

in their marriages than do the wives of the intermediate-class men. It is thus the latter who have on average the longest interval between first withdrawal from and return to the work-force, while the service-class wives have the shortest.

Since the differences in question here are not enormous and the numbers from which the data derive are rather small, there is an obvious danger of over-interpretation. None the less, the results reported would seem consistent with one underlying theme in the arguments of class theorists that were earlier reviewed: namely, that the pattern of employment of married women is more likely to be class-conditioned than class-determining. To begin with, the relatively early withdrawal from employment of the working-class wives can be associated, as Table 4 also shows, with cross-class variation in the timing of the birth of first children, which is of course well known from census data. Or, one could say, the effect is here seen of long-standing and apparently unchanging differences in class subcultures, as reflected in different patterns of family formation. For example, a major, though not the only factor in the relatively short average interval between marriage and the birth of a first child found in the case of working-class wives is the high proportion of these women who are pregnant at the time of marriage.<sup>20</sup> Again, the variation observed in the timing of re-entry into the work-force would seem interpretable in terms of the differing degrees of choice and constraint that exist within more or less advantaged class situations. Thus, the rather early return to employment of working-class wives in relation to the birth of their first child may be taken to indicate – as indeed does evidence available from other sources – that such women are more likely than others to see participation in the labour market as being an economic requirement: that is, in order to provide what they would regard as a satisfactory standard of living for their families as well as, perhaps, some modicum of financial independence for themselves.<sup>21</sup> However, in assessing the significance of the similar pattern found in the case of service-class wives, it must be kept in mind that it is also among the latter that one has the highest proportion of wives who have not at any time been in paid employment. Thus, for women who marry men in such highly advantaged positions it may be suggested, on the one hand, that a larger freedom of choice exists than for others over whether or not they should remain in the work-force at all, but, on the other hand, that if, for whatever reasons, they have taken up employment and wish to return to it after maternity, more resources will be available to them than to other women with which this return may be facilitated: for example, through the purchase of more sophisticated household appliances, second cars, the services of domestic helps, nannies, private nursery schools etc.

In the context of these variations evident among the wives of men stable in class position, one may then examine the patterns of employment of the wives of men in the intergenerationally mobile subsamples. Viewed thus, the results reported on the length of the intervals between their first withdrawal from employment or the birth of their first child and their return to the work-force are much as might be expected. However, one feature of special interest which may be noted from Table 4 is that in the case of the wives of men in each of the mobile groupings distinguished, the first withdrawal from work comes later after marriage than with the wives of men in any of the stable groupings; and consistently with this, Table 3 shows that among wives in the first 10 years of marriage, those of mobile men are more likely to be found in the work-force than are any others. Reverting to Table 4, it can moreover be seen that this 'delay' in withdrawal is most marked in the case of women married to men who achieved upward mobility 'indirectly': that is, not immediately at the

time of their first entry into employment after the completion of their full-time education but rather through a process of work-life advancement.

While it would again be desirable to have these results checked on the basis of more extensive data, they could as they stand be seen as lending further support to the general position adopted by class theorists. That is, as suggesting that the family as the basic unit of

TABLE 5

*Type of employment of wives of men in subsamples with differing class mobility experience:  
(a) at marriage; (b) held for greatest number of years after marriage; (c) at time of interview (1974)*

Subsample	Class of wives' employment <sup>(a)</sup>								
	%								
	I	II	IIIa (clerical)	IIIb (other)	IV + V	VI	VII	None	N
Stable in Class I	(a)	9	25	18	29	0	0	0	18
	(b)	8	31	11	32	0	0	0	18
	(c)	2	25	3	11	3	0	2	55
Stable in Classes III-V	(a)	1	7	12	42	5	8	22	3
	(b)	1	13	10	42	7	5	21	1
	(c)	1	10	2	21	3	1	18	43
Stable in Classes V-VII	(a)	0	4	10	29	2	13	38	5
	(b)	0	5	10	29	4	12	37	3
	(c)	0	5	5	14	6	3	20	47
Upwardly mobile to Class I - direct	(a)	2	29	15	44	2	1	3	3
	(b)	2	29	13	48	4	0	1	2
	(c)	2	9	9	20	2	0	1	56
Upwardly mobile to Class I - indirect	(a)	4	17	26	39	0	6	4	5
	(b)	4	16	26	42	1	5	6	1
	(c)	1	10	9	24	5	1	6	43
Downwardly mobile from Class I	(a)	4	7	23	29	1	14	9	13
	(b)	4	11	23	34	2	9	16	2
	(c)	4	5	13	21	0	2	11	45

## Note

(a) The class schema is the same as that of Table 1 but Class III has been divided into IIIa, routine nonmanual employees in clerical and kindred occupations, and IIIb, routine nonmanual employees in other, mainly sales and service occupations.

reward is also likely to be a unit of economic strategy within the class structure. Thus, in the early years of marriage especially, when the future still appears as relatively 'open', the timing and extent of wives' work may often form part of a family plan, whether aimed at social advancement or social survival, which is developed in response to the husband's career possibilities or problems.

