationships, determinations of work-related injury, and penalty and adjudication records can be formed under their respective rules and may be extracted in subsequent matters that have a legal basis for doing so. Later uses of medical-insurance, assistance, or passage records must still be checked separately against the specific systems concerned. This is the limited meaning of "state formatting produces new differentiating units." It does not mean that the state creates the whole of lived reality, or that all differentiating units originate in the state. [F07]

Understanding the long-term effects of arrangements for state incorporation of differences requires distinguishing three temporal levels: immediate consequences, the formation of write-back, and the content of write-back taking effect again. A concrete penalty or permission first changes the person's position in the present. Yet an immediate consequence does not mean that write-back has already formed. Once personnel or procedures preserve a handling result as a difference available for renewed extraction in the future—for example, by entering it in a file or database—write-back has already formed. Nor does preservation that forms write-back mean that its content has already taken effect again in a subsequent situation.

Whether these preserved contents take effect later still depends on the concrete event. Records established by student-registration personnel may be retrieved anew in family migration or later educational events; arbitration or adjudication records may be extracted in related enforcement or risk judgments; handling results formed by reimbursement personnel may change the family's later arrangements for care and advancing payment; and records formed by border-inspection personnel may be consulted anew by subsequent personnel acting within their authority in future events of

passage. These are conditional consequences. When not being retrieved, records can ordinarily remain silent; they do not automatically take effect across domains. Only when subsequent events such as school admission, migration, work, assistance, medical insurance, loans, leaving the country, litigation, or administrative approval prompt the relevant personnel or procedures to retrieve them anew do past handling results gain weight in the present. A historical index is not an automatic continuation of the past; it is the re-entry of preserved differences into the present through concrete materials, personnel, and procedures. How a record is interpreted, whether contrary materials are accepted, whether erroneous registration can be supplemented and corrected, and whether different nodes achieve mutual recognition may all change its weight.

Once specific personnel or the corresponding procedures preserve the results of present supplementation and correction, refusal, or new determinations as differences available for renewed extraction in the future, new write-back has already formed. Neither existing preserved records nor newly added write-back takes effect automatically merely because it is preserved. Only when personnel or procedures retrieve, interpret, or assign weight to it anew in subsequent events does its content take effect again. Immediate consequences, the formation of write-back, and the content of write-back taking effect again must be kept distinct so that the timing and distribution of corrective capacity can be accurately identified and concrete responsibility borne at the corresponding stages.

XI. How the State Is Compressed into Fixed Images

The state is often compressed into several fixed images. The image of a single personality may highlight centralized commands or coercive consequences, at the cost of hiding different agencies, personnel, powers, procedures, and breaks in mutual recognition behind one will. Interpreters who adopt the image of a machine of pure oppression can extract coercion, exclusion, and punishment, yet may have no room for assistance, protection, adjudication, public services, and the enforcement of rights.

The image of all-powerful order treats registration as accurate knowledge and adjudication as completed enforcement, thus overlooking misregistration, omissions from registration, incorrect registration, costs associated with materials, and enforcement failures. As for the image of a single neutral institution, interpreters who adopt it may see only uniform procedural forms. The ways personnel extract differences, disparities in authority, as well as misregistration, omissions from registration, costs associated with materials, and differences in implementation recede beyond the frame; institutional biases and biases of power are also concealed.

Interpreters who adopt class theory can extract real differentiating units such as labor, wages, income, housing, property, debt, resources, risk, available exits, relations of domination, and certain institutional biases. The explanatory power within a limited scope formed through this process of extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression does not prove that class entities exist within any limited scope. Class entities do not exist, and class theory is not an ordinary limited Model A or Model B; it belongs to Model C in its total-image-subsumption direction. It elevates a set of differences subjected to low-dimensional compression, projection, and naming into society itself, thereby subsuming other valid explanations. The state is not an instrument of implementation for a class entity. Class theory and interpreters who adopt it cannot demote the concrete chains of identification, registration, certification, mutual recognition, implementation, and write-back to subordinate materials.

State registration likewise cannot create or replace national communities. The reality of a national community comes from long-term interaction, multiple layers of relaying, language, rites and

customs, shared memory, shared harm, shared protection, demands of responsibility, experiences of boundaries, and intergenerational write-back. Registration agencies can create ethnic-category fields and change members' institutional positions, but fields alone cannot manufacture these interactions, memories, and responsibilities. Nor can family, locality, nation, market, or society be subsumed by state procedures. Social Differentiation Network Theory is used to trace how concrete differences enter consequences; it cannot, in turn, be elevated into another single entity posited as what the state fundamentally is, or another total image of it.

XII. Preventing Complexity-Based Conflation and Calibrating Explanations of the State

Understanding the state does not consist in choosing an essence for it from among a subject, a machine, an institution, or a class instrument. It consists in returning to the examination of concrete events such as school admission, assistance, medical insurance, unpaid wages, litigation, border passage, household-registration transfers, document applications, and the enforcement of penalties. Each of these events involves different materials and procedures; the word "state" cannot say everything about them. The real consequences produced by state organizations and procedures must always be explained in terms of personnel, materials, qualifications, restrictions, and implementation.

These mechanisms do not follow one fixed path. Different events involve different differentiating units and relational chains entering into consequences, and no node can be presumed always to matter most. In school-admission events, for example, one must examine residence and application materials in the admission review concerned, how student registration is established after initial enrollment, and how existing student-registration materials are extracted in later events such as progression to another level of schooling or transfer. In unpaid-wage events, one needs to trace whether an employment relationship exists, wage records, inspection, adjudication, and enforcement; not every case must pass through all the relevant procedures. In medical-insurance events, one can examine medical records, medical-insurance relations, expense materials, and reimbursement processing. In border events, one must locate documents, the purpose of passage, existing records, and personnel's judgments.

How concrete consequences are generated must be explained through the individual stages of procedural chains: which staff member identifies and extracts differentiating units at a particular service counter or in a particular setting, and into which documents, systems, or records they are registered; which node holds certification authority, and whether authorized nodes recognize or reject the materials; where nodes achieve mutual recognition and where connections break; and, after an award or decision has been made, who initiates implementation and who bears the costs and consequences when implementation falls short. In this process, present consequences of implementation do not require subsequent write-back as a precondition. As soon as handling results are preserved by documents, archives, systems, or the relevant relations that carry them as differences available for renewed extraction in the future, write-back has formed. If old records are retrieved anew and take effect again later, the specific position, statutory authority, and retrieval conditions of those retrieving them must be made clear. The formation of write-back and its later renewed effect must not be conflated.

If incorrect registration, omissions from registration, or mistaken recognition go uncorrected, one must continue to trace the stage at which materials were not accepted, how authorized personnel handled them, and whether changes reached subsequent nodes. Failure to correct cannot be explained by a vague appeal to the state's will. In concrete handling, the parties' submission of

supplementary or corrected materials, presentation of contrary materials, or failures of mutual recognition between nodes may all force an existing explanation to be revised. These tests must be grounded in traceable relational chains. Which materials constitute valid counterexamples, and which inference they require to be revised, must still be assessed against the explanation's originally claimed scope of application. Acknowledging these differences and limits in agencies, procedures, materials, and implementation shows that state procedures are indeed complex, but it by no means cancels judgment. On the contrary, the existence of omissions and counterexamples keeps open entry points for calibrating and revising explanations.

Only when complexity is used to cancel valid comparison, placing valid explanations, limited explanations, erroneous explanations, and junk explanations on the same level, does one enter Model C's direction of erasing distinctions between explanations. The other direction elevates the image of a single personality, a machine of pure oppression, all-powerful order, or the total class image into the state and even society itself, subsuming other chains under a total image. These two mechanisms move in opposite directions, yet both destroy comparison, revision, and calibration. Extracting some phenomena through a fixed image does not thereby give an interpreter an adequate explanation. Whatever explanatory power within a limited scope can be established still comes from real differentiating units and the processes of extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression applied to them. It cannot be attributed to the image, still less used to elevate that image into society itself. A healthy path of understanding, by contrast, remains outside Model C precisely because, while acknowledging complexity, limits, omissions, and counterexamples, it preserves comparison between different explanations, provisional judgment, and revision.

Analysis of state mechanisms must therefore continually preserve the conditionality of institutional settings. The real consequences of state organizations and procedures do not make the state the single underlying reality that encompasses all of society. The boundaries of family, locality, nation, market, and society itself must not be subsumed under state categories. As concrete relational chains unfold through materials, qualifications, and procedures, counterexamples always retain an entry point for revising explanations.

Notes

[F04] Employment relationships, wage payments, arbitration, litigation, and court enforcement belong to different procedures. See Articles 7, 10, and 30 of the Labor Contract Law of the People's Republic of China (amended in 2012); Articles 2, 4–6, 9, and 27–51 of the Labor Dispute Mediation and Arbitration Law of the People's Republic of China; and Articles 66–75, 235, 247, and 250–255 of the Civil Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China (amended in 2023). Whether witness materials can be admitted and enforcement completed still depends on the concrete case and statutory conditions.

[F06a] For review of admission materials, see Note F05; for student-registration administration, see Note F02. For acceptance of materials, investigation and verification, decisions, and preservation in determinations of work-related injury, see Articles 6–12 and 17–24 of the Measures for the Determination of Work-Related Injuries. For procedures such as labor arbitration, civil litigation, and administrative reconsideration, see Note F06. Each legal source supports only the procedures and powers within its own scope. Rules on work-capacity appraisal must not substitute for the legal basis for determining work-related injury, nor may these sources be used to infer the full authority to extract differences at other service counters.

[F05e] See Notes F05, F06, and F08; they are used here only within the jurisdiction, period, procedures, and material scope expressly stated in each note.

[F05f] See Note F05; it is used here only within the jurisdiction, period, procedures, and material scope expressly stated in that note.

[F07] Records of admission and student registration, labor and work-related injuries, administrative penalties, and civil litigation are formed within their respective systems. See Articles 3–7 of the Measures for the Administration of Student Registration in Primary and Secondary Schools, Jiao Ji [2025] No. 1; Articles 4–25 of the Measures for the Determination of Work-Related Injuries; Articles 44–67 of the Administrative Penalty Law of the People's Republic of China; and Articles 66–75 and the enforcement part of the Civil Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China. Subsequent retrieval still requires a separate legal basis.

Chapter 31. The Market: Differentiation Networks in Prices, Debt, Credit, and Risk

I. The Market Cannot Be Presented as an All-Purpose Explanation

The market is easily presented as a total image. Once the market is mentioned, some people immediately think of prices, competition, exchange, wages, rent, and profit, as though these could explain every circumstance of human life. Another account takes the opposite approach, portraying the market entirely as a false appearance and treating prices, credit, debt, and contracts as nothing more than a shell concealing real relations of domination. Both accounts are too hasty.

Prices, wages, rent, debt, credit, risk, the capacity to wait, the width of available exits, information gaps, contract terms, payment deadlines, the costs of breach, and purchasing capacity enter into real consequences through the personnel, organizations, rules, and procedures that handle these materials, changing a person's actual position. Market materials have real effects; they are not false appearances. But explanations of the market cannot reduce family care, local recognition, state registration, national communities, school qualifications, historical memory, support from relatives, and identity verification entirely to market consequences.

The market involves transactions, pricing, credit extension, evaluation, and contract performance; it is not simply a space of exchange, nor do prices automatically regulate everything. The personnel, organizations, rules, and procedures involved in these processes turn differences in life into prices, deadlines, debt, credit, risk, and contract terms. These are only common entry points in market differentiation networks, not an exhaustive list. After this compression, it remains necessary to distinguish how deadlines, liquidity, the capacity to wait, and the width of available exits change people's choices, and which differences cannot readily enter prices and are instead omitted, obscured, or shifted onto others.

II. Prices Are Not Pure Numbers

Prices are often treated as the clearest facts of the market: the amounts of rent, wages, and a deposit; what the loan interest rate is; when a debt must be repaid; and how much a contract’s penalty for breach is. These numbers appear very definite. Yet a price is not a pure number. It is the market expression of multiple sets of differentiating units compressed together. Rent reflects location, school district, transport, the landlord’s attitude, the deposit, the possibility of filing the lease, neighborhood safety, commuting time, and the stability of the tenancy. Wages condense work intensity, the regularity of payment, social insurance, the risk of workplace injury, overtime, skill certification, fluctuations in the industry, and opportunities for substitute work. Debt maturities and loan interest rates contain credit records, guarantee relations, repayment capacity, future income, the risk of delinquency, and family fallback support.

At the same time that market pricing turns some differences into tradable forms, it downweights, obscures, or excludes others. A price can compress differences, but it cannot translate reality in full. Care time is difficult to express fully through wages; bodily wear is often underestimated; anxiety, waiting, and the loss of dignity do not enter contracts in full; family fallback support is treated by the market as an individual’s capacity to bear burdens; and once risk is passed to workers, the price may not compensate for it. Physical wear, care pressure, the anxiety of waiting, loss of dignity, and shifted risks may in fact be left outside the numbers.

Prices within market relations are not isolated consequences. Wages, rent, deposits, interest, credit, and insurance terms enter arrangements concerning families, localities, schools, and medical care along paths of waiting, guarantees, liquidity, and substitute opportunities. Analysts must explain which market materials are put forward by whom, who can change the terms, and who bears the consequences of delinquency and the risks, rather than portraying the market as a subject that allocates things on its own.

The same price can produce different results in different families. Income buffers, care responsibilities, local support, housing documentation, and existing credit alter the capacity to wait. Market materials therefore have to be compared together with non-market relations. Acknowledging that market differences are real does not mean accepting a total image of the market; criticizing market consequences does not mean denying the actual effects of transactions, prices, debt, and risk.

III. A Family of Workers from Elsewhere Enters Market Nodes

Consider again the family of workers from elsewhere. The father works on a construction site, and his wages have been overdue for two months; the mother does casual work at a restaurant, with wages settled daily but no stable social insurance. Rent falls due at the end of the month, and the landlord holds the deposit. In this example, the child's school application depends on the corresponding residence documents, so whether the family can maintain a stable address directly affects admission, yet renewing the lease means a rent increase. Meanwhile, an elder is ill, and the family must choose among medical expenses, rent, debt, and expenses for the child; relatives are also demanding repayment of money lent earlier. This family's circumstances cannot be summed up as low income. Income level certainly matters, but the more specific constraints are when wages arrive, when rent falls due, when debts must be repaid, whether the deposit can be returned, whether the landlord is willing to renew the lease, whether the mother can refuse bad work, whether the father has the capacity to wait for labor arbitration, and whether moving is an available exit for the family before the child's school admission.

The key differences in the market often lie not merely in amounts of money but in when money arrives, when debts press in, whether a lease can continue, whether risks can be borne, and whether choices can wait. The father's unpaid wages are not simply a matter of missing two months' pay. Those two months of arrears coincide precisely with rent coming due, preparation of the child's school-admission materials, the elder's medical care, and relatives' demands for repayment. Unpaid wages are therefore not only a labor issue: they also transmit substantive consequences, layer by layer, through rent, debt, the school application and subsequent student registration, medical insurance, and family relations.

Having her wages settled daily seems to give the mother cash sooner than the father, but in this example daily settlement coexists with a lack of stable protection, paid rest, and continuity of social insurance. She can obtain a little cash immediately, yet finds it difficult to build long-term credit and institutional documentation; the practical pressure of waiting does not disappear when she faces living expenses and unexpected events. Actual transactions, payments, rentals, and debt events involve more than the family's annual income: whether there is cash today, whether rent can be paid at the end of the month, whether the deposit will be returned, whether debt repayment can be deferred, how much credit remains, and whether the family can wait for the next job all gradually gain weight at specific points in time.

IV. Market Time and Liquidity

The market does not merely measure how much money there is. It also turns time in life into payment dates, due dates, repayment periods, lease terms, waiting periods, and periods of default. Wages arriving, debts falling due, rent being paid, and deposits being returned each have their own deadlines. Here, time is not background; it is a market differentiating unit. The end of a lease, repayment of a loan, the time required for arbitration and enforcement, and the ability to wait for the next job likewise change a person's circumstances. Pressure in the market is often produced by the superposition of prices, deadlines, and the capacity to wait, and does not arise from price alone.

The same ten thousand yuan produces entirely different consequences when one person must repay it today and another can repay it in six months. The same three-thousand-yuan wage places people in entirely different market positions when it is paid on time or left unpaid for two months. The same rent leads a family to entirely different choices when it falls due in a month or tomorrow. This is exactly the situation facing the family of workers from elsewhere. The father's unpaid wages may perhaps be recovered later, but rent will not wait, the school-application window will not wait, the elder's medical care will not wait, and relatives demanding repayment will not wait. When the deadlines associated with the landlord, creditors, relatives, medical expenses, and the application window approach at the same time, the family is pushed toward a particular node and choices that previously appeared to exist may narrow.

The key differences in the market lie not only in how many resources a person possesses but also in whether those resources can promptly become usable money, credit, housing, and exits. An unpaid wage claim cannot be treated as cash at hand and cannot be used to pay rent. A deposit theoretically belongs to the family, yet cannot be used before the tenancy ends. If it cannot be returned for the time being, the family may possess the resource and still lack the conditions to move; if the landlord withholds it, a new dispute also forms.

If a contract cannot be put into effect in time, a right on paper has not yet become protection available now. If a credit limit cannot be turned into a cash loan, it can hardly buffer risk. If no relative is willing to provide short-term funds, kinship cannot provide the fallback currently needed. Even if relatives were willing to lend in the past, showing that the family once had a relational channel, that channel may turn into pressure when repayment is demanded.

Insufficient liquidity presses a person into a position of few choices even when, on the surface, the person has income, a contract, and assets, so long as those resources cannot promptly become cash. Rent, debt, medical expenses, and living expenses still bear down on the person. Market circumstances depend not only on the total amount of resources but also on whether resources can move in time. Many families are not without resources; wages, deposits, contracts, kinship relations, and future income cannot, for the time being, be turned into exits usable now. Many market collapses begin with a break in cash flow, not with insufficient total income.

The role of debt and credit especially requires attention to temporal sequence. When a loan is established, the contract and repayment deadline first constitute conditions for the future. After delinquency, collection, evaluation, guarantees, and responsibilities borne by the family may give these conditions greater weight. Once a record is preserved by personnel or procedures as a difference that can be extracted again in the future, write-back has formed. Only later, when it is retrieved and assigned weight in credit extension, renting, or job seeking, does the content of write-back take effect again. Data that has not yet been retrieved may truly exist, but it must not be portrayed as already restricting opportunities at every moment.

V. Authority to Extract Differences and Evaluation Authority in the Market

Differences in the market do not automatically become prices, credit, wages, leases, orders, and contract terms. Certain nodes must first extract, evaluate, price, and rank them. A boss evaluates what wage a worker is worth, while a recruiter handles whether the worker can enter a particular position. A landlord evaluates whether a tenant is reliable, and a bank evaluates a borrower's credit. A platform evaluates whether a worker merits recommendation and handles whether the account can receive recommendations, while a customer evaluates whether a service is worth continuing to buy. Contractual risks are arranged by the relevant drafters, signatories, and those handling the contract. Deposit amounts, pay cycles, and penalties for breach are likewise set by the respective nodes, not governed by one abstract subject.

These judgments can enter the terms of transactions. They are therefore not merely ordinary opinions but evaluation authority within market networks. Labor contractors, intermediaries, insurance companies, customer-rating systems, acquaintances who provide introductions, guarantors, and credit systems may also possess this evaluation authority. Power in the market is manifested not only in who has money but also in the ability to set prices, extend credit, set contract terms, delay payment, demand deposits, evaluate reliability, and shift risk onto others. Whoever can extract certain differences and turn them into prices, credit, contracts, and risk judgments can affect a person's position in the market.

In concrete market events, ownership, control, and benefit may come apart. The nominal owner may not be responsible for daily arrangements; a manager may control use rights and data permissions; platform or intermediary personnel may set prices, rankings, and entry points for appeals; and benefits may flow to different positions. Responsibility should therefore be judged through concrete control, knowledge, capacity for correction, and causal linkage. It cannot be settled once and for all by an ownership label.

Yet this market evaluation that affects another person’s position is not a complete judgment of that person. It is a transactional judgment formed by a market node under particular conditions. A person’s market price cannot be equated with the person’s real ability, real contribution, or real value. Low wages do not mean low ability; poor credit does not necessarily mean poor morals; failure to rent a home does not necessarily mean unreliability; and taking low-paid work is not necessarily voluntary. It may result from an approaching debt deadline, insufficient family fallback support, and a capacity to wait that is too weak.

The mother’s casual work at a restaurant does not show that she can do only low-value work. She may need to pick up the child in the afternoon and therefore be unable to accept a long shift. She may also lack social-insurance records and introductions through local acquaintances, or the family’s cash flow may be so tight that she cannot wait for a more stable job that pays more slowly. The father’s continuing to take low-paid work does not necessarily show that he regards the price as acceptable. Approaching debt, rent coming due, the child’s school application, and the elder’s medical care all reduce his capacity to wait. Market evaluation affects people’s opportunities, but cannot replace a complete understanding of them.

VI. Contracts, Platforms, and Risk Shifting

Beyond prices, wages, rent, and debt, contracts and platform rules fix and rank market differentiating units, put them into effect, and write them back. They are themselves important market nodes. Once a contract fixes and states the payment deadline, penalty for breach and compensation for delay, the deposit and its return, the allocation of responsibility, the bearing of

risk and who bears unexpected risks, and the conditions for exit or termination, market consequences have already been allocated in advance.

In a platform market, whether a person obtains opportunities depends on more than labor capacity. A platform allocates opportunities through ratings, response speed, historical completion rates, complaint records, the risk of account suspension, ranking, and account weight. When an account receives a bad review or complaint, has its account weight reduced, or is suspended, market opportunities are reordered. For the family of workers from elsewhere, whether the father signed a contract and whether the contract states a payment cycle, whether the mother receives orders through a platform, and how the account is rated will all affect whether they can obtain stable income and future opportunities.

These contract terms and evaluation rules also concern who bears risk. Risk is shifted through transactions; it is not evenly distributed. Many transactions appear to involve mutual consent but actually shift uncertainty onto those with a weaker capacity to wait, narrower exits, and weaker credit standing: a labor contractor who leaves wages unpaid shifts cash-flow risk onto workers; a landlord who raises the deposit shifts rental risk onto tenants; a platform uses ratings and account suspensions to shift the risk of fluctuating orders onto workers; a bad contract loads the risk of breach onto the weaker party; and work without social insurance shifts the risks of illness, workplace injury, and unemployment onto the family. Risk shifting is an important mechanism in market differentiation networks: it lets certain nodes retain choices while pushing uncertain consequences onto those who find it harder to exit. Risk shifting is often hidden in contracts, deposits, pay cycles, platform rules, probationary periods, the absence of insurance, and breach clauses.

The construction site or labor contractor leaves the father's wages unpaid, and he and his family bear the pressure on cash flow. He cannot easily send that pressure back along the original direction; he can only continue to bear or shift it among rent, debts to relatives, the mother's working hours, and household expenses. A landlord demanding a higher deposit pushes rental risk onto the tenant. For someone with savings, a deposit is only temporarily tied up; for a family with tight cash flow, it may directly determine whether the family can move. A transaction may have the form of a contract, but one must still determine who bears the risk, who can exit, and who can only remain.

Risk is transmitted across different positions, and coordination, too, can span multiple nodes. Payments, logistics, credit extension, insurance, evaluation, and appeals are handled by different personnel and procedures; a correction in one place may not be synchronized with other positions. Understanding market order requires tracing how data is passed on, who has the authority to revoke or amend it, and whether old content is still used in subsequent transactions.

Benefits and causation in the market must also be separated. If a platform, landlord, lender, or enterprise benefits over the long term, that may prompt an inquiry into whether it controls rules, sets deadlines, or refuses correction. Benefit itself cannot prove motive, authority, or the whole causal chain. Responsibility must be located in the concrete positions that formulate contracts, set prices, evaluate data, collect debts, process appeals, and make corrections.

VII. The Capacity to Wait and the Width of Available Exits

The capacity to wait is not a psychological quality. It is a market position jointly generated by cash flow, debt deadlines, family fallback support, bodily capacity to endure, and institutional channels, and it forms an important differentiating unit in the market. People who can wait for wages to

arrive and people who cannot are in different market positions. People who can wait for a better job and people who must take work today have different bargaining power. When wages are unpaid, people who can wait for court enforcement and people who must pay rent at the end of the month face different choices.

The width of available exits changes bargaining power and also changes whether a person can refuse bad terms. Being able to stay temporarily with relatives, having another job to choose, having savings to rely on, having a place of origin to return to, and having credit that enables borrowing are resources that alter the width of available exits. Market relations also include conditions of exit. Being able to terminate a transaction under a contract does not mean that the person actually has the ability to withdraw. Substitute work, moving costs, debt deadlines, care responsibilities, and local support alter whether exit is feasible in practice.

Take the father’s accepting construction work as an example. Whether he accepts low-paid work cannot be judged only by the wage. The time required to recover unpaid wages, whether he can get work on other construction sites, current rent, and expenses for the child’s school admission and the elder’s medical care jointly limit the space in which he can refuse low-paid work. Market choice is not an isolated act; it results from pressures at several nodes converging at once. The narrower the exits, the more the market resembles coercion; the wider the exits, the closer the transaction comes to a choice.

Many market transactions appear voluntary; the key is whether the parties have the corresponding capacity to wait and channels of exit. Where these are lacking, market consent is pressed thin. Having no cash, no housing, and no credit are concrete circumstances that narrow available exits. Directly equating the formal choice to enter a contract with free exchange obscures the substantive constraints that the width of available exits places on bargaining. Yet treating all transactions indiscriminately as coercion also overlooks the parties' negotiations, alternative choices, and the relations they actually take up and sustain at concrete nodes.

A lack of resources changes bargaining, but it cannot establish that one side has no capacity to act at all. A person may obtain support through family, local, legal, or organizational relations, and those relations may also add new responsibilities. Market analysis must explain how exits are formed and limited, rather than fixing people in a passive position.

VIII. Market Relational Chains

Market problems are not simply a matter of several prices existing side by side: prices do not remain confined to themselves. Market relational chains transmit consequences outward through deadlines, debt, credit, and risk, along family, local, school, state, and labor nodes. When unpaid wages enter the rental process, the father's missing pay affects the rent, and pressure on rent in turn affects lease renewal. Provided that the admissions process in this example actually assesses the corresponding residence documentation, an unstable lease renewal then affects the residence permit, the applicable items in community registration, and the child's admission materials. As the child's admission is affected, the mother's work arrangements and the family's options for migration also change.

Rent can also enter the educational chain. A rise in rent may force a family to leave its former home, disrupt familiarity with the locality, community registration, lease filing, and preparation of school-application materials, and thereby change the child’s educational path. Debt enters the labor chain as well. When pressure from creditors, approaching repayment deadlines, and pressure on the family’s cash flow converge, the father may be unable to wait for labor arbitration and be left with

no choice but to continue taking low-paid work. The mother may likewise be unable to quit the restaurant and be left with no choice but to accept longer shifts with less protection.

If a delinquency is extracted from records by relevant personnel or procedures in a later lending event, these market consequences may extend through the record into later conditions of life. The retrieved delinquency may affect a loan, and restrictions on the loan may in turn affect renting, medical care, short-term funding needs, and a small business. When relevant personnel or procedures retrieve a credit record, a past market event may enter future opportunities.

IX. How Non-Market Nodes Enter the Market

The market is not a closed system. The entry points for many transaction terms originate outside it. Family fallback support changes the capacity to wait; local recognition changes the costs of renting and finding work; state-issued documents change eligibility for employment, loans, renting, and passage; educational qualifications and certificates change entry to jobs; bodily condition changes the capacity to bear risk; and introductions by people from the same home locality and other acquaintances change work opportunities. The personnel, organizations, and procedures handling transactions extract these differences and turn them into market conditions. This does not mean that family, local, state, school, bodily, and acquaintance relations are created or subsumed by the market.

In concrete events, whether the father can enter a particular construction site may depend on an introduction by someone from his home locality; whether the mother can find more stable restaurant work may depend on the child's pickup and drop-off times, physical fatigue, and local acquaintances; and whether the family can rent a less expensive home may depend on the landlord's trust, familiarity with the community, and having all the required documents. The nodes handling these materials extract differences from outside the market and recast them as wages, rent, credit, deposits, contracts, and risk judgments.

X. Market Historical Indices and Write-Back

The market also has historical indices. Wage records, bank transaction records, credit records, loan records, lease records, disputes over deposits, platform ratings, breaches of contract, insurance records, consumption records, and transaction evaluations may settle into a market past that can be extracted later. These records can remain silent in daily life until a later event occurs—renting, borrowing, seeking work, buying insurance, opening a shop, taking orders, applying for a platform account, or seeking a guarantee—and relevant personnel or procedures may then extract them anew from documents, accounts, contracts, or records.

Current transactions, evaluations, contract performance, and record handling produce consequences on several levels. On the one hand, events directly produce real consequences: an instance of unpaid wages changes a family's cash flow; where local school admissions do require the corresponding residence documentation, a break in the lease disrupts preparation of application materials and changes the child's path to admission; and a risk of workplace injury changes family care arrangements. These direct consequences are transmitted along relational chains involving family, locality, the state, and school, among others. They do not depend on whether write-back is subsequently formed.

On the other hand, when the concrete results of handling current evaluations, contract performance, breaches, complaints, or payments are preserved by the relevant personnel,

procedures, or documents as differences that can be extracted again later, this preservation itself constitutes write-back.

When later participants or procedures call upon these materials in new events—for example, when a credit delinquency changes future borrowing capacity or a negative platform review changes later order opportunities—they may further change how prices are assigned to the person concerned, credit is extended to them, housing is rented to them, and they are employed, insured, recommended, and provided with guarantees in the future. These subsequent effects are not confined to individuals: they may also pass along relational chains into families, localities, the state, and schools.

Credit is both a compression of past handling and an entry point through which later personnel extract differences. A credit record may preserve part of a person's payments, contract performance, or evaluations, yet may not show illness, unemployment, care, or the course of a dispute. If a later credit provider relies only on this compressed result, the relevant facts of life are lowered in weight. The existence of contrary materials and correction procedures is therefore a necessary condition for credit write-back to remain calibratable.

XI. How the Market Is Compressed into Fixed Images

It is particularly easy to compress the market into several fixed images. Interpreters of an all-purpose market image believe that prices can explain everything, as though looking at market outcomes revealed real ability, real needs, and real value, thereby obscuring family fallback support, state qualifications, local recognition, debt deadlines, the capacity to bear risk, and the capacity to wait. People using this image can extract some real consequences from concrete materials such as prices, wages, rent, debt, and credit. But once these people elevate the materials into a total image of all social reality, they swallow family, locality, the state, nation, school, and history. Market analysis cannot treat price as a substitute for every form of value. Care, community responsibility, dignity, and legal rights may intersect with price relations, but they are not automatically generated or canceled by price. Analysts must trace how prices change action options while preserving real relations that cannot be absorbed by a total image of transactions.

Interpreters of an anti-market image believe that the market is only a false appearance or a shell of exploitation, and thus overlook the real effects of prices, wages, rent, debt, credit, and risk on practical choices. An anti-market explanation can indeed identify domination, risk shifting, and unequal contracts, but it cannot deny the concrete force of these market differences merely because it takes a critical position.

A moral-evaluation image presents market consequences as matters of personal diligence, laziness, frugality, extravagance, or good and bad credit, obscuring cash flow, contract terms, information gaps, risk shifting, and the width of available exits. Moral evaluation can identify concrete conduct and responsibility for performing contracts, but it cannot reduce market consequences directly to personal moral character.

Interpreters who adopt class theory subsume the market under a total class image. They can extract some high-weight differentiating units from resource differences and labor circumstances, but the explanatory capacity within a limited scope formed through this process of extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression comes entirely from the concrete differentiating units and the processes that handle them. It is neither attributable to the total class image nor an indication that class entities exist within any scope; class theory has been the total-image-subsumption form of Model C from the outset. An abstract classification such as "low income"

alone cannot explain differences in concrete mechanisms at all: why do people with equally low incomes end up in entirely different market positions because of differences in wage payment dates, debt deadlines, rent due dates, deposits, credit records, family fallback support, the capacity to wait, and the width of available exits? This shows that abstract classification cannot replace tracing each concrete mechanism. The market cannot be subsumed under a total class image, still less can interpreters who adopt class theory swallow up the market's own mechanisms of prices, pricing, debt, credit extension, deadlines, cash flow, credit, risk, risk shifting, the capacity to wait, and write-back.

XII. Calibrating Explanations of the Market

The market is indeed complex, but its complexity does not justify saying that all explanations are much the same. Nor can one say that because the market contains wages, rent, debt, credit, and risk, no judgment is possible. Using complexity in this way to cancel effective comparison moves in the direction of Model C's erasure of distinctions between explanations. The key to calibrating market explanations is not deciding whether the market is ultimately free exchange, a structure of exploitation, a system of moral rewards and punishments, or a class instrument. Understanding the market cannot stop at a single price. Whether the current market event concerns unpaid wages, renting, borrowing, job seeking, consumption, insurance, taking orders through a platform, breach of contract, or credit evaluation, analysis must return to the concrete event and ask which differentiating units have been extracted in it, who extracted them, which nodes are pricing, extending credit, providing guarantees, collecting debts, or evaluating, and how market relational chains transmit consequences.

As concrete events unfold, the factors involved do not bear equal weight. In an unpaid-wage event, the time wages arrive, labor relations, debt deadlines, rent pressure, and the capacity to wait may weigh more heavily. In renting, rent, deposits, lease filing, the landlord's attitude, transport costs, admission materials, and moving costs may weigh more heavily. In a borrowing event, credit records, guarantee relations, repayment deadlines, interest, the consequences of delinquency, and family fallback support may weigh more heavily. In job seeking, wages, social insurance, workplace injury risk, the regularity of payment, alternative jobs, and bodily capacity to endure may weigh more heavily. In these circumstances, the capacity to wait and the width of available exits also change bargaining. Comparison must further distinguish which explanations grasp key market differences, which obscure non-market nodes, and which compress the market into a single image or refuse to acknowledge counterexamples. Calibration must concretely trace which differences in life are being priced, which nodes are making evaluations, which deadlines are approaching, which cash flows are breaking, which debts have narrowed choices, and which risks are being shifted onto others.

The calibration of market analysis must also face the test of evidence and counterexamples. Once concrete personnel, institutions, or procedures preserve the results of handling prices, debt, credit, transactions, or evaluations as differences that can be extracted again in the future, write-back has already formed. Calibration must also establish how these contents take effect again when they are retrieved, interpreted, or assigned weight in later events of credit extension, transactions, renting, employment, or evaluation. The conditions under which limited market analysis fails can be specified and must be assessed against the scope originally claimed by the explanation. If the materials cannot support a connection between prices or debt and consequences, or if valid counterexamples show another node changing the outcome more directly, the analysis should, on the basis of those counterexamples, reduce the explanation's operative weight, revise its path, or narrow its scope. It cannot declare the original explanation wholly invalid merely because other

nodes dominate another setting. Reinterpreting all family, national, state, or educational consequences as market outcomes, however, constitutes total-image subsumption; the actual existence of market materials cannot legitimize it.

Prices, credit, contract forms, ownership arrangements, and debt responsibilities can be repeatedly taken up and sustained across regions, institutions, and even generations, producing long-term, real market consequences. This stability does not require class entities, nor does it establish that the market is the underlying reality of all social relations. Non-market relations involving nations, families, institutions, and communities may still limit transactions, provide protection, or change who bears risk; each must be explained through its own real paths. Only by acknowledging both these long-term effects and these independent relations can an explanation of the market avoid expanding into a subsumptive total image of the market.

In long-term relational chains, calibration must also preserve materials concerning failed corrections: an entry point for appeals exists but no one handles them; a record has been corrected but the correction has not been synchronized; a contract has been terminated but an old evaluation is still retrieved. All these separate formal changes from actual consequences. Faced with this disconnection, analysts should separately trace the authority to make corrections, the paths of synchronization, and the specific responsibilities of those who subsequently use the materials.

Chapter 32. Schools and Education: Differentiation Networks of Student Registration, Evaluation, Qualifications, and Future Opportunities

I. Schools Cannot Be Presented as Mere Channels of Upward Mobility

Schools are easily presented through two images: one treats them as channels of upward mobility, as though children could change their fate simply by studying hard; the other treats them as ideological machines, claiming that they do nothing but train students in obedience, produce selection, and reproduce the existing order. Each account grasps part of what is real, yet both judge too soon, compressing intersecting processes into a single image. Admission, examinations, certificates, teachers' recommendations, and a school's reputation can indeed open new opportunities for children; student registration, household registration, places, scores, rankings, evaluations, language habits, family fallback support, and school resources also do lead different children down different paths. In admission, examination, student-registration, evaluation, and qualification procedures, the opening of opportunities can occur alongside the consequences of selection, exclusion, compression, and stratification.

These consequences do not come from an abstract entity with a unified will. They are jointly carried by teachers, homeroom teachers, admissions or review personnel, school administrators, and concrete examination, student-registration, archive, and qualification procedures. Different responsibilities are involved in who accepts applications, who interprets materials, who makes classroom observations, and through which question-setting and scoring procedures results are produced; qualifications, too, are confirmed or interrupted at specific steps. If every action is described as “the school decides,” different authorities, materials, and responsibilities are merged, and a particular instance of handling is easily mistaken for the unified will of education as a whole.

In tracing these events, student-registration systems, application materials, and classroom order provide common entry points. Teachers' evaluations, peer relations, examinations, disciplinary records, recommendation opportunities, school places, internship opportunities, and graduation qualifications allow differences to be extracted, assigned weight, connected, transmitted, and written back within different relations. School space and school time also play a part. These entry points intersect; they do not constitute a general theory of education or an exhaustive list. Still less can differentiation networks within schools be elevated into the underlying reality of education or an all-purpose explanation.

Within a single school, opening opportunities and forming constraints can occur at the same time. A teacher’s supplementary explanation may give a student a new entry point into understanding, while student registration and certificates may preserve the learning the student has completed. By contrast, another material requirement, a missed deadline, or an evaluation that has hardened into a fixed form may narrow later choices. Analysts need not decide in advance whether schools bring upward mobility or suppression. They need to identify which differences are amplified and which concealed in different events, and who still has opportunities at concrete steps to present new materials and change judgments.

