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OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Source: *The British Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (FEBRUARY 1987), pp. 77-90

Published by: Oxford University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23707216>

Accessed: 26-12-2019 12:13 UTC

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Literature Review: Women and Social Class—Mrs Bunn the Baker's Wife?

MERYL ALDRIDGE

WOMEN, THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

Inequalities of status and reward are accepted as inevitable in a liberal-democratic society, but extensive movement between those statuses is taken as a positive sign that equality of opportunity is working itself out: individuals are reaching their full potential and the society as a whole is maximizing its human capital. The measurement of social mobility has, then, not only ethnographic but moral, political and policy implications. It also presents some of the most formidable methodological problems in social science: what indicator of social status to use; how to rank that indicator; how to measure an individual's starting point, peak and final destination; how to incorporate changes in the industrial structure which affect both status and opportunities; whether a status group is anything to do with a class as a force for social change? Answering these questions can appear to be a purely technical matter but it also throws up fundamental ideological divisions. The strong feeling behind the statistical devices is nowhere more clear than in recent debates about women and social class. In 1954 D. V. Glass and his colleagues published the first systematic study of social mobility in Britain, based on interviews with 10,000 adult civilians in England, Wales and Scotland in 1949. Material was gathered on respondents' education and occupational history, that of their spouse and of their father and father-in-law. 'In the case of a married woman, the occupation at the time of marriage was requested, although in allocating women to social status categories the occupation of their husband or father was used. This was done because with the still limited employment

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0045-3102/87/010077 + 14 \$03.00/0

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opportunities for women—that is, especially in professional and administrative roles—occupation is not a satisfactory index of social status for women in our society (Glass, 1954, p. 83). Women who were unmarried and living away from their parents were classified according to their own occupation. In the final sample women respondents were over-represented because interviewers found more of them at home. The research team did not, however, analyse their data on women, so the main part of this classic study was based entirely on the occupational mobility of men.

The next (and most recent) large-scale attempt to track mobility was carried out by a team at Nuffield College, Oxford in 1972 (Goldthorpe, 1980). Apart from the deployment of much more sophisticated statistical techniques, the Oxford study addressed the renewed interest in class analysis which has dominated European sociology (and social policy to some extent) since the late 1960s. For Glass and his colleagues, occupation was merely a widely agreed and reasonably reliable indicator of social standing, life-style and reward (although of course the debate about locating the clergyman who lives in near-poverty, or the awkward tendency of manual workers to see ‘workers by brain’ as hardly working at all, continues). Although status is essentially a subjective matter, social consensus means that individuals experience it as externally real and permanent, whatever their personal scale of values. For Goldthorpe, on the other hand, class is at least in part an objective matter: the kind of work you do, the terms of your employment, your security, authority and working conditions give you a set of interests which exist whether you acknowledge them or not. Under some circumstances this underlying commonality of interest will be acted upon to bring about social change, both through the work-place and the political process. The Oxford study was, then, concerned not just with the aggregated outcome of individuals’ occupational fate, but the recruitment into, composition of and political potential of groups occupying the same relationship to the economic structure. The primacy of the economy was taken for granted, in the materialist tradition: the study was based on interviews with 10,039 employed men in England and Wales between the ages of 20 and 64. Not until the Appendix of the major report (Goldthorpe, 1980) is the exclusion of women discussed. The first reason given is the expense of a bigger sample; the second, that it would make direct comparison with a key US study difficult and the third that ‘it is difficult to envisage any factors which, over the period in question, would be likely to result in any *sizeable* number of women occupying *markedly* different class positions from those of the male ‘heads’ of their families, or possessing attributes or engaging in activities which would in themselves materially influence the class position of (the) family unit (pp. 287–288: emphases and inverted commas in original).