In Table 5 further data from the 1974 study are presented relating to the type of employment in which the wives of men in the various subsamples were engaged. While these data are not ones that can be directly compared with the census statistics previously referred to, they are clearly in broad agreement with the latter in indicating that the location of married women within the occupational division of labour is frequently different from that of their husbands. However, on the basis of the information summarized in Table 5 various other observations may also be made which serve to throw doubt on the idea now much in vogue that, in consequence of such husband-wife differences in employment, there exists in present-day British society a substantial number of 'cross-class' families, which create serious difficulties for conventional class theory.

It may be noted first of all that the data of Table 5 bring out rather more clearly than do census statistics that the relation between the type of employment of husband and wife tends to follow a fairly simple pattern. If the wives of men in professional, administrative and managerial positions are not themselves in similar positions, then they will very largely be found in lower-level nonmanual—that is, mainly clerical, sales and services—occupations rather than in manual ones. If, however, the wives of men in lower-level nonmanual and other 'intermediate' positions are not in similar positions to their husbands, they will very largely be found in manual work; while, conversely, if the wives of men in manual wage-earning positions are not likewise employed, they will be located almost entirely in the lower-level nonmanual grades.

In so far, then as this pattern implies that wives' conditions of employment will, if they differ significantly from those of their husbands, be of a less favourable kind, it is not at all obvious why problems should arise for class theorists, and especially if what has already been shown concerning the typically discontinuous, limited and conditional nature of wives' employment is kept in mind. Indeed, critics have had relatively little to say on the case where the wife's type of employment is clearly of inferior grade to the husband's, and such arguments as they have advanced have been contradictory: some have claimed that the additional income provided by the wife's work will help to enhance the family's standard and style of living, while others appear to believe that the nature of the wife's work will tend in some way to undermine the family's class position.<sup>22</sup> However, what has clearly been of major concern to critics is the case where it appears possible to claim that the wife's type of employment is not only different from, but also superior to that of her husband; and this situation has been seen as arising most extensively where men in manual work have wives who are employed in nonmanual occupations. Thus, for example, Britten and Heath have recently contended that the kind of 'cross-class' families which are in this way formed represent 'a large and important category within the contemporary class structure which class theorists ignore at their peril.'<sup>23</sup>

There are two main grounds on which this proposition may be queried. First, it is necessary to examine just what are the nonmanual occupations in which the wives of manual workers are engaged, and in particular the nature of the market and work relations in which they typically involve their incumbents. As already noted, the occupations in question are

overwhelmingly located at the lower-levels of the nonmanual hierarchy; but further, the categorization used in Table 5 serves to bring out that they are also less often ones of a clerical character than occupations in sales and services. Indeed, it might plausibly be argued that some of these latter occupations should not be classified as nonmanual at all – but this is not the issue of real importance. What must rather be emphasized is that, from the standpoint of class analysis, the distinction between manual and nonmanual work is not *in itself* of any great significance. So far as men are concerned, this distinction is of value as an *indicator* of class position because of the fact that it is quite closely correlated with differences in market and work situations – as reflected, for example, in conditions of service and fringe benefits, guarantees of security and promotion prospects, work rules and relations with superiors, etc.<sup>24</sup> Before, then, the distinction may safely be taken as an indicator of the class position of women employees, it would need to be established that a similar correlation exists in their case also. This, however, has not been done, and it may moreover be regarded as very doubtful whether any such correlation is to be found. All the available evidence would point to women in lower-level nonmanual occupations being less favourably treated than their male counterparts in regard not only to levels of pay but also pay increments, sickness benefit, pensions, etc.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, while in the case of men it is *de facto* promotion chances, if not established career lines, which perhaps most significantly differentiate lower-level nonmanual from manual employment, the same would seem scarcely to hold in the case of women. In this respect, the work-histories that form the basis of Table 5 are themselves informative.