II. School Admission for the Child of a Family of Workers from Elsewhere

Continue with the family of workers from elsewhere in the preceding chapter. The father works on a construction site, and his wages are in arrears; the mother does casual work in a restaurant, with wages settled daily; rent falls due at the end of the month, and the landlord may raise it or be unwilling to cooperate in producing certain rental documents. Meanwhile, medical care for an elder has taken up the family's cash flow, and relatives are still pressing for repayment of loans. When the child reaches school-entry age, some of the materials concerning residence, renting, the parents' social insurance or work, and the application may enter review, depending on local policy and the admission category. When progressing to further schooling or transferring, existing student-registration materials may also be checked, while school places are handled separately under specific arrangements. Formal admissions materials belong to a different level from family cash flow and the landlord's cooperation, yet they meet within the same event in life.

Preparing materials itself takes time and coordination among those involved. Parents must know what is required, where to obtain it, who issues it, and when to submit it. Whether landlords, community personnel, employers, or other bearers of materials are willing to cooperate may also affect whether the information can be produced in time. A family does not enter the school only on application day. Events involving renting, work, and communication before application already determine which differences can be turned into documents. If analysis begins only with the stack of materials received by review personnel, obstacles preceding their production disappear from the analysis.

Once differences in life enter the admission event, they continue to be transmitted along nodes such as housing, the community, receipt of materials, admissions review, student registration, and class placement. Receipt of materials and admissions review concern whether the address is stable and application materials are complete; whether student registration has been established and entry into class is timely must be identified at their respective processing stages. After entry into the classroom, the stability of results, teachers' evaluations, and the smoothness of communication with the family also form materials that can be handled, connecting to whether later examination eligibility remains continuous. Recasting differences from life outside through such stages as receipt of materials, admissions review, student-registration management, and teachers' evaluation has a real organizational role. Yet this does not mean that the relevant personnel and procedures have seen the child's entire life. These states belong to different stages and cannot be assembled into one procedure that every child must complete in sequence. A child's school admission is therefore not simply an educational issue, but the result of differences in the family, locality, state, market, and school connecting with one another in a concrete qualification event.

“Successful admission” is not the end of every problem. Early differences involving address, whether materials can be submitted on time and received and reviewed, establishment of student registration, and timely entry into class may continue to be transmitted, connecting to explanations of transfers and absences, adaptation to classroom language, homework support, and future examination eligibility. Gaps in coursework caused by late entry into class may appear in the first assignments and tests. Teachers' preliminary judgments based on performance at that time may affect seating, opportunities for classroom questioning, supplementary guidance, or communication with parents; after receiving evaluations, parents in turn rearrange their time and expectations accordingly. The first qualification event thus connects to subsequent classroom events, but this chain does not inevitably deteriorate: new teaching interventions, peer assistance, and subsequent performance can all change its direction.

III. Preservation of Qualifications through Student Registration and Breaks in Materials

A child's attending lessons in the classroom does not mean that admission formalities are complete, that student registration has been successfully established or updated, still less that all subsequent qualifications follow automatically. In reality, the child may already be sitting in class listening to lessons, getting to know classmates, and submitting homework. Yet checks at the admissions stage concerning rental documents, proof of residence, parents' work records, community registration, school places, and application timing, or formalities not completed in the course of a transfer, may leave a gap between actual attendance and registration in the system. If the student-registration file is not successfully established or transferred, subsequent examination eligibility, transfer, and progression procedures may still face substantive obstacles. Student registration affects current qualifications only when personnel or procedures authorized to handle it retrieve and check it anew in a concrete event.

Student registration is a mechanism for preserving qualifications within school relational chains. Under the Measures for the Administration of Student Registration in Primary and Secondary Schools as revised in 2025, after initial enrollment formalities have been completed, the school collects and enters information using the student's valid identity document [F02], establishes a student-registration file within two months, and updates it promptly after start-of-term reporting or a transfer. Materials concerning renting, residence, or social insurance required at the admissions stage in particular regions, years, and application categories belong to admission-entry review. They have their own procedural nodes, distinct from the collection of student-registration information and establishment of files using identity documents after enrollment, and from subsequent examination eligibility. Personnel receiving materials, reviewing admissions, and managing student registration handle materials and preserve registration records under different rules. When subsequent examination, transfer, or progression events arise, the relevant personnel and procedures retrieve records again, making them one item of material for confirming qualifications. Student registration is not a simple name or an ordinary form, nor is it the student's complete identity. Its continuity cannot be considered only in abstract terms of “having it” or “not having it”: the time it was established, transfers in and out, continuity between grades, records of coursework completed, and consistency of personal information such as names may each become a separate issue in subsequent events. A registration's having been valid at the previous school does not mean it will necessarily be accepted in the same way at a new school, in a new examination, or in a new review. Those handling the matter need to check the materials required by the current event and whether the old record supports the qualification now being claimed.

Teachers, review personnel, and administrators in schools often have to handle student affairs through student registration, materials, results, written evaluations, attendance, and archives. They confront not the whole of children’s lives but some differences preserved and formatted through these forms. Misalignment may therefore arise between a child’s real circumstances and the child in school records. At the stages of qualification review and entry, actually living nearby does not mean that application materials are valid; a family’s real poverty does not mean its financial-aid materials will necessarily pass review. If moving house causes the family to miss the application window, this may appear in the review procedure as “incomplete materials.”

Such misalignment can also occur in everyday teaching, continuity of coursework, and understanding behavior. When facts of life cannot enter the corresponding forms, they are easily omitted, compressed, or misread. A child’s having actually studied does not mean continuity of student registration can be smoothly maintained; an actual transfer does not mean that coursework

can be picked up where it left off; real difficulties do not mean teachers can correctly understand them from existing records. Discontinuity in coursework after a transfer may appear in classroom and results records as “weak foundations.” Having no quiet space at home may be understood by teachers from homework results as “poor study habits.” Parents’ irregular working hours and slower replies in the parent chat group may also be understood as “low family cooperation.” These misalignments need not be attributed to someone deliberately ignoring the child. School organizations rely on materials, results, attendance, written evaluations, and archives to handle large numbers of affairs. The focus of analysis is not an abstract accusation against schools, but identifying through what materials facts of life pass, who receives and interprets them, and at which step a break occurs.

Materials may also conflict with one another. Attendance records show missed classes, while medical or transport materials kept by parents may explain why. Results suddenly decline, while transfer records, differences in coursework, and teachers’ observations may reveal another line of explanation. Slower replies in the parent chat group do not necessarily mean a family is unconcerned; they may also be connected to working hours and the use of devices. If personnel handling the matter use only the records that are easiest to quantify or that appeared first, other facts of life struggle to enter judgment.

Supplementary materials do not guarantee that the original judgment will be overturned, but they should be able to form an objection open to examination. The relevant personnel need to explain whether new materials bear on the current event, which record they can correct, and which parts still cannot be confirmed. This neither treats every family account directly as sufficient proof nor grants existing archives an unquestionable status merely because they were preserved first. Repairing breaks in materials depends on concrete receipt, checking, and response, not abstract goodwill. Omissions, errors, or outdated content in student-registration records further involve explicit entry points for correction: can parents and students learn where the problem lies, can they submit supplementary proof, which staff member has authority to amend the record, and will amendments be synchronized with the records used later? All these affect whether qualifications can be restored. Calling student registration an automatically operating system conceals how materials are accepted, refused, and corrected, and makes procedural responsibility untraceable.

IV. Examination Scores, Everyday Evaluation, and Students’ Responses

An examination is not ability itself. Procedures for setting questions, answering them, scoring, and using results compress part of a child’s abilities, training, language habits, family support, time arrangements, physical condition, and answering techniques into scores, rankings, and qualifications. Scores have real effects: they may influence class placement, progression to further schooling, recommendations, scholarships, and school choice. But they cannot fully represent a child’s understanding, capacity to bear strain, curiosity, expressive ability, care pressures, family burdens, and future possibilities.

Scores take shape through several steps. Question setters choose what to measure; teachers decide the focus of routine training and review; students answer within a limited time and in a particular physical condition; scoring personnel or procedures then turn answers into results according to rules. No step has to be described as arbitrary, but each establishes which abilities are more readily seen. If only the final score is retained, the scope of the questions, conditions of answering, and method of scoring drop out of the explanation. Low results may be connected to speed of understanding, but may also involve difficulty adapting to the language, insufficient training resources, continuity of coursework after a transfer, a sick person in the household, insufficient

sleep, or physical condition on the examination day. The examination compresses these differences into a score, which teachers, class-placement personnel, and admissions or qualification-review personnel may retrieve in later events. Understanding examinations requires both acknowledging that scores enter real consequences and preserving the possibility that new materials, subsequent performance, and counterexamples may change existing judgments. A single result cannot be treated as the whole child.

Scores from different examinations cannot be directly compared apart from their uses. A classroom test can help a teacher identify current gaps in understanding, whereas an examination for further schooling or qualifications may directly allocate limited opportunities. The same score has different consequences in different classes, at different times, and for different purposes. Analysts need to distinguish scores as learning materials from scores as qualification materials, without portraying every test as the same kind of selection or denying an examination's comparative role within a particular scope merely because it is limited.

Examinations are a starting point; evaluation in schools has no single source. Teachers' evaluations, homeroom teachers' evaluations, examination results, and discipline and reward-and-punishment records may form formal or semiformal materials under school rules. Experience as a student class officer, peer reputation, family evaluations, parent communication, and recommendations may operate through different interpersonal and organizational relations. They differ in origin, mode of preservation, and consequences, and cannot be merged into an undifferentiated "school evaluation," still less become a judgment on the child's entire worth.

Low results do not mean low ability, just as silence does not mean having no thoughts, and inconsistent homework likewise does not necessarily stem from a lack of effort. Evaluation often forms through everyday accumulation. Speaking up once may be understood as engagement, or seen in another interaction as an interruption. Silence may stem from thought, unfamiliarity, anxiety, language difficulties, or a judgment of the present atmosphere. Teachers must handle class affairs within limited time. Preliminary evaluations have a working role, yet may take insufficient sleep for laziness and anxiety for inattention. Adjustment after a transfer, upheaval in the family, and difficulty adapting to the language may also be read, respectively, as weak foundations, regression in learning, or poor expressive ability. Physical weakness may even be moralized as a lack of effort in physical-education evaluation. Teachers' judgments may help a child be seen, but may also misread family, bodily, emotional, or language problems as problems of attitude and character.

Once teachers or homeroom teachers turn classroom behavior, homework, results, and parent communication into written evaluations, rewards and punishments, recommendations, or other records, these materials may affect class positions, family judgments, and subsequent opportunities. Peer evaluations operate through everyday interactions and reputation, while family evaluations affect resource investment, expectations, and arrangements of responsibility. Different evaluations may support or conflict with one another. When temporary observations enter formal written evaluations, recommendations, or disciplinary records, their scope of effect changes. Yet none automatically amounts to the student's essence, and preliminary evaluations must still be distinguished from subsequent materials.

Students also respond to evaluations. Some participate more after receiving recognition; some speak less after being repeatedly misread; others turn to another teacher, peer, or family member and explain their own circumstances. These responses may change the materials teachers see next time, forming a new cycle. Analysts cannot portray evaluation as a direct cause of personality, nor

ignore that evaluation has already changed opportunities for participation. They need to trace how evaluation, response, and subsequent records connect with one another.

V. Authority to Extract Differences, Evaluation Authority, and Recording Authority in Schools

Differences within schools do not automatically become educational consequences. Application or admissions personnel receive materials, review personnel judge whether they are valid, and student-registration personnel preserve registration records. Teachers and homeroom teachers evaluate classroom, homework, and everyday performance; examination and scoring procedures produce results; school administrators handle rewards, punishments, and records. The power held at each node is different: authority to extract differences, evaluation authority, recording authority, and authority to process qualifications, each within a different scope.

Specific personnel must judge from existing materials and procedures whether an instance of lateness is an isolated event or an attitude problem, whether silence stems from not yet having adapted or from a lack of ability, and whether missing materials can be supplemented and corrected or will interrupt qualifications. Education-department personnel, admissions or review personnel, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, and relevant people in parent committees and training organizations may extract differences from different positions. Student-registration and examination systems preserve or process records, community attestations carry materials that can be submitted, and peer relations operate through interaction and reputation. The authority, materials, and consequences at different nodes must not be written as though they were the same.

Authority to extract differences also includes choosing the scale of observation. Teachers can focus on a single assignment or compare changes over a period. Review personnel can look only at whether materials meet current requirements, or, within the permitted scope, inform people of entry points for supplementation and correction. In handling a conflict, administrators can retrieve one side’s records or check materials preserved by different participants. A difference in scale does not make every conclusion valid. Such differences in scale remind interpreters to explain the span of time, number of events, and sources on which their judgment rests.

Personnel or procedures able to turn a difference into results, written evaluations, disciplinary action, places, recommendations, or qualifications may thereby change a child's position in school relational chains. Review of materials, confirmation of student registration, classroom judgments, examination rankings, parent-communication records, and peer responses each affect the child's circumstances in the corresponding events. They do not form one path that all educational consequences must traverse. Organizations and procedures do have effects; no single node can possess or explain a child in full.

At the same time, different authorities may constrain one another: subject teachers can describe classroom performance but may not have the authority to amend student registration; student-registration personnel can handle registration but may not understand the child's everyday learning; peers can describe their experience of interaction but cannot directly determine formal qualifications. Bringing each limited judgment into its appropriate scope can supplement materials. Elevating one node's evaluation into an overall conclusion turns limited authority into an overall naming of the student.

VI. How Family Fallback Support Enters Schools

Family fallback support is not a background outside school. Who can be present to support a child's studies, drop the child off and pick the child up, help with homework, and purchase materials; who can afford extracurricular training and transfer costs; who can provide time, emotional support, and material support when results decline—all these differences enter school through homework, lateness, communication, results, and teachers' evaluations. A father returning late, a mother working nights, the lack of a desk in a quiet place at home, a phone needed by parents to handle work messages, and an elder's medical treatment disrupting daily routines may all leave traces in the child's school performance.

With fuller family support, an instance of lateness, a missed homework submission, or fluctuating results may be more easily remedied. With insufficient family support, the same event is more readily preserved as a fixed evaluation. This difference has real weight, yet family fallback support cannot be portrayed as the sole source of educational outcomes. How teachers interpret, whether materials can be supplemented and corrected, how peer relations develop, whether school resources are available, and how the child subsequently responds may all change the original outcome.

Family fallback support also takes different forms. Money can buy materials and save travel time; care can sustain daily routines; family members familiar with procedures can help organize materials; a stable residence makes continuity in student registration and peer relations easier. These forms of support do not necessarily coexist and cannot all be converted into income. Families with similar incomes may develop different capacities to remedy problems because of differences in working hours, available caregivers, residential stability, and familiarity with school procedures.

Family investment likewise cannot be directly equated with how much a family cares. Parents may be unable to come to school because of work, transport, care, or physical constraints; slower replies to messages may also result from shared devices or working hours. If teachers can obtain supplementary explanations, original judgments may be adjusted. If families do not know what evaluations are forming at school, they also struggle to provide relevant materials. The role of family-school communication therefore depends on who sends messages, whether they arrive, when both sides respond, and whether responses actually enter subsequent handling.

VII. School Space and School Time

School space is not a mere background to education. Seating changes how teachers observe, with positions near the teacher increasing everyday observation. Drop-off and pickup at the school gate may make family fallback support visible, and various parent activities also make some families more likely to enter teachers' view. Responses in parent chat groups may affect teachers' judgments of family communication; students who frequently visit offices may likewise leave more formal or informal impressions. Who is readily seen, and which part of life is seen, change with these positions.

The classroom foregrounds answering questions and discipline; the playground brings the body, cooperation, and peer positions into view; the dormitory exposes daily routines and interactions. Office conversations often organize scattered events into explanations that can be recorded and may become formal evaluations. Cafeteria spending, dormitory interaction, tutoring-class lists, and results boards may also bring resources, peer evaluations, and examination results into view. The teacher's dais, playground, cafeteria, dormitory, tutoring class, bulletin board, and results board may all become nodes where differences are seen, compared, preserved, and interpreted.

Increased visibility may bring help but may also increase the density of evaluation. Those less readily seen may avoid certain kinds of attention while also losing entry points for explaining difficulties and obtaining support. Materials formed in different spaces may supplement or contradict one another. Someone's silence in class does not mean a lack of ability in collaboration with peers; the existence of a dormitory conflict cannot directly be turned into a fixed character trait across all learning activities. Space itself makes no judgments: consequences arise from how teachers, students, parents, and administrators observe, compare, record, and respond. What parent chat groups sustain here is school communication; their limited role cannot represent the general mechanisms of platform ranking, recommendation, or visibility.

Educational consequences may also change with time nodes. Application windows, deadlines for materials, and school-entry age form one set of conditions; transfers, examinations, supplemental admission, terms, and progression to further schooling each have their own timing, as do the preservation of disciplinary records and graduation. These must be identified through specific procedures; they do not share a uniform policy or fixed deadlines. School procedures turn growth, migration, illness, family upheaval, and delays in materials into temporal differences within qualification events. Materials becoming complete a day earlier or later, a transfer occurring at the start of term or before graduation, and fluctuations in results occurring in an ordinary examination or at a point of progression to further schooling may receive different evaluations.

Behind the family of workers from elsewhere missing the application period may lie a landlord's failure to file the lease, parents' inability to obtain leave, insufficient time to supplement materials, or a delayed move caused by unpaid wages. These difficulties in life already exist; once they enter application and review procedures, they are also processed as missed timing, late submission of materials, or unstable qualifications. Only when temporal differences are received, reviewed, and assigned weight within concrete procedures do these corresponding qualification and evaluation consequences form.

School time is also cumulative. Short absences can be made up for; if they fall precisely at the start of new coursework, before class placement, or before qualification confirmation, the later cost of catching up may increase. A late submission could have been supplemented and corrected; if several procedures close one after another, the family faces a new transfer or a wait. Consequences come not only from “how late” but also from which node was missed and whether later arrangements still leave entry points for repair.

The time of a child’s growth may also be misaligned with organizational time. Students need a longer period of adaptation, but term schedules and evaluation arrangements do not necessarily wait. A family has just finished moving, while applications, coursework, and examinations may already have occurred in succession. This misalignment does not directly prove that the procedures are wrong, nor can it be attributed to insufficient ability in the child. Analysts must separate individual change, family events, and school schedules before judging which temporal difference actually entered qualification or evaluation consequences.

VIII. School Relational Chains

In some regions and particular admission years, changes in housing may affect a family's obtaining or submitting formal materials concerning residence, renting, social insurance, or work. Admissions personnel process only the items required under local rules [Fo5g]; the effects of parents' working hours, family routines, and study space on homework, results, and teachers' evaluations belong to the composite scenario in this book, not to admissions-policy requirements. The entry of these external differences into schools does not make the respective mechanisms of family, locality,

the state, or the market disappear. Stages such as receipt of materials, registration, examinations, and evaluation recast them as student registration, results, written evaluations, places, and qualifications. Current determinations by teachers, homeroom teachers, or administrators form write-back when preserved as differences that can be extracted again in the future. Only when specific personnel or procedures retrieve these records anew in subsequent handling may they again affect family resource arrangements and future opportunities.

Materials formed at the preceding node have not reached their endpoint. Teachers' evaluations may enter recommendations, class positions, reward-and-punishment records, and opportunities for further schooling. Examination results may enter rankings, class placement, scholarships, certificates, and school choice. Consequences continue to be transmitted only after specific personnel or procedures at the next node retrieve and interpret the materials anew and assign them weight. As it unfolds, the chain may branch, weaken, or break. Actual residence does not necessarily become valid materials, and family hardship is not necessarily understood by teachers as a child's lack of effort. These breaks belong to the analysis and cannot be erased by a single image.

Relational chains may extend in several directions at once. A decline in results can enter teachers' written evaluations, parents' expectations, peer positions, and the student's own subsequent participation. Correction in one chain does not necessarily change other records at the same time. A teacher has updated their view, but the family may still allocate resources according to old results. A student's subsequent performance improves, but old recommendation materials may not yet have been updated. Analysts need to trace each chain separately, rather than sum up the whole situation through a single improvement or failure.

There are also repair nodes in the chains. Supplementation and correction of materials, retesting, teachers' supplementary explanations, new information from parents, students' subsequent performance, and peer testimony may all reopen existing judgments. Their effectiveness depends on whether the relevant personnel actually receive them, which record they can amend, and whether they enter later qualification events. Identifying entry points for repair does not guarantee that all consequences can be reversed. It avoids portraying a single break as a fate that must continue.

IX. School Historical Indices and Write-Back

Student-registration records, transfer records, transcripts, rankings, written evaluations, rewards and punishments, disciplinary actions, attendance, competition records, teachers' recommendations, graduation certificates, examination eligibility, and archives are preserved by the corresponding teachers, homeroom teachers, student-registration or archive personnel, and school procedures. They constitute an educational past that may be located and extracted anew in the future. When current judgments are preserved as differences that can be extracted again in the future, write-back has already formed. But preservation itself does not mean that these records automatically take effect or automatically govern the future.

Results, written evaluations, recommendations, and rewards and punishments first produce changes in present evaluations and opportunities, and can be preserved in archives or through teachers' communication. Only when events such as progression to further schooling, transfer, selection for honors, scholarship applications, job seeking, internships, or qualification review occur may admissions, review, recommendation, hiring, or other authorized personnel and procedures retrieve some of these records and give them different weights according to current purposes. An absence, transfer, disciplinary action, examination setback, or teacher's

recommendation affects new evaluations, admission, class placement, financial aid, trust, or qualifications only through this extraction in the present. Likewise, only when the content of write-back is identified anew, extracted, interpreted, or assigned weight in subsequent handling does it re-enter family judgments, changing parents' expectations, resource investment, and arrangements of responsibility.

After receiving teachers' evaluations, peer reactions, and changes in opportunities, students form new modes of participation and expectations of themselves through their own understanding, responses, and subsequent actions. These responses unfold from the present situation and need not wait for future retrieval to occur. Teachers' evaluations cannot bypass these intervening steps and directly determine how students see themselves. Old records cannot cancel new materials, subsequent performance, and counterexamples. A transfer may explain fluctuating results; sustained improvement may change the weight of a low score; and new teacher judgments may correct old written evaluations. A single disciplinary action cannot automatically determine character and the future. Historical indices allow the past to enter the present while requiring current judgments to explain who extracts it, why it is assigned weight, and which materials will compel revision of the original evaluation.

Records may differ in version. An original written evaluation has not yet been amended, while new teacher observations have already formed. A paper archive preserves one instance of handling, while materials held by the family and student reveal another course of events. The bases for coursework and results may also differ before and after a transfer. Current users unaware of when records were formed and for what purpose easily mistake outdated materials for the latest state. Calibrating historical indices requires explaining together who formed the records, when they were formed, and in what events they are extracted anew.

Write-back also involves scope. A classroom evaluation can be used to adjust present teaching; it should not automatically expand into a judgment on graduation qualifications or character. A disciplinary record can establish that a particular instance of handling occurred; it cannot replace observation of subsequent actions. The more readily records pass across events, the more their users need to explain their relevance to the current problem. Only by preserving conditions of scope, time, and counterexamples can the educational past become revisable material rather than permanent labels.

X. How Schools Are Compressed into Fixed Images

Schools are easily compressed into several fixed images. An explanation of schools as channels of upward mobility can grasp the real opening of educational opportunities. But if this leads to the idea that schools will naturally open the future as long as one studies hard, a limited explanation is compressed into an image of upward mobility. Student registration, family fallback support, local qualifications, school resources, and market pressure, along with household registration, physical condition, and breaks in materials, are all obscured. An ideological-machine explanation can grasp some discipline and selection; yet an image that portrays schools entirely as machines of indoctrination and discipline likewise leaves no room for student registration, certificates, teachers' evaluations, peer relations, examination eligibility, and real opportunities. These judgments point in opposite directions; neither explanation's role within a limited scope justifies swallowing up those carrying mechanisms.

Examinations and comparison also have a role within limits, from which an explanation in terms of ability rankings can develop. Treating scores and rankings as the complete expression of ability, however, downweights language habits, training resources, family support, physical condition, care

burdens, and psychological pressure. If every outcome in school is then treated as a natural display of individual ability, question setting, materials, time, and evaluation nodes, along with the different ways students demonstrate abilities in different environments, all drop out of the image. Pointing out these conditions does not cancel differences in ability. Which materials present a particular ability, within what scope it can be compared, and which new performances can test and revise the original evaluation must still be explained separately.

When interpreters portray schools as “educational investment,” they produce another compression, as though investing money, time, and training would yield proportional returns in results, qualifications, and future income. Investment can indeed change some conditions, but it does not automatically turn into outcomes: entry points for materials, physical condition, language habits, teachers' judgments, peer relations, continuity of student registration, and qualification time points may all change how investment enters consequences. Portraying education entirely as investment once again attributes failures to obtain expected outcomes to insufficient investment or wrong choices.

Interpreters who adopt class theory can extract some real differentiating units from differences in family resources, school resources, and opportunities. This explanatory capacity within a limited scope comes from these differentiating units and the processes of extracting, assigning weight to, connecting, and compressing them; it does not belong to the class image. Classes do not exist. The capacity to differentiate within a limited scope does not prove that classes exist at either an overall or a limited level, nor does it turn class theory into an ordinary limited explanation such as Model A or Model B. The basic structure of class theory belongs from the outset to the total-image-subsumption direction of Model C. Interpreters who adopt class theory and its total image cannot subsume schools under a class image. Student registration, continuity of student registration, examinations, evaluation, teachers' evaluations, places, qualifications, transfer nodes, application timing, language adaptation, school space, physical condition, historical indices, write-back, breaks in materials, and future opportunities each have their own concrete bearers and relational chains. If interpreters downgrade all these mechanisms to subsidiary materials of the class image, this is precisely how total-image subsumption manifests itself in explanations of schools.

XI. Preventing Complexity-Based Conflation and Calibrating Explanations of Schools

Schools are indeed complex, yet comparisons can still be made on the basis of concrete events. When a child encounters obstacles to initial admission, one must identify how application timing, residence documentation, household registration, school places, rental stability, and parents' work records operate. The applicable items of formal documentation are still determined by the local admission year and category; the child is not required to have student registration beforehand. In progression to further schooling or transfer, continuity of existing student registration, receipt of materials, grade timing, teachers' evaluations, peer relations, and family migration form another combination. For these qualification events, merely saying “schools provide opportunities” cannot explain who obtains which opportunities; merely saying “schools select” likewise cannot explain which material excludes whom in which procedure.

The materials extracted through examinations and teachers' evaluations are not entirely the same. Examinations involve training resources, language habits, family routines, physical condition, examination rules, and psychological pressure; in teachers' evaluations, classroom performance, family communication, language habits, attendance, conditions for homework, and physical condition are extracted anew. Comparison cannot stop at listing differences. It must also examine

whether explanations identify real actors, explain how materials are formed and used, trace qualification, evaluation, and time nodes, and leave entry points for revision through new materials. This provides a concrete basis for distinguishing which explanations extract key differences, which obscure important nodes, and which compress schools into a single image. Explanations that make relational chains clear usually have greater comparative power than simply attaching an overall label to schools. Complexity does not mean that all explanations are equivalent, still less that judgment is impossible.

Acknowledging that explanations are limited and keeping omissions, boundaries, and counterexamples in view is not itself Model C. Only when complexity is used to cancel valid comparison, revision, and calibration, placing valid, limited, erroneous, and invalid explanations on the same level, does this move in the direction of Model C's erasure of distinctions between explanations. Limited models can each extract different sets of differences: one model is suited to analyzing how examinations form comparisons, while another may better explain how family fallback support or local qualifications enter admission events. Different explanations may be used for different events; one cannot retrospectively deny an explanation’s validity merely because a different explanation performs better in another, unrelated event. Comparison must specify the concrete questions being compared, the respective scopes of application, and the relevant evidence. Resolving a concrete causal disagreement at hand naturally requires returning to that question for checking and comparison, but this does not require all comparisons to be confined to a single event or the same set of materials. The models need not merge into a single image, nor can they be judged equally unsuccessful because each has omissions. Only by comparing their explanatory power, differentiation bias, and capacity for revision within clearly specified relational fields, boundaries, and evidence can complexity be prevented from becoming an excuse to cancel judgment.

Understanding schools requires identifying concrete events such as admission, transfer, examinations, class placement, teachers' evaluations, disciplinary action, rewards and punishments, progression to further schooling, graduation, internships, or qualification review. It also requires tracing how materials are received and how differences in life are extracted by teachers, homeroom teachers, admissions or review personnel, school administrators, and student-registration, examination, archive, and qualification procedures, then processed through certification, evaluation, ranking, recording, or recommendation to produce consequences for student registration, evaluation, qualifications, and opportunities. These analytical dimensions have no fixed order: an admission event may begin with residence documentation and application timing; a classroom event may first present teachers' observations and students' responses; an examination event may begin with question setting, answering, and the use of results. Analysts should follow the materials that first change qualifications or opportunities, then adjust boundaries in light of newly appearing nodes, avoiding a descent into rigid procedural checklists.

In this tracing, positions from which students and families can explain their circumstances must be preserved. Teachers, administrators, parents, students, and peers may hold different materials, and their accounts may conflict. Formal records have limits and cannot automatically be treated as the complete facts; the existence of objections, however, does not mean that all accounts are equally valid. Analysis needs to compare when materials were formed, the procedures actors control, and the relevance of accounts to the current event, then indicate which conclusions can stand and which parts still await revision through later materials. When old records are retrieved anew in current procedures, their connection to the present state must likewise be examined under these conditions, identifying which new materials and counterexamples require changes to the original explanation.

Student registration, examinations, evaluations, qualifications, and records can indeed change students' circumstances and future opportunities, but all must operate through specific personnel, materials, organizations, and procedures. Family fallback support, local qualifications, state materials, and market pressures enter schools along different paths. Materials and relations of the family, locality, state, market, body, and community are likewise extracted only within limited scopes in concrete events. Write-back forms when specific personnel, materials, organizations, or procedures preserve the results of school handling as differences that can be extracted again in the future. Only when specific personnel or procedures subsequently retrieve, interpret, or assign weight anew to the relevant records may they take effect again in family, local, state, market, bodily, or community relations, thereby affecting parents' expectations, resource investment, and students' subsequent actions. Such tracing neither portrays schools as natural channels of upward mobility nor confines them to the role of ideological machines, still less subsumes educational differences back into class entities and class theory's total image.

Notes

[F02] Articles 3–7 of the Ministry of Education's Measures for the Administration of Student Registration in Primary and Secondary Schools, Jiao Ji [2025] No. 1, provide for student-registration information, the management system, and the establishment and updating of student registration. Articles 12–15 provide for changes in student registration and continuity when progressing to another level of schooling or transferring. The two-month period for establishing a file under Article 6 applies after initial school-enrollment formalities have been completed; it cannot replace admission-eligibility and admission procedures. This note follows the official full-text republication by the Huainan Municipal Education and Sports Bureau (https://sjtj.huainan.gov.cn/public/118319840/1260535420.html, rechecked on 2026-09-30). The document is dated 2025-01-03; Article 30 provides that it takes effect on the date of issuance.

[F05g] See Note F05; the use here is confined to the jurisdictions, periods, procedures, and materials explicitly specified in that note.

Chapter 33. Platform Society: Differentiation Networks of Accounts, Records, Ranking, and Visibility

I. Platforms Cannot Be Presented as Mere Tools

A platform is easily portrayed as a tool, as though people used it to find work, buy things, chat, rent housing, book medical appointments, submit homework, or publish content, and could leave once they were done. Another account treats it as a virtual space, as though a screen separated what happens there from real life. The distinction between online and offline cannot adequately explain platform society. Both understandings omit platforms' positions within social relations. Personnel responsible for rulemaking, operations, review, customer service, and technical maintenance within companies use accounts, record systems, ranking rules, and review procedures to preserve materials, arrange opportunities, distribute visibility, and form evaluations. Labor relations, trust, and pathways of punishment also change as a result.

A platform node, as used here, refers to the relational positions of company personnel, rules, procedures, accounts, records, and users within an event. A platform has no unified personality and is neither an autonomous underlying reality nor the social totality. It can produce real consequences, but it does not think and act on its own. As people use platforms, account and record systems maintained by the relevant personnel also preserve records of behavior. Ranking rules, review procedures, and evaluators in the current event form account evaluations, arrange opportunities, limit visibility, and carry records into the future.

In concrete events, accounts, real-name information, records, scores, labels, ranking, recommendations, visibility, bans, complaints, orders, traffic, rules, permissions, social relations, transaction evaluations, and penalty pathways connect with one another to form differentiation networks. These items are only common entry points, not a complete list. Differentiating units within platforms remain potentially infinite.

People using the same platform service do not thereby enter identical relations. Workers are concerned with whether they can obtain orders and income; merchants, with whether their goods can be seen; parents, with whether notices and materials have arrived; and content publishers, with review and circulation. A user may simultaneously be a buyer, an evaluator, someone being evaluated, and an appellant. The materials encountered, permissions held, and consequences borne differ at each position. The term 'platform user' cannot flatten these differences.

Different positions also exist within platform companies. Those who make rules do not necessarily handle individual appeals. Customer-service personnel can receive explanations but may lack authority to amend records. Review personnel can make a determination about a piece of content or a transaction, while technical-maintenance personnel are responsible for whether the system operates according to established arrangements. An analysis of a concrete event must identify which personnel or procedures actually extract materials, form judgments, and put consequences into effect. It cannot assign every action to an abstract 'platform.'

II. The Family of Workers from Elsewhere Enters Platform Society

Let us continue with that family of workers from elsewhere. The family always lives within real relations. Platforms enter their lives through events involving job seeking, renting, education,

medical care, kin, and debt; they do not create another world isolated from reality. The father works at construction sites and may find work through chat groups of people from the same place of origin, recruitment platforms, recruitment information in short videos, or construction-site groups. Information posted by recruiters is presented after ranking, affecting which site he goes to and whose claims he believes; the related chats also remain in accounts and record systems. The mother does casual work at a restaurant and may also take orders through delivery, domestic-service, or hourly-work platforms. When she takes orders, ratings, response speed, and completion records change her next opportunity. What actually needs tracing is how company personnel use accounts, records, ranking, and evaluation procedures to preserve real differences anew and then bring the processing results back into life.

Housing and education events likewise pass through different entry points. Landlords post rental listings through rental platforms and consult tenants' credit, chat records, payment methods, and past evaluations. A child's schooling involves home–school chat groups, application systems, homework platforms, notification software, and online materials. Whether parents can see group messages in time and successfully upload materials may enter teachers' judgments of the family's cooperation.

In medical care and debts to relatives, the elder's treatment involves appointment platforms, medical-insurance settlement, medical-record uploads, and online-consultation records, and is affected by appointment timing, real-name information, medical-record uploads, and payment records. When relatives press for repayment, chat software, money-transfer records, and family chat groups also enter the event. The money-transfer records, chat content, and silence in the group that remain may later be extracted anew by family members.

The same family may also move materials among entry points on several platforms. Phone numbers, real-name information, payment methods, and addresses are used to establish different accounts, while work messages, school notices, appointment results, and money-transfer receipts are scattered across different procedures. When one entry point fails, the effect may not stop at a single service. Restricted payment may obstruct order-taking; a changed phone number may interrupt notifications; and a shared device may mix together records of different family members. These connections must be traced one by one, rather than attributed directly to the family's 'not knowing how to use platforms.'

Family members differ in their command of platforms. Parents may be familiar with taking orders or chatting but unfamiliar with submitting school materials. A child who can operate a device may not have authority to handle real-name, payment, or medical information. An elder relies on family help to book an appointment, yet the account's operation record may show only one success or failure. Operating ability should not be treated as a fixed individual attribute. How care, devices, time, and permissions jointly change results must also enter the analysis.

III. Entry through Accounts and the Storage and Retrieval of Records

An account is a basic entry point into platform society, with a role far beyond that of an ordinary name. It carries history, permissions, credit, relations, transactions, evaluations, labels, and penalty records. Taking orders, speaking, buying, selling, livestreaming, commenting, appealing, entering groups, or obtaining recommendations often depends on account status. The relevant personnel and procedures also identify users primarily through accounts. Real people are thus represented as real-name information, phone numbers, payment methods, past records, scores, devices, locations, group relations, and violation records. These data can present only part of a person's circumstances.

Many platform difficulties arise at the point of translation: a person's real circumstances cannot readily be turned into an account-based image of the person that company personnel and established procedures can process. Within this process, accounts, records, ranking, and visibility each perform a distinct role. Accounts carry entry eligibility and permissions; records preserve materials; ranking arranges the order of presentation within an event; and visibility indicates whether users can actually see or be seen. The four are related, but their distinctions should still be maintained.

The formation of an account-based image also involves selection. Which behaviors are recorded, which differences are placed under the same label, when activity is treated as continuous, and what anomalies require review all depend on classifications and processing arrangements established and maintained by company personnel. Facts of life that the system has not preserved may be difficult to bring into an appeal. Preserved fragments, meanwhile, may be detached from their circumstances at the time and reinterpreted in another event.

The relevant procedures encounter precisely these account statuses, records, scores, and labels, not a person's whole life. This way of processing readily produces misalignment. A person reliable in real life may fail to gain the trust of trading partners or review procedures because the account is too new and has too few ratings and records. Someone has in fact encountered difficulties, yet the record retains only lateness, slow responses, or canceled orders. After processing, a malicious complaint may leave only the label 'complaint upheld.' A change of device, phone number, or city may also be marked as anomalous by established identification rules, and risk procedures may even judge normal behavior suspicious. All these examples show a distance between the real person and the account-based image.

The formation of records may itself be disputed. Behind cases in which the record 'retains only lateness, slow responses, or canceled orders,' an order may have been canceled voluntarily by the worker or in connection with the other party changing requirements, a device failure, or an emergency in real life. An unread message may not have been opened, or its alert may not have arrived; the account may have been switched, or the device shared by family members. If the final record retains only 'canceled' and 'unread,' the reasons for their formation are compressed. Later users retrieving the record must explain what it can prove and what it cannot.

One person may also occupy several account positions at once. Work accounts, shared family accounts, purchase accounts, and accounts for public speech carry different relations, while the same phone or payment method may connect them. Whether accounts are identified as belonging to the same person, whether their histories can be transferred, and whether restrictions are shared all change permissions and risks. Analysis must still distinguish the real person, identity materials that can be submitted, and the account-based image established by procedures. Identity information cannot replace the person.