Goldthorpe has subsequently justified this position both theoretically

and empirically in the series of papers discussed below. To dismiss women so briefly, so confidently and in an appendix suggests that this choice of research strategies was, though, something of a foregone conclusion. The world of work, politics and industrial action is seen as profoundly the world of men, not only in practice but somehow in principle. Glass and his colleagues lived in a more innocent age, yet their exclusion of women is better justified in terms of their own frame of reference and of contemporary historical realities. During the 1970s much of the literature of the women's movement focused on women's work both as domestic and waged labour. The relative importance of this division to women, to men and to capital is the very basis of the cleavage between Marxist and non-Marxist feminists, yet none of this discussion—of which much has been only too 'academic' (see, for example, Kaluzynska, 1980 for a comprehensive yet witty account)—appears in Goldthorpe as part of a theoretical justification of the research team's position.

It is not only British empirical work, of course, which has disconnected women from social class in this way. Delphy, for example, (1984; in French, 1977) makes the same observation about studies of French social structure. During the 1970s a number of substantial theoretical discussions of the nature of inequality, class and mobility in Britain also asserted that women's relationship to the class structure can only be understood through the medium of the family. As Parkin put it in 1972 'Now female status certainly carries many disadvantages compared with that of males in various areas of social life . . . (however) . . . for the great majority of women the allocation of social and economic rewards is determined primarily by the position of their families—and, in particular that of the male head . . . their claims over resources are not primarily determined by their own occupation but, more commonly, by that of their father or husbands' (pp. 14–15). This, in essence, is also the position taken up by Giddens (1973), Westergaard and Resler (1975) and Parkin in later work (1979).

It is also an analysis shared by American functionalist theorists, most influentially by Talcott Parsons, much criticized by rarely read in the original by feminist critics. (For a succinct account of Parsons' position, see Anshen, 1959.) As Goldthorpe has more recently (1983) pointed out, these analyses arrive at the same answer by very different theoretical routes. Functionalists accept the gender division of labour as necessary for a motivated, cared-for and flexible work-force, seeing the servicing of the economy as in the ultimate interest of all members of that society. While Parsons acknowledged that women both individually and collectively were having their opportunities limited by their responsibility for domestic tasks, he argued that this was compensated-for by the rewards of successful capitalism. Critics, of course, simply reject the assumption that the fruits of

capitalism are distributed equally or justly, asserting instead that interests are fundamentally opposed on class lines (as in the case of Marxist commentators like Westergaard and Resler) or that society is fragmented into a multiplicity of interests which can be based not only on occupation but patterns of consumption (like housing tenure), ethnicity, gender, sector of employment—even age. Variants of this position (called, among other things, post-Marxism or neo-Weberianism) are taken by Giddens and Parkin.

While much of the women and class debate has appeared to be abstractly theoretical, ironically the arcane arguments have centred on the interpretations of ‘facts’: what is the significance of the major increase in women’s paid working over the last 30 years?

WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET

By 1984, women accounted for 41% of the GB labour force, compared with 30% in 1921; 31% in 1951 and 37% in 1971. It is, however, among married women that the dramatic change has occurred: in 1921 they accounted for only 4% of the labour force. By 1951 it was 12%; by 1971, 23% and in 1984 27%. By 1984, 62% of married women were working or looking for work, compared with 9% in 1921; 25% in 1951; 34% in 1961 and 49% in 1971 (Cmnd 9756 1986).

Among working women with dependent children, 70% were working part-time (EOC 1985); nearly all part-time workers are women (Rimmer and Popay, 1982, p. 21). It is part-time work which has accounted for the whole of the rise of the proportion of women in the labour force (Martin and Roberts, 1984, p. 121). Participation rates in 1980 suggested that women then ‘in their late thirties will have spent at least 64% of their lives since leaving school in work by the time they reach retirement age, while younger women can be expected to work for about 67% of their potential working lives’ (p. 136).