If, for example, we consider those wives of men stable in Classes VI and VII who at any time in their married lives had held a lower-level nonmanual occupation (i.e. one falling into Class IIIa or IIIb), we find that of the 53 women in question, only 6, or 11 per cent, had ever moved from such an occupation into an administrative or managerial or even a nonmanual supervisory one (i.e. one falling into Classes I or II). And, it may be added, no evidence of any greater career mobility from Class III positions can be produced if one looks likewise at the work histories of wives of men in the other subsamples. While no strictly comparable results for men can be cited, it is clear from various analyses of the data of the 1972 national mobility inquiry and from other sources that their chances of advancement from lower-level nonmanual positions are considerably greater.<sup>26</sup>

It is therefore by no means apparent why if the wife of a manual worker is employed as a clerk, typist, shop assistant, etc., it should be supposed that a 'cross-class' family is thereby created. It would rather seem that the market and work relations in which the wife will be involved are unlikely to differ much in their basic characteristics from those experienced by her husband. Although the one may be doing (arguably) nonmanual work and the other manual, both will be engaged essentially in an exchange of wages for labour in subordinate and 'dead-end' positions.

Secondly, the difficulties involved in regarding families of the kind in question as 'cross-class' ones may further be displayed by considering the full implications that must follow from such a claim and, in particular, from the fact that not only is the category indeed a large one, as Britten and Heath claim, but also, to judge from the 1974 data, a *highly unstable one*. Although, as was noted above, few women were found to move in their working lives from Class III to higher-level nonmanual positions in Classes I and II, there is, on the other hand, evidence of quite frequent mobility between the lower-level nonmanual occupations of Class III and the manual, wage-earning ones of Classes VI and

II. Thus, for example, among the wives of Class VI and VII husbands who had ever been in gainful employment, as many as two-thirds (87/130) had at some time during their marriage been in a nonmanual occupation – but less than two-fifths (48/130) had worked only in such occupations, that is, had never held a manual job. And furthermore, among those women whose marriages had extended for 10 years or more, one finds that while again two-thirds (63/93) had at some time been nonmanual workers, in this case less than one-third (29/93) had never held a manual occupation. In other words, if it is to be maintained that any family in which the wife of a manual wage-worker holds a nonmanual occupation has thereby a distinctive location within the class structure, it must in turn be accepted that British society is characterized by a far greater degree of class mobility than has hitherto been supposed, and indeed to such an extent that the size of what could be regarded as the stable working class must be reduced to quite diminutive proportions. The alternative view is, of course, that the very frequency with which women workers move between lower nonmanual and manual occupations is itself a further indication that such occupational mobility does not for the most part entail a shift in class position, in the sense of some significant change in market and work relations, and that the proportion of manual wage-workers married to women whose nonmanual employment does give them a different class location is extremely small.

In order to develop this last point, the 1974 data may once more be drawn on. It is possible to examine the work histories of the wives of men stable in Classes VI and VII, and to note the number of instances in which these women had at any time in their married lives held nonmanual occupations which *could* be taken as placing them in a clearly superior position to that of their husbands; that is, professional, administrative and managerial occupations of the kind covered by Classes I and II. It turns out, in fact, that none of the 130 wives in question had ever held a Class I occupation, and that in only 14 cases were Class II occupations at any point recorded. Furthermore, it may be added that of the 14 women in question here, six had held such occupations only for a period of two years or less before moving down to a lower occupational level or leaving the work force. Of the remainder, one had withdrawn from the work-force after fifteen years, out of twenty married, in a Class II occupation; while for the others, who were in Class II occupations at time of interview (cf., Table 5), the average length of incumbency was just under four years in relation to an average length of marriage of sixteen years.

The data presented in this section serve, then, in several different ways to show that changes in the extent and nature of the employment of married women over recent decades are far less damaging to the idea of the family as the basic unit of class stratification than it has of late become fashionable to suppose. While the proportion of married women who have at some time or other been engaged in paid employment has substantially increased, the adoption of a work-life perspective fully reveals the intermittent and limited nature of this employment – even discounting the considerable extent to which it is undertaken on less than a full-time basis. There can be little doubt that within the conjugal family it is still overwhelmingly the husband who has the major commitment to labour market participation, and there are, furthermore, various indications that the pattern of employment of married women is itself conditioned by their husbands' class position, or class mobility, as achieved in the course of working life. Finally, evidence has been brought forward to suggest that differences in the type of employment engaged in by husbands and their wives are far less than would appear from the official statistics that have been widely

cited, at all events if attention is focussed on the kinds of market and work relations that are involved. And 'cross-class' families may thus in turn be regarded far more as artefacts of an inappropriate mode of categorization than as a quantitatively significant feature of present-day society. Rather than marriage being the source of a new complexity in the class structure, it would seem that class still remains the basis of homogamy.<sup>27</sup>