Account and record systems preserve records of large amounts of past behavior in ways set by company personnel. A purchase, a negative review, a complaint, an instance of lateness, a statement, a violation, a ban, or a failed appeal may all be extracted anew in the future.

Such records can appear repeatedly across times, settings, and relational chains. Past behavior continues to participate in later events in forms such as labels, scores, recommendations, and restrictions. Chat records left by the father in a recruitment group may become evidence in a claim for unpaid wages, or be forwarded by others and become evaluation materials. A negative review received by the mother on an order-taking platform may affect the following week's orders. A parent's slower reply in a group may leave an impression on a teacher. A failed appointment booking for the elder may force the family to rearrange care and time.

Records become candidate materials for future judgments and therefore cannot be treated merely as neutral storage space. Historical indices do not produce power on their own. Only when operations, review, customer-service, or technical-maintenance personnel, or users, retrieve records in a current event, interpret them for concrete purposes, and assign them weight does the past enter the present.

Different records may also conflict. Transaction-completion records, chat content, proof of payment, location data, and the two parties' evaluations may present different courses of events. Supplementary explanations from customer service and original labels may not be updated in step. Judgment cannot rely only on the most easily retrieved material. Current personnel should compare when records were formed, their sources, applicable scopes, and amendment statuses, while keeping entry points open for contrary materials to enter processing.

IV. Ranking, Visibility, and Evaluation Authority on Platforms

When two workers taking orders have accounts at different positions in the rankings, the opportunities they face differ. When one request for help is widely reposted and another is seen by almost no one, the two are also unlikely to produce the same consequences. Record systems preserve materials, while ranking rules arrange opportunities within the current event: recommendations and searches affect which accounts are readily seen; the order in which goods are presented, whether content is hidden, and which evaluations appear first also produce different distributions of opportunity. Visibility has real effects on income, reputation, relations, trust, and action space. It is anything but an empty name.

Content that is not visible still exists; it simply has difficulty entering chains of opportunity. Content has been posted, yet no one sees it; an account still exists, yet cannot be found in a search; a product has been listed, yet appears far down the list. Workers remain online but still receive no orders. If requests for help are pushed into positions where responding is difficult, they too are unlikely to produce consequences. In home–school groups, a parent's silence may also be interpreted as unwillingness to cooperate. As visibility distributes opportunities, it leaves many accounts, pieces of content, goods, forms of labor, and requests for help at the margins. These circumstances do not necessarily all result from penalties.

Power does indeed often operate through ranking, downweighting, restrictions on reach, hiding, bans, and the rejection of appeals, and it need not be accompanied by public commands. Once an account has been downweighted, opportunities have already diminished even if no one has explicitly stated what is prohibited. When content is hidden, that alone is enough to obstruct its effects even without public refutation. When an appeal is rejected, the reasons may remain unclear even though the penalty has already been entered into the record.

The effects of a ranking position must also be considered within the concrete event. Ranking higher does not necessarily bring the same kind of benefit: goods being seen may increase transactions; an appeal for help being seen may bring support; and personal content being widely seen may also increase misreading, attacks, or reports. Being farther down usually reduces opportunities for contact, yet not every consequence can be inferred from position alone. The weight of visibility depends on who can see, when they see, what action they can take afterward, and whether subsequent evaluations are in turn preserved.

Actions among users also enter ranking chains. Clicks, time spent viewing, evaluations, reposts, blocking, and reports can become candidate materials, from which ranking arrangements set by company personnel then extract some differences. These behaviors provide only limited signals

and cannot fully determine the value of content; nor do ranking rules discover what is true on their own. The formation of signals always involves concrete users, record systems, and rule arrangements.

Differences in accounts and records do not turn into consequences on their own. Personnel or procedures must extract, evaluate, rank, or restrict them. Personnel and procedures that can extract differences and turn them into scores, labels, recommendations, restrictions, or penalties can also affect users' positions within platform relations. Who determines whether an account is reliable? Each of the following has actual handlers: whether a delivery rider or domestic worker can be recommended, where a merchant ranks, whether content is visible, whether a complaint is upheld, whether an appeal succeeds, and whether past records affect the next opportunity. These processes involve evaluation authority and ranking authority within platform networks, far more than mere opinions.

Rulemakers, customer-service staff, and review personnel within platform companies, together with merchants, evaluators, group administrators, and complainants, may all hold differing degrees of authority to extract differences and evaluation authority. Recommendation, payment, and credit procedures also carry established processing authority. Platform power appears not only in account ownership, but also in record preservation, rule setting, ranking for visibility, credit evaluation, hiding content, banning accounts, and handling appeals.

Different evaluators have different materials available. Trading partners may see only a page, price, and past ratings. Customer-service personnel can see appeal materials and processing records. Review personnel judge content or behavior under current rules, while group administrators may impose restrictions based on interactions within the group. If a judgment formed at one position is extended directly to other positions, limited materials may be expanded into an overall evaluation of the entire account.

Authority to extract differences also determines which materials remain outside judgment. When procedures accept only established formats, circumstances that cannot be turned into images, text, timestamps, or specified options may fail to enter processing. If personnel examine only recent records, long-term reliable conduct is also easily overlooked. Analysis need not add all materials of life without limit, but it should explain how the current window was formed and examine whether excluded materials could change the conclusion.

V. Platform Rules Are Not a Stable Background

Platform rules change weights and cannot be treated as a stable background. Recommendation methods, review standards, appeal entry points, the scale of penalties, and merchant rules may all be adjusted, changing accounts' weights within the relevant events. After a rule update, previously normal speech, order-taking, transactions, and interactions may face new ranking, evaluation, or restrictions. Previously effective practices may cease to work, and long-silent records may receive new interpretations. A once-unimportant label may even begin to affect recommendations, searches, and order-taking. The same account, the same set of records, and the same behavior may thus produce consequences different from those in the past.

For those who rely on platforms for orders, a rule update directly affects income; it is no distant technical adjustment. Families relying on home–school platforms for notices are also affected by changes in entry points, alerts, and submission methods. After rulemaking and operations personnel complete an update, review procedures and ranking rules may give old records weight anew or interrupt actions that could otherwise have continued.

Rule changes also produce gaps in understanding. Company personnel may already have changed entry points, standards, or classifications while users still act on past experience. Customer-service explanations, page prompts, and actual processing may also fall out of step. Records of mistaken selections or delays left in this way cannot immediately be understood as users' refusal to comply. Analysis must trace when rules changed, how notices were delivered, who had time to adjust, and whether supplementation and correction are allowed in dealing with penalties.

Rules also have scopes of application. A restriction may concern only a certain kind of transaction, content, or account status and should not automatically be extended into a judgment on all actions. An update may change recommendations without necessarily changing payment or appeals. Treating platform rules as a single whole obscures differences among departments, personnel, and procedures, and makes responsibility difficult to locate.

VI. How Real Differences Enter Platform Ranking

Platforms are not closed online systems. The key to platform society lies in how real differences gain new representations through accounts, records, and ranking procedures maintained by company personnel, and are then preserved, ranked, and written back. Online life has not replaced offline life; the two have long been connected through concrete events.

Care and the body offer an initial view of how life circumstances are compressed. In everyday life, care responsibilities reduce the time available online, and bodily condition may be reflected in completion rates, lateness rates, and the risk of complaints. Once they enter a platform, care responsibilities may leave only a record of time offline, and physical fatigue only a record of completion speed. When picking up her child prevents the mother from staying online for long periods, the record system may retain only slow responses, few orders taken, and low activity.

Spatial and material conditions are also recast: geographical location may become delivery distance, nearby recommendations, and local rankings; device condition affects response speed and content quality; and network stability is reflected in online status. Once movement between places enters a platform, it may leave only changes in location. After the father moves to another city to find work, his location, device, and account behavior all change, and the relevant rules may generate markers on this basis. Mandarin, dialects, and modes of expression bring another set of life differences into procedures: they may enter customer-service evaluations, livestream viewing, and content circulation; once language differences enter a platform, they may leave only the form of replies. In another situation, a parent working the night shift misses messages in a home–school group, while the teacher or school review personnel may see only a failure to respond in time.

Real-name information also bears on account certification and payment permissions; market credit bears on eligibility to transact; and local acquaintance groups carry information on jobs and rental housing, along with reputations within the groups. The differences that procedures can handle are fewer and more readily compared, but a compressed marker cannot replace the full circumstances that produced it.

Real differences may also be recombined on platforms. Location, device, payment method, and time of operation may each look ordinary in isolation, yet form a risk marker when jointly extracted under the same rule. When scores, completion rates, and response speed enter ranking together, they may also change a person's position in taking orders. Such a recombination does not create a person's essence. It only means that procedures set by company personnel represent and assign weight to differences in a particular way within a specific event; personnel and procedures in the current event then carry the results back into reality.

VII. Platform Time and the Costs of Complaints, Penalties, and Appeals

Different platforms turn different business processes into calculable time. Time in everyday life does not enter systems automatically. Only after rulemaking and operations personnel set time limits is time in everyday life within the corresponding activity converted into response periods, completion periods, popularity periods, appeal periods, penalty periods, or record periods. Depending on the specific activity and published rules, the relevant times may include some of those associated with registration, responses, fulfillment, refunds, appeals, handling, or record retention. Recommendation cycles, popularity windows, read-status timestamps, money-transfer times, and deletion times do not necessarily all coexist on the same platform.

Once established, these times are readily recorded and compared precisely, and may even become grounds for penalties. For example, lateness on an ordinary order may have different consequences from lateness on an order during peak hours. Whether a message is answered immediately or several hours later may also change trust. Once the appeal deadline for a complaint has passed, the relevant position may also become temporarily fixed through procedural handling.

Record systems and ranking rules turn people's busyness, fatigue, care responsibilities, network delays, and real difficulties into processable markers such as slow response, poor completion, missed deadlines, or untrustworthiness. A late reply, a missed appeal period, or lateness at a peak time may all be transformed within the current event into differences in credit, scores, recommendations, and penalties.

Platform time also distributes waiting unevenly. Some people can wait for a review, refund, or appeal; others depend on that day's income, and every day of account restrictions adds another layer of pressure on their lives. Some can submit supplementary materials repeatedly, while others can deal with the matter only once in a break from work. The same processing time need not produce the same weight. Judging this difference also requires returning income, care, device use, and qualification deadlines together to the current relational field.

Under rules that certain platforms have published and that apply to the corresponding activities, measures taken against accounts may lower visibility, restrict some functions, suspend services, or terminate eligibility. Platforms do not necessarily all employ these measures together. Downweighting, restrictions on reach, point deductions, and hiding, as well as restrictions on withdrawals, taking orders, speaking, or group activities, each have their corresponding scope of application. The specific measures, targets, periods, and means of appeal still vary with the platform, activity, and version of the rules. A complaint may trigger point deductions, restrictions on reach, an account ban, a refund, compensation, or cancellation of eligibility, but this does not establish that every complaint passes through the same set of measures.

When review and operations personnel impose a penalty through procedures and then preserve the result of handling it as a difference that can be extracted again later, this constitutes a form of write-back. Whether penalty records can actually be retrieved in subsequent applications, appeals, recommendations, and transactions must still be judged according to the rules, authority, and subsequent handling of the corresponding activity. A successful appeal can restore some opportunities but does not necessarily guarantee the deletion of all historical records; failure may leave the penalty in the record.

Complaint materials and appeal materials often occupy different positions. Complainants can submit screenshots, evaluations, or accounts of events, while those complained about need to know why they are restricted, which materials can answer the complaint, and who will review them anew. If a penalty occurs before its reasons are delivered, appellants must also prepare materials after

opportunities have already diminished. Procedural sequence thus becomes part of real consequences.

Appeals both serve to correct errors and incur costs. Whether people can find an entry point, understand the rules, possess evidence, and wait for a reply all change the actual weight of a penalty. If customer service offers only stock replies, appellants must spend more time finding effective explanations. When an account is banned, people who depend on that day's income find it especially hard to wait. After a failed appeal, the penalty may remain fixed in the record.

For a casual worker such as the mother, every stretch of appeal time after an account restriction may also be a stretch without income. If the father is removed from a recruitment group, the work information he can access diminishes. If parents fail to submit materials and cannot find an appeal entry point, a child's school-admission procedure may also be delayed. An appeal requires an entry point, time, evidence, and the ability to understand rules; those concerned must also be able to afford to wait for the result. In life, it has never been merely an abstract right.

After an appeal succeeds, relational chains may not all recover at once. A penalty can be revoked, yet previous visibility, trust in transactions, group position, or family arrangements do not immediately return to their former state. If others have already retrieved the records, the associated evaluations may persist. Examining appeals therefore cannot stop at the result field. Which permissions have been restored, which records corrected, which consequences have already spread, and whether supplementation and revision can continue must each be checked.

Time records themselves may also require calibration. System time can prove when an operation was preserved, but may not fully explain when a user saw a notice, when the user began dealing with it, or why the process was interrupted. Read status, online status, and response duration are all limited materials and cannot automatically prove a person's attitude. If new materials can explain a delayed notice, device failure, or real event, the weight of the original time marker may need adjustment.

VIII. Platform Relational Chains

The consequences of platform events do not stop inside platforms. Accounts, records, scores, ranking, visibility, and penalties are transmitted through nodes such as labor, family, locality, state, market, and school, connecting events of labor, education, medical care, kinship, and markets. For example, when the father finds work through a recruitment platform or coworkers' group, whether information is true, coworkers' evaluations are reliable, and past chat records have been retained all affect which job he enters. Scores also enter income chains: when the mother takes hourly work or casual food-service work through a platform, scores affect her next opportunity; a negative review may lower her recommendation position, and lateness may also affect her eligibility to take orders.

Home–school platforms enter education chains. A child's homework, notices, applications, and material uploads may all have to be completed through platforms. Whether parents can see messages in time, successfully upload materials, and reply on time also enters teachers' evaluations and school procedures. Appointment platforms enter medical chains. The elder's treatment involves appointments, medical records, medical insurance, and online materials. Unfamiliarity with operations, missed appointment slots, or failed medical-record uploads all change access to medical care. Chat records enter kinship chains: relatives' demands for repayment, family disputes, money-transfer records, voice messages, and group silence may all be preserved, making the past within kinship relations easier to extract anew.

The same platform record may also enter several relational chains. An account restriction can first change income from orders, in turn leading the family to rearrange spending and care. Such consequences in life do not require family members to have consulted platform records beforehand. An argument in a group chat can affect local reputation and then be carried into renting, job seeking, or kinship relations. When records or evaluations pass between nodes, personnel or procedures must actually encounter, adopt, or forward the relevant materials. Transmission cannot be portrayed as records spreading on their own. At the same time, relational chains also branch, break, and weaken. A negative review may affect one ranking without necessarily entering long-term penalties. Chat records can serve as materials for claiming unpaid wages, yet may fail to change the processing result for lack of other proof. A failed submission of a home–school notice may also be repaired through a teacher's supplementary confirmation. Analysts must see both continuity and breaks; a platform's leaving traces cannot be equated with consequences necessarily lasting forever.

IX. Platform Historical Indices and Write-Back

If specific platform rules and lawful data-processing arrangements preserve records of transactions, chats, scores, complaints, appeals, or payments, some of their content may be extracted anew in subsequent matters. Whether traces of likes, reposts, browsing, follows, blocking, group chats, location, and deletion are preserved, for how long, and by whom they can be retrieved must still be judged separately by platform, business activity, authority, and version. Account and record systems do not thereby become subjects acting on their own apart from personnel and rules. Records silent in ordinary times may gain weight anew when people take orders, seek jobs, rent housing, apply for services, join groups, or handle disputes.

The relevant personnel retrieve, evaluate, and adopt records in the current event, forming new judgments. When the results of handling the event are preserved as differences that can be extracted again in the future, this constitutes write-back. When later personnel or procedures use these materials in new events, they may change how the person concerned is recommended, trusted, or employed, how housing is rented to them, or how others pay attention to, help, or exclude them. They may also carry evaluations back into family, local, school, market, medical, and kinship relations.

This chain of subsequent effects must be distinguished from immediate consequences. A negative review may reduce opportunities to take orders; a complaint changes account status; and a ban may even cut off income. A failed appointment booking forces the family to adjust care. Not all of these consequences have to wait until the results of handling the event are preserved before they occur. A group-chat dispute may enter local relations, money-transfer records may be used by relatives in debt disputes, and rental chat records may affect a landlord's choice. A parent's absence from a home–school platform may also lead teachers to judge the family's cooperation on that basis. Whether these materials are used and when they take effect must be traced along concrete relations. Once the results left by company personnel and users handling events at hand are preserved, they can become materials extracted again in the future. Preservation, however, does not guarantee that they will take effect later. New materials, contrary records, counterexamples raised in appeals, and subsequent events may all prompt the relevant personnel to adjust weights, revoke judgments, or correct the original image. Write-back is not the final word.

Historical indices also require distinctions among versions. An original evaluation, a customer-service supplement, an appeal result, and later handling may appear in succession. Users who see only the earliest label may overlook corrections already made; retaining only the final result,

meanwhile, may conceal losses previously caused by a penalty. Only by explaining when a record was formed, who amended it, why it was amended, and the event to which it applies can different versions be kept from being pieced together into a seamless history. Moreover, a record's deletion or temporary silence still does not warrant a direct judgment that the relevant history has disappeared. A user's inability to see a record does not establish whether other authorized personnel or procedures can retrieve it. Nor does a trace remaining in a system mean that it necessarily acquires high weight in the next event. Whether history can enter the present depends on who retrieves it and why, how it is interpreted, and whether contrary materials can enter judgment at the same time.

X. How Platforms Are Compressed into Fixed Images

Platforms are often compressed into several fixed images. The tool image sees only life becoming more convenient. Although a tool explanation can account for this convenience, it leaves record preservation, opportunity ranking, identity evaluation, visibility distribution, and penalties out of view. The virtual-space image places platforms outside reality. A virtual-space explanation grasps the distinctive forms of online interaction, yet easily overlooks the fact that platforms have long entered nodes of labor, family, locality, school, medical care, market, and state.

Analyzing systems, rules, recommendations, and review helps explain how technology works. The purely technological image, however, assigns the entire problem to these mechanisms, concealing the social differences, evaluation authority, appeal costs, and real consequences behind them. Another account depicts technology as an all-powerful subject, as though every consequence were directly determined by a single algorithmic will. Actual events often involve rulemaking, receipt of data, user actions, human review, customer-service handling, merchant choices, and external qualification procedures simultaneously. Technical procedures certainly matter, but not every decision necessarily comes from the same mechanism, and there is no invisible unified will. The responsibilities that concrete personnel should bear must be made clear, while the continuing effects of ranking and record procedures on visibility and opportunities must also be retained.

The public-opinion image focuses on voices, quarrels, and expression. The public-opinion explanation sees expression and circulation; accounts, records, ranking, taking orders, payment, penalties, and transaction opportunities thus recede from view. Portraying all users as passive recipients likewise produces misjudgment. Users are subject to ranking, penalties, and entry restrictions, but they also preserve materials, lodge appeals, adjust actions, establish groups, evaluate one another, or move relations elsewhere. These responses may not be effective, and must certainly not be romanticized. They nonetheless form new records and nodes, thereby changing subsequent judgments.

Interpreters who adopt class theory may also subsume platforms under a total class image. Within a limited scope, they can extract income differences and relations of control in platform labor, yet cannot explain another set of questions. People whose incomes are similarly low still experience entirely different consequences because of differences in account status, scores, complaint records, response speed, ranking position, group relations, appeal outcomes, device condition, rule updates, and the risk of bans. The fact that people with similarly low incomes experience different consequences is admittedly insufficient on its own to prove that classes do not exist. The key is that class classification alone cannot explain the concrete mechanisms of accounts, scores, ranking, visibility, appeals, and write-back. Class theory also reduces accounts, records, scores, ranking, visibility, complaints, appeals, bans, group relations, and write-back to subsidiary materials of the total image. Class entities do not exist, but labor, wages, property, debt, risk, domination, and

heavy exit costs are real; real communities and social differentiation networks continue to exist. The capacity for distinction extraction within a limited scope comes from real differentiating units and the processes of extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression applied to them. It cannot be attributed to the class image. The image itself is an output of low-dimensional compression, projection, and naming of these differences. Class theory belongs neither to Model A nor to Model B; it belongs from the outset to the total-image-subsumption direction of Model C. Model C's direction of erasure of distinctions between explanations, meanwhile, uses the multiplicity of differences to cancel judgments of weight. Both mechanisms destroy the conditions for healthy comparison.

XI. Comparison amid Complexity and Calibration of Platform Explanations

Platform society is indeed complex. If we therefore declare all explanations much the same, or mix labor, consumption, social interaction, public opinion, and rules together, analysis cannot continue. Concrete events provide different entry points, and the materials to be checked must be identified according to the question.

Investigating a dispute over taking orders requires examining how account status, scores, response time, ranking, historical completion rates, complaint records, and penalties operate. In a dispute over home–school communication, one may first need to distinguish whether messages can be seen, when parents reply, and whether materials have been uploaded successfully. How teachers record matters and whether the system provides confirmation also affect the understanding of this course of events. Even where accounts and records are involved in both cases, their effects cannot be judged apart from the matter at hand.

In a housing rental, property listings, chat records, credit, payment methods, evaluations, and identity certification enter rental relations. Real-name information, available appointment slots, time windows, medical-record uploads, and payment in medical appointment booking must instead be placed back within the concrete process of seeking medical care. In content circulation, visibility, reposting relations, group position, reports, restrictions on reach, and account history in turn acquire greater weight. Only by distinguishing these events can we establish how each item of material connects to the corresponding consequences, rather than substituting a string of platform terms for explanation.

Acknowledging complexity in a healthy way means selecting a warranted window for the question and making the explanation's limits explicit. This window may be narrowed or expanded on the basis of materials. In handling a dispute over taking orders, we can first compare order requirements, completion records, both parties' materials, evaluations, and appeal handling, without having to explain the whole of platform society at once. If we find that account history, care responsibilities, or rule changes are altering the result, we can then expand the window. Limited distinction extraction remains constrained by events and materials; it cannot arbitrarily select differences favorable to an existing position.

Although platforms are complex, judgments remain possible, as do comparisons among models. Calibration of explanations must compare which key differences various models actually extract and which nodes of family, locality, state, market, and school they obscure. An explanation that identifies concrete personnel, procedures, materials, and chains of consequences, and explains how counterexamples compel revision of judgments, has greater explanatory power than one that sums up everything as “technical control” or “market domination.” Testing a model's scope of application must be done within the scope it claims and against evidence concerning the same question.

Another explanation's better performance in a different event does not in itself directly invalidate the first. If, within the original model's claimed scope, materials or counterexamples concerning the same question require revisions to weights, paths, or scope of application, the model should be adjusted accordingly. Total-image subsumption that refuses to acknowledge counterexamples and destroys the conditions for comparison cannot be transformed into a healthy model merely by narrowing its scope of application after the fact.

Understanding platform society is best begun with an event in progress. Taking orders, scoring, account bans, complaints, renting, appointment booking, home–school communication, group-chat disputes, payment disputes, content circulation, account appeals, and information searches each offer a different entry point. Analysis has no fixed starting point. An account-ban event can be investigated from the grounds for the penalty and the appeal entry point; an order-taking event often first reveals ranking and scores; home–school communication may first encounter delivery problems involving notices, accounts, and materials. Analysts should trace the differences that first change eligibility, income, trust, or visibility and adjust the relational-field window in light of new materials. Steps that are always the same merely turn platform explanation into a procedural checklist.

As an event is traced, who extracts differences in life and which personnel or procedures preserve, rank, evaluate, restrict, recommend, or penalize gradually become visible as concrete relations open to examination. Account-based images may obscure whole persons; rule updates change weights; visibility distributes opportunities; and the costs of penalties and appeals change paths of action. Each of these effects has its own bearers, and records also return along relational chains to family, labor, school, medical, and kinship relations. Calibration must ask when old records regain weight, when current judgments are preserved as differences that can be extracted again later, and who retrieves, interprets, or assigns weight to them in subsequent handling. When counterexamples appear, the original explanation should keep an entry point open for revision. Any explanation that compresses these relations into a single image must undergo calibration by counterexamples.

Calibration must also retain positions from which those concerned can give their accounts. Company personnel, workers, merchants, consumers, parents, teachers, and group members may hold different records, and their accounts may conflict. Formal records present only some facts; the existence of disagreement does not mean all accounts are equally valid. Interpreters must compare the sources and times of formation of materials, the authority held by actors, and their connection to the current event, then mark which conclusions can stand and which parts still require revision.

Accounts, records, ranking, visibility, and penalties do indeed change people's positions and opportunities. Their effects must pass through concrete personnel, rules, materials, and procedures and cannot be attributed to an abstract platform. Differences in labor, family, locality, state, market, school, medical care, and community enter platforms within limited scopes, and processing results also return to these real relations. Tracing this path prevents platforms from being elevated into what society fundamentally is and complexity from becoming an excuse to abandon comparison. The total image of class theory likewise cannot subsume real and diverse platform mechanisms.

Chapter 34. Revolutions and Movements: Differences Gaining Weight Together, Rapid Connections between Nodes, and Action Write-Back

I. Distinguishing Revolutions from Movements and Tracing Paths of Explanation

Revolutions and movements are easily compressed into a single image. “An eruption after class contradictions accumulate” is a common explanation; mass anger, youth impulsiveness, state oppression, or harm to a national community are also often invoked as causes. Interpreters who adopt these accounts may extract some real differences. The explanatory capacity that can stand within a limited scope comes from real differentiating units and the processes of extracting, assigning weight to, connecting, and compressing them; it cannot be attributed to an image, nor can class contradictions thereby be treated as the real causal basis. These limited differences alone do not warrant inferring the emergence of a revolution or a movement. Still less can the actions of different participants be reduced to a shared impulse of a crowd that has suddenly lost its reason. Dispersed differences of different kinds do not converge on their own; people situated in different positions must bring them into a concrete event.

Within a particular relational field, differentiating units such as labor circumstances, debt, rent, local relations, national memory, young people's circumstances, educational opportunities, platform circulation, family pressures, public space, and punishment records may be brought into the current event simultaneously by people in different positions. Participants put forward their experiences and demands; organizers establish contacts; communicators and recorders preserve materials; and the relevant institutional personnel and procedures process the matter. The event brings previously dispersed differences together; slogans and friend–enemy divisions compress them; participants bear costs in different positions; and records of action and subsequent handling then enter judgments within families, localities, the state, schools, markets, platforms, and communities. These relations are not the result of the social differentiation network reorganizing itself. They are consequences jointly produced by concrete personnel, organizations, materials, rules, and procedures.

In defining concrete actions, movement and revolution must not be conflated into one term. Movements may form around limited demands, public protests, strikes, student action, local resistance, platform mobilization, or community action, varying in duration and scope of influence. Revolutions have greater intensity and scope: beyond demanding wage compensation, policy changes, the revocation of penalties, or local recognition, the participants concerned also seek to change the state, institutions, nodes of power, narratives of legitimacy, and the future order. Understanding revolution within a continuum of movements does not diminish its intensity. It rejects an account of revolution as a historical rupture that suddenly arrives detached from existing relations.

Revolution is not an inevitable stage reached when a movement naturally escalates; most movements do not become revolutions. Only when the demands put forward by certain participants and their organizations reach into institutional structures and structures of legitimacy, and persistently change people's judgments about the state, the sources of power, community boundaries, and the future order, may action reach greater intensity. Revolutions and movements therefore cannot be named solely according to an event's intensity. A limited protest may gradually

connect with institutions, the state, and historical memory, or it may end after compensation, division, or withdrawal; a major conflict, meanwhile, may fail to form a stable chain of responsibility across nodes. Judging the relation between the two requires comparing duration, the transmission of materials, what organizations take up and sustain, shared consequences, and the links at which earlier judgments lack support from materials. The scale of an event cannot directly yield a macro-level conclusion about revolution.

A particular total image cannot supply the answer in advance when explaining a revolution or movement. What must be examined is which differences gain weight within the same event, who connects them, who puts forward, accepts, or rejects a shared expression, and how action leaves records that can later be extracted anew. Explaining how such processes take shape does not amount to providing a method for launching a movement.

II. The Accumulation of Differences and Conditions for Action within a Situation

Consider a conceptual composite situation: an industrial city. It once had stable factories, connected to surrounding workers' communities, technical schools, markets, local acquaintance relations, and public squares. The factories provided work and also affected family incomes, local identities, prospects for young people, master–apprentice relations, evaluations concerning marriage, and community memory. Later came factory restructuring, unstable youth employment, increasing outsourced labor, and rising pressures of rent and debt. Taking orders on platforms became a fallback for many. Graduation certificates no longer guaranteed jobs, and old relations in local communities weakened. Unpaid wages, demolition and relocation, penalties, and the state personnel, materials, and procedures implementing “stability maintenance” also became visible. This situation does not correspond to a particular real city or a single historical event and must not be treated as verified historical fact. It merely brings several differentiation relations together within one analytical setting.

In this setting, a young worker is injured while seeking payment of wages owed. At first, the people concerned can treat this as a labor dispute. Then coworkers repost photographs of the scene in groups, students begin discussing how he too attended technical school, and parents talk about their own children possibly facing similar circumstances. Residents of the old factory district bring up housing allocations, layoffs, relocation, and compensation disputes again. Short-video account holders edit clips, a small local newspaper offers an interpretation, and family members also speak out. Personnel and procedures within the relevant state institutions begin to handle the event. After platform-company personnel or review procedures intervene, restrictions on reach, deletions, reposts, screenshots, and arguments appear at the same time.

Unpaid wages remain an important entry point into the event, but are not the only difference extracted. Coworkers, students, parents, residents, family members, account holders, and the personnel handling the matter bring debt, housing rental, prospects for young people, school qualifications, local memory, state implementation, platform bans, family pressures, and differences left over from history into current explanations from their respective positions. The fact that multiple materials gain weight within the same event does not justify inferring that they arise from the automatic eruption of a single cause. Unstable labor, debt, young people's uncertainty about their future, family pressures, local memory, and state implementation can coexist without necessarily forming a movement. Differences gaining weight are only one condition.

The event needs people to explain and communicate it; information needs people to preserve and confirm it; dispersed people need to connect with one another through organizations, relations,

and public space. Participants must also judge whether they can bear the risks and whether action might change the future. In the industrial-city situation, the young worker's injury can become an event node. If no one preserves materials, brings forward the experience, or connects it with other circumstances, the event may remain at the individual level. Even if information about it circulates, attention will still dissipate if no one verifies the information, allocates work, or establishes trusted relations. At the same time, pressures involving debt, rent, student registration, care, and work raise participation costs, leading some people to remain silent, withdraw, or move into logistical support.

Only when connected through concrete bearers can slogans, organizations, circulation, sacrifice narratives, imaginings of the future, and institutional handling turn dispersed discontent into collective action. The so-called critical state is not a natural law. It is the provisional result formed when these conditions are weighted in relation to one another in concrete action. Even under similar conditions, different people may still judge differently according to the credibility of materials, participation costs, and consequences they can expect. Analysis cannot work backward from a list of conditions to infer an inevitable critical point.

III. Organizational Nodes and Positions of Participation

In the industrial city, coworkers verify who was at the scene; students bring the event into school; family members provide personal experiences; residents of the old factory district connect local memory; and account holders expand visibility, while possibly also causing misreadings through editing and retelling. These concrete tasks are distributed across different positions. That does not mean there is a center issuing orders to everyone. Dispersed differences do not become a movement on their own.

These functions may be taken up by nodes such as trade unions, student organizations, local communities, religious organizations, national communities, platform groups, kinship networks, and occupational associations. Underground publications, public spaces, commemorative activities, strike committees, and mutual-aid networks may also take up the same functions in particular events. Their names do not make them self-acting subjects: organizers coordinate direction; information preservers leave materials; and messages require verifiers to confirm them. Task allocators arrange work, communicators expand visibility, logistical supporters sustain care and supplies, and relevant rules and procedures limit the actions that can be taken. Only when concrete people keep preserving, confirming, and transmitting materials and allocating work can differences move from grievances, rumors, and posts into joint action. The existence of a node does not guarantee that a connection will succeed: messages may be questioned, assigned tasks may have no one to take them on, and different organizations may compete for the authority to interpret.

The people in one movement are not homogeneous, and participants' positions are not fixed identities. Workers owed wages, family members, students, residents, coworkers, recorders, and bystanders may enter the same event through different materials. Some bear the risks of unemployment and debt, some transmit records, and some provide support only at particular times. Portraying all these people as "the subject of the movement" conceals differences in positions of participation and capacity to bear responsibility. A person's position may also change in the course of the process: at different times, someone may move from observing to participating, while someone else may withdraw as costs increase. The same person may also occupy positions as a worker, family member, local resident, or account holder, bearing different consequences in different relations.

These differences in position also appear in costs. Core organizers bear the risks of coordination and interpretation; ordinary participants face risks at the scene; sympathizers bear the risks of expression; and observers may be suspected by different sides. A movement may also include people drawn into it, logistical supporters, opponents, silent people, people who withdraw, and people who are misidentified. Participation cannot be measured only by the number of people or their apparent stances. Even when categories are the same, costs need not be: students may face risks to their student registration and future eligibility, as well as disciplinary action; workers face unemployment, unpaid wages, and penalties; account holders must consider bans and records; local residents may be pressured between public expression and relations of acquaintance; and family members must bear care responsibilities and later consequences. The same slogan may connect different hopes and bring different risks for workers owed wages, students, families of the injured, communicators, and local residents. Analysts must identify who puts forward demands, who circulates and records them, who implements or opposes them, and who remains silent, while also tracing how family, labor, school, state records, platform accounts, local relations, and bodily risks concretely limit each person's choices.

Whether people can continue participating is also affected by the allocation of resources. If transport, time, medical care, legal assistance, information channels, and family support are concentrated in only a few positions, other participants may bear higher exit costs even when they support the same demand. Who arranges resources and whether the reasons for their distribution are public affect who has a say and who bears risks. Concentrated action requires concrete organizers, relations of authorization, and communication nodes. The concrete people who put forward demands, decide slogans, arrange resources, review lists, preserve records of harm, and negotiate with external institutions may all affect the path of action. An organization's name may summarize these relations, but cannot replace tracing the actual bearers, rules, and procedures.

Centralized decision-making within a movement may also coexist with dispersed action. Core organizers set demands and directions for resources, while local participants may still handle matters differently according to their own risks, community relations, and materials. Analysts can neither attribute every consequence to a single center nor deny the effects of authorization from above and resource allocation merely because participation is dispersed. Representation within a movement must also be substantiated through relations of authorization. The ability to speak, negotiate, or preserve records does not make someone a representative of all participants. The formation, scope, and withdrawal of authorization, and objections to it, must all be located in concrete relations. This requirement preserves the reality of collective action while preventing an organization's name from acquiring a unified personality.

IV. Slogan Compression and Friend–Enemy Divisions

Slogans can compress complex differences into forms that are easy to circulate, remember, and express together. Organizers propose slogans, some people take responsibility for circulating them, and participants decide whether to accept them. Different parties may not give the same words the same meaning. Some workers may see wages and labor protections in a slogan demanding payment of wages owed; some students may connect it to future opportunities; local residents may think of the dignity of the old factory district; and family members may care more about risks. Platform workers may focus on the stability of their accounts and income, while some members of national communities may demand recognition of shared memory.

The same slogan can temporarily establish a direction for action, but cannot prove that all participants have the same motive or expect the same result. Faced with a proposed slogan, some

repeat it, some accept it, and others reject or reinterpret it. If a slogan is too weak, dispersed differences struggle to enter shared expression; if compression is too strong, it may obscure conflicts among wages, the future, local recognition, family protection, and sustained action. Subsequent calibration must ask which differences the slogan has upweighted, which it has downweighted, and how downweighted demands reappear within the action.

In delineating a direction for action, organizers and participants may use friend–enemy divisions to concentrate action. They ask: Who prevents wages from being paid, conceals the injured person's condition, deletes information, or protects those responsible? Who is willing to support a particular demand publicly? Such compression can clarify direction and has real mobilizing force. Yet those making the classifications may also extend misidentification, assigning the hesitant, bystanders, those pursuing different strategies, internal critics, or those forced into silence to hostile positions.

Friend–enemy divisions may rapidly gain weight in a crisis, but opposition cannot be established from silence alone, and withdrawal does not necessarily negate an original demand. Some people fear unemployment, student-registration consequences, care responsibilities, or debt deadlines; others are constrained by student registration, care, housing, accounts, or debt and cannot participate publicly. Still others disagree with a particular strategy while continuing to acknowledge a limited demand. Silence, hesitation, withdrawal, and internal criticism therefore do not automatically amount to betrayal.

The stronger friend–enemy divisions become, the more necessary it is to leave room for questions, additions, internal criticism, and the correction of classifications. If counterexamples and materials concerning withdrawal show that the image of action has downweighted differences in positions of participation, the explanation must be narrowed or rewritten. Dissent must not be reabsorbed as evidence of hostility. Otherwise, compression originally intended to concentrate action will turn differences in positions of participation into new harms.

When movements connect with national communities, local society, or family relations, these relations may take up and sustain them, but conflicts may also arise. Community members need not adopt the same strategy because they share a name, and family support may come with its own conditions concerning care and risk. Interpreters must preserve the independent standing of these relations and cannot require them to serve merely as resources for mobilization within a movement image. External pressure also changes weights within a movement. Penalties, bans, violence, entry points for negotiation, and public support may rapidly give certain strategies greater weight, or may split existing alliances. These changes must be explained through actual events, records, and processes of taking up and sustaining action. “Historical inevitability” cannot replace participants' choices and costs.

V. Sacrifice Narratives, Shared Memory, and Imaginings of the Future

Death, injury, arrest, or disappearance, as well as humiliation, punishment, dismissal, and expulsion, may all be brought into sacrifice narratives by family members, coworkers, students, recorders, communicators, and organizers of commemorative activities. Neither the event itself nor the movement's name automatically forms shared memory. Only when people preserve, circulate, and reinterpret photographs, testimony, posts, songs, slogans, commemorative activities, and subsequent handling can individual experiences enter a community's memory. Which harms, victories, failures, and dissent recorders choose to preserve, how families and localities retell them, and whether school, platform, or institutional personnel allow the relevant materials to be extracted all affect how later people understand the event. If a single commemorative narrative swallows internal differences, it too compresses complex action into a total image.