As is well-known, though, women are not evenly distributed among the labour-force, whether by occupation, by industrial sector or by seniority. In 1980, four types of occupation accounted for 73% of full-time and 86% of part-time women workers: professionals in health, education and welfare; clerical workers; workers in catering, cleaning and hairdressing; work in selling (Martin and Roberts, 1984, p. 23). They report that this situation had changed little over the previous 15 years and the pattern was confirmed by 1984 figures (EOC 1985). Where women worked with other people doing the same job, 63% were working only with other women and this tendency was, according to Martin and Roberts’ research (1984, p. 33), even more marked among part-time workers and the lower the grade of the job.

Even in sectors where women are over-represented, they are found among more junior grades. The EOC (1985 p. 80) comment upon this from Civil Service sources; Boddy *et al.* (1986, p. 107) found the same in the Bristol insurance industry. DHSS apparently no longer collects gender/grade information about local authority social services, but 1977 figures used by Popplestone (1980) and Howe (1986) show a linear relationship, from 7% of women directors to 83% of social work assistants. Data from the probation service in 1984 (Howe, 1986) show a similar pattern: 9% of women chief probation officers to 43% women probation officers—and 89% female part-time staff. (The relationship here is slightly more complex, though, with a larger proportion of women ACPOs than SPOs.)

How has the cataclysmic industrial restructuring which has overtaken the UK in recent years affected women's employment? There have certainly been large job-losses for women in manufacturing industry as firms have closed or replaced their less-skilled employees with automated equipment. Where the size of the work-force in a firm is being reduced, the cuts can fall disproportionately on women workers by the operation of principles like 'part-timers first' and 'last in; first out' (Walby, 1985). On the other hand, as 'successful' manufacturing firms re-equip, the outcome has sometimes been the replacement of skilled jobs for men with work defined as semi-skilled for women. In some cases this has coincided with the moving of premises to a geographical area where labour is plentiful but with weaker traditions of union organization (Massey and Meegan, 1982). Much is made of the future importance of the service sector of the economy: insurance; banking; computing; retailing; local government; health; education; tourism etc. While these have grown enormously in recent years and have provided employment opportunities for women to a greater extent than for men, much of that work is insecure, badly-paid and menial. Working in an office or shop may be much pleasanter than in a factory or as, say, a cleaner in a computer firm or a cook in a hospital, but the pay, security and benefits may be the same or even worse.

The Economic and Social Research Council has recently sponsored a series of locality-based labour market studies. Boddy and his colleagues' (1986) examination of the Bristol area is particularly interesting because it tends to be seen by outsiders as economically secure—even flourishing. 'High-tech' is well-represented, particularly in aerospace/defence and this sector, together with services like insurance, has grown while traditional industries such as tobacco and paper/printing have declined. '(I)nsurance employment doubled over the decade to 1981, to over 7500 of whom 45% were women' (Boddy *et al.* 1986) but few were found in management, most in routine clerical posts. Some employers expressed a preference for employing married women in such jobs because of their assumed concern with the pay-packet more than with intrinsic satisfaction (p. 152). As the

then-Chancellor said in 1984 (Boddy *et al.* 1986, p. 160), many of the jobs in the service sector are not 'high-tech' but 'no-tech': unskilled and often casual employment. Bristol may be attracting an elite of managers in the public and private sectors and highly-paid research and development staff, but their spending generates jobs at the other end of the reward-hierarchy: cleaning; catering; selling—the 'no-tech' dead-end. Boddy and his colleagues suggest that Bristol may be moving towards a 'bi-polar' pattern of employment, with women (and young people and ethnic groups) at the bottom (1986, pp. 132 and 157).