### III

For those who believe that conventional ideas on the articulation of the conjugal family with the system of social stratification are now outmoded by the frequency with which married women are found in paid employment, the general direction of the conceptual and methodological shift that is needed in response to this change would appear clear enough. Instead of the position of the family as a unit being seen to follow from the location within the occupational division of labour of its (usually male) 'head', it should rather be understood as being determined in some more complex way in which the work-force participation of wives may appropriately figure. Thus, so far as class analysis is concerned, several authors have argued for the use of a kind of class categorization of conjugal families which is based on the employment situation of both husband and wife. In a recent paper, Britten and Heath have made detailed proposals for such a 'joint classification'.<sup>28</sup> However, such proposals may be subjected to serious questioning on at least two counts: first, because the method by which it has been sought to validate joint classifications suggests some confusion of purpose; and secondly, because their actual application in class analysis would seem certain to produce highly problematic results.

In attempting to establish the case that joint classifications are necessary and valid, their proponents have typically presented evidence to show that the employment situation of married women 'makes a difference': that is, that when a joint classification is utilized, more of the variance in some set of attributes of the conjugal family (or of its individual members) can be accounted for than if the position of the family were to be indexed by the nature of the husband's employment alone. Such exercises may be open to criticism on technical grounds, in particular for containing biases in favour of the effect that they wish to demonstrate. Thus, for example, the analyses offered by Britten and Heath may be biased in this way through their reliance on inadequate categorizations of husbands' occupations as well as of wives';<sup>29</sup> and again because they make no attempt to check on the extent to which the 'differences' produced by the inclusion of wife's employment status may be merely spurious ones.<sup>30</sup> However, a more basic issue that may be raised is that of why it is supposed that this approach to the validation of joint classifications is appropriate at all. The answer that would be given, it appears, would be on the lines that what is being sought is an indicator of the 'social background' of families which can then be applied in an attempt 'to map the basic structure of socio-cultural differences' within the population at large;<sup>31</sup> thus, the degree to which a classification can account for – or at least display – variance in family members' social characteristics and life-styles must be the key criterion in its evaluation. But, if this is the position taken up, two further things may be said.

On the one hand, it may be remarked that if it really is an indicator of 'social background' that is wanted, it is unclear why a specifically *class* schema, even if a 'joint' one, should be proposed. It would seem far better to seek to construct some measure of the general 'socio-economic status' of families, in which could be represented not only husbands' and wives' occupations and employment status, but further such other relevant factors as their

levels of education and qualifications, family income, housing type etc. Judged by the criterion of socio-cultural variance explained, one could safely predict that such a measure would give a superior performance to that of any kind of class categorization.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, though, it must also be observed that to account as fully as possible for the range of socio-cultural variation existing in the population at large is *not* in fact the objective of class analysis as this would be understood by writers such as those earlier referred to in this paper. As was noted, the first empirical concern of class analysis must be that of establishing how far classes have formed as relatively stable collectivities through the continuity with which individuals and families have been associated with particular class positions over time. It is then only to the extent that classes prove to be in this way identifiable that the further question can be raised of how far they are also differentiated in socio-cultural terms.<sup>33</sup> By pursuing this question, it may be found meaningful to speak of the differences existing between, say, working-class life-styles and those of the petty bourgeoisie, or of other classes; but this would still of course be only in terms of central tendencies. It has never been supposed by class analysts that the variable of class membership itself – or even if supplemented by that of class mobility – can provide the basis for any complete mapping of socio-cultural patterns. Indeed, one of their preoccupations has been with the way in which the effects of class in this respect are cut across both by the effects of stratification within classes as, for example, by income, and by those of other affiliations – religious, ethnic, regional etc. The grounds on which some confusion of purpose may be alleged can thus be summed up as follows: joint classifications of the kind proposed are unlikely to perform as well as other measures of 'social background' the task that is apparently intended for them by their proponents, but this is not in any event a task towards which class analysis is primarily oriented.

It might none the less still be argued that, despite the way in which it has been attempted to validate them, the real test of joint classifications must remain that of how well they enable one to understand the class structure itself; and it could rightly be pointed out that their advocates do also make claims for them in this regard. For example, Britten and Heath refer to 'our attempt to redescribe the class structure', to their 'map of the class structure', to certain classes they distinguish as being 'the backbone of the class structure', and so on.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, though, it is when thus considered as instruments of class analysis that the dubious nature of joint classifications is most clearly revealed.