After the young worker is injured, bearers in different positions bring different understandings: some coworkers may see their own labor circumstances in it; some students connect it to future risks; family members are concerned about consequences for the family; residents of the old factory district recall local decline; and platform workers may notice instability in accounts, income, and responsibilities. These interpretations can generate pressure to protect, commemorate, and continue action, but do not naturally combine into a single narrative. If recorders and organizers demand that everyone commemorate in the same way, questions, additions, and new materials may be excluded. Shared memory thus both connects and needs to remain subject to subsequent calibration.

In confronting their present experiences, participants may oppose unpaid wages, penalties, a particular act of state implementation, or local exclusion, and may also propose different arrangements for the future. Some demand stable work; some young people hope that educational qualifications can connect to real opportunities; local residents may hope the old factory district leaves more than memories of decline; others hope that personnel and procedures responsible for implementation can protect workers as well as impose penalties. These aims may be compatible or may conflict. They cannot be summed up in the phrase “people's shared imaginings.”

Imaginings of the future must enter action through slogans, organizational discussions, documents, images, and communication nodes. They are not a will generated by the movement itself. Those proposing a plan, those accepting it, and those bearing its consequences may be different people. Articulations of the future are also constrained by existing records, available resources, and positions of participation. Their effects cannot be judged merely by the grandeur of a slogan. When an articulation of the future leads participants to believe that action is not in vain, it can prolong action; when different aims can no longer coexist, it may also bring about division, negotiation, or withdrawal.

VI. Extension, Attenuation, and Division of Movement Relational Chains

Unpaid wages can enter chains of debt. Wages failing to arrive affect rent, borrowing, family care, tuition fees, and future choices. When several workers face similar deadlines, organizers may interpret their individual experiences as shared circumstances. Similar deadlines provide visible materials for comparing their situations, but do not mean that different individuals will automatically make the same choices of action as a result.

An injury in the same event can enter a chain of memory. The mere fact that an injury occurred is insufficient to explain how a group will later understand and characterize it. Whether family members, coworkers, recorders, and communicators preserve materials, and how they narrate them, changes whether an individual experience can enter later public judgment; the concrete methods of preservation and processes of narration require substantive checking. Students’ reposts, discussions, and assemblies may bring the event into schools and public spaces, while relevant school personnel, records, and disciplinary procedures alter the costs of participation. Platform account holders can circulate and preserve materials. Restrictions on reach, bans, and deletions imposed by platform-company personnel or review procedures block visibility; some participants may also interpret them as concealment and repression.

Intersecting with these processes of circulation are institutional measures such as permissions, prohibitions, arrests, negotiations, investigations, and compensation. These measures are implemented by personnel, materials, and procedures within relevant state institutions. They change risks, but do not constitute a will possessed by “the state” itself. Different procedures may also produce inconsistent results; how participants understand them still depends on the materials

and relations visible at the time. Care, attempts at dissuasion, support, and resource arrangements by family members also lead some participants to change positions. When rent, debt, student registration, work, and bodily pressures gain weight again, some people may remain silent, withdraw, move into logistical support, or change how they act. A movement's relational chain is therefore not a line that extends automatically. It consists of multiple sets of bearers, records, and procedures transmitting consequences across one another over a short period. The movement's spread, weakening, division, and failure must all be identified along these relations.

People who initially accepted the same slogan may later divide over wages, negotiation, safety, state records, school discipline, and continued action. Some want to continue, some advocate negotiation, some give priority to protecting the injured person's family, and some withdraw because of rent and debt. Family, debt, student-registration, and work pressures lead people back to their prior responsibilities. A slogan may no longer be able to contain internal differences; coordinators may be unable to maintain trust; and the risks of participation may exceed what some people can bear. At the same time, platform bans cut off some circulation, while future arrangements and sacrifice narratives may also become objects of contest among different participants. These mechanisms may occur simultaneously, and failure cannot be accounted for by a single cause. An explanation of a movement must show how it arose and also trace how trust was lost, how bridging nodes broke, and why people in different positions dispersed. Division does not prove that the initial differences did not exist, and failure does not erase records and consequences that have already formed.

Internal contradictions also arise within these relations. Resource allocators, propagandists, implementers, and ordinary participants may hold different judgments about aims, costs, and withdrawal. Appointments, reviews, and the allocation of responsibility within an organization may likewise produce new exclusions. These internal relations are not noise outside the movement; they are conditions for how action is maintained, redirected, or dissolved.

When new materials show that the movement image originally drawn covered only some participants, or that a presumed mobilization chain never actually formed, the original judgment and its basis should still be retained to show why the conclusion needs to be narrowed, reorganized, or withdrawn. Such revision cannot conceal failure by rewriting the earlier judgment after the fact. Nor does it require reducing the movement to total categories such as class, the state, the nation, or the market. A limited explanation can stand only on the basis of its own materials and scope; it cannot pass off a limited image as a self-sufficient entity. Class entities do not exist, and they must not be acknowledged anew merely because materials within a limited scope are valid.

The results of a revolution or movement have different levels and cannot be summed up under a single label of victory or defeat. In concrete situations, even when a policy has been corrected, harm to families and local rifts may persist; even when organizational relations disintegrate, shared memory and mutual-aid networks may remain. Demands not being accepted, members withdrawing, records becoming distorted, and subsequent write-back being revoked each belong to different levels. Only by distinguishing immediate changes, the persistence of relations, the formation of write-back, and its later renewed effects can we accurately determine which explanation needs to be narrowed, which relations still exist, and which new materials are sufficient to rebuild judgments about the event.

VII. Movement Historical Indices and Write-Back

Past strikes, memories of old factories, local struggles, harms suffered by national communities, and student movements may all be preserved as a movement past that can later be retrieved; state

penalties, commemorations of martyrs, experiences of failure, and arrest records may be preserved in the same way. Family stories, local legends, commemorative days, songs, photographs, slogans, and documents preserve other entry points. A new event does not automatically give these materials greater weight. Family members, participants, organizers, recorders, communicators, organizers of commemorative activities, and relevant institutional procedures must retrieve the materials anew in the current event.

How much weight the retrieved materials have depends on their connection to the current experience, the extent to which they can be checked, the position of the person putting them forward, the support or contradiction provided by other materials, and how they enter slogans, judgments of identity, commemoration, penalties, or choices of action. This is not a one-time confirmation. New photographs, contrary testimony, supplementary records, and subsequent events may all require people to revise earlier judgments. Materials that were previously silent may also acquire new meanings through current rules and positions of participation.

The injury, ban, compensation, negotiation, or failure at hand first produces immediate effects. When families, organizations, platforms, schools, or state procedures preserve the relevant contents as differences that can be extracted again in the future, write-back has formed. Preservation may continue after the action has ended. Families, factory managers, school personnel, platform-company personnel, relevant personnel within state institutions, and community organizations may continue preserving materials concerning injuries, strikes, student assemblies, platform bans, compensation, and failure, making them available for later fear, experience, commemoration, and institutional handling. How they will be used in the future still depends on the bearers, relations, and procedures at that time. Only when specific people later retrieve, interpret, or assign weight to the preserved contents do those contents take effect again in a new event. The original harm need not disappear as a result, and subsequent action need not follow the same path.

A movement can bring immediate institutional change without necessarily forming a lasting community. Equally, it may fail to change policy immediately yet establish enduring mutual aid, memory, and responsibility. Evaluating a movement's historical standing requires separately tracing institutional consequences, organizational continuity, members' relations, and the content of write-back. A sweeping conclusion of success or failure must not flatten the differences between these levels.

VIII. How Movements Are Compressed into Fixed Images

Revolutions and movements are often compressed into fixed images. The class-eruption image portrays action as the automatic eruption of class contradictions; the mass-emotion image portrays participants as angry, blindly obedient, or out of control. The hero image attributes consequences to the courage of a few people, while the conspiracy image reduces local differences and participants’ explanatory capacity to external manipulation. Interpreters who adopt an image of state oppression can extract concrete materials of implementation and control, yet may still occlude internal differences within the action, organizational strategies, community responsibilities, and imaginings of the future.

Classes do not exist. Differentiating units such as labor, wages, resources, domination, debt, and risk have real consequences, and class theory and interpreters who adopt it can also extract these differences. The explanatory capacity within a limited scope comes from extracting, assigning weight to, connecting, and compressing them; it does not come from the class image and cannot prove that classes exist at an overall or limited level. People in similar labor predicaments may still

take different paths because of local relations, national memory, prospects for young people, organizational nodes, and platform circulation. Differences in family pressures, sacrifice narratives, state implementation, and imaginings of the future also produce different positions of participation and paths of action. A classification of similar circumstances cannot replace explaining these connections.

Class theory belongs from the outset to the total-image-subsumption direction of Model C. It is neither Model A nor Model B, and it does not become Model C only when it is "overused." Locality, nation, youth, organizations, platforms, families, sacrifice, state implementation, and imaginings of the future cannot be subsumed by its total image. Extracting some high-weight differences does not permit class theory or interpreters who adopt it to reduce event nodes, organizational nodes, slogan compression, friend–enemy divisions, participation costs, historical indices, and action write-back to subsidiary materials. Communism's subsumption of revolutions and movements under class entities and a total class image continues the same structure of subsumption. Pointing this out does not deny the real consequences of labor, debt, and domination.

IX. Comparison amid Complexity and Calibration of Movement Explanations

Under the same slogan there may be different demands and different participation costs. The materials used by organizers, ordinary participants, family members, and communicators differ; recorders, reviewers, implementers, and opponents occupy other positions. Explaining an action requires identifying who extracts, assigns weight to, connects, and circulates what through which nodes. Slogans, organizational classifications, and friend–enemy divisions compress differences, while photographs, testimony, posts, documents, and institutional records preserve some explanations. Abstract terms such as "movement," "state," "platform," or "history" can serve as relational shorthand only when their bearers are clear; they cannot replace actual actors and procedures.

The basis for comparison unfolds with the concrete event. In an unpaid-wages event, wage deadlines, debt, coworker relations, organizational nodes, state implementation, and platform circulation may gain greater weight. In student assemblies and actions, school evaluations, prospects for young people, public space, imaginings of the future, and the risk of disciplinary action may gain greater weight. Actions by national communities and local struggles involve different memories, boundaries, recognition, family futures, and institutional materials. Strikes, platform mobilizations, commemorative activities, public conflicts, and events of state implementation also bring different materials into current relations. These weights must be compared in light of concrete events. They cannot be set by a fixed list, and the images of class eruption, mass emotion, heroism, conspiracy, or state oppression must not be imposed in advance to characterize them.

The concrete limitations of silent people, materials concerning those who were misidentified, failures and divisions, new records, and contrary testimony may all require an explanation to narrow its scope or reduce the force of its claims. When withdrawal, internal dissent, or breaks in relations appear, we must examine which claimed scope of representation and causal judgment they concretely challenge and adjust the explanation on the basis of the materials. They cannot be reinterpreted as proof of a unified will, nor can the entire explanation be declared invalid because of one difference. Which explanations capture key differences, which obscure nodes, and which refuse to change when counterexamples appear thereby become matters with checkable grounds. A judgment may stand provisionally while later materials retain an entry point for its revision.

Acknowledging omissions, counterexamples, and boundaries of application, and revising on the basis of new materials, is how a limited explanation faces complexity. The subsumption of other explanations by a total class image belongs to the total-image-subsumption direction of Model C. Refusing valid comparison, revision in light of counterexamples, and provisional judgments on the grounds of complexity belongs to Model C's direction of erasure of distinctions between explanations. Complexity itself does not constitute the latter direction, nor can it be a reason to say that all explanations are much the same. Calibration compares concrete explanations; its aim is not to find a total image that is correct forever. An analysis of events, nodes, positions of participation, records, and write-back is also not the same as a procedure for entering a relational field or carrying out distinction extraction.

When judging later records, we must still keep in view the immediate consequences already caused by injury, penalties, bans, compensation, negotiation, withdrawal, and failure. When these results are preserved by concrete personnel, organizations, or procedures as differences that can be extracted again in the future, write-back is formed. Only when the materials are later retrieved, interpreted, or assigned weight within families, localities, schools, factories, platforms, or state institutions can they possibly change subsequent judgments. Preservation after the fact cannot conceal the losses already borne at the time, and the retention of records cannot directly be equated with their inevitably taking effect in the future.

Materials and cross-event relations may support a broader judgment about action, while withdrawal, division, and failure limit its scope; the two do not cancel each other. Community action can genuinely exist, and an erroneous classification can also be revoked. Supporting a demand does not authorize an organization to speak for all its members. Participants can form shared demands, share risks, preserve memory, and build continuing relations, while contrary materials, withdrawal, and internal dissent retain the capacity to limit a judgment. Turning all differences into a unified subject obscures responsibility; reducing all shared relations to individual choices, meanwhile, denies the real processes through which organization and action are taken up and sustained. The force of an explanation of a movement lies in whether it can preserve both shared demands and differences among positions of participation, allowing these concrete relations and contrary materials truly to enter the conclusion.

Chapter 35. Limited Distinction Extraction and Entry into Concrete Relational Fields

I. Explanation Cannot Begin with an Ultimate Answer

Faced with a concrete event, explanation must first answer how to begin. After an event occurs, people often ask: ultimately, is it class, the state, the market, the nation, the family, or the platform? These images are not meaningless. Those using them can extract real differences such as labor, certification, prices, shared memory, care responsibilities, or account records, forming judgments with explanatory power within a limited scope.

Distinction extraction within a limited scope does not mean that the overall explanation is correct, still less prove that the entities named by an image exist. An explanation's capacity within a limited scope comes entirely from the concrete real differentiating units extracted and their handling, not from the image itself. Analysts can extract real differentiating units such as labor, wages, property, housing, debt, risk, domination, and available exits, but cannot infer class entities from these materials. Class entities do not exist. Class theory belongs from the outset to the direction of Model C in which a total image subsumes concrete differences; it cannot be reduced to the status of an ordinary limited image. Undertaking limited distinction extraction in a concrete event does not alter this judgment in the slightest.

If interpreters settle on an ultimate answer before encountering an event, subsequent materials will serve only to fill in the predetermined image; differences, nodes, and consequences not accommodated by the image in advance may remain outside their view. An ultimate answer often offers a convenience: it quickly tells people what to look for, yet also readily leaves no place for unexpected differences. Beginning with the event may be slower, but every judgment can return to concrete materials and processes of handling. Analysts can still use images of the state, market, or family, or other images, provided they disclose their scope of validity and do not let the images answer for the event in advance.

A concrete event is not a casually chosen example. It must contain identifiable actions, people handling matters, and consequences: someone makes a demand, someone accepts or rejects materials, a qualification is being established or interrupted, and a relationship may change as a result. Social Differentiation Network Theory begins here precisely because preliminary judgments must establish who is handling matters, how materials are required, which relations have been implicated, what differences are extracted or occluded, and which consequences have already occurred. If an event is reduced to grand terms such as "inequality," "marketization," or "family problems," analysts still do not know which differences have actually entered into consequences. Across different events, moreover, the order, kinds, and intensity of the relevant dimensions vary; they are not fixed steps completed in sequence every time.

At the beginning of explanation, the accounts of those concerned, documentary records, procedural requirements, and observers' descriptions may differ. Analysts need not immediately select one piece of material as the ultimate answer, nor can they abandon judgment because materials conflict. A more reliable approach is first to distinguish who produced each piece of material, which event it concerns, what it can establish, and which parts it does not cover.

The starting point of an event may also be disputed. A child's school admission can begin when the family prepares materials or when the school refuses to accept them; an unpaid-wages event can begin when wages fall due or be traced further back to contracting arrangements and the formation

of work records. Which starting point to choose depends on the question the analyst is answering. The starting point is only the entry into the current window; it cannot be presented as the sole true beginning of the whole matter.

Interpreters must also keep their own position in view. Which materials they see, which records they cannot access, and how they choose the analytical boundaries of the event all affect preliminary judgments. Acknowledging these limits does not weaken analysis. On the contrary, it allows those who come later to check the grounds for judgments and identify where revision should begin when new materials appear.

II. The Relational-Field Window and the Unfolding of a School-Admission Event

In this book's composite situation, a child in the family of a worker from elsewhere really does live in the city. Every day he leaves the residential compound where his family rents a home; his parents work nearby, and neighbors have seen him. These facts of life do exist, but school personnel cannot complete an eligibility review solely on the grounds that "everyone knows he lives here." In accordance with the local admissions year and admission category, they check whichever of the following apply: proof of residence, a rental contract, the landlord's filing, community registration, proof of the parents' employment, and continuity of social-insurance contributions. They require the family to submit the corresponding materials within the prescribed time.

Poverty and household registration may both matter, but explanation cannot stop at these two names. If the actual obstacles at present are the landlord's failure to file, the end of the application period, and the admissions review not accepting materials, analysts must trace how these differences acquire weight. The fact of the child's residence has not disappeared; it has simply not been successfully extracted through materials and procedures. Entering the relational field therefore also involves identifying which differences are occluded.

This shows that the relational field is the state of relations in which a concrete event is already situated, not a frame manufactured by the interpreter. The landlord's filing or failure to file, the school's acceptance or refusal of materials, and coworkers' willingness or unwillingness to testify each already involve actors and consequences. These relations do not wait for analysts to name them before occurring; the relational field therefore precedes the window. Analysts may see some of them and temporarily miss others. Omissions limit the explanation, but do not make those relations cease to exist.

The child's school admission already implicates the fact of residence, the landlord's filing, community registration, continuity of social-insurance contributions, school places, application deadlines, student-registration materials, and family cash flow. Each of these relations has its bearers: the landlord decides whether to cooperate with filing; community personnel register information or issue proof under the relevant procedures; school personnel review admission eligibility under admissions rules; and places are determined under the corresponding admission arrangements. After initial enrollment formalities have been completed, student-registration personnel collect information and establish student registration, while progression to a higher school level or transfer involves separate procedures for transferring and updating records. Application deadlines constrain the conversion of materials, and family cash flow affects whether parents can take leave, make the rounds to obtain materials, and maintain housing. Neither deadlines nor cash flow handle events on their own.

The worker’s unpaid wages implicate contracting relations, wage records, coworkers’ testimony, rent, arbitration, and family expenses. The actions of the workplace and coworkers in providing or refusing proof need to be traced separately. The mother’s taking platform orders, meanwhile, implicates account scores, response times, care responsibilities, bodily condition, customer evaluations, and payment records. The platform’s account records and allocation procedures change opportunities to take orders. Concrete personnel, organizations, materials, rules, and procedures jointly carry the handling and consequences. The relational field must not be portrayed as another entity driving the event from behind the scenes. It describes the actual state of relations; those who actually make demands, preserve documents, refuse proof, or change eligibility remain concrete personnel, organizations, and procedures.

Listing the school, landlord, community, deadlines, and cash flow serves to verify who is handling matters, on the basis of what materials, which conditions constrain that handling, and how consequences form. It does not claim to have exhausted every relation. Omitting the bearers makes it easy for a state of relations to appear to possess an autonomous will; relations themselves, however, do not extract or determine differences on their own. The kinds, sequence, and weights of nodes may differ across events. These distinctions cannot simply be copied into a fixed procedure.

A relational-field window is an analytical boundary that interpreters establish from clues in an event. It cannot be drawn arbitrarily, nor is it a container that never changes once established. Too small a window misses nodes that have already changed consequences; too large a window brings every possible background into the core analysis. Interpreters need to adjust the window in light of new materials, nodes' responses, relational changes, and consequences, allowing it both to expand and to narrow. The window carries an explicit analytical responsibility: including the landlord in the school-admission event requires explaining how filing affects residence materials; including the parents' working hours also requires showing why taking leave, submitting materials, or replying is affected. If there is no traceable connection between a background condition and current eligibility, risk, evaluation, or responsibility, it can temporarily remain outside the window.

Several overlapping windows may form around the same event. Parents care about whether the child can enter school on time; school personnel care about whether application materials can enter the admissions review; the landlord cares about the responsibilities that filing brings; and the analyst tries to see how these positions connect. Different windows do not mean that everyone speaks past everyone else. The materials they provide can be compared and may reveal differences invisible from a particular position of handling.

Materials have their own times of formation. A rental contract may have been signed long ago, while filing must wait for the landlord's cooperation; proof of the parents' employment comes from their workplaces, while community registration requires another set of information. If the family learns which document is missing only as the deadline approaches, the problem is not merely “incomplete materials.” It also concerns when the notice arrived, who can supplement and correct the materials, and which procedure is still open to accepting them.

Different materials may also contradict one another. The address on the contract does not match the actual residence, community registration differs from the landlord's account, and the parents' employment records may be interrupted by job changes. School personnel must handle these differences within a limited time. Analysts cannot treat the final “approved” or “not approved” as the complete course of events; they must preserve how materials were compared, interpreted, and selected or set aside.

The family is not restricted to waiting passively. Parents may seek out the landlord to sign additional documents, ask their workplaces for supplementary proof, explain their living

arrangements to community personnel, or ask the school what avenues for supplementation and correction remain. Whether these actions take effect depends on whether the relevant personnel accept the materials and whether the procedure still allows revisions. Retaining the positions from which those concerned act can prevent the family's predicament from being written as a natural outcome.

Reasons for adjusting the window should be recorded. New testimony brings contracting relations into the analysis of a workplace injury, and the window expands accordingly. If materials already explain a deposit dispute and the distant real-estate cycle has not yet changed its current handling, the window can narrow. Such adjustment does not aim to finish everything at once; it keeps the scope of analysis close to the consequences taking shape.

Materials sometimes point to different boundaries for an event. The time the school receives materials, the time parents begin preparing documents, and the time the landlord refuses to cooperate may each provide a different starting point. Analysts must choose an entry point according to the question asked and retain the other timelines. This clarifies the current problem while avoiding the use of a single starting point to occlude antecedents and subsequent developments that already exist.

The space outside the window is not blank. Background conditions temporarily excluded may still really exist; there are simply no materials currently showing that they have entered handling. If analysts write “not included” as “nonexistent,” they mistake an analytical boundary for a boundary of reality. Conversely, if every real background condition is placed at the core, the window loses its capacity to identify present consequences.

Nor must the window include the family’s entire life at its core. Parents’ educational expectations, the child’s classroom performance, and peer relations may become important after admission. If the current dispute concerns only whether application materials can enter the admissions review, they can temporarily remain in the background. When the event shifts from eligibility review to classroom life and evaluation, the analytical window adjusts accordingly.

III. Limited Distinction Extraction and Verification of Candidate Differentiating Units

A differentiating unit is a unit of difference in the world that can be distinguished, represented, assigned weight, and brought into comparison, and that may be extracted, connected, transmitted, and written back within a concrete relational field, thereby changing an object's position, eligibility, risk, evaluation, responsibility, action, or consequences. It is not a fixed factor, a variable, a smallest social atom, or a purely conceptual label, nor does it produce consequences on its own apart from real bearers. The differences in the world that can enter social events are inexhaustible. Income, household registration, age, language, educational qualifications, bodily condition, family position, familiarity with a locality, account records, debt deadlines, medical records, student registration, coworker relations, neighborhood reputation, shared memory, and silent records may all acquire relatively high weight in particular events. Potential infinity does not mean that every difference is already taking effect in reality, nor that all are equally important.

Limited distinction extraction is precisely the interpreter's extraction, from inexhaustible latent differentiation space, of the differences that currently need to be traced, on the basis of materials, people handling matters, relational chains, and consequences already implicated in the event. It is not arbitrary selection, nor does it mean that only a finite number of differences exist in reality.

Inexhaustibility does not cancel comparison and judgment. Judgments can hold provisionally while remaining open to revision through counterexamples and subsequent materials.

Potential infinity means that analysts cannot list every potentially relevant difference in advance. Language, bodies, time, equipment, memory, and local relations can all be subdivided further, and the same difference can connect to new nodes. This does not require interpreters to include an infinity of differences at once; it reminds them not to mistake the current list for the final structure of the world. Any concrete event extracts only some of these differences. For example, school personnel require proof of residence, the landlord refuses to file, the application deadline approaches, and the admissions review cannot accept application materials. These differences then connect in the current school-admission event and change its consequences, while other differences can temporarily remain in the background. If subsequent materials show that certain personnel or procedures have retrieved those other differences, analysts can still revise the original window.

Whether a difference can enter analysis depends on whether there are already clues connecting it to the event. The actions and explanations of those concerned, differences in documents, and requirements for materials raised by procedures and the responses to them can all provide entry points. Changes in eligibility and relations, the transmission or sudden redirection of consequences, and the retrieval of old records also deserve to be traced. When materials are rejected, the reasons for rejection provide new candidates; after a successful appeal, the new materials that changed the judgment must likewise be identified. The sources of candidates should be recorded so that analysts do not present their own suppositions as known facts of the event. If parents' working hours have already affected taking leave and submitting materials, they enter the school-admission event. If no relevant materials are currently available, the candidate can first be recorded as awaiting verification; it cannot immediately be assigned high weight.

Candidate differentiating units are thus grounded in materials that can be checked. Proof of residence, the landlord's filing, community registration, and student-registration status in a school-admission event; proof of an employment relationship, medical records, and testimony in a workplace-injury event; and contracts, records of money transfers, photographs, and chat records in a deposit event are all merely analytical entry points, not yet confirmed causes. Interpreters must still examine whether concrete personnel, organizations, or procedures have extracted the differences, whether they have acquired enough weight to enter comparison, and whether they have been transmitted along relational chains and changed eligibility, risk, evaluation, responsibility, or opportunity. Differences with only general relevance that have not yet entered present consequences can temporarily remain in the background. Subsequent materials may also bring them back into the core.

Verification cannot stop at the names of differences. Household registration may enter directly into eligibility in one admission review but provide only background in another event. Care responsibilities may change when materials are submitted, or may cease to be an obstacle because someone shares them. The name of the difference has not changed, but its position within relations may differ. It therefore cannot be detached from the personnel, materials, and procedures that carry it and treated as a fixed factor.

The representation of differentiating units may also change with the materials. "Unstable residence" may initially be a summary and later be divided into lease duration, number of moves, the landlord's filing, and commuting distance. Several scattered records may also be combined into a single eligibility judgment in the current procedure. Subdivision, combination, and renewed representation are all constrained by the concrete event; there is no eternally fixed smallest unit.

“Residence materials” can include a contract, filing, and community proof; “time pressure” can take the forms of an application deadline, the cost of taking leave, and the arrival time of materials. Candidates may therefore contain or overlap one another. Analysts may adjust the level of representation to the event’s needs, but cannot treat a higher-level summary and one of its component details as two independent causes within the same comparison, creating a false impression of quantity.

Limited distinction extraction permits temporary omissions but requires that they be corrigible. If a preliminary window excludes a language difference but later communication records show that it is affecting the understanding of materials, analysts should add it. A candidate difference can also leave the core if verification shows that it has entered neither handling nor consequences. For example, a landlord was initially thought to have refused filing, but later materials show that filing was completed and the actual problem lies in continuity of student registration; a negative review seemed to affect order opportunities, but subsequent records show that the account restriction came from a different action taken in handling the matter. Both inclusion and removal require reasons grounded in materials. Removing a candidate that does not hold does not mean that raising the earlier question was worthless.

This is also where the value of a candidate list lies. Listing dozens of identities, resources, and background conditions without explaining who has extracted them in the current event still falls short of entering the relational field. A shorter set can be more useful than a vast list if it corresponds to materials, nodes, and consequences. Length or the number of entries cannot substitute for verifiability.

Conclusions reached through limited distinction extraction can have different strengths. When materials show only that a difference may be relevant, the conclusion should remain provisional. A judgment can be strengthened only when multiple independent materials point to the same handling node and counterexamples still cannot overturn the connection. Making the strength or weakness of evidence explicit does more to keep explanations revisable than hiding what is unknown behind an assertive tone. Such limitation does not turn judgment into subjective preference.

When several analysts propose different candidates, they can return to the same body of event materials for comparison. An analysis has better-supported preliminary judgments if it identifies people handling matters, materials, nodes, and consequences more accurately; explains why materials were accepted or rejected and where relational chains broke; accommodates contrary evidence; and is willing to narrow or revise its conclusions when new materials appear. Comparison does not require every disagreement to disappear immediately, but should locate disagreements where they can be examined. A limited model that can be traced and accepts calibration can still have greater explanatory power than a closed total image or arbitrary speculation.

IV. How Causality Is Grounded in Relational Connections

The impulse to seek a root cause easily compresses a complex event into a total image declared in advance. Social events still have causes, and causal analysis remains valid. Opposing a root cause declared in advance requires causal judgments to rest on concrete, verifiable intermediaries or relational connections. Materials failing to arrive may interrupt an eligibility review; missing wage records may make responsibility difficult to establish; an account restriction may directly reduce opportunities to take orders. New materials can support, limit, or overturn all these judgments. Interpreters must distinguish differences already extracted through materials and procedures,

mechanisms that provisionally carry relatively high weight, relational chains that can be verified, and answers declared to be the sole root cause before analysis even begins.

In this book's composite situation, the child's school admission is not automatically caused by the word "poverty." Rent, the cost of taking leave, the preparation of materials, continuity of social-insurance contributions, residential stability, school places, and application deadlines are the concrete relations through which poverty enters consequences, and the causes differ in their distance from the outcome. The landlord's refusal to file is the immediate condition behind the current interruption in the provision of materials; rental relations and local registration arrangements provide more distant conditions. Family cash flow affects whether parents can move or take leave and may in turn change the responses available to them. If educational resources affect places, interpreters must also explain how those places translate into review outcomes. Compressing these relations into a single level makes it harder to explain where differences acquire weight.

Causal chains may also break. Even with a lower family income, a child may still enter school without difficulty if the landlord is willing to file, materials are supplemented and corrected, and school personnel can receive them in time. A family whose income is not low may also be blocked by incorrect materials, a missed deadline, or problems with continuity of student registration. These counterexamples do not cancel the importance of income differences; they only limit overstrong conclusions such as "income necessarily determines the outcome."

Nor are a worker's unpaid wages automatically caused by the words "labor circumstances." Contracting relations, wage records, and coworkers' testimony can be used to verify the facts of labor and responsibility. When a case enters arbitration, the corresponding materials are submitted to arbitration personnel for examination. When a legally effective document has not been complied with and an application for enforcement is made in accordance with law, enforcement personnel then handle it. These materials and procedures connect responsibility to real consequences at their respective stages; they are not a single path that every unpaid-wages case must complete. If the matter is attributed only to a distant structure, who keeps shift schedules, who confirms wages, who refuses to provide materials, and who is responsible for processing claims may disappear within the total image. Tracing nodes preserves the more distant background while making current responsibilities and entry points for correction visible. Analysts may still offer deeper explanations: if the regional economy changes employment arrangements, connections through contracting arrangements, wage records, or job stability must be found. Without concrete intermediaries and relational connections, macro-level concepts can serve only as provisional background.

The mother's opportunities to take orders are likewise not determined by low income on its own. Those implementing platform rules allocate opportunities according to scores, negative-review records, time online, and customer evaluations preserved in the account; care arrangements and bodily fatigue limit when she can respond to orders. Causal judgment cannot stop at naming concepts. Only by explaining who extracts differences, through what materials they acquire weight, and how they are transmitted and change consequences does causal judgment become concrete.

Causes are not confined to actions that produce adverse outcomes. Someone submitting supplementary materials, being willing to testify, extending the time for accepting materials, or correcting old records may interrupt an existing relational chain and redirect consequences. If analysis looks only for sources of pressure without recording how corrections occur, it will write the event as advancing in one direction and miss the actual positions at which those concerned and the personnel handling it change the outcome.

Explanation must also distinguish actors' intentions from the consequences of their actions. A landlord's failure to cooperate with filing may arise from concerns, negligence, or refusal to bear responsibility. For the school-admission event, analysts must first establish how this action blocks materials. Intentions can enter analysis when materials support them; gaps cannot be filled with conjecture. Verifiable consequences do not mean that analysts have already grasped all of the other person's motives.

V. How Questions Change the Point of Entry: Workplace Injuries and Deposits

A worker strains his lower back while carrying goods on a night shift. A coworker saw him stop and brace himself against a wall; he visited a small clinic and may also have had imaging done. The injury really occurred, but that does not mean responsibility has been formally recognized. When applying for a determination that the injury is work-related, the applicant must state basic circumstances such as the time of the accident on the application form and provide proof of the employment relationship, including proof of a de facto employment relationship, and a medical diagnosis certificate. Depending on the work arrangements and the disputed issues concerning the accident, the personnel handling the matter may also need to check medical records, shift records, what witnesses at the scene know about the course of events, or training records. The workplace's stance affects whether filing the claim and obtaining evidence proceed smoothly, but acceptance of the application is not conditional on the workplace's consent. These materials each support the corresponding factual judgments; the connection between injury and responsibility must still be clarified through verification in the determination procedure. [F01]

The workplace-injury entry point shows that bodily facts and institutional recognition must not be conflated. The workplace's denial of an employment relationship, medical records that do not clearly state where the injury occurred, coworkers' unwillingness to testify, or application materials that fail to arrive may all keep the fact of injury from reaching a determination of responsibility. Lack of formal recognition does not make pain disappear, nor can the reality of pain directly replace materials required by procedures. How much force each of these differences acquires in subsequent eligibility, responsibility, and consequences for life must still be traced through the specific stages of handling, one by one.

A tenant from elsewhere cannot recover the deposit when ending a tenancy. Rent, the deposit, and the landlord's bargaining power may carry relatively high weight, but those handling the dispute do not consider only the everyday fact that the tenant "lived here." They examine contract terms, money-transfer records, photographs of wear and damage to the property, repair responsibilities, the timing of the tenancy's end, the handover of keys, property-management fee arrears, and chat records.

The tenant may have moved out on time, cleaned the rooms, and returned the keys. If the contract did not specify standards for wear and damage, the deposit was paid in cash, there were no photographs at handover, and the landlord describes old wear and damage as new, actual residence and maintenance become difficult to turn into materials that mediation, complaint-handling, or litigation personnel can confirm. The facts have not disappeared; they have simply not acquired enough weight in the current procedure to change the judgment. "Wear and damage" in a deposit dispute also requires concrete representation: marks on walls, equipment malfunctions, the state of cleanliness, and missing items may be carried by photographs, handover inventories, repair records, or the two parties' accounts. When landlord and tenant interpret the same mark differently,

the personnel handling the matter must check when it formed, how responsibility was agreed, and how strong a conclusion the available materials can support.

Cash payments and money transfers leave different kinds of evidence. A money-transfer record can establish that a sum of money changed hands, but the purpose of the payment must still be judged alongside annotations, the contract, and chat contents. If there is no receipt for cash, later exchanges between the parties or other witnesses may also supply supporting material. The form of materials changes the difficulty of proof, but cannot be taken directly as the truth of the event.

Both parties may provide new materials. The tenant can add move-out photographs and handover messages, while the landlord can present repair documentation or contract terms. Analysts should not fix either side in advance as the only credible party. Who produced the materials, how they relate to the dispute, and whether they can be tested against counterexamples provide the basis for current judgment.

Failure to recover the deposit first constrains cash flow for the next rental, then narrows the time available to move, affecting commuting, dropping off and picking up children, job stability, and familiarity with a locality. These are immediate consequences; they do not mean that write-back has already formed, nor do immediate consequences depend on write-back. If those concerned or relevant institutions preserve the outcome of handling the deposit and contracts, money-transfer records, photographs, and chat records as differences that can be extracted again in the future, write-back has formed. Preservation itself, however, does not mean that these contents will necessarily govern subsequent judgments. Only when concrete personnel identify, extract, interpret, or assign weight to these contents anew through mediation, complaint-handling, or litigation procedures in later disputes does the content of write-back take effect again; it can then support, refute, or revise earlier judgments in light of new materials.

When the deposit event ends also depends on the analytical question. If the only question is whether the deposit can be returned, analysis within the window can be brought to a close once the handling outcome has been established. If the question is how the outcome affects the next rental, cash flow, moving deadlines, and commuting arrangements enter a new relational chain. The continuing pressures on life caused by the failure to recover the deposit do not have to wait for preservation or subsequent retrieval before they occur. The earlier window provides materials; the later one can trace both these immediate consequences and how preserved contents are used later. The two windows need not be conflated into one infinite event.

VI. Adjusting Windows and Passing from One to the Next

When expanding the relational-field window, analysts cannot push all distant background conditions into the core analysis. A child's school-admission event can be traced back to urban policy, the regional economy, historical migration, education finance, the real-estate market, population administration, and still more distant social changes. If these backgrounds have not yet changed admission eligibility, application deadlines, school places, proof of residence, and the handling of student registration through current personnel, materials, or procedures, they need not be forced into the core.

Analysts should place at the window's core nodes and differences that have already entered actual handling through concrete personnel, materials, or procedures and changed the event's consequences. Nodes and differences that materials indicate are about to change eligibility, risk, evaluation, relations, or write-back, but that have not yet entered actual handling, should be listed as candidates awaiting verification, not brought directly into the window's core. Ordinary

background should not be brought directly into the core either. If new materials confirm that candidates awaiting verification have entered handling, both the window and preliminary judgments need corresponding adjustment.

Without narrowing, analysis spreads without limit; without expansion, it misses crucial nodes. Technical tools cannot automatically supply an appropriate boundary. Interpreters must choose provisionally on the basis of materials, counterexamples, and consequences, and leave grounds that can be checked and revised. If new materials point to another person handling matters, a new node begins to change eligibility or responsibility, or the original explanation cannot accommodate counterexamples that have occurred, any one of these changes requires checking whether the window is too narrow. Reasons for expansion come from the event, not from the pursuit of theoretical all-inclusiveness.

Narrowing is also supported by materials. An important background condition has not entered current handling; a relational chain has broken and no longer transmits consequences; or a dispute, once verified, no longer makes a difference to the current conclusion. All these circumstances allow analysts to move the relevant contents back into the background and concentrate on nodes still operating. When studying whether a child can enter school, the window can be narrowed to eligibility and student-registration handling. When studying how admission outcomes affect family life, analysts must continue to trace commuting, working hours, and cash flow. Different questions can have different stopping points. Once the question and boundaries have been stated, several limited analyses need not compete for a single complete window.

Temporarily remaining outside the window still does not mean having been judged irrelevant. A lack of materials means only that verification has not yet occurred; confirming that a difference has not entered current handling requires grounds established through verification. This prevents insufficient materials from being misrepresented as nonexistence without letting everything unknown permanently occupy the core. When narrowing, it is best to record the reasons for exclusion: some background conditions lack materials, some nodes have been checked but have not changed consequences, and some distant relations currently lack traceable intermediaries. All three can temporarily remain outside the window, but for different reasons. Candidates awaiting verification must not be conflated with ordinary background. When new materials later appear, these reasons make it possible to check where the window should reopen without unfolding the entire event from the beginning.