To summarize then, women seem likely to remain at least as significant a factor in the labour force as they are now, but segregated by sector and disadvantaged in terms of seniority, pay, security and conditions. 'Women's work', in short, is as distinctive as ever. (See Martin and Roberts, 1984, for an extensive discussion of what this means to women and to men and some of the mechanisms of its perpetuation.) The relationship of women to the labour-market has been characterized by some theorists as being part of the 'secondary' segment of a 'dual labour-market' where mature, white, skilled men are primary (see Beechey, 1978, and Bruegel, 1979, for a spelling-out of this view). Whatever the experience of particular individuals, the typicality of women's responsibility for home-management, for the care of children and other dependants reinforces women's segregation in the workplace—and the limitation of work opportunities shapes individual's commitment to the concept of a career, the acquisition of skills and to advancement in specific jobs. In material terms women are secondary in the occupational structure and for many—perhaps most—their paid work is secondary to their domestic commitments, whether actual or potential. The circle is drawn tight: if pay and prospects are so poor, the only realistic way for most women to achieve a home away from parents and to get a reasonable standard of living is by marriage. Westwood (1985) writes vividly of the 'glamour' introduced into the tedium of a Leicester hosiery shop floor by engagements and weddings. ('The hosiery', traditional employer of women, is famous for elaborate rites of passage when employees get married.) Once achieved, marriage and child-bearing bring a short—and shortening—respite from paid work. (The 'family wage' is becoming more mythical than real but it is a powerful myth, nevertheless.) Women return to work, but this time for what employers, spouses, male colleagues and surveyors of social mobility define as 'pin-money'.

This is the crux of the matter: few women earn enough to support themselves comfortably, let alone any dependants. Their wages are therefore secondary in the household, especially since part-time work fits in with domestic responsibilities. They will accept poorly-paid 'dead-end' jobs because convenience and pay are more important than job-satisfac-

tion (see Martin and Roberts, 1984, for a full discussion of this). So they are cheap and expendable labour: secondary to the economy as individuals, but not as a group.

WOMEN AND SOCIAL CLASS: THE 'CONVENTIONAL VIEW' CHALLENGED

Given the energy with which women's issues are currently being pursued in British political and academic life it is hardly surprising that the position taken up by the Oxford mobility study has been challenged. The first salvo in what has become an acrimonious triangular debate was fired by Britten and Heath in 1983. 'Class', they asserted, is not just a matter of occupation but has 'normative and relational aspects' (1983, p. 47) affecting health, education and fertility, for example. While accepting that the circumstances of the household determine life-chances, they suggested that to classify and predict on the basis of one breadwinner is now artificial and misleading. Using data from the 1980 Child Health and Education Survey and 1979 British Election Survey they set out to examine in what ways women's paid work 'made a difference' to members of the household. For this reason they concentrated their attention on households where the wife was working in an occupation conventionally described as higher status than that of her husband. These couples accounted for about 20% of the sample, the other groupings being sole bread-winner (32%); families with both earners in one class (36%) and 12% where the head of household was a lone parent or both spouses were unemployed—'an important but often neglected group' (1983, p. 55). Their conclusion was that 'cross-class' households show differences in qualifications (the manual husbands of non-manual wives were more likely to have qualifications than those with wives in manual work); in fertility (a smaller family's being associated with women having a non-manual job) and voting behaviour (where the wife was in a non-manual job there was a greater propensity to vote Conservative).

While Britten and Heath have not answered the implicit questions about cause (did the 'white blouse' job or the Conservative voting come first?), the point they make is important. Much is made of the manual/non-manual divide in the class structure both where status/consumption and political orientation/class interest are concerned. If occupational structure is to have any predictive value, Britten and Heath argue, then the complexities of households at this boundary should be examined much more closely. In raising this issue, however, they also construct for themselves a dilemma which is equally important and upon which much of the later debate turns—but which weakens their case.

The placing of occupations in a hierarchy makes gross assumptions about social consensus and confuses their prestige with more concrete indicators of class interest. Are the members of the very large category 'routine non-manual workers' a homogenous group and are they all somehow better off than manual workers? Britten and Heath suggest that perhaps there is a 'break' for women workers between the pay, prospects and conditions of clerks, cashiers and other more skilled and responsible posts and those of typists, office machine-minders and sales assistants. Women in the former group tended, in their sample, to be married to men in higher social categories. Having made this observation (1983, pp 52–53) Britten and Heath do not pursue it, in part for lack of empirical data, but it must be said that to do so would not have advanced their position on cross-class households!