It was seen in the previous section that where husbands' and wives' occupations are related, a danger exists that, through the use of inappropriate categorizations, a large proportion of 'cross-class' families of a quite artefactual kind may result, and that, in turn, when the class position of families over time is considered, large amounts of similarly artefactual class mobility will be generated. It has, however, also to be noted that joint classifications give rise to another problem which is of a somewhat comparable kind, but both more serious and less avoidable. In such classifications, it is logically required that families in which the wife is in paid employment should be regarded as having different class positions to those in which the wife does not work, even where husbands' occupations are of a similar kind. Thus, Britten and Heath, in developing their own schema, distinguish between, on the one hand, 'dual career' or 'dual earner' families and, on the other, 'more traditional' families in which 'the man is the breadwinner and the woman is the housewife';<sup>35</sup> and they then treat these as different *types* of family which fall into different categories throughout their schema. But there is here a fundamental misconception. It

should be apparent, both from official statistics and the research findings earlier reviewed, that what exists in the social reality to which the schema is to be applied is not, for the most part, different types of family of the kind suggested – such as might reflect, say, abiding differences in family ideologies and relationships – but simply families passing, and perhaps repassing, through different phases in a manner which is now common to the very large majority of *all* families. Recall from Table 2 that the proportion of married women who have *never* been in paid employment is very small, whatever the class position of their husbands.

The most revealing consequence of this misconception, as embodied in joint classifications, is then that, in the same way as the artefactual enlargement of the number of 'cross-class' families, it must lead to the estimation of rather extraordinary rates of class mobility. This is evident enough if one again turns to Table 2, and considers the data on the frequency with which women move out of, and back into, the work-force over the duration of their married lives. For in a joint classification each such move must itself be taken to represent a change in the woman's, and hence in her family's class position – over and above, of course, any changes resulting from her actual occupational mobility while within the work-force. As a means of illustrating further the point that is here being made, it is of interest to gain an idea of what would be the frequency of class mobility shown up if one applied a joint classification on the lines proposed by Britten and Heath to the work-history data of the husbands and wives in one of the subsamples of the 1974 inquiry: that, say, of men intergenerationally stable in Classes VI and VII. From an exercise carried out to this end, it emerges that the families of these men would be reckoned to have changed class position at an average of approximately once in every eight years of their existence *in consequence solely* of wives moving out of and back into the work-force; and, it may be added, when wives' occupational shifts are also taken into account, the frequency of this class mobility rises to almost once in every six years.

The conclusion to which one is forced is then that the application of a class schema of the kind proposed by Britten and Heath to the analysis of the class structure is in effect a largely self-defeating exercise. If the employment situation of married women is as important in determining the class locations of their families as such a schema implies, then it has in turn to be accepted that the rate of mobility of family units is at such a level that any interest in class formation becomes difficult to sustain. The classes to which Britten and Heath refer in their attempt at 'redescribing' the class structure must *all* – and not least those they take as providing the 'backbone' of this structure – be recognized as collectivities with a very low identity in terms of their continuity over time. Moreover, since this is the case, it has also to be said that the value of their conception of class structure to their project of mapping the correlated structure of socio-cultural differences becomes *not* a little questionable. Just what, one may ask, is the sociological significance of knowing that one of their classes differs from another by some 5 to 10 percentage points in, say, the proportion of its constituent families with more than two children or in the level of its Labour vote if it is also known that these classes are quite unstable aggregates?

In fact, for anyone who has examined women's work-histories in detail, it would be difficult to regard the frequency of class mobility that is implied by the Britten-Heath schema as being other than spurious.<sup>26</sup> But it is perhaps still worth spelling out the position to which Britten and Heath, and other proponents of joint classifications, would be committed if they were to insist on treating the conclusions that are reached via their



approach as being valid ones. They would in effect be arguing that when the implications of the expansion of married women's employment are properly taken into account, the class stratification of contemporary society proves to have a far more fluid form than studies based on the conventional view of the linkage between family and class structure are able to show: the result of women ceasing to be 'peripheral to the class system' has been a remarkable process of class decomposition. Whether or not this is what the authors in question would want to argue remains still to be seen. But the easier way out would be for them to recognize that they are in danger of being seriously misled by the deficiencies of their own methodology and of the sociological analysis that underlies it.