Stopping expansion does not declare explanation finished. Once the current window can explain who handles materials, how differences enter consequences, and where the main counterexamples lie, while identifying what remains unverified, analysis has grounds for provisional closure. This stopping point serves the current question; it neither closes off the event nor prevents other questions from forming new windows.

After provisional closure, analysis can still reopen. New testimony, corrected records, subsequent handling, or unexpected consequences may make an old window inadequate. Reopening does not mean the earlier analysis failed in its entirety. Provided the original judgment explicitly stated the scope of its materials, it can be retained within its original range of validity, while the newly added parts undergo calibration.

Entering the relational field establishes a starting point for tracing, not a conclusion about weights. Analysts should be able to state which question about the event they are answering, which materials and people handling matters lie at the window's core, which candidates await verification, which differences temporarily remain in the background, and which nodes and relational paths are

currently identifiable. These contents have no fixed order and do not constitute an operational checklist completed once and for all.

The fact that materials have been presented establishes only that they have entered the view of those handling the matter. Extraction does not mean acquiring high weight, and a difference not being extracted does not mean it does not exist. Further comparison of how a difference changes eligibility, risk, evaluation, responsibility, and consequences for action also requires tracing how nodes handle materials, how consequences are transmitted, how records are preserved, and whether counterexamples can change preliminary judgments. Analysis must make the scope of limited distinction extraction and the remaining differences explicit, so that subsequent verification of weights always has materials to return to and nodes to examine, and the window can reopen when new relations or counterexamples appear.

Chapter 36. Applied Analysis of Weight: Nodes, Transmission, Records, and Write-Back

I. How Differences Gain Weight through Handling

When an event first arises, analysts may be able to establish only that several differences have entered handling, without yet knowing which carries the most weight. This provisional position does not evade judgment. Weight is not a ranking of people or a fixed attribute that differences carry by nature, and cannot be judged apart from concrete relational fields and real consequences (as discussed in Chapter 09). In actual events, the key to analysis is to trace, compare, and calibrate the strength of differences' effects. Judging weight does not require a complete ordering at the outset. Only by clearly separating known materials, unknown aspects, and the strength of a judgment can later adjustments be made in light of counterexamples, without having to defend the first impression.

Conspicuousness does not mean weight. A difference may recur throughout an account yet change no eligibility or opportunity; another appears only once in the materials yet redirects the entire handling process. Analysts cannot substitute frequency of appearance, emotional intensity, or a concept's prominence for verification of consequences. What really needs to be asked is who handled this difference on the basis of which materials, and what changed afterward. The position a difference occupies also changes its weight. The same proof of residence may be no more than an archived document for a child whose student registration is complete, yet directly bear on eligibility for a child applying as the deadline approaches. The proof's contents have not changed, but the stage of the event, the handling node, and the time available differ, and so does the intensity of consequences.

Differences do not gain weight on their own; they have to be extracted by personnel, institutions, or procedures situated at nodes. Nodes are not mere background. Concrete personnel, institutions, or procedures at nodes act on materials and rules to make certain differences seen, handled, rejected, or preserved. When a child enters school, school personnel or procedures for reviewing materials handle proof of residence, student-registration status, application timing, and the completeness of materials; labor arbitration institutions check proof of employment relationships, wage records, and coworkers' testimony; platform operations or ranking procedures read account ratings, response times, completion rates, and customer reviews.

What nodes extract is not a difference laid bare outside the materials. The fact of residence has to be represented through contracts, filings, testimony, or other records; facts of labor likewise enter handling through shift schedules, wages, chat materials, or the accounts of those concerned. Forms of representation affect what personnel can see, but must not be confused with the difference itself. Incomplete materials can only limit the strength of the current determination; they cannot erase real life or labor along with it. Community personnel verify the facts of residence, familiarity among neighbors, and supporting materials, while family members also extract traces of care, support, property distribution, and responsibility from past lived experience.

If no node extracts a difference, it may temporarily remain outside the event's consequences. But not being extracted does not mean not existing—some differences become problems precisely because nodes cannot extract them. A child really lives in a place, but the fact of residence cannot be converted into school materials; a father really works, but the fact of his labor cannot be converted into arbitration materials; a mother bears care responsibilities, but those responsibilities

cannot be converted into an explanation the platform can recognize. These differences are not without weight. Their difficulty lies precisely in not being recognized by appropriate nodes. Analysts must also distinguish the weight borne in life by those concerned from the institutional weight assigned by procedures. Pain may weigh very heavily on the worker, yet personnel making a determination may be unable to connect it to a procedure for assigning responsibility because the materials are insufficient. This does not mean that the pain is unreal or that procedural judgment exhausts the event. Both positions must be retained to explain why real differences have not become formal consequences.

Refusal itself may also provide new analytical leads. When school personnel refuse to accept materials, their reasons indicate which requirement has acquired weight; when a platform's appeal procedure does not accept an account of care responsibilities, the manner of refusal reveals which differences are excluded. Analysts must examine both the materials accepted and the points where materials are blocked. The latter often reveal how nodes narrow the reality that can be recognized.

Once a difference has been extracted, its entry into consequences must still be examined. After school personnel check proof of residence, it gains weight in that event if application rules use it to decide whether an application can be made. An account rating likewise acquires greater weight when a platform's ranking procedure reads it and adjusts recommendation positions accordingly. Continuity of social insurance affects eligibility only after eligibility-review personnel handle it according to continuity requirements; past care affects who continues to bear responsibility only after family members incorporate it into judgments of responsibility.

Weight assignment is not abstract evaluation. It is the process of handling through which concrete personnel or procedures, acting on materials and rules, bring a difference into consequences for eligibility, risk, evaluation, responsibility, relations, or opportunity. Extracting a difference does not mean that it has already acquired high weight. If the extracted difference has not changed these consequences through current handling, its weight remains limited. Changes in consequences can serve as concrete manifestations and checks on judgments of weight, but they are not the sole criterion, still less a synonym for weight itself. Analysis must continually trace nodes, procedures, materials, recognition, refusal, authority, and concrete relational connections. It cannot first use a consequence to prove that a difference has high weight, then invoke that high weight to explain the occurrence of the same consequence.

A difference may look small, but if it determines whether materials are valid, whether an account is recommended, whether eligibility is approved, or whether responsibility falls on a particular person, it may become very weighty. Whether the landlord completes a filing appears to be only one step in renting, but if it determines whether the child's proof of residence is valid, it gains weight. A negative review on a platform appears to be only one evaluation, but if it determines subsequent recommendation positions, it gains weight. A break in social-insurance contributions appears to be only a monthly record, but if it determines whether eligibility remains continuous, it gains weight.

Even after extraction, a difference may receive only limited handling. A staff member sees a supplementary explanation yet makes the same judgment on the basis of other materials; family members acknowledge someone's past care, yet the allocation of responsibility does not change. In these circumstances, “has been seen” cannot be written directly as “has acquired high weight.” Different nodes may also handle the same difference in opposite ways. Community personnel confirm actual residence, but the school's materials procedure does not accept that kind of proof; family members acknowledge care provided, but the platform's procedure still records a slow response as a negative evaluation. Weight cannot become a numerical value shared by all of society.

Analysts must identify the node, the consequence at issue, and the kind of handling that makes a difference heavier or lighter.

II. Tracing Relations While Also Seeing Downweighted Differences

Several paths of weight formation may coexist within a single event. Admission materials affect the child's eligibility, the parents' taking leave also affects family income, and the landlord's filing connects rental and school procedures. These paths can intersect without having to be forced into a single main line. Analysts must compare the consequences each changes before judging which path currently carries greater weight.

Naming a difference does not by itself give it weight. Nodes extract differences and bring them into concrete handling; weight assignment makes differences change eligibility, risk, evaluation, responsibility, relations, or opportunity. As consequences extend along relational chains involving family, school, market, state, platform, or locality, effects are transmitted outward. If handling results are preserved as differences that can be extracted again in the future, write-back has formed, leaving historical indices available for later use. Whether the preserved contents subsequently enter real consequences again must still be traced. Immediate consequences do not depend on write-back, and preservation does not guarantee that the preserved contents will necessarily take effect in the future.

These leads do not constitute an operational checklist that an event must complete. Extraction and weight assignment sometimes occur almost simultaneously; records may have existed long before the current event; and after transmission along a relational chain, new people handling the matter extract the same difference anew. Chapter 09 examines extraction, comparison, the assignment of operative weight, and connection to consequences in the current relational field; nodes, transmission, records, and write-back allow the continuation of effects to be traced. Both sets of entry points must expand or contract dynamically with the event; they do not all appear every time.

A difference can be extracted without being given consequences, or it can change present consequences without leaving a record. Some differences, though recorded, do not become apparent in the short term; others that seem small at present gain great weight in particular future events because they have been preserved. Verification must examine both how these leads appear and where they are interrupted.

Breaks in these links likewise have explanatory power. Materials have been accepted but consequences have not changed: the problem may lie in weight assignment. Current eligibility has been affected but subsequent relations have not changed with it: transmission may have stopped somewhere. A record has been preserved but no one retrieves it later: it has not entered a new event. Finding where the break occurs is often closer to reality than writing the entire chain as a smoothly running process.

Weight is transmitted onward along relational chains. If local admission policy lists rental filings or proof of residence among application materials, a landlord’s lack of cooperation may first make the relevant materials difficult to produce and then affect application or admission arrangements. Establishing or updating student registration still presupposes completion of enrollment formalities and student-registration procedures. The family reassesses whether to remain in the locality on that basis. A difference in the rental process thus enters education and the family’s residential choices. Along the relations connecting wages, debt, and housing in this family, wages in arrears affect debt deadlines; debt deadlines affect rent; rent affects residential stability; and residential stability in turn affects the materials for the child’s school admission.

Transmission does not replicate consequences unchanged. A negative review may take the form of fewer recommendations at a platform node and of insufficient cash flow after entering the family; residence materials bear on eligibility to apply within school procedures and turn into pressure to move when transmitted to the family. Both the form of representation and the kind of consequences may change with the node. Analysts must explain the intervening transformations, not summarize them merely as “a major impact.” If a difference remains local, the scope of its effects may be limited. If it continues to be transmitted through multiple nodes, repeatedly changing eligibility, risk, evaluation, and opportunity, this provides observational material indicating stronger effects.

But passing through many nodes does not suffice to establish the highest weight. Small consequences can continue through many positions, while another difference may appear at only one node yet directly determine eligibility. Range, duration, and the intensity of consequences must be observed separately. The number of nodes, the directness of consequences, and their severity cannot individually determine weight. These relations may also be interrupted: if the landlord subsequently completes the filing, the chain originally leading toward blocked school admission may be revised; if platform personnel accept an appeal and amend the record, the negative review’s effect on later recommendations may diminish. An interruption does not prove that the difference never had weight; it shows only that conditions have changed and that the judgment should be updated accordingly.

Tracing relations also requires examining which differences are downweighted, occluded, or excluded. Market pricing mechanisms may downweight time spent on care and wear on the body; state materials systems may occlude actual living circumstances; platform rating procedures may exclude care responsibilities and physical fatigue; and school achievement evaluations may occlude adjustment after a transfer, family upheaval, and difficulties with language. Such downweighting can also occur in explanation: interpreters using narratives of national community sometimes downweight internal differences, while those using class theory may rewrite household registration, accounts, student registration, local recognition, and family fallback support as subsidiary materials.

Being occluded does not mean being without weight; sometimes stronger consequences arise precisely because a difference cannot be recognized. The mother’s care responsibilities have not entered the platform’s interpretive rules, yet have fed into slow responses and falling ratings. The father’s actual labor has not entered the requirements for arbitration materials, yet has fed into the inability to resolve wage arrears, approaching debt deadlines, and strained family cash flow. The child’s actual residence has not entered the school’s list of materials: at the application stage this takes the form of inability to apply; where existing student registration is involved, it takes the form of unstable student registration. In either situation, pressure to move is also transmitted to the family. Different states of handling must not be conflated, but the difficulties in each have not disappeared for lack of recognition. Occlusion, too, produces consequences.

Analysis must distinguish several situations. A difference may not yet have left a record; materials may exist but not have been accepted by personnel; or existing classifications may downweight it so that it can appear only under another name. All these situations produce invisibility, but through different mechanisms. Calling them all “being overlooked” blurs the entry points for correction.

Nor can occlusion directly justify presuming the highest weight. Care responsibilities excluded from platform evaluation may indeed explain response times; travel distances, physical condition, or the handling of an account may also contribute to the consequences at the same time. Analysts must compare on the basis of materials and counterexamples. They cannot respond to a

difference's exclusion by declaring it the sole cause. Downweighting is a relational judgment. It must identify the personnel or procedure, the representation adopted, and the differences whose entry into consequences was thereby made more difficult. Market, state, school, and platform can serve as shorthand in analysis, but concrete personnel, organizations, and procedures still carry out pricing, registration, review, and evaluation. Only writing in this way can prevent abstract nouns from acquiring autonomous will.

III. Records Re-enter Events over Time

Weight changes with the stage of an event. In a child's school-admission event, the application window and proof of residence may carry the most weight before application; the landlord's filing, community certificates, and school places may gain weight during materials review; once the child joins a class and attends school, teachers' evaluations, peer relations, and family fallback support may begin to gain weight. These activities do not wait for a student-registration file to be established. As the same event moves forward, new nodes and materials become involved, and differentiating units previously in the background may enter key consequences. Judgments of weight must therefore move with the event, rather than fixing a result at one point in time as the answer for the entire event. Not having completed enrollment formalities and already attending school while student-registration filing or transfer has not proceeded smoothly are different states of handling. The latter does not mean that the child cannot attend class at present, but may still obstruct subsequent reviews of eligibility for transfer, progression to further schooling, or examinations. Nor are the effects of this student-registration event confined to the present: school record keepers, subsequent transfer procedures, examination-eligibility reviewers, teachers' evaluations, and the family's judgments about moving may all extract this student-registration event anew in the future and give it consequences.

In the father's wage-arrears event, the date wages are due to be credited and debt deadlines gain weight when arrears first occur; proof of the employment relationship, wage records, and coworkers' testimony gain weight when the event enters arbitration. When the award has taken legal effect and the employer has failed to comply within the required time, the procedure for applying for compulsory enforcement and enforcement nodes gain weight. If concrete personnel or procedures preserve the relevant wage, award, or enforcement results as differences that can be extracted again in the future, write-back has formed. Preservation does not guarantee that they will necessarily take effect in the future.

Only when new personnel, organizations, or procedures handling subsequent events identify, extract, interpret, or give real consequences to these contents anew does the content of write-back take effect again, potentially changing judgments about debts, family evaluations, and local reputation once more. Analysts must separate these two moments. They cannot retrospectively make subsequent extraction a condition for the initial formation of write-back.

Historical indices give differences an opportunity to pass through time, but the past does not automatically determine the present. Judgments made by current personnel or procedures may also be preserved and written back as new records, becoming materials that can be retrieved, questioned, and corrected again in future events. Whether a difference can gain weight again in the future depends on whether it is preserved and whether later events can extract it anew. Schools may enter absences in the relevant records under student-registration or day-to-day management rules; personnel handling a matter may enter a penalty in relevant records; interrupted social-insurance contributions may appear in contribution and individual entitlement records. Different records' retention periods, permissions, and subsequent uses must be judged separately.

If a particular platform's published rules provide for negative reviews and account histories, a negative review may enter that record. One negative review on a platform account means more than receiving one fewer order that day: future ranking procedures may extract it and affect later recommendation positions, customer choices, and account levels. A family argument may remain in members' memories of responsibility. An argument over responsibility is more than that evening's unhappiness: family members may extract it again years later as a basis for judging who should care for the elderly, who owes the family, and who neglects it. A local breach of trust may also settle into reputation through acquaintances' evaluations. Records allow differences to enter the future.

For this very reason, historical records themselves also have conditions of formation. Who made the entry, when, why it was recorded at the time, and whether the person concerned is allowed to supplement it all affect how strong a judgment it can support in the future. Detached from its original event, an old evaluation may acquire weight in a new procedure beyond its original purpose. Analysts must not merely ask whether a record exists; they must also check the circumstances in which it formed. Records may conflict with one another: old materials support eligibility while new materials show that circumstances have changed; family members have different memories of past care, while a platform appeal may add explanations absent from the original evaluation. Those retrieving records now need to compare their timing, sources, and scope of application. Historical indices provide materials open to renewed examination, not unalterable verdicts.

The absence of records likewise requires careful interpretation. Missing documents may mean that an event never happened, but may also result from inadequate methods of preservation, the person concerned being unable to obtain them, or records having been lost. Analysts cannot directly equate “no materials found” with “the difference does not exist.” The strength of a conclusion must be proportionate to what can currently be verified.

Weight cannot be judged only once. As an event develops, its nodes, materials, relational chains, and consequences may all change. A difference that initially carried little weight may suddenly become crucial at a new stage; one that initially carried great weight may recede into the background at a later stage. Analysts cannot divide an event into stages arbitrarily. New personnel beginning to handle it, changes in material requirements, eligibility having been established, or consequences reaching another set of relations may all indicate a transition between stages. Analysts must explain the basis of their divisions so that others can examine exactly when a difference gained weight.

Nor do changes of stage necessarily proceed smoothly. An appeal may return an event to materials review, new medical records may force a determination of responsibility to be re-examined, and residence records may be retrieved again for a transfer even after student registration has been established. Events sometimes return to earlier nodes, but this is not mere repetition: the materials and the people bearing consequences have changed, and weight must be judged anew. An analytical report that states only the final outcome erases the movement of weight across stages. Keeping a timeline allows us to see that a difference was once crucial but later lost its effect, and when downweighted materials re-entered procedures. This temporal change is itself part of weight relations.

IV. Comparison Begins with Comparable Circumstances

Comparison of like cases can help calibrate weight. If events are similar in type and in their main conditions of handling, and outcomes change markedly after a difference changes, there are

grounds for judging that the difference has acquired relatively strong weight in the current relational field. For example, if two equally poor children have different admission outcomes because of whether their landlords completed a filing, filing becomes a high-weight difference to trace. But two events at different application stages and subject to different material requirements cannot be compared directly merely because family incomes are similar. The question about the event, the handling nodes, the time frame, and the available materials must first be stated. The vaguer the conditions of comparability, the weaker the resulting judgment.

Besides the landlord's filing, community registration, school places, application deadlines, the way application materials are received, and subsequent continuity of student registration must each be examined to identify the stage at which they change consequences for eligibility. Equally poor families, or families with similar household-registration positions, may still experience different outcomes because their materials and nodes differ. Comparison rests on similar event types, material requirements, handling procedures, and questions concerning consequences; what must be compared are the materials, records, relations, or nodes that actually differ.

Under these conditions of comparability, if one of two workers owed wages has proof of the employment relationship and the other does not, and their handling outcomes differ, this reveals the proof node's role. Two low-income mothers' circumstances may also diverge depending on whether their account ratings are stable. If care responsibilities slow one mother's responses and the platform downweights her account, ratings, response times, and ranking procedures enter the consequences together. Once concrete procedures retrieve account ratings, response times, or customer reviews, they may change opportunities to be recommended and to take orders. Even if care responsibilities, physical condition, and travel distances do not enter account fields, they may still change responses through real constraints. Limited compression of these two levels of effects must still undergo testing against counterexamples, with judgments retained or withdrawn on the basis of the materials.

No two real events are identical. Comparison of like cases does not seek a single cause, nor is it an experiment in mechanically controlling variables; it cannot compress reality into an experimental exercise. Whether the comparison holds depends on whether the explanation more clearly identifies which node extracted which difference, which difference acquired strength in shaping consequences, and which relational chain continued to transmit consequences. The result is only a provisional judgment; new materials may still revise it.

Different outcomes also delimit the scope of inference. A landlord's filing matters greatly in several events, yet another event may be blocked by school places or continuity of student registration. This shows that filing cannot become a universal answer to every admission problem. If the original conclusion has exceeded the conditions supported by the materials, its scope must be narrowed. If it originally judged only that filing carries relatively high weight under a particular set of conditions, a different outcome under other conditions does not automatically invalidate that limited judgment. Accepting this limitation does not mean that comparison has failed.

Comparison therefore discovers connections between differences and consequences that merit tracing; it does not automatically prove a single causal relationship. If the two events also differ in other important ways, analysts must retain competing explanations. Only when subsequent materials can show how concrete personnel changed their handling on the basis of that difference does the causal judgment gain stronger support.

V. Proof and Responsibility in Labor Disputes

Labor circumstances plainly matter in determinations of work-related injury, but they are not an abstract cause. How these circumstances connect through evidence, testimony, materials, and determination to the corresponding consequences for responsibility and compensation is the process that judgments of weight must trace. If a worker's injury has not been formally recognized, the pain does not disappear on its own; nor can the existence of pain directly replace the proof required by procedures. Bodily facts and formal determination must both be retained.

For the fact of injury to enter a determination of work-related injury, an application form, proof of the employment relationship, a medical diagnosis certificate, and any other materials required by the application procedure must be submitted. How the injury occurred is then checked against medical records, shift records, witnesses at the scene, and other materials according to the points in dispute. The workplace's stance affects whether it files proactively or cooperates with verification, but is not a legal prerequisite for accepting the application. Whether shift records, testimony, and the like need to be supplemented depends on the points requiring verification. Without proof of the employment relationship, bodily pain may be unable to connect formally to the chain of responsibility.

The workplace may also deny different things. Acknowledging that the worker was present but denying that the injury was work-related, and acknowledging the injury but denying the employment relationship, call for different materials to be verified. Describing both simply as "refusal to recognize" occludes where the chain of responsibility breaks. If the workplace does not apply as required, the injured worker, the worker's close relatives, or the trade union may apply directly within the statutory application period. In the work-injury determination procedure, when the worker or the worker's close relatives consider the injury work-related and the workplace does not, the workplace bears the burden of proof. If it refuses to provide evidence, the administrative department may decide on the basis of evidence supplied by the worker or obtained through investigation; the judgment must still rest on evidence. This allocation of the burden of proof cannot replace verification of the employment relationship itself, nor can it be extended to mean that the workplace bears the entire burden of proof in every dispute over employment relationships.

Statutory duties and rules governing proof do not automatically remove practical obstacles. If medical records do not specify when and where the injury occurred, those records acquire relatively high weight; if coworkers dare not testify, coworker relations and judgments of risk also gain weight. Medical records carry information about bodily condition and the time of consultation, shift materials indicate work arrangements, coworkers' testimony supplements the account of what happened at the scene, and the worker's own account preserves the pain and circumstances of injury. Any item of material may have gaps. Where materials support one another and where conflicts remain must be examined; a single document cannot answer for the whole event.

Materials also change over time. Unclear work arrangements may be confirmed through chat materials, coworkers may later be willing to give an account, and new medical records may reveal continuing symptoms. Fading memories, lost records, or people's departure, in turn, make some key leads harder to extract, and the window must adjust to the state of the materials. As the wait lengthens, medical expenses, income during the period off work, and family savings may gradually gain weight, and the event's center of gravity also changes. These consequences must be supported by materials and the actual circumstances of those concerned, not supplied from imagination. When savings cannot sustain the wait, advance payment of medical expenses and income during the period off work increase the weight of the entire event.

Handling results also pass into other relations: stopping work affects income, interrupted income affects medical expenses and rent, rent falling due affects residential stability, and bodily recovery affects the next job. Analysts can expand the window along these actual consequences. Distant structures can remain in the background for now if they have not changed current materials, eligibility, risk, or relations. New materials may still support, refute, or revise the preliminary judgment.

The father's wage-arrears event can be analyzed through labor circumstances, arbitration and enforcement, contracting chains and cash flow, family debt, coworkers' testimony, and local relations. Actual labor, wages, property, debt, housing, risk, domination, available exits, and real communities are objectively existing differentiating units, but they cannot be compressed into proof that class entities exist. Analysts need to trace how the failure to receive wages transmits consequences to debt deadlines, rent, family materials, proof for arbitration, and enforcement nodes, rather than skipping the intervening processes and imposing ready-made categories.

Different kinds of materials have different sources and bearers: wage records may be produced by the party engaging the labor, shift records or traces of work may be preserved by workers, and coworkers' testimony comes from shared experience. Different sources support different scopes of judgment. Analysts cannot let one item occlude other conflicting records merely because its form is complete. Wage records, proof of employment relationships, and coworkers' testimony do not produce consequences on their own, and practical difficulties in obtaining evidence persist.

In dispute proceedings, parties are responsible for providing evidence for their own claims. Evidence relevant to the dispute that is held and managed by the employer must be supplied by the employer; the arbitration tribunal may also require the employer to supply it within a specified period, and failure to do so within that period entails adverse consequences. Those adverse consequences, however, do not mean that the worker automatically wins the case.

The relevant materials must be retrieved, reviewed, and given procedural consequences by concrete personnel and procedures in the respective current arbitration, adjudication, or enforcement proceedings. The actions of relevant organizations or personnel in accepting, returning, requesting supplements to, or refusing to confirm materials all change the possibility of those materials entering subsequent procedures. An abstract institution does not carry out these actions by itself, nor do documents produce effects on their own. These actions must be located in the personnel who perform them, organizational positions, and procedural nodes.

Family pressures caused by wage arrears can explain how consequences are transmitted, but cannot in turn replace verification of the facts of labor. Debt deadlines, rent, and care arrangements may make an event more urgent, yet do not automatically prove where responsibility lies. Only by separating judgments of responsibility from consequences for life can the reality of both be retained. Different evidence, conditions for testimony, and enforcement nodes may present different counterexamples. Analysts must use these materials to judge whether the original explanation is supported or needs to be limited or revised. This conceptual composite situation is not an account of an actual case. The distinctions in this section between procedures for filing, providing evidence, and enforcement refer to the corresponding legal sources in mainland China; they do not presuppose a particular region, specific time limit, amount, or case outcome. [F01] [F06]

These labor-dispute materials also show that a difference's existence, extraction, acquisition of weight, formation of write-back, and subsequent renewed effect do not occur at the same moment. Once shift schedules, medical records, wage records, chat materials, or testimony are preserved as materials that can be extracted again, write-back has already formed. Only when concrete

personnel in arbitration, determination, appeal, or enforcement positions later retrieve them anew and change responsibility or eligibility do they enter real consequences again.

VI. Comparing Material Chains in Medical Insurance Reimbursement

In medical insurance reimbursement, illness itself may be the most conspicuous element, but reimbursement nodes read more than pain and medical condition. Here, a conceptual comparison explains the relation between procedures and consequences for life; it is not an account of a particular actual case. The procedural distinctions refer to the relevant rules for basic medical insurance when seeking treatment in another province in mainland China. Their specific application still depends on local policies, the category of medical treatment, and the period concerned; not all patients need to complete filing formalities when seeking treatment.

The place of insurance enrollment, hospital grades under the applicable benefit rules, referral formalities required for the category of treatment, completeness of receipts, and contribution records applicable to the specific insurance scheme and period all enter the corresponding reimbursement handling. Contributions are not invariably required to be continuous. Determining coverage also involves different levels: the range of conditions covered, such as chronic and special outpatient conditions, is not the same as the payment catalog for medicines, diagnostic and treatment services, and medical consumables. Filing procedures for treatment away from the place of insurance enrollment differ by category. If filing has not been completed in time, it is necessary to check whether it may be completed afterward under the rules, or whether the treatment is emergency rescue treatment that is treated as already filed; one cannot infer permanent loss of entitlement directly. Different procedures may use different materials. These requirements do not constitute a fixed checklist.

With the same illness, under the applicable treatment category and benefit conditions, one person completes filing, seeks treatment under the corresponding hospital-grade rules, and has all receipts ready, allowing expenses to be settled smoothly. Another is pushed into debt because filing has not yet been linked into the settlement process, relevant expenses fall outside the payment catalog, or cash available for advance payment is insufficient. Under direct settlement, the insured person need pay only the expenses prescribed as their own responsibility. Where direct settlement is unavailable and manual reimbursement is sought under the rules, in circumstances requiring payment first and a wait for reimbursement, the family's capacity to advance the money limits how long it can hold on. The capacity to advance cash is a real capacity to bear the burden, not an eligibility requirement for reimbursement review set by the system.

Access to information may also enter consequences. Some people know early that filing is required, while others discover missing materials only at settlement. Whether relatives can accompany them and whether those concerned can submit materials repeatedly also affect procedural progress. The ability to obtain information, relatives' time for accompaniment and care, transport costs, and the capacity to wait are precisely the differences in people's lives that procedural descriptions easily occlude. They may enter judgments of weight only when supported by concrete actions and records; analysts cannot infer them from identity or status. Verification must identify which materials current personnel required, which requirement changed the reimbursement result, and whether those concerned can supplement materials or appeal. Judgments of weight must examine not only an illness becoming more serious, but also which differences in people's lives reimbursement nodes have downweighted. [Fo8]

Medical condition changes treatment needs, procedures determine which expenses can be processed, and the capacity to pay in advance limits how long those concerned can hold on. These

relational chains may intersect, but they must still be traced separately to compare which chain currently changes the most important consequences. Putting everything under “illness” or an abstract system loses the intervening positions of weight assignment.

VII. Counterexamples and the Calibration of Weight

Judgments of weight are not completed once and for all. Analysts may initially consider income differences the weightiest, only to discover later that student-registration nodes and application deadlines are the actual obstacles. Household registration may also be given excessive weight: people in the same household-registration position experience very different consequences because landlords' filings, community registration, and school places differ. When platform ratings appear to be the weightiest, new materials may show that care responsibilities, physical condition, and travel distances explain why ratings fell. Counterexamples provide entry points for calibrating weight; they cannot be treated as enemies of explanation. A judgment of weight unable to handle counterexamples becomes a new fixed image.

Counterexamples can indicate several different problems. One may show that a difference originally given importance did not in fact enter consequences; it may reveal that an omitted node is more crucial, or prove that the original conclusion holds only under narrower conditions. These situations call for different revisions. Analysts need not abandon the entire explanation because of one counterexample, but neither can they merely force it back into the original conclusion and refuse to change the scope. Responses to counterexamples must leave changes that can be examined. Which materials were added, which node thereby entered the window, and to what extent the original judgment of weight was lowered or raised should all be made clear. If new materials change only secondary aspects, the core judgment can be retained; if they sever the original relational chain, the conclusion must be rewritten. Calibration aims to keep judgment close to the event; it cannot serve to save a theory's face.

The objections of those concerned may also be sources of counterexamples. A worker points out that shift records omit night shifts; a parent reports that the school did not accept supplementary materials; a person taking orders explains that a negative review arose while they were handling a care event. Such accounts cannot automatically be accepted as valid because of the speaker’s identity, but they must enter verification. Analysts must seek the relevant records, procedural responses, and changes in consequences before deciding whether an account can revise the existing judgment. Ordinary insufficiency of materials, deferred handling, uncertainty, and valid objections are all normal features of empirical analysis and cannot simply be judged to be failures of the mechanism.

In applying the concept of weight, analysts must neither let a single image announce the answer in advance nor abandon comparison because differences proliferate. When using limited images of the state, market, family, or nation, analysts can make judgments within a limited scope about concrete questions, and differentiation bias can occur in all such uses. Analysts must disclose which differences they have extracted through these images and which materials and contents they have omitted, explain the scope within which their conclusions hold, and return them to concrete nodes, procedures, and consequences for examination. Acknowledging bias aims to revise models. It neither means that all images are indistinguishable nor that society can be explained only by one total image. Class entities do not exist. Class theory belongs from the outset to the direction of Model C in which a total image subsumes concrete differences; it is not an ordinary limited image.

Weight is not a number fixed in advance. It does not give differences permanent ranks or compress complex events into score sheets. It forms within events and changes with nodes, consequences,

relational chains, records, and counterexamples. Analysis of weight can help interpreters make limited, revisable judgments among potentially infinite differences: tracing how differences are extracted, given consequences, and transmitted outward; how they are recorded and written back; and how they change with the stage of an event. When a difference gains weight, it is also necessary to identify which differences are occluded at the same time. Comparison of like cases can make weight apparent, while counterexamples may compel the original judgment to be recalibrated.

A judgment must account for the materials on which it rests, the people handling the matter, the stage of the event, counterexamples, and what remains unverified. A conclusion can be clear without pretending to hold forever. When subsequent events retrieve new historical records, change handling nodes, or produce different consequences, the original judgment should be reopened. As long as weight analysis rests on concrete personnel, materials, procedures, and consequences, and accommodates examination through comparison and counterexamples, it can remain an analytical relation without becoming a new social entity.

Chapter 37. Calibrating Applications of Community: Types, Relations, and Boundaries

I. Is There Already a Relation Beneath the Name?

To judge a relation called a family, locality, nation, platform, or movement, we need to identify from concrete materials whether traceable interaction, memory, recognition, responsibility, protection, punishment, boundaries, and write-back already exist beneath the name, who carries these mechanisms, and in what events they produce consequences. The analysis of community mechanisms in Chapter 16 must likewise be tested in these materials and relations; conceptual labels cannot take their place.

A common name can be an entry point, but it is insufficient to certify a real relation. The same surname does not necessarily form a real family community; the same local identity does not necessarily form a local community; the same national name does not mean that every pair of members has a direct relation of responsibility; and the same platform group name does not guarantee that members already have continuing interaction and write-back mechanisms. Similarity is not connection; belonging to the same category is not belonging to the same network.

People who give names, registration personnel, group administrators, or movement organizers may use a name to convene members, and members may use it to recognize one another. But before these mechanisms have formed, a name can at most evoke an imagined association and bring about short-term mobilization; it cannot by itself prove that a community already exists. Whether what begins under a name can endure as a community depends on whether members interact repeatedly, whether recorders preserve shared experience, whether the people involved assign responsibility and maintain boundaries, and whether these materials are retrieved again in later events. As interaction, memory, responsibility, and write-back gradually form, a name that originally served only for classification may also become an index of a real relation. Judgment must be revised with the materials; a name does not complete certification automatically.

For precisely this reason, one name may encompass several networks that are not connected to one another. People who use the same local designation may not know one another and may not share reputation or responsibility. Members covered by the same national name, by contrast, may form connections through layered relays involving different families, languages, rites and customs, and commemorations. A name provides an entry point for searching for materials; analysts cannot merge these relations in advance on the strength of the name alone.

Conversely, people using different designations may form a real community. People who live together over a long period, care for one another, bear risks, and preserve memories may still recognize one another and make demands of responsibility in concrete events even without a uniform self-designation. Identifying a community requires tracing the mechanisms that maintain relations; it cannot use only whether members adopt the same label as its criterion.

Real communities can exist. A community is neither a naturally completed whole nor an actor possessing a unified will; it is a set of mechanisms jointly maintained by members, organizers, recorders, interpreters, and various arrangements of relations. These mechanisms differ in strength, depth, and duration, and may be reactivated or gradually weaken in different events. Long-term care by family members, repeated testimony by local acquaintances, and the preservation of shared memories by members of a nation can all produce concrete consequences; these consequences do not require the community itself to have a will. Recognition, the assignment of responsibility,

protection, and exclusion are always carried out by concrete members, organizers, recorders, and procedures within it.

When identifying these mechanisms, analysts must face the limits of knowledge imposed by the range of available materials. A researcher may encounter only public ceremonies and not private care, or read only formal records and be unable to obtain the account of an excluded person. Acknowledging such limits does not cancel judgment; it keeps the strength of the judgment proportionate so that later counterexamples can show where the conclusion should be revised.

Applied judgment should therefore distinguish three levels. A descriptive community name can help locate an entry point into the materials; an actual relational network must be supported by concrete interactions and consequences; and a community image that has been essentialized, defined by bloodline, or personified turns a name into a natural, unified subject by mistake. These three cannot substitute for one another. Removing essentialism from an image absolutely does not mean denying that real relations have formed.

II. How Do Connections Form, and What Depth Can They Sustain?

A family can form a real community, but the name “family” cannot prove in advance that a community exists. Family members and caregivers live together over long periods, forming longer chains of relations through care, property arrangements, responsibility, and evaluations by relatives; quarrels and the division of tasks are also part of these chains. Whether continuing connections and write-back have formed must be traced through concrete materials, not reduced to a fixed checklist. Members, caregivers, or organizers who form a community can support other members, but they may also invoke protection and past contributions to demand obedience, or even oppress those who leave or dissent.

Local relations, in turn, must be identified through repeated encounters, testimony, evaluations, the circulation of reputation, guarantees, and spatial visibility. Acquaintances, neighbors, landlords, witnesses, and evaluators sustain these relations; the name of an administrative district or a household-registration label cannot replace their interaction. They can protect acquaintances, but they may also exclude newcomers, strangers, people with bad reputations, and those with no one to vouch for them. Migration, population mobility, and platformization may, in turn, weaken these ties.

A national community is real and must not be reduced to subjective imagination merely because it contains indirect interaction. A national community is not a bloodline essence, a state registration, a homogeneous whole, a mere label produced by local identification or platform tags, nor an automatically formed unified personality. It does not require every member to know every other member directly; internal disagreements and shared connections can exist at the same time.

Members of a nation and various intermediaries maintain real relations by forming long-term relays and intergenerational write-back. They do so through long-term interaction, shared memories, shared harms, shared protection, responsibility, and experiences of boundaries, and through families, localities, language, rites and customs, marriage, migration, commemoration, intergenerational narratives, and concrete people, materials, and procedures in schools, the media, and state institutions. Members may still occupy different positions and hold different standpoints, interpretations, and responsibilities. Registration by a state institution is only one kind of concrete material and procedure, not the sole certification of a nation's reality.

This indirect connection also shows why frequency of contact cannot be the sole criterion. Some people interact frequently in daily life without preserving memories for one another or bearing

responsibility; others do not know one another directly yet may sustain long-term relations through family, language, rites and customs, commemorations, and other relays. Accounts told by earlier generations, language use, the practice of rites and customs, commemorative activities, and contact across localities can connect members who do not know one another within the same relation of memory and responsibility. Indirect interaction depends on traceable relays. The depth of connection is affected by who sustains these relays, how materials are preserved, and whether later people continue to retrieve them. Merely saying that “we all share a culture” is still insufficient to explain the concrete existence and effectiveness of the chain of relations.