In his 'Women and class analysis: in defence of the conventional view' Goldthorpe (1983) seizes on this point with satisfaction, claiming that the whole notion of the cross-class family is a mere artifact of occupational scales. In any 'objective' sense many women in white collar work are in the same class position as their manual-work husbands. The so-called 'differences' collapse into matters of aspiration and life-style. Not, of course, that this would be a devastating criticism if one were not so committed to class structures as a 'major vehicle of social change' (1983, p. 267) and therefore keenly interested in their boundaries. Both in his report on the Oxford mobility study and in the seminal *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure* (Goldthorpe *et al.*, 1969), Goldthorpe has been very concerned to establish that the possibility of class action still exists, based upon collectivities with 'a degree of continuity' and the 'distinctiveness' of 'their life-chances, their life-style and patterns of association' (1983, p. 467). Britten and Heath's approach would seem to dilute the analysis of class identification in a way that Goldthorpe finds unsettling in principle, as well as unnecessary in practice. The phenomenon of non-male heads of household can, he says, easily be incorporated into existing paradigms, but their numbers are so small as to make it pointless to do so. He does not, however, produce evidence of their unimportance, nor does Goldthorpe address the problems brought about by large-scale unemployment for the 'conventional view' of the main breadwinner. In some parts of the UK it is precisely the kind of skilled, well-paid manual job, upon which the ikon of the 'family wage' was based, which has been wiped out by contemporary industrial change. (See Land, 1980 for a comprehensive discussion of the idea of the family wage.)

The main plank of Goldthorpe's 'defence' is that married women's work is—for reasons which he does not condone—so typically secondary in the household that it is a better reflection of social reality to treat the family as the unit of stratification. To do this he has, however, to make a number of

assumptions, some of which are open to question. The first is to assert that women with a genuinely higher-status job than that of their spouse are so rare as to be a negligible category. Evidence on married women's employment would seem to support this. Goldthorpe then takes it as self-evident that the status of the household must be that of the highest-status member and that only consumption patterns and standard of living will be affected by there being other earners. The possibility that women might have their own occupational identity, still less express it through, for example, trade union membership or voting is not contemplated. If women participate in the labour force, though, they cannot, by Goldthorpe's own reasoning, fail to have interests as employees. It may well be that their identification with domestic tasks and with their husband's class will affect their workplace behaviour. Employers certainly seem to believe that this is so as the work of Boddy *et al.* (1986) and Massey and Meegan (1982) referred to above illustrates. Analysts of class formation and behaviour surely need to examine the composition of the whole labour force. Women living without a male head of household, or with an unemployed 'head' or without dependants also need conceptual consideration.

Goldthorpe's relegation of married women's work is based in part on data from a 1974 follow-up to the Oxford mobility study. The work histories of the wives (!) of 578 respondents are used to establish that the labour market participation of married women is typically 'intermittent and limited' (1983, pp. 475–76). Because their work is not continuous, does not add up to a career strategy and seems to be determined by their husband's occupation, it cannot constitute as separate basis of class-interest. Agin the 'facts' of women's working lives cannot be denied but it is odd that Goldthorpe should take such an idealist position, as if the paid work available to women was structured by their collective aspirations rather than the imperatives of the economy. How will he analyse the class position of men who, in the current circumstances of mass unemployment, will perhaps not spend as much as 64% of their adult lives in work (see Martin and Roberts, 1984, above)—and whose jobs range widely across skill-levels and industrial sectors? Surely the idea of 'commitment to work' as a mental state cannot be used as a key indicator of class-interest which, in Goldthorpe's often-stated view, is an objective matter?