## Notes

- \* I am indebted to the following for comments, criticism and information: Shirley Dex, Peter Elias, Elizabeth Garnsey, Eileen Goddard, Alison Macfarlane, Susan McRae, Gordon Marshall, Ray Pahl, Lee Rainwater, Ceridwen Roberts and John Westergaard.
- 1. See, e.g., Joan Acker, 'Women and Social Stratification: A case of Intellectual Sexism', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 78, 1973, and 'Women and Stratification: A Review of Recent Literature' *Contemporary Sociology*, vol. 9, 1980; Christine Delphy, 'Women in Stratification Studies' in Helen Roberts (ed.), *Doing Feminist Research*, London, Routledge, 1981; Andrew Cooper, 'Sex, Gender and Society' in Ivan Reid and Eileen Wormald (eds.), *Sex Differences in Britain*. London, Grant McIntyre, 1982; Sheila Allen, 'Gender Inequality and Class Formation' in Anthony Giddens and Gavin Mackenzie (eds.), *Social Class and the Division of Labour*, Cambridge University Press, 1982. Cf. also Margrit Eichler, *The Double Standard: A Feminist Critique of Feminist Social Science*, London, Croom Helm, 1980, ch. 4, and Ann Oakley, *Subject Women*, London, Martin Robertson, 1981, ch. 13. An earlier influential paper was Walter B. Watson and Ernest A. T. Barth, 'Questionable Assumptions in the Theory of Social Stratification', *Pacific Sociological Review*, vol. 7, 1964.
- 2. Talcott Parsons, 'An Analytical Approach to the Theory of Social Stratification' in *Essays in Sociological Theory*, Glencoe, Free Press, rev. ed., 1954, p. 77.
- 3. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-71.
- 4. In addition to the paper cited above, see also in the same collection 'Age and Sex in the Social Structure of the United States', and further 'The Social Structure of the Family' in Ruth N. Anshen (ed.), *The Family: its Future and Destiny*, New York, Harper, 1949, and 'The American Family: its Relations to Personality and the Social Structure' in Parsons and Robert F. Bales, *Family, Socialisation and Interaction Process*, London, Routledge, 1956.
- 5. It may also be noted that often those feminist critics who *have* given some attention to class analysis - for example, Eichler and Oakley - appear virtually to equate it with Marxism. As what follows should make clear, while class analysis in the sense of the present paper obviously owes much to Marx and Marxism, these are not its only sources and its exponents may or may not count themselves as Marxists. On the other hand, there are clearly some Marxists - e.g. ones of a 'structuralist' persuasion - to whom class analysis in this sense is clearly uncongenial.
- 6. Anthony Giddens, *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies*, London, Hutchinson, 1973, p. 288.
- 7. Frank Parkin, *Class Inequality and Political Order*, London, MacGibbon and Kee, 1971, pp. 14-15.
- 8. John Westergaard and Henrietta Resler, *Class in a Capitalist Society*, London, Heinemann, 1975, p. 291.
- 9. See, e.g., A. J. Fox and P. O. Goldblatt, *Longitudinal Study: Socio-demographic Mortality Differentials, 1971-1975*, London, H.M.S.O., 1982, pp. 31-3.
- 10. *Class in a Capitalist Society*, p. 104.