Judgment of a platform group cannot stop at accounts belonging to the same group either. Group owners, administrators, account holders, and members exchange messages, provide mutual aid, evaluate, block, and preserve information. Only if they preserve records over the long term, sustain mutual aid, establish stable recognition, and can provide protection, impose punishment, and write back members' performance may a weak or partial community form. Brief exchanges of information are not yet sufficient to support this judgment. Some group owners, administrators, and members have indeed formed such relations through sustained mutual aid, shared risks, shared records, and stable recognition.

Shared risks may also connect organizers, ordinary participants, logistical supporters, those who withdraw, and dissenters within a movement. Concrete events, slogans, organizational nodes, and narratives of sacrifice, through assemblies, reposting, risk-bearing, and logistical support, make the formation of action-community mechanisms possible. But this formation is not irreversible: rising risks, internal differences, organizational ruptures, and future disagreements may all weaken these relations. A short-term action community may provide strong protection in a high-risk event yet decline rapidly afterward; a family or national community may endure for a long time while direct responsibility between some members remains relatively weak. Strength, depth, and duration must therefore be described separately. A long history cannot be directly converted into high strength.

Even an interaction with powerful consequences cannot directly prove an enduring community. Strangers helping one another in danger do provide real protection; if no continuing recognition, memory, or write-back of responsibility follows, the action may remain a single event. Only when it is properly preserved by the people concerned and retrieved again in later relations may it become a starting point for community formation. Two people appearing in the same space, a group of people using the same label, or several accounts joining the same group are likewise insufficient for certification. Interaction in the strict sense must be carried out by concrete members and produce traceable consequences for recognition, responsibility, evaluation, protection, punishment, or boundaries.

Family, locality, nation, platform, and movement are only a few types of relation, not an exclusive, closed list, still less the same entity repeated in different places. Sustained by different people, materials, nodes, and chains of relations, they have different boundaries, pressures of responsibility, and forms of write-back. In real events, they can overlap and connect, and only some of their mechanisms may enter into consequences. Comparison cannot take one type as a fixed yardstick. It must examine separately whether interaction continues, who preserves memory, whether protection and responsibility actually occur, how boundaries are maintained, and whether records can be retrieved again in the future. These dimensions should not be reduced to fixed scores, since the materials may not support precise quantification. Specifying in which events and with respect to which consequences a mechanism is stronger or weaker, while leaving unverified aspects open, allows counterexamples and new materials to revise the judgment.

Within the same community, core caregivers bear long-term responsibility, while peripheral members are activated only in commemorations or events involving danger. Both are connected, but the depth and strength of their relations differ. An assessment of the whole cannot consider only the most active members, nor can it use the most distant members to deny all connections.

III. When Does Memory Fall Silent, and When Does It Become Weighty Again?

For community mechanisms to pass through time, someone must preserve the past and materials must carry memory. In family relations, members tell who cared for whom, who owed what to whom, and who remained silent at a crucial moment; relatives make demands of responsibility when dealing with eldercare, loans, illness, or the division of a household. In local networks, acquaintances preserve evaluations of reliability or breach of trust through testimony and reputation, and local evaluators may retrieve these evaluations again in a current event.

Members of a nation, practitioners of a language and rites and customs, participants in commemorative activities, and relevant recorders write shared harms, protection, migration, and experiences of boundaries into narratives or other records. Members of the nation and participants in commemorative activities then reinterpret shared memories in events involving language, boundaries, commemoration, or humiliation.

In platform networks, group owners, administrators, and members preserve group activity through chat records, transaction records, evaluations, and screenshots, and may retrieve chat records in complaints, bans, mutual aid, or pile-ons. Participants and organizers of movements preserve experiences of action, narratives of sacrifice, and taboos, and when risk rises they reevaluate statements, silence, withdrawal, and logistical support.

Community mechanisms need not operate explicitly all the time. Many relations are silent in ordinary periods; only in illness, debt, boundary conflict, public humiliation, platform disputes, movement events, or external pressure do the people involved retrieve kinship relations, care records, shared memories, group records, or narratives of sacrifice. Retrieval is not an automatic reaction. The past does not automatically determine the present. Only when family members, local evaluators, participants in commemorations, group administrators, or movement organizers retrieve old narratives, reputations, rituals, screenshots, or other records in a current event and give them new consequences do historical materials become weighty again.

Shared memory is not only warmth. Care and mutual aid can be remembered, but so can harm, debt, humiliation, exclusion, collective attacks, and coercion. What recorders preserve and ignore, and how interpreters arrange the materials, affect members' positions in later relations. Shared memory often contains disputes: different members may remember different parts of the same harm, and may offer opposite accounts of who provided protection and who should bear responsibility. Analysts need not smooth away disagreements to prove a community. If a dispute itself is preserved over time, repeatedly answered, and changes members' positions, it is also part of a community mechanism.

A medium of preservation does not maintain memory by itself. Photographs, genealogies, chat records, rituals, and commemorative places participate in present recognition only when concrete people use them. Materials may be lost, displayed selectively, or reinterpreted by a new generation. When identifying shared memory, analysts must look at the preserver, the retriever, the silent person, and the person who raises an objection at the same time.

Forgetting may also be part of a community relation. Someone may deliberately suppress an unfavorable memory; some experiences may fade because no recorder was available; and other contents may lose their opportunity for retrieval after members disperse. Analysts must distinguish shared memory that never formed, memory that once existed and then weakened, and memory still preserved by a small number of members. These have different meanings for the continuity of a community. Members' silence also has different causes: they may temporarily face no event requiring a common response, or may stop participating because of fear, disappointment, migration, or an interruption of relations. To judge whether a community has weakened, one must see whether interaction, memory, responsibility, and boundaries are continually losing their carriers. A period without public activity is still insufficient to declare that a community does not exist.

The same historical material can acquire different strength in different events. Activation is usually selective: illness may retrieve memories of care, a loan may retrieve an evaluation of creditworthiness, and a boundary conflict may retrieve narratives of shared harm and protection. The same community will take out different materials in different events; the content shown by one activation cannot be treated as its entire structure. A relation that does not appear in this event need not be judged to have disappeared permanently. Responses from those concerned, new materials, and alternative interpretations can support, refute, or revise an existing record. Members may accept an established interpretation, or they may offer new materials, point out omissions in the record, and refuse disproportionate demands of responsibility. Community mechanisms can therefore be activated, revised, weakened, or dissolved; they are not permanently fixed by the past.

IV. Who Can Recognize Members and Interpret Shared Memory?

Positions of community membership may be central, peripheral, or temporarily participatory. Some people undertake care or recordkeeping over a long period; some provide support only in a particular event; and some maintain a connection through language and memory while rarely entering organizational activity. All these positions may be real. If people are divided only into “members” and “non-members,” many differences in responsibility and cross-boundary relations disappear. A member's withdrawal and re-entry must be traced separately: stopping participation may have interrupted responsibility, or the person may still be constrained by old records and the expectations of others. When an excluded person leaves an organization, other connections in family or national relations do not necessarily disappear at the same time. Who recognizes the withdrawal, which records are still retrieved, and whether interaction later resumes will all change the judgment of the boundary.

Community relations form members' positions, but recognition and exclusion must be carried out by concrete people and procedures. Those qualified to interpret shared memory, certify positions, declare that someone has deviated, distribute responsibility, and draw boundaries occupy the corresponding positions of power. Family members evaluate who cares for the family; parents, elders, or caregivers may evaluate who has fulfilled their responsibilities. Local acquaintances judge who is reliable; acquaintances, neighbors, landlords, or local elders may testify, vouch for someone, or give negative evaluations. Group owners and administrators may invite, mute, or remove accounts. Group owners, administrators, and active members may also change account visibility and membership in accordance with platform rules and the relevant records. [So6]

Positions within a national community likewise cannot be automatically determined by a name. Family narratives, practices of language and rites and customs, concrete people in schools and the

media, commemorative rituals, and community organizers may all affect how shared memory is preserved and retrieved. Families, practitioners of language and rites and customs, school and media personnel, participants in commemorative activities, and community organizers take part in recognition through memory, language, experiences of boundaries, and responsibilities of protection. They may offer different interpretations of those who remain silent, dissent, withdraw, or occupy peripheral positions. Records and procedures within state institutions may also affect the preservation and retrieval of memory. Registration can produce real consequences, but it cannot monopolize or create the entire reality of a national community.

In a movement, organizers and participants identify members on the basis of actions, risk-bearing, or positions taken. Organizers, slogan writers, core participants, and interpreters of narratives of sacrifice may judge who is a member, who has withdrawn, and who is deemed to have deviated. Ordinary participants, logistical supporters, those who withdraw, and dissenters may not accept these judgments; their responses and counterexamples should also enter the analysis. The authority to certify is real power, not unquestionable truth: recognition may be real yet unfair, and exclusion effective yet unreasonable.

Interpretive authority is usually distributed across different positions. Family elders may know older narratives, actual caregivers have everyday experience to draw on, and younger members can present new materials not covered by old records. Families, practitioners of language and rites and customs, participants in commemorative activities, and organizers within a national community may also interpret the same memory differently. One side's louder voice cannot make it the community's sole will. Access to materials, in turn, affects the authority to certify: administrators can see complete chat records, while ordinary members may retain only fragments; state personnel hold registration materials, while family and local members preserve another set of lived memories. Who can submit, consult, preserve, or delete materials changes which interpretation is more likely to acquire consequences. This asymmetry cannot be hidden under “the community's determination.”

A formal account's higher position need not cancel informal memories. Registration, organizational announcements, or administrative decisions can directly change qualifications, while family oral accounts and local testimony may preserve interactions not covered by formal materials. The two kinds of material differ in the strength of their consequences and may contradict one another; official status cannot be equated with completeness. Who makes a judgment, on what materials it rests, whether the person concerned can respond, whether peripheral members can offer alternative interpretations, and whether excluded people can reenter or revise their positions must all be explained. Explaining a real mechanism does not mean acknowledging its legitimacy in advance.

V. How Does Protection Become a Demand for Responsibility?

When community mechanisms are real, they usually produce protection through concrete members. Whether protection exists depends on concrete actions and the costs borne. Verbal support may provide emotional support, while care, shelter, guarantees, or sharing risks can change more direct consequences. Both may be real, but their strength differs. Analysis must therefore neither portray a single statement of support as long-term protection nor deny support that has occurred because protection is incomplete.

Caregivers look after the sick, support children, advance expenses, or intercede on someone's behalf; family members may also demand that someone care for the elderly, repay favors, or maintain respectability. Local acquaintances provide support through testimony, introductions,

guarantees, and reminders, and may also demand that someone keep their word, help acquaintances, or maintain a good reputation. Protection and responsibility thus connect within concrete relations, but whether each demand is proportionate must still be judged separately.

Members of a nation and the relevant organizers can provide shelter in danger, while participants in commemorative activities and recorders preserve shared experiences. Members may make demands of shared responsibility upon one another, and members and organizers may also demand that people remember history, protect members, or uphold shared dignity. Platform-group members provide information, mutual aid, reposts, and support; group owners and members may demand responses, reposts, or compliance with group rules. Movement participants provide logistics, care, and risk-sharing, while organizers and participants may demand participation, support, silence, or the bearing of risk.

Those now making demands may also reinterpret this support as grounds for obedience. Relatives can invoke past care to demand repayment of a debt; local evaluators can turn recognition among acquaintances into exclusion of outsiders. Organizers within a national community may invoke protection to downweight internal differences, group members may turn mutual aid into a pile-on, and movement organizers may invoke solidarity to misjudge those who remain silent or withdraw. Punishment is the other side of protection, but who specifically carries it out, against whom, on what records, whether its intensity is proportionate, and whether members can refuse or contest it must still be traced. Punishment is not limited to formal expulsion: silent treatment, withdrawal of help, negative reputation, refusal to testify, or repeated retrieval of past mistakes may all change positions. These consequences must be supported by concrete actions and materials. A community does not punish by itself, nor can an abstract name replace a judgment of responsibility.

Protection can form shared responsibility, but those protected do not automatically bear unlimited responsibility. Being in the same network only makes shared responsibility possible; it does not make members automatically bear equal responsibility. Who has provided protection, who has the capacity to bear responsibility, who is directly connected to the event, who is merely a peripheral member, and who has withdrawn or objected change the object, proportion, and strength of responsibility. Remote members occupy different positions from direct participants, and those who have provided protection cannot have the same right to make claims as those who merely share a name. A common name cannot flatten members' differences; dividing responsibility equally would cancel these real differences.

Responsibility therefore needs a definite object, scope, and time. Whom one has cared for, what help one has received, and whether one now has the capacity to bear responsibility are all concrete grounds for the force of a demand. Those addressed may accept, refuse, negotiate, or offer counterexamples, and even demands supported by past protection and recognition may be revised by new materials. A person making a demand cannot extend responsibility into unlimited obligation on the basis of membership alone. The pressure of responsibility is part of a real mechanism, but whether it is legitimate and proportionate must still be judged within relations and events.

Refusing responsibility does not necessarily mean leaving a community. A member may oppose the proportion of a particular demand, question an old record, or point out other obligations they are bearing. If these responses enter discussion, they may instead show that responsibility is still being negotiated. Refusal can become connected to community decline only when interaction, recognition, protection, and memory are interrupted over a long period.

VI. How Do Boundaries and Records Change Positions?

Community boundaries have real consequences. They may be formed by kinship, familiarity, shared memories, language and rites and customs, risk, responsibility, platform permissions, or relations of action. Family members, local acquaintances, practitioners of language and rites and customs, group administrators, and movement organizers retrieve these materials in concrete events to judge who may enter, who is protected, and who must bear responsibility. Boundaries can protect and can exclude. Who draws a boundary, what materials are used, how it is enforced, whether contestation is allowed, and how the result of drawing the boundary is recorded and written back into future relations are all part of its actual operation. A group with no boundary at all is unlikely to form a community; an overly rigid boundary may oppress both internal members and outsiders.

A boundary is not an eternal essence. A new member may gain a position through continuing interaction and relations of responsibility; an existing member may withdraw or be excluded; and peripheral members and cross-boundary relations may connect several communities at once. Boundaries are maintained, but they also change through new materials, responses from members, interrupted relations, or renewed acceptance.

Community boundaries can be layered. Someone may be recognized as a member in culture and memory but not appear on the formal roster of an organization; another person may have a registered position without continuing interaction or a relation of responsibility. Each boundary produces its own consequences, and no single layer can substitute for the whole judgment. State registration is material that may acquire high weight; it is not the sole source of a community. Boundaries often overlap. Family relations can cross localities; a national community can cross state borders; and a platform group may connect members from different localities and nations. Crossing a boundary does not automatically erase an existing community, nor does it guarantee that a new community has formed. Analysts must see in which layer of relation concrete interaction and responsibility fall.

A community boundary need not remain visibly prominent in everyday life. Everyday dealings may be quite open, while the people involved distinguish inside from outside only in an event involving resource distribution, danger, commemoration, or responsibility. Which person activates a boundary in which event is more explanatory than the abstract question “Where is the boundary?” Different events may also retrieve different boundaries.

Write-back has already formed when the outcome of handling within a community is preserved by concrete members, recorders, or procedures as a difference that can be retrieved again later; preservation does not mean that it will necessarily be used in the future. Only when members, organizers, or procedures in subsequent events reidentify, retrieve, interpret, or give these contents real consequences does the written-back content become effective again. Later retrieval is not a condition for write-back to form in the first place. Nor do immediate consequences presuppose write-back.

Within a family, members preserve care, property distribution, and actions at crucial moments through narratives and family records; relatives may bring up a refusal to provide care many years later. Local acquaintances preserve evaluations of reliability or breaches of trust in testimony and reputation, and local evaluators may cite a breach of trust again. Narratives and reputation can also carry records; materials are not limited to written archives.

Members of a nation and participants in commemorative activities enter statements, protection, deviation, and sacrifices into narratives or related records. Group owners, administrators, and

members preserve actions within the group through chat records, screenshots, evaluations, and ban records; a group administrator may retrieve a statement or screenshot. Movement participants and organizers preserve participation, withdrawal, opposition, and logistical support, and participants may reinterpret an instance of silence. Records will change members' positions again through their concrete later use, but the retriever's interpretation cannot directly prove the motive of the person concerned.

The person concerned may point out an error in the record, add an omitted action, or offer a different interpretation of silence, withdrawal, or opposition. New materials may support an old record, or lower, change, or revoke its consequences. Write-back affects future positions but is not a permanent final decision. It may also change how later people understand an earlier event. If a withdrawal once preserved as “deviation” is accompanied by new materials showing the risks faced by the person concerned, family or organizational members may rewrite the original evaluation. The consequences once produced by the original record do not disappear for that reason, but future recognition and responsibility may change. That is precisely why write-back can be calibrated again.

A missing record cannot be treated as negative evidence either. Care may have left no documents, local mutual aid may exist only in oral accounts, or part of a chat history may have been deleted; all of this limits verification. Analysts may reduce the strength of a conclusion and look for other carriers, but cannot directly infer that interaction never occurred. Absence of material and material proving absence are two different situations.

The object of write-back must also be specified. A record may change qualification within one organization only, or it may travel through family narrative or local reputation into other relations. The broader the range of transmission, the more necessary it is to verify who retold the account along the way and who accepted it. A record does not pass from one community to another by itself; concrete members and procedures always carry the connection.

VII. How Does One Person Face Several Communities?

In a general composite scenario illustrating multiple positions, a young worker may simultaneously be a family member, an outsider in a locality, a member of a nation, a platform account holder, a member of a group of fellow workers, and a movement participant. This refers to no specific person or verified event. People within these relations may make conflicting demands: family members may ask him not to take risks out of family concerns such as housing or debt; fellow workers may ask him to testify in the actual circumstances of labor, wages, and domination; movement organizers may ask him to take a position. Meanwhile, group administrators and members may preserve his statements, and personnel and procedures within state institutions may record his actions. Actual labor, wages, property, debt, housing, domination, and fallback options within real communities are all objectively existing real relations. They can neither be denied nor ever be swallowed up into some all-encompassing class entity. Analysis must trace these concrete demands and recorders separately, rather than merging them into the unified will of a community.

Multiple communities are not a row of parallel labels. One network provides protection while another may demand action; one relation demands silence while another may demand testimony. In comparison, it is necessary to distinguish who makes which demand, which materials are retrieved, and which responsibilities conflict, and to see how the person's choices are written back into a future position by different recorders. The person concerned is not merely a passive bearer of multiple demands. They may choose which members to ask for help, refuse a responsibility, or use material supplied by one community to answer a demand from another. These actions may change

the weights of different relations and may produce new recognition or exclusion. Analysts must preserve the person's position as an actor, rather than merely listing identities.

Conflict may also force a community to redraw its boundaries. Testimony by fellow workers may worry a family, movement participation may affect the position of a platform account, and local reputation may alter an opportunity for work. Each chain of consequences has different carriers. Combining them as “social pressure” loses the position of responsibility and makes it impossible to see which relation provided protection.

VIII. Community Fabrication, Real Consequences, and the Limits of Judgment

A common name, a common enemy, a common emotion, a common slogan, common registration, and short-term intensity of circulation may all serve as entry points to a community. People who name, mobilize, register, or participate in circulation may use them to form a temporary connection, but a temporary connection cannot replace long-term interaction, preservation of memory, distribution of responsibility, generation of boundaries, and write-back mechanisms. Community fabrication describes a temporary connection as a long-term mechanism, a common name as shared responsibility, and a common emotion as shared memory.

An identity under the same name, a shared emotion, or a common enemy cannot directly prove a real community. Mobilizers use a common enemy to gather people, and short-term emotion may produce exclusion, attack, or obedience; these consequences must be acknowledged. Community fabrication does not mean pure falsehood or nonexistence: it may still produce real consequences of mobilization or exclusion. These demonstrate the power of mobilization and classification, but do not automatically prove that a lasting community has formed. Only if short-term actions are later preserved, repeatedly retrieved, and turned into relations of responsibility must the judgment change accordingly. The existence of community fabrication likewise cannot negate traceable real mechanisms within family, local, national, platform-group, or movement communities.

A real community is not naturally legitimate. Concrete members and organizers may provide protection and may also impose oppression; recorders may preserve shared memory and may also ignore counterexamples; people making demands of responsibility may sustain mutual aid and may also create coercion; people maintaining boundaries may protect members and may also exclude outsiders and internal dissenters. Judgment of reality must be separated from judgment of legitimacy.

Checking in the reverse direction which mechanisms are missing from a claim about a community is an important route for identifying community fabrication. If there is only a name without continuing interaction, only emotion without a carrier of memory, only slogans of responsibility without actual protection, or only boundary exclusion without write-back among members, the judgment of the community's reality is weakened. The absence of one mechanism need not lead immediately to a judgment that the claim is false, but the strength of the claim made by the analysis must be strictly proportionate to the materials at hand.

A community is not a fixed entity, but does not thereby lose its reality; boundaries have consequences, but are not therefore eternally unchanging. Identification must be grounded in carriers: how members interact, who preserves and interprets memory, who recognizes or excludes members, who protects or punishes, who demands responsibility of whom, who maintains boundaries, and which actions and records are written back into future relations. Shared memory

is preserved by members, materials, rituals, organizations, or procedures, then retrieved by people in the present within concrete events. The past does not automatically determine the present.

These entry points have no fixed order. Some events first expose conflicts of responsibility; others first leave records of exclusion. Analysts must trace the materials, not tick boxes one by one. Only once the carriers have been made clear can “community” serve as shorthand for mechanisms of relations, explaining how concrete people, materials, rituals, organizations, and procedures form mechanisms and consequences, rather than praising them in advance.

How strong a mechanism is, how long it lasts, and in which events it is retrieved again must also be grounded in materials. Responses from members and alternative interpretations can support, refute, or revise an existing record. Similarity is not connection; belonging to the same category is not belonging to the same network. Belonging to the same network only makes shared responsibility possible; it does not produce automatic, unlimited, or completely equal responsibility.

Judgment must stop within the limits of what the materials support. Available materials may suffice to confirm that a family or group has real community mechanisms in a particular event, yet be insufficient to infer that all members bear responsibility in the same way in other events. If continuing interaction has been confirmed but stable responsibility has not, judgment should remain faithfully at that level. If shared memory is visible but there is no evidence that it is changing members' positions, there is no need to announce a strong community in advance. Partial confirmation is itself a limited judgment. New interactions, withdrawals, records, and counterexamples may still change the conclusion. A community's reality is supported by traceable, dynamic relations and must undergo subsequent calibration; there is no need to close off room for revision with a single definitive classification.

Notes

[So6] For Portes's discussion of how network relations may produce exclusion, excessive demands on members, and restrictions on freedom, see Portes (1998), pp. 15–18 and 21–22. For the roles of conditional cooperation, punishment, information about past behavior, and rules in collective action, see Elinor Ostrom, “Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms,” Journal of Economic Perspectives 14(3) (2000): 137–158, especially pp. 142, 146–150, and 154. Neither source supports a unified will of the community or entails that community demands are naturally legitimate.

Chapter 38: Operational Calibration of Complexity Compression

I. Making Limited Judgments about Complex Events

Faced with overlapping social events, analysts must make the necessary limited compressions while preventing the results from being passed off as what society fundamentally is. A child's admission to school may involve household cash flow, proof of residence, landlord filings, school places, the student-registration system, teacher evaluations, and local recognition at the same time. A father's unpaid wages may involve the facts of labor performed, the contracting chain, wage records, debt deadlines, arbitration materials, and enforcement nodes. A mother's taking orders through a platform may involve account ratings, response times, care responsibilities, bodily condition, customer evaluations, and platform ranking.

These situations may involve multiple sets of differentiating units, types of nodes, relational chains, kinds of records, and instances of write-back at the same time, but the sources of complexity need to be distinguished. Some events involve a great quantity of materials; in others, the people handling matters and the levels of relations intersect; still others undergo repeated write-back over an extended period. The quantity of materials, the levels of relations, and the extension through time must not be conflated. Only by identifying the kind of complexity at issue can we understand what a judgment may have omitted.

Acknowledging that an event is complex provides no reason to abandon analysis and comparison. To stop merely on the grounds that "it is too complex, so no judgment can be made" is, in effect, to use complexity to cancel comparison itself.

A limited judgment can still be established even when the materials are incomplete. In a school-admission event, for example, an analyst may confirm that a landlord filing has already changed the admission materials while acknowledging that school places, household cash flow, and local relations have not yet been fully verified. What is known and what is unknown must be kept separate. The unknown does not cancel an established fact; treating everything unknown as unanalyzable would instead deprive the materials already available of their effect.

Analysts need to state their position of observation. People directly involved are situated in everyday life and can see its continuing difficulties; staff may encounter only procedural requirements; researchers reconstruct relational chains from the materials they have obtained. Compressions formed from different positions may complement one another, and they may also conflict. Making the position of observation explicit helps calibration, but such disclosure does not make all accounts equally reliable.

An analyst cannot lay out all the differences in an event to the same extent at the same moment; explanation can unfold only under limited compression. Compression begins with the choice of a question: deciding which question to answer also decides which materials to read first, what time span to cover, and which background to leave outside for the time being. This choice is constrained by the event itself and cannot be completely neutral. Making the reasons for the choice public allows others to check whether the compression is too narrow or has departed from the question.

On the basis of the question selected, analysts extract relevant differences, arrange materials, identify nodes, and trace relational chains before forming a provisional judgment open to discussion and examination. People who use limited explanatory images such as the state, market,

nation, family, platform, and movement may each extract different sets of differences: registration and enforcement; prices and transactions; shared memory and responsibility; care and property; accounts and visibility; and shared dissatisfaction and directions of action. When using these images, their applicable scope must still be stated. No image may be allowed to pose as what society fundamentally is.

The same body of materials can support different limited compressions for different uses. Admission records can be used to analyze eligibility, and they can also be used to trace the consequences of a family's relocation. Materials concerning unpaid wages can be used both to define the allocation of responsibility and to examine how debt is transmitted to the family. The two explanations need not be mutually exclusive. The key is to compare what each answers, which differences it extracts, and which relations it leaves out.

It must be clarified that explanatory images of different kinds have no will of their own and do not select materials by themselves. It is concrete people, when using images such as the state, market, or family, who decide how to name differences, arrange evidence, and form conclusions. For precisely this reason, it is entirely possible for different people using the same image to arrive at different results. Returning responsibility for the selection of materials and the argument to the analyst prevents an abstract concept from being personified as an acting subject.

The fact that a compression contains less than the reality it addresses does not mean that a judgment is necessarily false. A map contains less than the roads themselves, and a concept less than the event itself; as long as analysts make their uses and boundaries explicit, they can still assist comparison and judgment. Without limited distinction extraction, events would merely scatter into details too difficult to handle. The validity of a judgment depends on what it extracts, what it omits, the nodes and relational chains in which it holds, and when it ceases to hold.

A provisional judgment is therefore never arbitrary. From the outset it is materially constrained by the materials, the consequences of the event, the responses of the people concerned, and counterexamples. Faced with a complex event, analysts need not make coverage of all reality a precondition, but they must keep the process of limited distinction extraction open to verification and challenge by counterexamples.

II. How Scope and Granularity Can Be Compared

Compression involves the granularity of observation, which depends on the concrete question and the materials at hand. Take "household cash flow" as an example. It is suitable for summarizing overall economic pressure; but if one goes on to examine how that pressure is formed, it can be broken down into rent, transportation, leave taken from work, and the costs of preparing materials. A summary that is too coarse will conceal mechanisms, while a breakdown that is too fine may lose the present line of inquiry. Analysis has no permanently correct smallest unit.

Effective compression reduces the materials included while preserving distinctions relevant to the question. In studying an obstruction to school admission, it may be necessary to retain proof of residence, the time of submission, the way application materials are received, and the subsequent connection to student registration, while temporarily omitting remote background that has not yet connected to the current consequences. Omissions must have reasons, and new materials must be allowed to bring that background back into the analysis.

The delineation of scope must be supported by how far the materials actually extend. If a difference has so far been extracted only at one node, the conclusion should initially stop at that node. Only when consequences have actually been transmitted to the family, locality, or other procedures is

there reason to extend the confirmed scope of effects outward. This does not prevent analysts from continuing to investigate leads suggested by new materials; candidates that still await verification cannot simply be treated as established conclusions. The importance of the background in itself does not mean that it has already entered into the current consequences. Distinguishing confirmed effects from leads still to be investigated is necessary to prevent compression from expanding without limit.

Several limited compressions can coexist: a family image displays care arrangements, a market image displays prices and income, and a state image displays eligibility and enforcement. The local explanatory power arising from the relevant differentiating units and the processes through which they are handled must be compared in the context of the event. We cannot declare that only one approach is effective merely because the approaches differ, nor can we erase their differences merely because all of them are limited.

Whether a compression is effective must be judged by returning it to the concrete relational field. Analysts need to state the event at issue, the differentiating units extracted, the nodes and relational chains in which they operate, and the differences that have been occluded, and then use new materials or counterexamples to decide whether an existing judgment must be weakened, supplemented, or withdrawn.

Therefore, no image may cross its boundary and subsume other mechanisms. In events involving materials, certification, and enforcement, analysts may use a state image to extract important differences, but must not let it swallow family care, market pressure, platform ranking, and local relations in advance. In handling events involving accounts, records, and visibility, analysts may likewise use a platform image, but must never let it swallow bodily condition, care responsibilities, state real-name identification, and market credit. Stating an effective scope publicly is meant to make an explanation open to comparison and revision, not to display weakness.

This effective scope includes at least three levels: the question, time, and consequences. A compression may be suitable for explaining the stage of materials review but insufficient for explaining a family's relocation after the review. It can be effective early in an event yet may lose its focus once the event enters an appeal or enforcement stage. Analysts must not arbitrarily expand effectiveness at a particular moment into an all-purpose summary of the entire matter.

Comparison among limited models also depends on this scope. An explanation using a family image may have greater explanatory power for care responsibilities, while one using a platform image may be stronger for account visibility. The purpose of such comparison is not to assign permanent rankings, but to examine which compression, for the concrete question at hand, can be re-expanded more accurately, accommodate counterexamples, and accept revision. If another explanation demonstrates greater explanatory power in a particular event, this shows only that it fits the materials better within that relational field and scope; it does not automatically require the original model to give way on every question.

III. A Generalization Must Be Able to Return to the Event

In speaking of "unpaid wages," an analyst has already performed a compression. To enter into the event, the analyst must re-expand this generalization into the materials carried by wage records, proof of the employment relationship, and co-worker testimony; trace how the contracting chain, arbitration materials, and enforcement nodes each enter into the current handling of the matter; and examine debt deadlines, rent pressure, and household cash flow. Materials must be submitted, preserved, retrieved, and interpreted in concrete procedures by the people concerned, providers of

materials, and handling personnel before they can take effect in the corresponding handling of the matter. Relations, too, must be traced to concrete people and procedures: the contracting chain itself must not be treated as a document. The real burdens of debt, rent, and cash flow do not depend on procedural recognition for their existence.

Re-expansion requires stating what has been omitted and unfolding the concept into the differentiating units, nodes, relational chains, historical indices, and write-back mechanisms relevant to the question at hand. It does not require laying out all the limitless materials that have been omitted. A compression that cannot be re-expanded can easily remain a slogan; it is the support, refutation, or conflict among materials that provides an entry point for subsequent calibration.

"Platform labor" likewise needs to be brought back to actual handling. Analysts can trace account ratings, response times, completion rates, customer evaluations, appeal deadlines, and recommendation positions, as well as bodily fatigue, care responsibilities, and family time. Personnel of the platform enterprise set rules, system procedures invoke records in particular events, and reviewers, appeal personnel, and order-takers each act. Actual consequences must be explained through these interactions, without granting the platform or its records a will of their own. The reality of bodily fatigue, care responsibilities, and family time likewise does not depend on their recognition by platform procedures.

Within the generalization "a child's admission to school," proof of residence, landlord filings, and community registration concern how materials are formed and submitted; school places, application windows, and student-registration nodes must be traced according to their respective positions in the handling process. Whether materials enter into the corresponding eligibility and procedural consequences depends on parents' submissions, review by the relevant staff, and the concrete handling through registration or student-registration procedures. These positions must not be collapsed into a single procedure. Household cash flow and teacher evaluations are also among the concrete matters that need to be re-expanded. Each has its own effects; they must not all be treated as materials produced only after review.

Re-expansion can begin with the most important connections within a concept. Analyzing "market pressure" requires stating who proposes prices, how transaction terms change, and to whom the consequences for income are transmitted. Examining "family responsibility" requires identifying who previously provided care, which memories were retrieved, and how demands came to bear on particular members. A concept has verifiable content only when it is traced to actual carriers and points of connection. Unpaid wages can be traced further into work arrangements, the local economic structure, and more remote background, but this does not require an endless reconstruction of history. Once the available re-expansion sufficiently explains the principal nodes, relational chains, counterexamples, and unknown parts, analysis may provisionally close, with the relevant points reopened when new evidence appears.

Unfolding materials also requires distinguishing their evidentiary force. Statements by the people concerned, documents, procedural responses, and observers' records support different ranges of facts; presenting them side by side does not mean that they have equal evidentiary force. Analysts must state who produced each item, when it was produced, and how it relates to the current event. A generalization must not answer on behalf of the materials.

IV. How the Total Image Swallows Differences

Operational checks must distinguish two mechanisms working in different directions. First, has the current explanation begun renaming other valid mechanisms as subsidiary material of the same total image? Second, has the current analysis used complexity as a reason to cancel distinctions in evidentiary strength, comparison among explanations, and provisional judgment? The first question checks total-image subsumption; the second checks the erasure of distinctions between explanations. These are different mechanisms within Model C. They cannot substitute for one another, nor do they constitute fixed stages occurring in sequence. Analysis must also examine whether the current compression leaves room for other valid explanations and counterexamples, and whether the original judgment has actually changed after the materials have changed.

Once an interpreter rewrites all social differences through a single image, other real mechanisms become obscured. If every consequence is written as the will of the state, family care, market pressure, platform ranking, local familiarity, and community responsibility disappear outside the image. If every relation is written as transaction and price, care, dignity, memory, local reputation, and the pressure of responsibility are likewise downplayed. A national community has real mechanisms of long-term interaction, multi-level relay, language, rites and customs, shared memory, shared harm, shared protection, demands of responsibility, experiences of boundaries, and intergenerational write-back. Analysts must not reduce a national community to bloodline essence, state registration, a platform label, or a propaganda illusion, nor use shared identity to downplay its internal inequalities, different positions of participation, boundary fabrication, and oppression within the community.

Likewise, class theory does not become a total image only after it is used excessively. In its theoretical construction, it belongs from the outset to the direction of total-image subsumption. This book does not acknowledge that classes exist. What operates in concrete events is real labor, wages, property, debt, housing, risk, domination, and available exits, together with real communities and real relational structures. The local explanatory capacity of analysis comes entirely from concrete subjects extracting, assigning weight to, connecting, and compressing these real differentiating units within concrete relational fields. A class image is merely a low-dimensional output of this handling process. It can indeed present some harsh circumstances, but this does not justify attributing the explanatory capacity of analysis to the image itself. Once analysts elevate class into an ontological entity and use it to subsume other institutional, procedural, and everyday differences, they cut off the possibility of re-expanding the concept into concrete materials and carriers.

The danger of a total image lies not only in the excessive breadth of its concepts, but even more in its rewriting of counterexamples. If, faced with family care, national responsibility, or platform ranking that they cannot explain, users reduce all these materials to surface forms of the same central force, the image loses the possibility of correction. It appears to absorb more materials but in fact cancels the differences among them. The erasure of distinctions between explanations operates in another direction: it obliterates differences in evidence between explanations and conceals the cost of error. If all accounts are treated as equally limited and equally incapable of yielding a conclusion, it becomes impossible to identify which explanations ignore the people concerned, misuse records, or cancel real communities. It must be emphasized that a sound retention of uncertainty, the raising of reasonable objections, a justified suspension of judgment when materials are insufficient, and valid rebuttals based on materials belong to normal empirical calibration. They are by no means automatically equivalent to the erasure of distinctions between explanations. Acknowledging complexity still requires identifying where evidence is stronger,

where inference breaks down, and where withdrawal is required. Calibration proceeds precisely through these distinctions.

A total image may also produce real-world consequences. Organizers, managers, or interpreters who use it to allocate responsibility, distinguish friend from enemy, or arrange resources will change the positions of concrete people. These consequences prove that an image has force when people use it; they cannot, in reverse, prove the existence of the social entity the image claims. Analysis needs to separate the act of using an image from an ontological judgment. Social Differentiation Network Theory itself must also accept this limit. If its users rewrite every event in the same set of differentiation terms and reject other limited explanations and counterexamples, it too will slide toward a total image. The requirement here is not to deny the objective existence of relational networks, but to prevent any limited image from being treated as society itself. This must be reflected in a public statement of effective scope, in allowing concepts to be re-expanded into concrete materials and carriers, and in continuing self-calibration when faced with counterexamples.

This set of positions is only an entry point for calibration, not a closed table of types. Discovering over-compression may require narrowing the scope; discovering a misaligned image may require unfolding the materials again or changing the limited image; discovering that counterexamples never change the conclusion should lead to a reduction in judgment strength or even withdrawal. A sound acknowledgment of complexity retains these comparisons and revisions; it does not belong to Model C.

V. What Part of a Judgment Must a Counterexample Change?

Counterexamples do not calibrate explanations by themselves. The people concerned, providers of materials, and analysts must put forward, preserve, and examine counterexamples in concrete events, stating whether they support, refute, or conflict with the existing materials, before a judgment can possibly be adjusted. A parent pointing out that supplementary materials were refused, a worker pointing out that shift records omitted night shifts, or an order-taker explaining that a bad review occurred while they were providing care are all entry points for objections by the people concerned. These accounts do not become established automatically because of the identity of the person making them, nor may the existing compression rule them out in advance. Corresponding materials and procedural responses must still be sought.

Ordinary objections, insufficient materials, and valid rebuttals need to be handled separately. An opposing voice unsupported by materials may express only a partial impression from a particular position of observation. Insufficient materials call for suspending a conclusion and conducting further investigation, not immediately rejecting an existing inference. If the original model has stated its applicable scope and can offer an evidence-based argument for ruling out the challenge, this constitutes a valid rebuttal. An effective counterexample tests a concrete judgment through substantive materials: a difference that never entered into the consequences, an omitted node in an inference, or an erroneous path may each require revision. It may also be necessary to reassess weights or restrict an apparently universal conclusion to particular conditions. A counterexample need not first overturn the entire key path or display comprehensive consequences to count as effective.