The source of women's 'commitment to work' is the starting-point of Stanworth's (1984) 'reply to Goldthorpe'. His position on male head of household is, she says, tautological. What needs to be addressed is the sexual inequality both within the household and in the wider society which perpetuates the different structure of opportunity for women and for men. Is it not the case that, acknowledging this reality, a couple may have a 'strategy' in which his career, their home-ownership etc. is advanced by her taking an instrumental view of work by, for example, taking a shorter time

off for child-bearing or a job that pays well but has few prospects. To this extent Stanworth is accepting that households may be the most useful unit of social stratification, on the Britten and Heath model, but she also suggests that Goldthorpe has failed to explain why, although working, women cannot have occupational interests. If nearly all women are not only in inferior employment to that of their husbands, and in effect this work is 'proletarian', whether in office, shop or factory, this cannot be without some social effect. Are junior non-manual male employees in the proletariat for the purposes of Goldthorpe's analysis, she asks?

Goldthorpe is always very insistent that arguments must be capable of empirical support (an injunction that he does not always follow himself, as in discussing the actualities of household composition, for instance). While Stanworth makes some useful empirical points on, for example, the need to incorporate the high incidence of divorce and remarriage if one must use the household as the unit of stratification, she is even more telling at a theoretical level, principally over Goldthorpe's failure to confront gender inequality. Assigning all members of the household to the class of the male head could only be defensible if there were shared authority and an equal standard of living for all. On the contrary, she says, that this is not necessarily the case has been shown by Pahl (1983) who found that some women were better off on benefits after their marriage broke down. (Allan, 1985, provides a useful discussion of the renewed research interest in the power dynamics within marriage; Morris, 1984, describes wives making ends meet under conditions of unemployment; Kerr and Charles, 1986, examine the distribution of food.) There is, as Delphy (1984) has devastatingly pointed out, a complete contradiction here. Assigning women to their husband's social class makes it appear that they have an identity of interest, whereas the relationship is one of dependence which is greater the less equal the paid employment—and greatest if the wife is not employed at all.

One can see Goldthorpe's problem here, though, because these considerations might lead one to conceptualize all women as having, by their gender, a common interest and so constituting a class in themselves—the position taken by radical feminists. Repudiating this position seems to be a subterranean theme in Goldthorpe's paper on women and social class, although it is very rarely explicit and the key word 'patriarchy' is never used. It is not the position taken by either Stanworth or Britten and Heath, all of whom share Goldthorpe's emphasis on the importance of paid occupations.

The next stage of the debate was a reply from Heath and Britten (1984) which, firstly, produced support for their remarks about distinctions between women in different types of routine non-manual work with an analysis of data from the 1979 General Household Survey. Only women in

supervisory or semi-professional posts were clearly as well-off as male skilled manual workers—and then not always in terms of pay. Female junior office staff were more comparable with semi- and unskilled male manual workers, while women in sales work were in much the same position as female manual workers which, in terms of pay, sick-pay and pensions, was worse than the conditions of unskilled male workers. They then identify three career paths which they see women as typically committed-to, whether currently working or not: *semi-professional* (with academic and vocational qualifications); *office work* (accompanied by a lower level of qualifications) and *unskilled* low-paid work for the unqualified—the ‘secondary labour market’. A woman’s affiliation to one of these groups is, they say, explained more by her own qualifications than by her husband’s occupation. There is, of course, quite a strong link between the standing of spouses’ work but this, Heath and Britten claim, reflects class endogamy, not that a wife’s occupation is determined by that of her husband. They then use statistical modelling to retest their concept of a woman’s occupation ‘making a difference’ to party identification and fertility. Their conclusion is that, using better data and more sophisticated techniques of analysis, they can continue to assert that—at least in the aspects of behaviour explored—the occupation of the male spouse is not adequate as the sole predictive factor; women’s labour market position must be included.