11. Frank Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory: a Bourgeois Critique*, London, Tavistock, 1979, p. 85.
12. *Class in a Capitalist Society*, p. 352.
13. It is of interest to inquire just why this point should have been so systematically ignored by feminist critics. Part of the explanation at least would seem to be that they share in Acker's belief that to 'discard the assumption of derived status or class for women and investigate the possibilities of conceptualizing women as social beings with identities and existence of their own' is necessary to a full understanding of women's disadvantaged and subordinate position. ('Women and Stratification', p. 25). The logic of this view is, however, not easy to follow. Class theorists would obviously wish to reply that the dependence that the assumption in question reflects is quite fundamental to women's disadvantaged and subordinate position, and that nothing is to be gained – least of all by feminists – from seeking to disguise the fact. If it were the case that the majority of married women could be realistically regarded as having a directly determined class position, then women would be far less discriminated against as regards work-force participation than in fact they are. At the same time, it is far from clear why arguing that married women's class position is usually derived should prevent these women from being thought of as having identities and an existence of their own, or indeed be in any way disparaging to them. It would seem that the only consistent way to move on from Acker's argument is to claim, as some feminists are apparently ready to do, that a sociological practice which mirrors social reality thereby confirms and reinforces it – from which one must presumably conclude that sociologists have to hand a ready and painless method of changing the existing social order, namely, to misdescribe it. What feminists – and indeed others – might more reasonably maintain is that sociologists have not so far made much headway in accounting for the emergence and persistence of conventional sex roles and 'patriarchal' institutions generally. But it must here be added that – contrary to what Acker, for instance, supposes – it is by no means self-evident that a satisfactory theory of sexual inequalities will be of a piece with one of class inequalities. The exact relationship of patriarchy and capitalism, for example, is a matter for extensive and detailed empirical inquiry and not for *a priori* declarations about the need for an 'integrated' theory – which would seem to stem from nothing more than the metaphysical belief that all great evils must have some common source.
14. Cf. Parsons, 'The American Family', and also Morris Zelditch, 'Role Differentiation in the Nuclear Family', also in Parsons and Bales (eds.), *Family, Socialisation and Interaction Process*.
15. In the British case at least, a serious practical difficulty does, however, arise in the case of survey research, in that no sampling frame exists in which families of the kind in question can be identified.
16. John H. Goldthorpe (with Catriona Llewellyn and Clive Payne), *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 122–4, 291–4.
17. The idea of the 'three-phase pattern' was first popularized in Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein, *Women's Two Roles*, London, Routledge, 1956, but still persists. Cf. Ann Oakley: 'The typical pattern for women has three phases: employment, followed by fulltime domesticity, followed by a job again'. *Housewife*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1974, p. 78. For criticism of this view based on American data, see Glen H. Elder and Richard Rockwell, 'The Timing of Marriage and Women's Life Patterns', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 1, 1976, and Annette Sorenson, 'Women's Employment Patterns after Marriage', Center for Demography and Ecology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Working Paper, 82–9. In part, more complex work patterns are the result of increased participation – e.g. of more women moving in and out of work between the birth of children; but it also appears that the participation of many women continues to be intermittent after their period of active motherhood is over. The data provided in the text would seem to be broadly in line with those for married women in the sample for the National Training Survey, carried out in Great Britain in 1975–6. I am extremely grateful to Peter Elias of the University of Warwick for providing me with the results of special analyses of these data.
18. See *General Household Survey, 1976*, London, H.M.S.O., 1978, Table 2.39(b), p. 56, and also

- Sheila Rothwell, 'United Kingdom' in Alice M. Yohalem (ed.), *Women Returning to Work*, London, Frances Pinter, 1980, pp. 165-7.
24. This decline may well result in part from higher levels of unemployment discouraging married women from remaining in the work-force; but the disincentive effects of taxation, National Insurance contributions and travel and other expenses would also seem important. Cf. Lorna Bourke, 'When Married Women Cannot Afford to Work', *The Times*, June 5, 1982.
  25. See Karen Dunnell, *Family Formation 1976*, London, H.M.S.O., 1979, chs. 4-5. Cf., also *Social Trends 12*, London, H.M.S.O., 1982, Table 2.21, p. 41.
  21. Cf., the research findings reviewed in Michael Webb, 'The Labour Market' in Reid and Wormald (eds.), *Sex Differences in Britain*, pp. 150-4.
  22. Cf., e.g., the varying positions taken up, implicitly or explicitly, in the following: Ernest A. T. Barth and Walter B. Watson, 'Social Stratification and the Family in Mass Society', *Social Forces*, vol. 45, 1967; Marie R. Haug, 'Social Class Measurement and Women's Occupational Roles', *Social Forces*, vol. 52, 1973; Valerie Kincaid Oppenheimer, 'The Sociology of Women's Economic Role in the Family', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 42, 1977; Albert F. Osborn and Tony C. Morris, 'The Rationale for a Composite Index of Social Class and its Evaluation', *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. xxx, 1979; Nicky Britten and Anthony Heath, 'Women, Men and Social Class', in Eva Gamarnikow, David Morgan, June Purvis and Daphne Taylorson (eds.), *Gender, Class and Work*, London, Heinemann, 1983.
  23. 'Women, Men and Social Class', p. 60.
  24. Cf., the extensive data reported in Christine Craig, *Men in Manufacturing Industry*, Cambridge, Department of Applied Economics, 1969.
  25. See, e.g., Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth, *Report No. 6: Lower Incomes*, London, H.M.S.O., 1978, pp. 68-9, and A. McIntosh, 'Women at Work: a Survey of Employers', *Employment Gazette*, November, 1980. The differences in question are particularly marked, as might be expected, in the case of women in part-time work.
  26. Cf., Goldthorpe, *Social Mobility and Class Structure*, ch. 5 esp., and also A. Stewart, K. Prandy and R. M. Blackburn, *Social Stratification and Occupations*, London, MacMillan, 1980, chs. 6-7 esp. For further evidence and discussion on the low rates of promotion of women in clerical work, see Rosemary Crompton, Gareth Jones and Stuart Reid, 'Contemporary Clerical Work: A Case Study of Local Government' in Jackie West (ed.), *Work, Women and the Labour Market*, London, Routledge, 1982. In marked contrast to men, married women appear in general to display little net upward mobility in the course of their working lives. Cf., Christine A. Greenhalgh and Mark B. Stewart, 'Occupational Status and Mobility of Men and Women', *Warwick Economic Papers*, No. 211, 1982.
  27. It is of interest to note the extent to which what has been claimed factually in this section of the paper is echoed not only in married women's own accounts of their working lives (see, e.g., the paper by Crompton *et al.* cited in the previous note and, in the same collection, Marilyn Porter, 'Standing on the Edge: Working Class Housewives and the World of Work') but further in the writings of feminist sociologists who have elsewhere been strong in their criticism of conventional class theory. Cf., e.g., Ann Oakley: 'Assertions of increasing equality between the sexes are often based on employment statistics. . . . In fact the impression of convergence is illusory . . . behind these statistics of employment, the traditional differentiation between women's and men's roles endures still. . . . Women's defining role is a domestic one', *Housewife*, pp. 72-3. To avoid any misunderstanding, one might add that nothing in the foregoing precludes agreement also with those who have stressed the importance, at the macro-sociological level, of changes in the extent and nature of women's work-force participation for the distribution of men within the division of labour, and in turn for the rate and pattern of their mobility and the possibilities for class formation. Cf., Elizabeth Garnsey, 'Women's Work and Theories of Social Stratification', *Sociology*, vol. 12, 1978, and Goldthorpe, *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain*, ch. 2.