Revision, too, takes more than one form. A counterexample may prompt analysts to reduce the strength of a judgment, narrow its applicable scope, adjust internal weights, rewrite a causal path, or withdraw a concrete conclusion when its core breaks down. These cannot all be handled by "adding more factors," still less by requiring every counterexample to overturn the entire

theoretical model. Nor does the greater strength of a different explanation in another event automatically compel the original model to give way within the relational field where it holds.

Children who are equally poor may face different consequences because landlord filings, school places, and application windows differ. An explanation in terms of poverty need not immediately be discarded, but the landlord, school, time window, and student-registration node must be added to trace the differences previously left unexplained. Workers who are owed wages may likewise obtain different results because proof of the employment relationship, co-worker testimony, and enforcement nodes differ; proof, testimony, arbitration, and enforcement mechanisms must then enter the analysis. If order-takers with the same low income face different consequences because of account ratings, response times, care responsibilities, and platform ranking, accounts, records, care, and ranking must be added. Whether these materials support or refute the original judgment must be checked again, and whether to reduce its strength or withdraw it decided on that basis. The people concerned and analysts may still challenge the results of calibration in light of subsequent events.

Tracing where revision is needed also requires examining when and where compression went wrong. Over-compression reduces multiple differences to a single axis and demotes other differentiating units to subsidiary material. What it changes first is scope: an explanation originally applicable only to wages and resources is extended to national memory, family care, and state certification, and the other differences lose their own positions. Misaligned compression, by contrast, may have a narrow scope yet use an image unsuited to the current event to answer the wrong question, without examining actual nodes and relational chains—for example, using price changes to explain an eligibility result caused mainly by the receipt of materials. Distinguishing these differences is necessary to identify where scope must be narrowed and where the image must be changed.

Refusal of calibration involves a further distinction in time. The original judgment may once have been effective, but after new nodes, counterexamples, and materials appear, users still refuse to adjust it and merely force them back into the original image. This is not quite the same as misalignment from the outset and may require withdrawing the existing conclusion. All three kinds of problems can also occur together: a single image first swallows multiple differences, is then applied to an unsuitable event, and finally renames every counterexample. The classification only helps locate entry points for revision; it must not become a fixed diagnostic table. Concrete judgments must still return to materials and consequences.

Refusal of counterexamples need not take the form of direct denial. Users may rename materials that do not fit expectations as secondary phenomena, continually raise the evidentiary demands on counterexamples without imposing the same demands on the original conclusion, or retain only records that support the image while leaving conflicting materials outside the analysis. All these practices deprive judgments of revisability. A genuine revision changes scope, strength, or relational chains and states which previous conclusion no longer holds. If the conclusion never changes and new materials are merely given a subsidiary position, the counterexample has no actual effect. Whether a change in judgment can be seen provides a basis for checking whether calibration has occurred.

A record must be kept after calibration: which difference was added, which conclusion had its strength reduced, and how far the effective scope was narrowed. If new materials sever the original relational chain, the core judgment must be rewritten; if they only fill out a secondary part, the original compression may be retained within a narrower scope. Conflicts among materials cannot be settled in advance by a single image. The same registration may support an eligibility judgment

yet be insufficient to establish the full content of a residence relation; the same account record may show a procedural result yet be unable, by itself, to explain care pressure. What the materials can establish and what still awaits confirmation must be stated separately.

Limited comparison does not require all models to handle the same batch of materials. Analysts can first establish which question each explanation answers and then compare how each handles the relevant materials. A family image may better explain care arrangements, while a state image may better explain an eligibility procedure. Their effective scopes differ, but it remains possible to check whether each omits a key node and whether each allows counterexamples to enter. Retaining uncertainty is not the same as canceling judgment. An analyst may say that one relational chain has stronger material support, that another still lacks a procedural response, and that one consequence remains only a provisional conjecture. Such distinctions allow for gradations in judgment. If all materials are simply called uncertain, known differences and unknown parts are again mixed together.

The results of comparison may also be provisionally set side by side. If two limited explanations account for different consequences and the available materials are insufficient to determine which relational chain carries greater weight, analysts may retain both judgments together with their respective conditions. Setting them side by side is not a declaration that all explanations are the same; it truthfully marks a difference that has not yet been resolved. When new materials enter, comparison must be carried out again.

VI. Following One Order to Trace Compression and Write-Back

When analyzing a mother taking an order, analysts can approach the event through order prices and competitive pressure, account ratings and response times, care responsibilities and family time, bodily fatigue and travel distance, and real-name and payment records. Through these approaches, analysts can extract real differences, but must not let any one approach subsume the others. The relative weight of the differences shifts at different stages of the event: before an order is taken, account ratings and recommendation positions become weightier; when the order is taken, response time, travel distance, and bodily condition become weightier; after a bad review, appeal procedures, appeal deadlines, and historical evaluations become weightier.

A platform is not a unified personality and cannot be assumed to make judgments by itself. Procedural stages such as taking an order, completing it, evaluation, recommendation, and appeal may be handled separately by different people and systems. System engineers, rulemaking personnel, order-dispatch procedures, customer service staff, and reviewers may all perform parts of this work, and weights need not be the same across stages. Concrete ranking and appeal consequences arise from rules set by enterprise personnel, the system's invocation of records, and the actions of reviewers, customers, and order-takers. Analysts need to trace how records cross nodes. Whether a past bad review affects subsequent recommendations depends on how the current procedure retrieves it and assigns it weight; it cannot be assumed to determine the present automatically.

The bodily depletion incurred during an order, anxiety caused by traffic delays, and a contractual penalty deducted immediately are all real gains or losses occurring directly at the current node; they do not presuppose write-back. When concrete people or procedures preserve a bad review, appeal, or account-handling result as a difference that can be retrieved again in the future, write-back has already formed. System fields are the carriers of preservation in this example; a field itself must not be treated as a necessary condition of write-back. Whether the preserved content is later retrieved, by whom, and under what conditions it is assigned weight anew and takes effect again

still depends on how concrete people and procedures retrieve, interpret, or assign weight to it in subsequent recommendation, appeal, or order-handling processes. Immediate consequences, preservation, and later use must not be conflated. Keeping records does not mean automatically controlling the future or settling the matter permanently.

Account records preserve only what the procedure has recorded. Interruptions in care, bodily fatigue, changes in traffic conditions, or temporary risks may not have entered the fields yet still have real effects on the order-taker. A difference's absence from a record does not mean that it does not exist, nor does its real existence mean that the current procedure necessarily recognizes it. Care responsibilities, bodily fatigue, order prices, customer evaluations, and platform records may support one another or conflict with one another. Analysts must retain the order-taker's responses and appeals and revise judgments in light of new materials and subsequent events. This conceptual composite situation does not refer to any particular platform or algorithm.

After an order-taker submits an explanation or appeal, whether handling personnel retrieve previous records and how they interpret new materials may change that person's subsequent position. A fall in the account rating may be followed by fewer platform recommendations, affecting income in turn. Changes in income then enter household cash flow, ultimately affecting care arrangements, rent payments, and the preparation of materials. Fewer recommendations, lower income, and tighter household cash flow are real consequences transmitted along relational chains; they do not mean that household cash flow itself has been written back.

Whether a compression can still be used depends on whether it can preserve both procedural records and real differences outside the records. If "platform ranking" merely summarizes rating, recommendation, and appeal positions and can be re-expanded into concrete personnel, rule invocation, conflicts among materials, and subsequent handling, it retains analytical value. If it excludes care, the body, transportation, and family time altogether, or explains every counterexample as a problem that the account had from the beginning, analysts must unfold the materials again and change the judgment.

School admission and wage disputes serve here only as comparisons of boundaries and compression. If an analysis of admission speaks only of poverty, household registration, or educational resources, it must check whether landlord filings, community materials, application windows, school places, the receipt of application materials, and the subsequent connection to student registration have been obscured. If new materials sever the original relational path, the original judgment should be reduced in strength or narrowed in scope. For unpaid wages, wage records, proof of the employment relationship, co-worker testimony, the contracting chain, arbitration, and enforcement nodes can test whether the generalization "unpaid wages" can be re-expanded. Household debt and rent pressure show the transmission of consequences; they cannot, in reverse, substitute for verification of responsibility. Full distinction extraction within the relational field and weight tracking for these two cases have already been undertaken in Chapters 35 and 36 respectively.

VII. A Shared Slogan Does Not Eliminate Differences in Participation

Movement organizers can use a slogan to connect dispersed differences to a common expression, and different participants may temporarily act in the same direction. This connection has real organizational force, but a slogan is not a unified personality and does not mean that everyone expects the same result. Workers, students, family members, local residents, and platform workers may extract different contents from the same slogan: wages, security, opportunities, risks,

protection, local dignity, accounts, and instability of responsibility. The formation of a common direction is itself a result of continuing interaction.

A shared slogan can compress the direction of action, but it cannot flatten the reasons for participation. Some value wages, some value safety, and some are concerned with local protection or family responsibility. The stronger the slogan's compression, the more organizers and analysts must examine participants' different positions, the participation costs they actually bear, the positions of silent groups, internal disagreements over strategy, the family pressures each bears, and the risks of splits and exits caused by disagreements. To maintain a common expression, organizers need to handle these differences. They cannot assume that the slogan has already done the work of understanding for everyone. A slogan can form connections, but it cannot pass itself off as the movement's entire reality.

Differences within a movement may reappear in later events, and participants and analysts must use them to examine and correct the existing common expression. Records left by action also need to be retrieved again by people in the present. Meeting records, public expressions, participants' memories, and later narratives may preserve different contents. If later interpreters select only one kind of material, they may rewrite disagreements that once existed as unanimity. A historical index can support calibration, but it does not provide a single answer by itself.

A community formed within a movement may contain real interaction, shared risks, demands for protection, and pressure of responsibility. Acknowledging such a community does not mean that internal disagreements disappear, nor that all participants remain permanently in the same position. Analysts must retain both the common connection and internal differences, avoiding the reduction of a movement to a pure illusion while also refusing to treat it as a closed entity.

VIII. Leaving an Entry Point for Reopening Judgment

Whether a compression can continue to be used depends on which key differences it has extracted and what it has omitted or occluded. It must be possible to re-expand these choices into differentiating units, nodes, relational chains, relational pathways, historical indices, and write-back mechanisms, with an account of how the relevant people or procedures extract, assign weight to, connect, transmit, and write back differences. Whether counterexamples can enter, whether local effectiveness has been passed off as the whole reality, and whether other differences have been rewritten as subsidiary material also bear on whether the judgment can hold. These calibration dimensions are interrelated. They have no fixed order, scores, thresholds, or automatic answers; they are not a score sheet, decision tree, or algorithm.

When new materials and event consequences enter, analysts must first determine whether they support or refute the original judgment, then decide whether a change is needed. They may retain the existing judgment, reduce its strength, narrow its applicable scope, add omitted nodes, unfold the materials again, or compare two compressions side by side. When relational chains and counterexamples have rendered the original explanation ineffective, the judgment must be withdrawn. Precisely what has changed in scope, strength, and content after a counterexample enters must be recorded. Continued use does not require keeping things as they were. The old name can be retained as long as the revisions are made public, but if the name remains unchanged while the conditions of judgment change, this too must be stated, so that apparent continuity does not conceal actual revision.

Some situations require only keeping questions open. When materials are insufficient, strong conclusions about responsibility or causation can be suspended while known consequences and

nodes awaiting investigation are recorded. A decision to supplement, restrict, or withdraw can be made when further materials become available. This brings the strength of the judgment back into line with the evidence; it does not abandon judgment. If a compression persistently obscures key differences, rejects objections from the people concerned, and cannot state its effective scope, it should not be retained simply because it has long been used. Withdrawal is also part of calibration. Analysts must give their reasons and state which materials remain available for use in other limited explanations.

Judging whether a compression is usable requires examining the concrete, verifiable entry points it leaves for reopening. Interpreters must identify gaps in the materials at hand and the limits of their coverage, keeping nodes not yet verified and relational pathways that remain conjectural visible. For judgments already made, they must also state which potential counterexamples would be sufficient to weaken or negate the current inference, and what changes in time limits or boundary conditions would require reexamination. These checks develop in relation to the concrete question; they do not constitute a closed checklist that must be complete on every occasion. If a conclusion counts every unknown as support for itself in advance, external materials can no longer bring about its revision. The problem then is not whether the conclusion is concise, but that it has closed off calibration.

The convenience of a name cannot substitute for the accuracy of its content. "Family pressure," "market risk," and "platform ranking" can maintain the line of discussion, but once they enter a key inference they must be unfolded into carriers and handling processes. Names can be brief; causal explanations cannot be omitted on that account. School admission, unpaid wages, platform labor, and movements need not use the same scale. The granularity of compression can be adjusted to the question, but sources of materials, the people handling them, relational chains, and consequences must still be present, and the requirements of accepting counterexamples and making boundaries public cannot disappear.

Re-expansion and calibration begin during analysis itself. Conflicting materials, objections from the people concerned, or new procedural responses may all require the original compression to be unfolded again. Records preserve some handling results but also omit experiences that were not recorded. When later people or procedures retrieve them, they must again confront new materials and event conditions. The past cannot automatically control the present, and current write-back cannot close off the future. A judgment may provisionally close, but it must still leave an entry point for reopening. Limitation is a condition of revisability; it cannot become an excuse for evading responsibility.

The necessity of compression and the danger of a total image can both hold at once. The former enables analysts to form judgments from limited materials; the latter reminds people not to elevate provisional results into society itself. As long as an explanation can still be re-expanded and compared, can accommodate counterexamples, and can account for its revisions, it retains value for use. When these conditions are lost, its strength must be reduced, its scope narrowed, or it must be withdrawn. These handling decisions remain subject to examination in light of materials and counterexamples and have no fixed sequence; analysis is thereby constrained by its concrete scope.

Chapter 39: What This Theory Is Not: Society Is Not a Class Plane but a Differentiation Network

I. Society Forms and Exists as a Differentiation Network

Society forms and exists as a differentiation network. The differentiation network has real standing in social ontology, replacing class entities and a pre-existing class plane. Here, a "differentiation network" means the real, dynamic, open, relational social structures and handling processes, situated in relational fields, that form through the joint operation of people, materials, records, nodes, and relational pathways. It is emphatically not an image temporarily adopted by a researcher, still less an analytical tool that can be replaced at will. At the same time, it is not a fixed, closed, pre-completed, personified ultimate entity that exhausts society; it is not a final explanation of the universe, nature, life, and everything that exists; nor is it a closed, unrevisable final naming of the essence of society.

This theory requires its own limits to be drawn clearly, rejects total images of all kinds, and calls for an account of its real content, the conditions that sustain it, and its theoretical boundaries. The first task is to prevent familiar grand terms from simply being brought back in: if class, identity, or the state is still treated as a pre-existing social skeleton into which differentiating units are then fitted, the questions that motivate the theory have been rewritten. Analysis should begin with the differences, those handling them, and the consequences that actually arise in an event, rather than deciding in advance which image society must conform to. Concepts such as relational field, weight, community, compression, and calibration jointly constrain inference. They require analysts to disclose their materials and scope, specify the actors and actions, and revise their judgments when counterexamples arise.

Social Differentiation Network Theory does not install an eternally unchanging entity beneath society, nor does it treat class, the state, the market, the nation, the family, the platform, identity, or a list of differentiating units as society's ultimate constituents. Treating a network or differentiating units as yet another fixed ultimate entity to replace the old underlying entity would merely repeat the practice it opposes. Substantialist ontology often first assigns an event a center, then arranges subsequently observed materials around it as subordinate elements. Social Differentiation Network Theory proceeds in the opposite direction: first identify which people, organizations, materials, and procedures are involved in an event, then trace the connections they form.

The author and interpreters who use this theory must trace how the people concerned, organizational members, and concrete procedures handle differences, and determine which materials support a judgment, which nodes change consequences, and which counterexamples require correction. These constraints keep the theory grounded in reality and prevent interpreters from closing relational structures into a new ontological image. Even when analysis temporarily reaches a stable conclusion, it may not infer that an eternal entity lies behind all events.

The fact that relational structures have real efficacy does not mean that they are things that act. School personnel receive materials, family members bring forward memories of care, and institutional personnel make certifications; these concrete actions join into continuing processes that form and sustain social reality. The word "network" is shorthand for the relational form of these real connections. It does not turn the expression itself into an entity. Apart from its carriers, materials, and events, it has no independent will and cannot produce consequences on its own.

For precisely this reason, society is not a class plane, and the consequences of concrete events cannot be accounted for by a single class axis. The real differences involved in a child's school admission, unpaid wages, and platform labor may include household registration, student registration, materials, accounts, income, family burdens, local recognition, state enforcement, and community boundaries. These differences do not disappear because the class entity is rejected, nor do they constitute the whole or a part of a class entity. In concrete relational fields, people, organizations, and procedures extract, assign weight to, connect, transmit, and write back differences, thereby forming a changing differentiation-network order. These processes account for how social reality forms and exists.

The class plane projects different events onto the same main axis. Qualifications tied to materials in school admission, proof and enforcement in an unpaid-wage case, and account ranking in platform labor are all finally rewritten as manifestations of class position. This compression strips concrete nodes of their independent explanatory standing and pushes responsibility toward an abstract entity. The differentiation-network order, by contrast, retains the direction and variation of relations. A difference may receive greater weight at one node and be downweighted at another; an existing record may be retrieved by later personnel, or it may be refuted by new materials. Because the order is formed through concrete handling, branching, interruption, reorganization, and write-back can occur without assuming a single center. Rejecting the class plane still permits recognition that some labor and resource differences are extremely important in particular events. Analysts must explain where that importance comes from, how it is transmitted into consequences, and under what conditions it changes. This preserves the concrete forms of inequality better than assigning every consequence to class in advance.

II. How Differences Become a Real Relational Order

A differentiating unit is not a new class, an identity label, a fixed factor, or a social atom. It is a unit of difference that can be distinguished, represented, and compared. Relevant people or procedures may extract it, assign it weight, connect and transmit it, and write it back within a concrete relational field, thereby changing a position, qualification, risk, evaluation, responsibility, action, or consequence. Differentiating units can be subdivided, combined, and represented anew as relations and events change; there is no final closed list. An interpreter cannot first list a set of isolated variables and then declare that society is made of them. The interpreter must state who extracts a difference from which materials, who records or adjudicates it, and which later people or procedures carry the existing result into a new event.

The same difference can be represented differently in different relational fields. Residential circumstances may be recorded as an address, a filing, an account of living together, or local testimony; the facts of labor performed may be carried by wage records, traces of work, and testimony from others. These representations cannot automatically substitute for one another. Analysts need to specify which kind of material the current procedure accepts and which facts of life have failed to enter the record.

Nor is a differentiating unit an indivisible smallest particle. Care can be differentiated further by time, responsibility, bodily exertion, and the ways memory is carried; it can also form new combinations with property, evaluations by relatives, or work arrangements. Whether further subdivision is needed depends on the question at hand. Stopping too early occludes consequences; subdividing without limit loses the main line of judgment. The value of differentiating units therefore lies in making differences traceable, not in supplying a permanently applicable table of social elements. Interpreters who fix commonly encountered differentiating units into a list still fall

back into factor ontology. New events can lead to new representations of existing differences and may also bring out differences that previously went unnoticed.

Concrete people or procedures handle, transmit, and reorganize differences along relational chains at multiple nodes. The real relational structures and processes thereby formed are what this book calls a “network.” This requires separating the real network, the theoretical image, and the acting subject. The differentiation network is neither a decorative metaphor nor simply the network diagram drawn by a researcher: that diagram is a limited representation and may be wrong or revised. Family relations, community ties, institutional authority, materials, and records may exist before a particular event, and may operate before an analyst discovers, names, or draws them. Even a researcher’s erroneous image does not cancel these real connections. But the prior existence of a local relation does not imply a fixed, pre-completed total network covering every event.

A differentiating unit is a unit of difference that may enter into consequences. Materials and records carry existing determinations; concrete people or procedures at nodes preserve, identify, certify, or transfer differences according to rules; and extraction, weight assignment, transmission, and write-back are still carried out by people, organizational positions, technical systems, and procedures. The network itself has no will and is not an entity that acts on its own. Only by retaining these divisions of labor can the network avoid becoming the empty claim that “everything is connected.” The foregoing judgment in social ontology thus retains its grounding in reality without personifying the relational structure or treating it as closed. Concrete applications must still be scrutinized against materials and counterexamples, and remain subject to revisions of scope.

In a platform setting, enterprise personnel and procedures form, preserve, and retrieve records of accounts, ratings, recommendations, customer evaluations, and appeals, then carry the results of handling into income opportunities. Family members may preserve or recount care, property, silence, and evaluations of responsibility, raising them again in new disputes. Past records do not act automatically. Only when current personnel or procedures retrieve them anew and assign them weight can they enter present consequences. Preservation as differences that can be extracted again in the future constitutes write-back; actual subsequent extraction and renewed effects depend on further conditions. Immediate consequences do not presuppose write-back. A node must not be understood as a dot on a diagram. It is a position where concrete handling occurs and may be carried by people, an organizational position, or a procedure. Materials may be received, recast, certified, rejected, or preserved at a node. Different actions can send the same difference into different relational chains and thus produce different consequences.

A relational chain is not a simple sequence of before and after. An earlier act of handling may constrain a later procedure, or it may be refuted or recast by later materials. Acceptance of residence materials does not guarantee a place; retrieval of an account rating does not necessarily decide an appeal. Analysts must distinguish connection, transmission, and causal inference. They cannot claim that a consequence has been demonstrated merely because events occur next to one another. A network claim has content only when it can be re-expanded. If an interpreter cannot say who extracted the differentiating unit, where materials were transferred, and how a determination was written back, “network” is only rhetoric. Re-expansion remains limited: the analyst need not restore all background, but must unfold enough to verify the judgment at hand.

Within these concrete processes, family members may put care, property, evaluations by relatives, silence, and responsibility forward again in a dispute. Local residents and community personnel may retrieve familiarity, reputation, testimony, and interaction records in a local event. Members of a national community may maintain boundaries through language, rites and customs, shared memory, shared harm, shared protection, and demands of responsibility, forming

intergenerational write-back. These processes cannot all be replaced by relations construed as subordinate to class or by state registration. Personnel in state institutions may handle registration, qualifications, materials, and enforcement in concrete procedures. Personnel and procedures of platform enterprises may handle accounts, ratings, rankings, and visibility. Movement organizers and participants may connect dissatisfaction, risk, memories of action, and imaginings of the future. Social Differentiation Network Theory traces these real actions and their relational consequences; it does not treat the state, platform, movement, or network itself as an actor.

The processes operating within events also include interruptions. Materials may not be received, records may not be transferred, and members may refuse an existing responsibility. Interruption is not an exception outside the network; it changes whether a difference can be transmitted and who bears the consequence, so analysts must trace connection and rupture together. The differentiation-network order may also reform over time. A past determination retrieved by current personnel may be supported or limited by new materials; new handling leaves records that can be put forward again in the future. A historical index provides an entry for retrieval but does not automatically prescribe the conclusion of every event. Describing society through relational structures does not mean that every person is directly connected to everyone else. Many consequences travel through materials, organizational positions, and layers of relays, while other relations are completely broken. Analysts must identify the actual relays instead of replacing concrete explanation with “everything is connected.”

III. From Identities and Lists to Events

Identity names can serve as entry points for analysis, but cannot replace the tracing of mechanisms. Faced with an “outsider,” an interpreter must determine who retrieves materials concerning residence, filings, qualifications, or local recognition, and in what event; through which nodes these materials pass; and how they change opportunities. Whether landlords cooperate with filings, how school personnel examine proof, and which procedures community personnel follow in processing applications can all change the real weight of the same name. An identity does not itself extract materials or confer consequences. All handling is still carried out by concrete people and procedures.

The convenience of using a name to gather similar experiences must not be mistaken for the existence of a shared mechanism. Two people both labeled “outsiders” may face entirely different landlords, material requirements, school nodes, and local relations. A shared name only indicates where to look; it is not enough to predict the same weights or consequences. “Platform laborer” is also only an entry point. In order-taking, ranking, or appeals, enterprise personnel and the relevant procedures may retrieve account ratings, response times, completion rates, and customer evaluations, then carry the results into subsequent recommendations and income opportunities. Who forms the records, how they are retrieved again, and how they affect household cash flow must be traced. Without these connections, classification still does not amount to explanation.

Identity itself may also be remade in the course of handling. People submit materials, staff select fields, and institutional procedures form records; when later personnel retrieve them again, the visible content of the identity may change. This is not identity growing by itself. The force of classification comes from concrete handling and from the way its results enter subsequent relations. Administrative records, people’s own accounts, and other people’s evaluations are each formed in different ways. Simply mixing these names into an identity collage does not explain how qualifications, responsibility, or risk change. Nor does an identity submit itself to examination. Interpreters must still determine who extracts it on the basis of which materials, who or what

procedure gives it consequences, along which relational chains it is transmitted, and which differences it occludes. Only when the relevant records are retrieved again in future events can they participate in new determinations and write-back.

Differences not covered by a name—family support as a fallback, bodily condition, local familiarity, language ability, and past records—may change the real position associated with the same identity. Adding more identity names without tracing how they enter consequences leaves classification where it was, however fine its distinctions become. Listing poverty, household registration, education, family, the state, the market, the platform, locality, and the nation, together with class, school, or movement, may look comprehensive while still explaining no consequence. A longer list is not necessarily closer to reality.

Factor lists usually place matters from different levels side by side. Poverty may be a condition of life; household registration and student registration may appear as records; families and states involve many kinds of members, institutions, and procedures. Placing them in the same column readily occludes how differences are represented and obscures who has the authority to receive, reject, or reinterpret materials. A list may be retained as a reminder, but analysis must enter the relational chains: how differences connect, at which node a connection is interrupted, which part of an inference new materials may change, which differentiating units gain weight, which are downweighted or occluded, and which counterexamples would overturn the current judgment. Names cannot answer who did what or what consequences followed.

In a child's school-admission situation, parents provide proof of residence, landlords cooperate with or refuse a filing, and school personnel examine materials according to procedure and handle school places and application schedules. The results of application processing may be preserved by the relevant admissions personnel or procedures. After students register, student-registration personnel separately preserve student-registration information and records of the corresponding changes in accordance with the rules, for future retrieval. This relational chain changes qualifications, time pressure, and future opportunities, but it is not a fixed checklist. How materials operate must still be judged in light of the event, procedures, and counterexamples. Early in the application process, whether materials are complete may directly affect their acceptance; at later stages, school places, continuity of student registration, or a family's relocation may become the principal consequences. Weight changes dynamically with events and handling. It is neither an inherent property or score of a difference nor something that can be read directly from a factor's name.

Writing every factor into the text without stating which enters consequences at the current node still evades the distinction between primary and secondary. Weight is neither a permanent ranking nor a numerical allocation. It must be judged by how personnel or procedures handle materials and how the results are transmitted into subsequent relations. Whether an identity is retrieved, a piece of material is recognized, or a difference gains weight through a new record must each be traced step by step. This may reveal several relational chains, but explains reality better than piling up names. The same holds for taking orders, school admission, and unpaid wages.

IV. The Class Image Cannot Replace Real Differences

The class entity does not exist. Real differentiating units—labor conditions, wages, income, employment, property, debt, housing, available exits, relations of domination, and risk—do exist and may produce grave consequences in concrete relational fields. But these real differences do not constitute the whole or a part of a class entity. Opposition to the class entity is in no way a denial of

the objective reality of unpaid wages, exploitation, poverty, injustice, or the shifting of risks. It is a refusal to bind concrete conditions a priori to a name purporting to designate an entity.

An interpreter who adopts class theory extracts a set of high-weight differentiating units, assigns them weight, connects them, subjects them to low-dimensional compression and projection, and names them. The local explanatory capacity comes entirely from these real differentiating units and the processes of handling them; the class image itself is only a low-dimensional output. An interpreter may indeed identify certain labor and resource conditions through what the image marks, but this local explanatory efficacy can never prove the existence of a class entity, still less serve as an excuse to ignore household registration, student registration, accounts, local recognition, family burdens, state enforcement, community boundaries, and historical write-back.

The local explanatory capacity formed by real differentiating units and the processes of their extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression must be strictly distinguished from class theory; the class image is only a low-dimensional output. Class theory is not Model A or Model B. From the outset, its basic structure belongs to the Model C direction of total-image subsumption. Interpreters who adopt class theory elevate a limited image into society itself and thereby demote, dissolve, or cancel other valid explanations. Class theory does not become Model C only after overuse, expansion, or abuse. This distinction must therefore never be softened into the compromise statement that “class exists, but is not complete enough.”

Real differences that can be traced separately—labor, income, debt, property, housing, domination, and risk—may connect with one another in a concrete event and may simultaneously carry greater weight. Yet these connections still generate no class entity. Local distinction extraction cannot become a refuge for class theory. Faced with a class image, analysts may bring some of the labor and resource differences it marks back into a concrete relational field and examine, one by one, mechanisms involving household registration, student registration, family, national community, state enforcement, local recognition, and platform procedures. If all the materials are ultimately taken back into the total class image, local analysis has become only an entrance to subsumption.

Opposition to class theory in no way removes responsibility for inequality. Unpaid wages, deprivation of resources, shifting of risks, and relations of domination can all produce real and grave consequences. The point is that interpreters should directly trace how concrete differences are extracted and assigned weight. They must not replace concrete responsibility with a non-existent class entity, nor allow the class name to occlude other mechanisms of oppression that are present.

V. How Other Explanations Enter Comparison

Social Differentiation Network Theory does not bring other explanations to an end. Explanations concerning the state, market, family, nation, school, platform, and movement may point to real differences within limited scopes. This does not entitle them to be judged equally effective in advance or to receive priority solely on the strength of their traditional standing. Model A and Model B designate only two limited explanations on the same level; neither may be presumed superior. Real societies, institutions, and outcomes are the objects they explain and compare. The labels A and B must not be treated as two separate real societies or institutions. Interpreters may compare limited images, but whenever they use an image, they must disclose what they have extracted, downweighted, or occluded, which events their conclusion applies to, and which counterexamples would force them to revise it. They must still compare the images on the basis of materials, scope, consequences, counterexamples, and capacity for revision.

Limited use requires distinguishing explanatory images from real carriers. An abstract name can help with generalization. In causal judgment, however, actions must still be attributed to people, organizations, and procedures; they cannot be left for abstract nouns to perform on their own. Opposing the subsumption of reality by an image does not mean opposing every relation that image concerns. Analysts must retain mechanisms and consequences. What they reject is elevating a local image into the only answer. Retaining other explanations also does not mean that the author abandons the theory's own judgment. Social Differentiation Network Theory still insists on returning to the real processes through which differences are extracted, assigned weight, connected, transmitted, and written back.

Explanations supported by different images need not have the same scope. Whether they can be used depends on the current event and materials; no permanent hierarchy can be assigned in advance. An explanation using a state image may have greater explanatory power in matters of material certification and enforcement. Personnel in state institutions can handle registration, certification, and enforcement; the state does not perform registration on its own. Criticism of procedures cannot deny their real efficacy. Nor may the use of this explanation fuse different institutions and procedures into a single will or ignore families, markets, localities, and platforms. School personnel and procedures can handle student registration, evaluations, and qualifications; enterprise personnel and procedures can handle accounts, ranking, and visibility. Each form of handling has its place. When using a platform image, bodily conditions, care, state real-name identification, and market pressure must still be retained.

Other differences emerge in care and responsibility. Family members can preserve care, property, responsibility, and long-term evaluations; an explanation using a family image may better account for the care and responsibility involved. Criticism of family oppression cannot cancel care, and acknowledgment of care cannot make responsibilities among relatives inherently legitimate or imply that all members bear them equally. Market participants can shift risk through transactions and prices; the market does not transact by itself. The use of a market image must not ignore care, responsibility, memory, or dignity. Movement organizers and participants can connect dissatisfaction, risk, and memories of action, but those using a movement image must not flatten differences in positions of participation or costs of participation.

Names of nations may be compressed or put to use, but criticism of national essentialization cannot cancel real communities. Their formation may involve long-term interaction and multiple levels of relays, and may proceed through language, rites and customs, shared memory, shared harm, shared protection, demands of responsibility, experiences of boundaries, and intergenerational write-back. State registration is not the only source of a community. Interpreters using a national image may extract long-term memory, shared harm, and shared protection. Such an explanation must preserve real national communities while also confronting internal differences and oppression within communities. It must not assume that shared memory is entirely uniform or allow a shared name to swallow up different positions and harms.

A limited image that flattens its own internal structure also requires calibration. Different explanations can constrain one another: materials extracted through one image may become counterexamples to an explanation supported by another. A consequence within a family may also force an explanation in terms of state procedures to be unfolded again. Mutual constraint does not require combining several images into a larger total image; it makes their respective scopes of application clearer.

Real differentiating units—labor, wages, property, debt, housing, risk, and domination—and the processes of their extraction, weight assignment, connection, and compression can form local

explanatory capacity; the class image is only a low-dimensional output. This local distinction extraction does not prove that a class entity exists and does not constitute a repair of class theory. As a total image, the basic structure of class theory belongs from the outset to Model C. It cannot be reduced to Model A or Model B in the name of "limited use," nor thereby returned to the ranks of ordinary limited models.

VI. Responsibility Cannot Be Replaced by Abstract Names

If a person, family, group, state institution, or platform enterprise is first judged good or evil and the evaluation is then used in place of mechanism analysis, the explanation stops at moral judgment. The interpreter needs to trace who extracted a difference, formed a record, and assigned a consequence; who received recognition or suffered exclusion; and how the current determination was preserved as material that could be retrieved again in the future. Moral and responsibility judgments may arise, and real harm cannot be canceled. Family members may oppress others by using interpretive authority, memories of care, or arrangements of property. Personnel and procedures of platform enterprises may also produce injustice through accounts, ratings, rankings, appeal deadlines, and income opportunities. After identifying a consequence, one must still explain its formation mechanism rather than stopping at "this family is bad" or "the platform is bad."

Mechanism analysis does not cancel moral responsibility. Who formed a record, who rejected materials, who set a procedure, and who continued the handling after knowing its consequences may all affect the judgment of responsibility. Only when analysts make actions and consequences clear can responsibility be located in real carriers, rather than being displaced by abstractions such as "that is how the institution works" or "that is how the market works." In the same event, harm and responsibility may also be distributed across different nodes: one person makes the direct decision, another maintains the record, and a later procedure enlarges the result. Analysts should not place all responsibility on a single person, nor say that no one is responsible merely because the relational chain is long. The scope of responsibility must be judged by action, knowledge, position, and actual consequence.

When moral evaluation precedes the materials, counterexamples are easily treated as excuses. Mechanism analysis requires first retaining the response of the person concerned, records of conflict, and procedural materials, and then determining how harm formed. This does not reduce the force of criticism; it prevents names of good and evil from replacing proof. At the same time, Social Differentiation Network Theory contains the author's definite judgment about social reality and must not be weakened into an arbitrary analytical tool or a list of methods. Relational fields, materials, nodes, and relational chains can be entry points for research, but they are not the whole theory. Neither the author nor its users may replace an affirmative account of how society forms with operational convenience. What is drawn here is the boundary between method and theory.

In concrete research, this theory cannot replace historical research, institutional analysis, field investigation, economic analysis, legal and political judgment, or literature and lived experience. The author thereby states a bounded theoretical position and a requirement of calibration, enabling interpreters to make limited, traceable, comparable, and revisable judgments. It is not the ultimate answer that explains everything. This theory cannot obtain materials for a researcher. The experience of the person concerned, the background in which a document was formed, the actual operation of a procedure, and historical records each require their own research methods. Social Differentiation Network Theory supplies a direction for questions and judgments: it tells researchers which differences, carriers, and relational chains to trace, but it cannot replace actual verification.

Nor does it guarantee that every event will yield a complete conclusion. Some materials cannot be obtained, some relational chains have been interrupted, and other consequences are still forming. Analysts may offer a restricted judgment and state what remains unknown. If they add connections unsupported by materials merely to appear complete, the theory slides from limited explanation into self-closure. There is a clear boundary between “usable” and “explaining everything.” This theory can assist analysis of difference-handling in families, localities, nations, states, markets, schools, platforms, and movements, but it cannot guarantee in advance that the same set of concepts occupies the center of every question. The relational field changes, and the focus of analysis must change with the materials.

VII. The Boundaries of Limited Judgment and of the Theory Itself

Limited judgment is not arbitrary choice, and still less does it mean that all explanations are the same. The interpreter must disclose the materials used, the relational-field window, the differentiating units extracted, the basis of weight, the nodes, relational chains, scope of application, and conditions for correction, so that different limited explanations can be compared by explanatory power, comparative power, revisability, and differentiation bias. Limitation requires the interpreter to distinguish the strength of judgments: one relational chain may already have several mutually supporting pieces of material, another inference may rest only on a statement by the person concerned, and some nodes may not yet have supplied a response. Keeping these states separate allows a judgment to stand provisionally while preserving room for later correction. Different explanations may answer different questions. An explanation using a family image may better explain care responsibility, while one using a state image may better explain a qualification procedure. Analysts must still check whether each extracts the key differences, whether it can be re-expanded to the materials, and whether it has rejected counterexamples. Comparison does not require compressing them first onto one scale.

Acknowledging that society is complex, that materials may be omitted, and that judgments need revision is a normal awareness of limitation. It does not belong to Model C. Complexity does not mean that all differences have the same weight at the same time: family care, qualifications tied to materials, income pressure, and local recognition can coexist, but the times and paths by which they enter consequences may differ. Analysts must identify the relational chains currently operating and mark where materials have not yet been obtained. A healthy awareness of complexity makes judgments more precise. It requires interpreters to acknowledge omissions, rather than lay out every difference in equal detail. Certain differences may temporarily remain outside the relational-field window, provided the reasons for omitting them are disclosed and counterexamples are allowed to bring them back into analysis. People, institutions, and concrete procedures can preserve records, retrieve materials, make certifications, transmit determinations, and write the results of handling back as differences that can be extracted again in the future. Differences, history, and records do not perform these actions themselves. Preservation as differences that can be extracted again in the future constitutes write-back; actual subsequent extraction and renewed effects depend on further conditions. Immediate consequences do not presuppose write-back. New materials or later events may still lead the people concerned and interpreters to question an existing write-back. Write-back is therefore not a permanent settlement.