In his ‘reply to the replies’ Goldthorpe (1984) criticizes the adequacy of the data used by Heath and Britten in constructing their three female labour markets. He also suggests that their conclusions about the working conditions of women clerks do not take sufficient account of the extent of part-time working, which affects conditions of employment as well as pay. It should be noted, however, that by their second paper, Heath and Britten seem to have abandoned the notion of ‘cross-class’ families and limit their discussion to dismantling the idea that the occupation of the head of household is sufficient as a predictor of the circumstances and behaviour of all within it. To this extent they comply with Goldthorpe’s reiterated demand (1984, p. 493) that those who wish to assign married women to an independent class position should show ‘how . . . is this manifested in their life-styles, their pattern of association, their socio-political orientations and action’ (although in his text the demand is made of Stanworth, who had not attempted new empirical work).

Again the main theme of Goldthorpe’s detailed criticisms of his critics is the extent to which their proposed models introduce an unmanageable fluidity into the idea of class. Heath and Britten suggest that ‘it may not be the fact of women’s *current* labour market participation which is crucial but her *potential* for such participation’ (1984, p. 481; emphases in original). Having introduced, Goldthorpe says, the possibility that a family’s class

position must change every time the wife enters or leaves paid employment, or changes the kind of work she does, the advocates of 'joint classification' now appear to suggest that she does not actually have to be working to have a class. Goldthorpe's reaction to this is derisive (1984 p. 496), although unintentionally ironic: much of the rest of his papers seem to be underpinned by the notion that women can indeed be in paid employment yet not be in a class. '(I)t would be absurd to treat, say, a typist married to a salaried professional or manager as having the same class as a typist married to a manual worker' (1984 p. 494). Surely Goldthorpe is now talking about status groups—and why is the woman's 'class' affected, but not the man's? The reason is that Goldthorpe assumes that higher status cancels lower: 'the class position of the conjugal family should be seen as unitary and as determined by the position of that family member who has, in some sense, the highest level of labour-market participation' (1984, p. 497).

And so we return to the pivot of the dispute. It is almost impossible for an empiricist to deny the impact of household circumstances on the well-being and opportunities of individuals within it—and to these circumstances women's employment makes an important contribution. 'Secondary' and 'marginal' do not mean 'unimportant' as the phrases 'secondary sex characteristics' and 'marginal rate of profit' illustrate! But while it is conceptually straightforward to see the household as having a joint *status*, it is much more difficult to see how such a group can have an identical *class* interest—which is perversely *au fond* an individual notion. Ideally for class analysts, the dilemma is resolved by only one member of the household's being in paid employment. Failing this the family must be defined *a priori* as unitary by the discounting of all occupational interests except those of the 'head'—which is where the debate began.

NOTES

1. Much recent sociological and historical work in kinship has centred on definitions of 'family' and 'household'. All the papers in the debate discussed above could be criticized for their assumption that the household is coterminous with the conjugal family. Even where that is so, there are further complexities arising from widespread cohabitation, divorce and remarriage. All of these issues deserve to be taken into account when discussing women and social class, as does the impact of unemployment on 'headship' in a social as opposed to an economic sense. For the sake of relative clarity, however, the assumptions made by the disputants are followed in the discussion.

2. The extent to which these conceptual difficulties are reduced by taking an explicitly Weberian starting-point is illustrated by the recent work of Dale *et al.* (1985). For them the household has a life-style and its members life-chances based on the aggregated work of all, whether paid or not. They then explore the market position of women's work, without making prior assumptions about hierarchies of 'skill' which, they say, is more associated with the male-domination and union organization of a job than the capacities needed to perform it. Using data from the 1976 General Household Survey Dale *et al.* then scored occupation on the basis of wage-levels; qualifications; sick-pay and pensions, producing 155 occupational groups. These were subjected to cluster analysis which produced five discrete strata for

women's fulltime employment (based on only 46 of the occupational groups, thus reconfirming the extent of occupational segregation in passing) and four for part-time employment (based on 26 groups). They conclude that there is a cut-off point between white-collar and manual work for women, because of the fringe-benefits. Manual workers in manufacturing industry were shown to be worse off than those in the service sector, because of inferior conditions of employment. Part-time shop workers were employed on terms and conditions as poor as those of manual workers in manufacturing.

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