28. 'Women, Men and Social Class'.
29. As earlier suggested, the OPCS Social Classes are quite unsuitable for the purposes of class analysis – most obviously, in that they fail to distinguish systematically either between employers, self-employed and employees or between supervisory grades and rank-and-file workers. Thus, for example, Britten and Heath's results could be biased in favour of their own arguments in that within the group of Class IIM men married to IIN women, there will in fact be sizable components of small proprietors, of self-employed craftsmen and of foremen who are more likely to have wives in nonmanual occupations than are manual wage-workers (cf., Table V above) and who are also known to diverge from the latter, in a 'white-collar' direction, on the various dependent variables introduced by Britten and Heath. The Market Research 'classes' which Britten and Heath also use are similarly defective.
30. If the aim is seriously to investigate how far the employment situation of married women does 'make a difference' – in regard to whatever dependent variables – even when family class on the conventional view is held constant, then it is essential that some form of multivariate model be specified. This would incorporate wife's employment situation along with other variables for which theoretical justification could be provided – and these should certainly include *inter alia* husband's class mobility.
31. Britten and Heath, 'Women, Men and Social Class', pp. 60.
32. If it is argued that often only data on husbands' and wives' employment situation will be available, then a still preferable method to joint classification – for reasons which will emerge – is that proposed by Erikson, in which the family or household is classified according to the employment situation of whichever of its members that ranks highest in an ordering according to 'dominant influence'. See Robert Erikson, 'Om Socio-ekonomiska Indelningar av Hushåll: Överväganden och ett förslag', *Statistisk Tidskrift*, 1981.
33. It is relevant here to note the distinction introduced by Sorokin between the relatively formed – that is, 'relatively stable and permanent' – element of a class, which might be termed the class 'core', and those individuals or families who are found in particular class positions at any one time but who have only recently entered them and whose continued incumbency is doubtful. Cf., Pitirim Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Mobility*, Glencoe, Free Press, 1959, p. 428. From one set of class positions to another, the relative size of these two elements may vary widely, and it is possible that virtually no stability at all will be observable. For developments of this approach in more recent work, see C. J. Richardson, *Contemporary Social Mobility*, London, Frances Pinter, 1977, and Goldthorpe, *Social Mobility and Class Structure*.
34. 'Women, Men and Social Class', pp. 55–6.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
36. Consider the following case. The wife of a man who is *throughout* a manual wage-worker herself works for two years after their marriage as a shop assistant. She then leaves paid employment for a period of eight years, during which time she has two children. She then goes back to work on the 'twilight' shift at a local factory, but after a year stops again to have a third child. Five years later she returns to work once more, part-time at the factory; but after another year she finds employment again as a shop assistant. An everyday story of working-class folk? But according to the Britten-Heath schema, the family has been class mobile five times in less than twenty years.

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