Neither a multiplicity of differences and nodes nor the complexity of relational chains can justify abandoning judgment. The problem with relativism is not acknowledging multiple viewpoints but canceling the difference among viewpoints. If sufficient materials and missing materials, revisability and refusal of revision, limited validity and arbitrary piecing together are all treated as

the same, an explanation cannot bear responsibility. Social Differentiation Network Theory retains multiple limited explanations while requiring them to disclose what can be examined.

Model C comprises mechanisms operating in two directions: total-image subsumption and the erasure of distinctions between explanations. When interpreters elevate a limited image into society itself, the mechanism of total-image subsumption comes into operation; when they use complexity to cancel comparison, counterexamples, and revision, the mechanism for erasing distinctions between explanations comes into operation. These mechanisms move in opposite directions but have a common function; they are not necessary stages through which a process must pass in sequence. Ordinary uncertainty, suspended judgment, insufficient materials, and valid objections are emphatically not equivalent to Model C. Complexity-based conflation illicitly substitutes "judgment is impossible" for "not yet complete." Once all explanations are described as limited and equally unsuccessful, the strength of materials, errors of inference, and capacity for revision can no longer be distinguished. Valid models, erroneous models, and garbage models are thereby placed on the same level. The erasure of distinctions between explanations appears to respect complexity, but in fact cancels criticism of erroneous explanations. Subsumption and the erasure of distinctions move in opposite directions, yet both destroy the conditions for comparison, revision, and calibration among limited explanations.

The originator and users of Social Differentiation Network Theory face these two risks as well. If they treat differentiating units as final entities, elevate the network claim into an all-purpose image, or demote all other theories into subsidiary materials of their own, the theory will slide toward Model C's total-image subsumption. Preventing total-image subsumption requires interpreters to state which questions are not to be answered by this theory alone. Historical context, legal responsibility, institutional detail, and the experience of the people concerned still require research through corresponding materials. The theory may organize questions, but it cannot reduce other research to a storehouse of examples for itself.

The other risk is to use social complexity and the limits of explanation to cancel comparison, counterexamples, and revision among models, presenting valid models, erroneous models, and garbage models as equally unsuccessful. Such a move will lead toward Model C's erasure of distinctions between explanations. Healthy humility does not fall into this category. Interpreters must still disclose boundaries, offer provisional judgments, and accept calibration; they cannot cancel valid comparison in the name of humility. Preventing this erasure of distinctions requires interpreters to make judgments open to criticism. After acknowledging what is unknown, the interpreter must still say which material currently has greater supporting force, which relational chain is more likely to hold, and what counterexample would cause the conclusion to be withdrawn. If only "everything is complex" remains, the theory too loses its comparative capacity.

The originator and users of the theory must allow other limited explanations to be compared with it within concrete scopes. They must ensure that their judgments can be re-expanded, can accommodate counterexamples, and can be revised in the light of new materials. Self-calibration does not mean repeatedly rewriting the core position. Class entities do not exist; class theory belongs from the outset to Model C's direction of total-image subsumption; a healthy awareness of complexity does not belong to Model C. These are established theoretical boundaries. Revisions at the level of individual cases address the corresponding concrete judgments and scopes on the basis of materials. They must never arbitrarily turn an explicit theoretical position into a vague compromise.

At the same time, when the foundational proposition itself faces a substantive challenge, the theory cannot evade examination by preemptively demoting the problem to an error in an individual case.

It must undergo rigorous criticism and delimitation at the level to which the problem belongs. This self-limitation does not soften the judgment that class theory belongs from the outset to Model C in its total-image-subsumption form. On the contrary, it can effectively prevent Social Differentiation Network Theory from insulating itself against criticism.

VIII. How This Theory Is to Be Examined

This theory distinguishes two different levels: an affirmative judgment in social ontology and a way of judging constrained by reality. The former affirms that society forms and exists as a differentiation network and that the differentiation network has real standing in social ontology. The network is not the ultimate reality of the universe, a fixed and closed total network, or a super-entity that acts on its own. The latter requires interpreters to calibrate their judgments on the basis of materials and consequences when they confront concrete events.

The book's judgments do not all stand on the same grounds, so their examination has layered requirements. Concepts must first remain consistent in their use across the text and be able to face boundary cases. An ontological judgment about how society exists must state which carriers, continuing relays, memory, responsibility, and consequences support real relations.

Once one enters a concrete event, materials, comparison, and contrary cases determine whether an empirical conclusion should be maintained, reduced in strength, narrowed, or withdrawn. A research approach must also allow readers to trace the basis on which a concept was formed, return to materials, nodes, and relational chains for re-examination, and retain the original judgment together with the reasons for its revision. Normative claims about what ought to be, priority, rights, or duties require their own value grounds, rules for conflict, and exceptions; they cannot be inferred directly from relational facts.

These checks constrain one another but do not replace one another. If a relational-chain, weight, or write-back judgment in one event fails, the first requirement is to reduce the strength of, narrow, or withdraw that application-level conclusion. If a meso-level mechanism cannot account for the materials, its scope must also be adjusted. If a core term expands and contracts arbitrarily across settings so that different social structures can no longer be distinguished, the problem rises to a loss of conceptual discriminating power. The challenge faced by the overall proposition in social ontology is broader still: it cannot establish itself merely by naming every relation after the fact as a differentiation network, nor is it immediately refuted by a mistaken judgment in an ordinary case.

This foundational proposition must still accept real criticism. Concepts must remain consistent across contexts and distinguish themselves from the empty claim that "everything has relations." They must make substantive distinctions among different social structures and provide explanatory content beyond "society is made of relations." If social continuities or consequences remain insufficiently explained by extraction, weight assignment, connection, transmission, preservation, and write-back, the theory should acknowledge what it has not explained. If a competing social ontology can explain the same materials with fewer assumptions and clearer boundaries, that constitutes a genuine challenge. Faced with continuing counterexamples, the theory must be able to narrow its scope of application, adjust its concepts, or withdraw an invalid meso-level explanation.

If continuing counterexamples or a competing social ontology reveal problems that bear on the foundational proposition itself, the theory cannot preemptively reduce all these problems to misjudgments in individual cases or failures of meso-level mechanisms. It must openly explain why the relevant materials can or cannot still be explained by this theory, and on that basis clarify the

foundational proposition's boundaries of application, what remains unexplained, and which formulations may require revision. Accepting such a challenge does not mean that an ordinary case alone can overturn the foundational proposition, nor does it mean that the book thereby withdraws its established judgment in social ontology. Such examination both prevents the foundational proposition from insulating itself against criticism and preserves its theoretical level, which differs from that of a one-off empirical hypothesis.

When facing concrete events, this way of judging does not require a fixed order and does not constitute a table of steps, decision tree, score sheet, or algorithm. The concepts provide dimensions of calibration; they must not be arranged as an operating procedure that automatically generates answers. Analysis of some events starts with conflicting materials; for other events, an objection from the person concerned may provide the first opening into the relational field. Community mechanisms, weight, and historical indices may also appear in different sequences depending on the question.

In concrete relational fields, the responsibility of analysis remains grounded in real constraints. Interpreters must explain which people, materials, and consequences an event actually involves. In undertaking limited distinction extraction, they must also state which differentiating units they have extracted and what they have downweighted, and explain which real relations provide the basis for weight: weight is not a numerical value innately carried by a differentiating unit. Limited does not mean arbitrary; it makes responsibility for judgment more concrete. Analysts cannot select only differences that suit their position or arbitrarily change the scope after counterexamples appear. They must give reasons for their selections, preserve downweighted materials, and explain when their conclusions cease to hold.

This requires tracing nodes and relational chains through concrete carriers: who preserves records, who retrieves materials anew in the current event, who certifies or passes them on, and who preserves the results of handling as differences that can be extracted again in the future, thereby forming write-back. The past does not automatically govern the present, and write-back does not permanently determine the future. New materials and subsequent events can still open possibilities for objection, response, and revision. Likewise, identifying a community requires examining whether long-term interaction, memory, recognition, boundaries, shared responsibility, and shared burdens are actually sustained by members and their relay relations. Explanatory compression must also specify its scope and limits of validity. It must neither elevate a total class image or any single image into society itself nor use complexity to cancel valid judgment.

Social Differentiation Network Theory does not claim to have explained the whole of society. It retains a theoretical position that allows limited distinction extraction, disclosure of grounds, comparison of explanations, acceptance of counterexamples, and revision of judgments. Concrete people, organizations, and procedures can change the connection, transmission, and write-back of differences, bringing about change, branching, rupture, or reconnection in the differentiation-network order. Any theoretical judgment can hold only within the conditions set by its materials, scope, and counterexamples; the analytical window must also be adjusted to the question and materials. Others can still examine these judgments by following concrete questions: where do the materials come from, who handled the differences, which node changed the consequences, which records were retrieved anew in the current event, and which objections call for revision? As long as these questions remain open, the theory will not pass off the results of its own compression as society itself.

Cited Sources and Their Uses

These 36 entries correspond to the edition's existing citations and their version checks. Scholarly titles retain their original wording; legal and policy sources show the Chinese title and an editorial English translation. Read each entry's use and limits together. Reading scope identifies the pages or provisions actually examined in editorial checks, not full-text review. Original cited ranges not individually listed as checked do not become newly verified merely because they remain in the notes.

Scholarly Sources for Comparison

R01 · The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries: A Multilevel Process Theory

Wimmer, Andreas. 2008. "The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries: A Multilevel Process Theory." American Journal of Sociology 113(4): 970–1022. https://doi.org/10.1086/522803.

Notes: S01, S02.

Use: Used in S01 and S02 as a point of contact for mechanisms of ethnic boundary formation, maintenance, and change. The article connects classificatory struggles and negotiations among actors to institutions, power, political networks, and varying degrees of closure and groupness.

Limits: This does not establish the book's ontology of community or nation, or its judgment that the state is not their source. Page 981 challenges the assumption that an ethnic category is a unitary actor; page 982 still permits varying degrees of groupness. Page 1011 acknowledges that some hypotheses about boundary properties remain to be tested.

Reading scope: Printed pages 970, 981, 982, 1008, 1011. Selected-page review, not a reading of the entire article.

R02 · The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences

Lamont, Michèle, and Virág Molnár. 2002. "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences." Annual Review of Sociology 28(1): 167–195. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.28.110601.141107.

Notes: S01, S02.

Use: Used in S01 and S02 for the distinction between symbolic and social boundaries and for relational processes of classification, membership, recognition, exclusion, and community formation. Pages 168–169 define the distinction; page 181 addresses communities, national identities, and spatial boundaries.

Limits: This review maps research traditions rather than empirically validating the book's judgments about the reality of national communities or its judgment that the state is not their source. Its discussion of symbolic and social boundaries as real on different levels is not interchangeable with the book's ontology. The earlier cited range 181–190 includes the bibliography, which begins on page 188; pages 189–190 are bibliography pages.

Reading scope: Printed pages 167, 168, 169, 181, 186, 188, 189, 190. Selected-page review, not a reading of the entire article.

R03 · Collective Memory and Cultural Identity

Assmann, Jan. 1995. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity." Translated by John Czaplicka. New German Critique, no. 65: 125–133. https://doi.org/10.2307/488538.

Notes: S03.

Use: Used in S03 for the transmission and maintenance of shared memory through communication, texts, images, rituals, monuments, institutional practices, and specialized carriers. Page 125 frames continuity through socialization and custom rather than phylogenetic inheritance; pages 129 and 131–132 discuss objectification, organization, media, and reflexivity.

Limits: This does not establish the book's ontology of the nation or a hereditary national essence. Czaplicka is the translator, not a coauthor: page 125 credits Jan Assmann and page 133 explicitly credits the translator. Crossref currently flattens both people into author fields and records only the starting page; the original publication controls attribution and the complete page range.

Reading scope: Printed pages 125, 126, 129, 131, 132, 133. Selected-page review, not a reading of the entire article.

R04 · Social Memory Studies: From "Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices

Olick, Jeffrey K., and Joyce Robbins. 1998. "Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices." Annual Review of Sociology 24(1): 105–140. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.105.

Notes: S03.

Use: Used in S03 for the historical sociology of mnemonic practices. Pages 111–112 discuss conceptual disputes and favor distinct practices at different social sites; page 123 addresses family influences, mnemonic socialization, and generational differences.

Limits: The reviewed authors' positions are not all findings established by Olick and Robbins themselves. The review does not establish a mystical group mind or the book's ontology of nation. Page 135 is the bibliography, not an additional page of argument.

Reading scope: Printed pages 105, 111, 112, 123, 135. Selected-page review, not a reading of the entire article.

R05 · Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology

Portes, Alejandro. 1998. "Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology." Annual Review of Sociology 24(1): 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.1.

Notes: S04, S06.

Use: Used in S04 for resources, exclusion, and excessive demands generated through relations, and in S06 for outsider exclusion, excessive claims on members, and restrictions on freedom. Pages 15–18 analyze negative consequences; pages 21–22 stress conceptual and causal care.

Limits: The review does not establish the book's full composite scenario involving care, income, residence, and marriage, or identify the differentiation network with social capital. Its context-dependent cases do not make all community demands either inherently legitimate or illegitimate. Page 22 moves from the conclusion to references; page 23 is entirely bibliography.

Reading scope: Printed pages 1, 3, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23. Selected-page review, not a reading of the entire article.

R06 · Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital

Coleman, James S. 1988. "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital." American Journal of Sociology 94, Supplement: S95–S120. https://doi.org/10.1086/228943.

Notes: S04.

Use: Used in S04 for relational structures as resources for action. Page S98 defines social capital functionally; pages S102–S104 discuss obligations, expectations, trust, and information channels; pages S109–S110 distinguish family financial, human, and social capital and discuss parent–child relations.

Limits: The article uses its own social-capital framework and focuses on education and human capital. The citation provides a limited point of comparison without equating the differentiation network with social capital or reducing family to class reproduction. This review neither reproduces its statistical analysis nor treats it as direct evidence for the book's composite opportunity-cost scenario.

Reading scope: Printed pages S95, S98, S99, S102, S103, S104, S109, S110. Selected-page review, not a reading of the entire article.

R07 · The Strength of Weak Ties

Granovetter, Mark S. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." American Journal of Sociology 78(6): 1360–1380. https://doi.org/10.1086/225469.

Notes: S05.

Use: Used in S05 for differences in tie strength, local bridging, information diffusion, and links across circles. Page 1364 states the bridge conditions and notes that weak ties are not automatically bridges; page 1369 limits the following discussion to illustrative applications; page 1373 connects information, mobility opportunities, and community organization.

Limits: The paper does not imply that every weak tie is a bridge or that all the relatives, landlords, schools, and contractors in the book are weak ties. It does not verify Chinese administrative procedures or the book's full composite family pathway, and it does not establish an ontology of community.

Reading scope: Printed pages 1360, 1361, 1362, 1364, 1369, 1373. Selected-page review, not a reading of the entire article.

R08 · Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy

Sampson, Robert J., Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton Earls. 1997. "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy." Science 277(5328): 918–924. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.277.5328.918.

Notes: S05.

Use: Used in S05 as a specific empirical study of neighborhood cohesion, trust, and willingness to intervene. A 1995 survey of 8,782 residents across 343 Chicago neighborhood clusters found a negative association between collective efficacy and measures of violence; pages 922–923 present adjusted results and explicit limitations.

Limits: Page 923 explicitly states that the basic analysis is cross-sectional and does not prove causal effects; cohesion and informal control are inferred from informants, and the study is limited to one city. The 8,782 respondents must be distinguished from the 7,729 cases with sufficient data used in the reported analyses (page 924, note 21). The paper does not validate all local communities or the book's administrative, school, housing, family, and occupational scenarios.

Reading scope: Printed pages 918, 919, 922, 923, 924. Selected-page review, not a reading of the entire article.

R09 · Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms

Ostrom, Elinor. 2000. "Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms." Journal of Economic Perspectives 14(3): 137–158. https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.14.3.137.

Notes: S06.

Use: Used in S06 for conditional cooperation, willing punishers, experience and information about prior behavior, membership boundaries, and rules. Page 142 discusses cooperation and sanctions; pages 146–147

discuss experience and information; pages 148–150 address field conditions, membership, and self-organized rules; page 154 emphasizes contextual variables and further research.

Limits: The article does not establish a unified community will, the intrinsic legitimacy of community demands, or current platform administrators' invitation, muting, removal, and visibility functions. Its evolutionary discussion does not establish a hereditary essence of particular nations. Page 155 contains the end of the acknowledgments and the start of the references; page 156 is bibliography. Pages 146–147 more directly support the discussion of experience and information and fall outside the original pinpoint ranges.

Reading scope: Printed pages 137, 139, 142, 143, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 154, 155, 156. Selected-page review, not a reading of the entire article.

Legal, Policy, and Version Sources

R10 · Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China

中华人民共和国义务教育法

Version: 2018 amendment · https://www.gov.cn/guoqing/2021-10/29/content_5647617.htm

Notes: F01, F10, F05.

Use: Provides the central framework for compulsory school attendance, guardians' duties, local enrollment, and compulsory education for accompanying children of migrants.

Limits: Does not provide a uniform national admissions checklist; local, annual, and category-specific requirements need their own sources. The specified reading is not verification of the entire law.

Reading scope: Articles 11–13 and the header identifying the 2018 amendment

R11 · Ministry of Education, Notice Issuing the Measures for the Administration of Student Registration in Primary and Secondary Schools

教育部关于印发《中小学生学籍管理办法》的通知

Version: Jiao Ji [2025] No. 1; issued January 3, 2025 · https://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A06/jcys_jyzb/202502/t20250207_1177647.html

Notes: F01, F13, F12, F09, F02, F07.

Use: Explains student-status records, divided responsibilities, record creation after enrollment, and progression/transfer procedures; supports the distinction between eligibility, admission, enrollment, and records.

Limits: Article 6 requires records within two months after initial enrollment; record creation must not become a universal prerequisite to first admission. Progression and transfers have separate procedures; information categories are not a universal parental-document checklist.

Reading scope: Articles 3–7, 12–15, and 30, and the notice date. The listed official page was also checked for its title, document number, date, and agreement of Articles 3–7 and 12–15 with the retained text; the new webpage was not read in full.

R12 · Measures for the Determination of Work-Related Injuries

工伤认定办法

Version: Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security Order No. 8; effective January 1, 2011 · https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2022-08/31/content_5711327.htm

Notes: F01, F06, F10, F06a, F07.

Use: Explains work-injury applications, supplementation, proof of de facto employment, investigation, and determination, distinguishing employers, applicants, and the social-insurance administrative authority.

Limits: A written contract is not the sole permissible proof of employment. Workers, close relatives, or unions may apply as provided by law if the employer does not; employer consent is not a prerequisite. Determination differs from work-capacity appraisal; not all articles or forms were checked.

Reading scope: Articles 4–12 and 17–25 and version/effective-date information; Articles 13–16 and the application-form attachment were not read

R13 · Civil Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China

中华人民共和国民事诉讼法

Version: 2023 amendment · https://cicc.court.gov.cn/html/1/218/62/83/443.html

Notes: F01, F03, F06, F10, F04, F07.

Use: Explains evidence and its examination, appeals, and enforcement of effective legal instruments as distinct stages; consolidates the two former bibliographic entries while preserving both uses.

Limits: Admissible material does not automatically establish facts. Finality, enforcement prerequisites, appealable decisions, and deadlines differ; asset information does not guarantee recovery. Commercial-arbitration rules cannot replace labor-arbitration rules.

Reading scope: Articles 66–75, 171–172, 175, 177, 182, 235, 247, and 250–255 and the 2023 amendment header

R14 · Measures for the Administration of Work-Capacity Appraisal

劳动能力鉴定管理办法

Version: Order No. 55; promulgated May 13, 2025; effective July 1, 2025; Article 39 includes a transitional rule · https://www.gov.cn/gongbao/2025/issue_12106/202506/content_7028414.html

Notes: F01, F06.

Use: Explains the technical remit of work-capacity appraisal, initial applications, material checks, service, renewed appraisal, and review, including Order No. 55's commencement and transitional rule.

Limits: Appraisal committees conduct technical appraisals; social-insurance administrative authorities determine work-related injuries. Order No. 55 took effect on July 1, 2025 and covers previously determined injuries with unfinished appraisals. It does not guarantee automatic benefit payment.

Reading scope: Articles 2, 4, 5, 7–23, and 39 and the promulgation date; attachments omitted from the gazette were not read

R15 · Labor Dispute Mediation and Arbitration Law of the People's Republic of China

中华人民共和国劳动争议调解仲裁法

Version: Adopted December 29, 2007; effective May 1, 2008 · https://www.beijing.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengcefagui/qtwj/201912/t20191219_1307906.html

Notes: F06, F04.

Use: Supports distinctions among confirmation of employment, evidence in labor disputes, arbitration, remedies against different awards, compliance, and applications for enforcement.

Limits: Confirmation, arbitration, remedies, and enforcement do not form a mandatory sequence for every case; remedies for statutorily final and other awards differ.

Reading scope: Articles 2, 4–6, 9, 27, 29, 39, 43, and 47–51 and promulgation/effective dates

R16 · Administrative Reconsideration Law of the People's Republic of China

中华人民共和国行政复议法

Version: 2023 revision; effective January 1, 2024 · https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/liebiao/202309/content_6901584.htm

Notes: F06.

Use: Explains acceptance, supplementation, evidence, hearings, decisions, and compliance in administrative reconsideration as a framework for administrative remedies in work-injury determination disputes.

Limits: Reconsideration is neither renewed work-capacity appraisal nor labor arbitration; deadlines and acceptance conditions cannot be transferred between these processes. Only specified provisions were checked in this round.

Reading scope: Articles 30–35, 44–47, 61, 63–65, 68–69, and 76–79 and revision/effective-date information

R17 · Regulations on Work-Related Injury Insurance

工伤保险条例

Version: 2010 revision; reproduced in the 2011 State Council Gazette · https://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2011/content_1778064.htm

Notes: F01, F10.

Use: Explains separate conditions and responsibilities for work-injury applications and proof, capacity appraisal, treatment, and disability benefits.

Limits: Determination, appraisal, and benefits are distinct. Employment may be proved through other evidence, and medical costs are subject to coverage limits. These provisions do not verify every individual benefit or uninsured-employer liability.

Reading scope: Articles 17–19, 21–25, and 30–37 and 2010 revision/2011 effective-date information; Article 20 was not read

R18 · Provisions of the Supreme People's Court on Restricting High Consumption and Certain Other Consumption by Persons Subject to Enforcement

最高人民法院关于限制被执行人高消费及有关消费的若干规定

Version: 2015 amended and republished text; effective July 22, 2015 · https://www.court.gov.cn/fabu/xiangqing/15046.html

Notes: F10, F12, F11.

Use: Explains the prerequisites, specified restrictions, court decision, and conditions for lifting consumption restrictions in a defined enforcement process.

Limits: Does not mean every record uniformly restricts loans, employment, or movement. Subjects, items, authorized exceptions, and lifting restrictions have conditions; consumption restrictions must also be distinguished from the dishonest-enforcement list.

Reading scope: Articles 1, 3–6, and 9 and 2015 amendment information

R19 · Ministry of Civil Affairs, Notice Issuing the Measures for Review and Confirmation of the Minimum Subsistence Guarantee

民政部关于印发《最低生活保障审核确认办法》的通知

Version: Min Fa [2021] No. 57; dated June 11, 2021; effective July 1, 2021 · https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2021-07/29/content_5628296.htm

Notes: F10, F08.

Use: Explains household applications for the minimum subsistence guarantee, document and information checks, supplementation, confirmation, community assistance, and information sharing.

Limits: Applies to the minimum subsistence guarantee, not all assistance. Documents obtainable through information platforms should generally not be demanded again; community assistance is not a universal requirement for a community certificate.

Reading scope: Articles 2, 4–25, and 38 and the notice header

R20 · Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Improving the Medical Insurance and Assistance System for Major and Exceptionally Serious Diseases

国务院办公厅关于健全重特大疾病医疗保险和救助制度的意见

Version: Guo Ban Fa [2021] No. 42; October 28, 2021 · https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2021-11/19/content_5651446.htm

Notes: F10, F08.

Use: Explains categories of medical-assistance recipients, coordination of three protection schemes, tiered assistance, application review, and interdepartmental data coordination.

Limits: Medical assistance, the minimum subsistence guarantee, and basic insurance do not share one poverty criterion. Direct inclusion of a category does not mean every bill is already paid or fully reimbursed.

Reading scope: Parts II–VIII and the notice header

R21 · Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Household Registration

中华人民共和国户口登记条例

Version: 1958; consulted official reproduction · https://gat.zj.gov.cn/col/col1229098252/art/2026/art_a71c53257b474e938a30ebd0f6294d18.html

Notes: F13, F09.

Use: Supports distinct reporting and verification mechanisms for birth registration, changes/corrections of household-registration particulars, names, and household events.

Limits: Correction after verification does not imply that registration creates births, kinship, or other facts of life; the use is limited to the specified matters and checked provisions.

Reading scope: Articles 7 and 17–19 and the identity of the 1958 text

R22 · Regulations on Marriage Registration

婚姻登记条例

Version: State Council Order No. 804; promulgated April 6, 2025; effective May 10, 2025 · https://www.gov.cn/gongbao/2025/issue_12006/202504/content_7021465.html

Notes: F13.

Use: Supports examples of application categories, attendance, documents, and networked verification under the 2025 marriage-registration rules.

Limits: Document requirements for different resident/status categories must remain distinct; the older household-register requirement must not be mechanically applied to mainland applicants under the 2025 rules. Recorded status and actual relationships are distinct.

Reading scope: Articles 4 and 7–10 and 2025 promulgation/effective-date information

R23 · Interim Regulations on Real Property Registration

不动产登记暂行条例

Version: 2019 amended text · https://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2019/content_5468903.htm

Notes: F13, F12.

Use: Explains real-estate registration applications, register contents, supporting documents, and conditional access to information as an example of records and their subsequent use.

Limits: Applications and information access have conditions concerning persons, documents, subject matter, purpose, and confidentiality; unrestricted access is not open to everyone. This round checks the 2019 text, not all rules in force in 2026.

Reading scope: Articles 2, 8, 15–16, and 27–28 and the identity of the 2019 amended text

R24 · Administrative Penalty Law of the People's Republic of China

中华人民共和国行政处罚法

Version: 2021 revision · http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/c2/c30834/202101/t20210122_309857.html

Notes: F13, F11, F07.

Use: Explains verification of evidence, process records, publication of specified penalty information, decisions, service, hearings, and enforcement as distinct elements.

Limits: Publication is limited to statutory circumstances and constrained by withdrawal and confidentiality rules; it does not authorize permanent, unconditional use. Records, decisions, and enforcement are distinct acts.

Reading scope: Articles 44–67 and the 2021 version information

R25 · Resident Identity Card Law of the People's Republic of China

中华人民共和国居民身份证法

Version: 2011 amendment · http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/c2/c12435/201905/t20190522_81831.html

Notes: F12, F09.

Use: Explains legal proof of identity, specified occasions for presenting identity cards, and police inspection powers, supporting conditional use of identity records.

Limits: Proof of identity, specified presentation duties, police checks, alternative proof, confidentiality, and restrictions on retention are separately conditioned; they do not grant every institution unlimited inspection powers.

Reading scope: Articles 13–15 and 2011 amendment information

R26 · Social Insurance Law of the People's Republic of China

中华人民共和国社会保险法

Version: 2018 amendment · https://www.gov.cn/guoqing/2021-10/29/content_5647616.htm

Notes: F12, F09, F08.

Use: Explains statutory conditions for different insurance branches, enrollment, contributions, entitlement records, and checking those records, distinguishing basic insurance from poverty-related assistance.

Limits: Pension, medical, unemployment, and other branches have different conditions; poverty status is not a prerequisite for all. Contribution records or retrospective payments do not automatically restore every entitlement or establish continuity.

Reading scope: Articles 2, 4, 16, 23–32, 44–45, 58, and 74 and 2018 amendment information

R27 · Archives Law of the People's Republic of China

中华人民共和国档案法

Version: 2020 revision · http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/c2/c30834/202006/t20200620_306637.html

Notes: F09.

Use: Supports archival-management duties, authenticity, security, and prohibitions on falsification; provides only limited support for F09's reference to correction of archives.

Limits: The provisions read support authenticity, custody, and management constraints, not a general individual right or procedure to correct factual errors in archives. The prior editorial full-text verification likewise did not establish such a universal process. F09 remains an editorial observation; the body text is unchanged.

Reading scope: Articles 4, 21–22, 39, and 48 and 2020 revision information

R28 · Regulations for Implementing the Archives Law of the People's Republic of China

中华人民共和国档案法实施条例

Version: State Council Order No. 772; promulgated January 12, 2024; effective March 1, 2024 · https://www.gov.cn/gongbao/2024/issue_11166/202402/content_6931883.html

Notes: F09.

Use: Supports management requirements for archival materials and electronic archives, including authenticity, completeness, and usability, providing institutional context alongside the Archives Law.

Limits: Authenticity, usability, investigation, or orders to rectify archival-management violations do not establish a general procedure to correct facts in personal archives; the regulations cannot guarantee the possibility of correcting every archive.

Reading scope: Articles 18, 24, and 40 and promulgation/effective-date information

R29 · Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, Implementation Opinions on Admission to Compulsory-Education Schools in Shanghai in 2023

上海市教育委员会关于 2023 年本市义务教育阶段学校招生入学工作的实施意见

Version: Hu Jiao Wei Ji [2023] No. 10; published March 30, 2023 · https://edu.sh.gov.cn/xxgk2_zdgz_rxgkyzs_02/20230330/c1c9c715418e49faad3a32981aeb4830.html

Notes: F05.

Use: Provides a Shanghai 2023 admissions example, especially conditions for accompanying children, alternative social-insurance/employment-registration routes, and document verification.

Limits: Limited to Shanghai 2023 and specified categories. Parental social-insurance and continuous flexible-employment registration are alternative routes; exceptions for certain retrospective contributions and electronic-document equivalence must be preserved. These are not national conditions.

Reading scope: Notice header and opening of Part I; focused reading of Part II(I), items 4–5

R30 · Beijing Municipal Education Commission, Opinions on Compulsory-Education Admissions in 2024

北京市教育委员会关于 2024 年义务教育阶段入学工作的意见

Version: Jing Jiao Ji Er [2024] No. 4; dated April 22, 2024; published April 23, 2024 · https://jw.beijing.gov.cn/xxgk/2024zcwj/2024xzgfwj/202404/t20240423_3632758.html

Notes: F05.

Use: Provides a Beijing 2024 example of household-registration categories, district review of documents for non-Beijing residents, and admission procedures.

Limits: Limited to Beijing 2024; district rules govern checks of employment, actual residence, household registers, residence permits, and related material for non-Beijing residents. A webpage validity label does not extend an annual policy to every later year.

Reading scope: Notice header, Part II, and Part III on admission conditions and methods

R31 · Dapeng New District, Guide to Applications for First-Year Junior-Secondary Places in Compulsory Education in the 2024–2025 Academic Year

大鹏新区 2024-2025 学年义务教育阶段初中一年级学位申请指南

Version: 2024–2025 academic year; published May 30, 2024 · https://www.dpxq.gov.cn/ztzl/mszt/jypx/tzgg/content/post_11320115.html

Notes: F05.

Use: Provides a Dapeng 2024–2025 grade-seven example of online applications, category-specific documents, alternative housing routes, social-insurance exceptions, and points.

Limits: Applicant and housing categories cannot be combined into one checklist for everyone. Preserve the insurance exception when one parent has Shenzhen registration, absence of points without insurance material, specified community-certification cases, and points time-bases. The source does not establish every element of the book's composite scenario.

Reading scope: Parts I–V and VII–IX and source/date information; Part VI was not read

R32 · Baiyun District Education Bureau and Service and Administration Bureau for Migrants to Guangzhou, Notice Issuing the Measures for Points-Based Admission of Accompanying Children of Migrants to Guangzhou

广州市白云区教育局 广州市白云区来穗人员服务管理局关于印发广州市白云区来穗人员随迁子女积分制入学实施办法的通知

Version: Yun Jiao Gui Zi [2024] No. 1; issued April 30, 2024; effective May 1, 2024; repealed April 10, 2025 · https://www.gz.gov.cn/gfxwj/qjgfxwj/byq/qbm/content/post_9630491.html

Notes: F05.

Use: As the historical Baiyun 2024 version, illustrates alternative residence/employment/insurance/grade-six-record routes and distinct stages of eligibility, points, preferences, places, and student records.

Limits: The four routes in Article 4(I)(3) are alternatives while other concurrent requirements remain. This version was repealed on April 10, 2025 and is a historical example; its original five-year clause cannot extend it to 2029 or make it current in 2026.

Reading scope: Articles 2–9 and 11 and page metadata on commencement and expiry

R33 · Labor Contract Law of the People's Republic of China

中华人民共和国劳动合同法

Version: Linked and read text: original 2007 version; relation of Articles 7, 10, and 30 to the 2012 amendment inherited from a prior editorial verification · https://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2007/content_711013.htm

Notes: F04.

Use: Explains employment beginning when work starts, written-contract duties, and wage-payment obligations, supporting the distinction between an employment relationship and its written documentation.

Limits: The linked text read this round is the original 2007 text; the 2012 amending decision was not reread. The finding that these three articles were unchanged is explicitly inherited from a prior editorial verification. Written contracts are not the sole evidence or starting point of employment.

Reading scope: Articles 7, 10, and 30 of the official 2007 text. Their relationship to the 2012 amendment relies on earlier editorial verification records; the original 2012 amending decision was not reread in this check.

R34 · National Healthcare Security Administration and Ministry of Finance, Notice on Further Improving Direct Settlement of Basic Medical Insurance Expenses for Treatment across Provincial Boundaries

国家医保局 财政部关于进一步做好基本医疗保险跨省异地就医直接结算工作的通知

Version: Yi Bao Fa [2022] No. 22; notice dated June 30, 2022; procedures effective January 1, 2023 · https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2022-07/26/content_5702881.htm

Notes: F08.

Use: Explains interprovincial basic-medical-insurance registration, direct settlement, responsibilities at the place of insurance and treatment, payment rules, checks, and local implementing rules.

Limits: Limited to interprovincial direct settlement under basic insurance. Registration, coverage, and benefit rates must be distinguished by category and place-of-insurance/treatment rules. Does not establish a national medical-assistance checklist, the author's family-advance/care scenario, or every local rule in 2026.

Reading scope: Parts II–III of the notice; Articles 2–17, 30–37, 43–44, and 57–66 of the attached procedures; form attachments were not separately read

R35 · National Healthcare Security Administration and Ministry of Finance, Notice on Further Strengthening the Management and Services of Direct Settlement for Medical Treatment away from the Place of Insurance

国家医保局 财政部关于进一步加强异地就医直接结算管理服务的通知

Version: Yi Bao Fa [2024] No. 21; dated September 5, 2024; published on the official website September 13, 2024 · https://www.nhsa.gov.cn/art/2024/9/13/art_104_13857.html

Notes: F08.

Use: Supplements rules on registration for interprovincial treatment, category-specific benefits, review at the place of treatment, and coordination across regions as the 2024 policy source named in F08.

Limits: Preserve regional deemed-registration/exemption and later-registration cases when describing prior registration. Benefit differentials and the 10/20 percentage-point figures are not uniform fixed rates for everyone. The notice concerns insurance settlement away from the place of insurance, not a nationwide medical-assistance or family-care document checklist.

Reading scope: Title, document number, signature date, and Parts I–IV of the notice; this does not claim a full-text reading.

R36 · Baiyun District Education Bureau and Human Resources and Social Security Bureau, Notice Issuing the Measures for Points-Based Admission of Accompanying Children of Migrants to Guangzhou

广州市白云区教育局 广州市白云区人力资源和社会保障局关于印发广州市白云区来穗人员随迁子女积分制入学实施办法的通知

Version: Yun Jiao Gui Zi [2025] No. 1; dated April 7, 2025; published April 9; effective April 10, simultaneously repealing the 2024 version · https://www.gz.gov.cn/gfxwj/qjgfxwj/byq/qbm/content/post_10204755.html

Notes: F05.

Use: Uses Article 11 solely to support F05's statement that Yun Jiao Gui Zi [2024] No. 1 was repealed on April 10, 2025, defining the endpoint of the historical 2024 source.

Limits: Does not replace the author's 2024 example with the 2025 eligibility or document requirements. This check does not assess all requirements of the new measures or claim reading their attachments. The signature, publication, and effective dates remain distinct.

Reading scope: Full title, document number, signature date, commencement metadata, and Article 11

Scope of Source Support

The following notes identify the limits of external support. They neither revise the author's theory nor equate an unverified proposition with a disproved one. Read them together with the corresponding passages and notes.

Reissuance of community certificates

Passage: Chapter 17

Reissuance of a community certificate depends on the certificate type, locality, issuing body, and applicable procedure. It does not imply a general right to reissuance or guarantee that an application will change the outcome.

Uses of enterprise records

Passage: Chapter 20

This passage discusses enterprise records and their consequences within state procedures. The cited material does not exhaustively establish every authorized user or use of every record type; it should not be read as proof that all retrieval is confined to the listed matters.

Correction of factual archive records

Passage: Chapter 20

Whether and how a factual record in an archive can be corrected requires separate verification for the record type and applicable rules. This general legal reference supplies no uniform correction procedure for all archives and does not imply that all lawful correction is prohibited.

Enforcement following nonfulfillment

Passage: Chapter 30

This passage concerns enforcement when obligations under a legally effective instrument remain unfulfilled. It does not make compulsory enforcement a necessary route for every payment; initiation, completion, and actual recovery depend on the applicable procedure and case.

Local admission and subsequent student registration

Passage: Chapter 30

This passage illustrates distinct stages of local admission review and student-registration filing after enrollment. It is not a verified complete checklist for one locality, year, and application category. Local material requirements must be checked against the relevant policy, rather than inferred from national registration measures or assembled from policies for different localities.

Registration rules and local admission checklists

Passage: Chapter 32

The 2025 student-registration measures are cited here for information collection, filing, updating, and continuity after initial enrollment. They do not supply a universal admissions checklist or

automatically determine later examination eligibility. Locality, year, application category, and subsequent matters require separate checks.

A further limit concerns the relationship between the 2012 Labor Contract Law amendment and Articles 7, 10, and 30: this edition's bibliographic work relies on earlier verification records and did not reread the original amendment decision. Whether a channel applies, whether a procedure is completed, and what results follow depend on the jurisdiction, date, and case. A composite scenario does not become an investigated case report simply because sources are attached.