

ARTIGOS

CLASS AND GENDER BEYOND THE “CULTURAL TURN”

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Abstract This paper addresses recent debates in order to facilitate a constructive return to discussions of gender and class. It is argued that “class” is primarily an economic concept, whereas “gender” inequalities primarily reflect normative/cultural constructions. Nevertheless, cultural degradations have economic consequences. It is suggested that a major strand of debate in relation to “gender and class” — that is, the feminist critique of quantitative class analysis (as exemplified by Goldthorpe, Erikson and Wright) — was flawed from the beginning. However, the “cultural turn” in feminism overlaid gender with sexuality and removed class altogether. Thus, debates in relation to gender, class, and the division of labour were not worked out to a satisfactory conclusion. Nevertheless, a class perspective remains essential if we are to understand and analyse the consequences of changes in the gender division of labour.

Keywords Gender, class, identity, culture.

It would be widely recognised that the 1980s and 90s witnessed a widespread “turn to culture” in some UK and US sociological circles. This intellectual shift was associated with theoretical commentaries that hailed the advent of “postmodernism” (Featherstone, 1991), as well as the influence of writers such as Foucault who emphasised the plurality and diversity of “scientific” knowledge and the corresponding weaknesses of social science “meta-narratives”. Many writers argued that “culture” had become particularly significant in postmodernity and that indeed, that in contemporary social life, everything is “cultural” (Baudrillard, 1993).¹

However, although, as a sociologist, I would fully endorse the significance of culture for social science theory and explanation, I did not find myself to be in sympathy with these theoretical trends. At a (very) general level, I was unhappy with the fact that the postmodernist/poststructuralist shift seemed to have removed the cutting edge from social science. The consequences of the apparent abandonment of a “politics of redistribution” in favour of a “politics of identity” have been extensively rehearsed (Fraser, 2000; Frank, 2000). O’Neill (1999: 85), for example, has argued that there has been something of a “...convergence of a postmodern leftism with neoliberal defences of the market”. An emphasis on the reflexive individual and a focus on individual identities rather than collective actions and outcomes has many resonances with neoliberalism, and the promotion of individual rights

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and recognition meshes well with the arguments of those who have criticised the way in which collective provision has “disempowered” individuals. In respect of gender, I felt that poststructuralists such as Butler had overlaid “gender” with “sexuality” (or sexual identity), blurring the (for me) absolutely crucial feminist distinction between “sex” and “gender”.

Turning to gender and class in particular, I want to argue that we have here not one debate but several. As “class” has been conceptualised/defined in various ways by different theorists and researchers, so has the nature of the “class and gender” debate in question. In this paper I shall focus on two broad themes in relation to class. The first relates to debates within politics, sociology, and political philosophy that centre on the eclipse of class within the “cultural turn”. The second is more narrowly sociological, that is, the debates on class and gender associated with the feminist critique of quantitative “employment aggregate” class analysis, as exemplified in the US by Wright (1997) and in Europe by Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992).

Thus this paper draws on a range of arguments not usually associated in close proximity to each other. I do not attempt to develop a unified or comprehensive alternative theory or framework. Rather, I hope to identify important elements from recent debates and contributions that, taken together, will facilitate a constructive return to discussions of gender and class.

The eclipse of class

In relation to the first theme, and putting the matter rather crudely, the discussion focuses on whether, under the conditions of contemporary capitalism, the distinctions between economy and culture have blurred and indeed, “cultural” considerations, broadly conceived, are driving economic activities. It is argued that “cultural” rather than “economic” issues may have become more significant for our understanding of contemporary society. Indeed, many have suggested that the shift from “economics” to “culture” involves a larger societal shift, an epochal change towards post-modern social conditions (Lash and Urry, 1994; Crook *et al.*, 1992). In relation to class, this argument has taken a variety of guises. There has been, for example, a discussion of whether consumption is more significant than production in shaping class identities. It has also been argued that more and more areas of the economy are, effectively, devoted to cultural production and reproduction, thus transforming the nature of “work” as employment in capitalist societies. More contentiously, it is argued that “class” has ceased to be a relevant analytical concept.

In parallel with these arguments, within political theory it has been suggested that with the rise of “new social movements” together with the foregrounding of the politics of eg. — race and sexuality, then “class politics” — or the politics of redistribution — have been replaced by “identity politics” — or the politics of recognition. Here I will focus primarily on the work of Nancy Fraser (2000), in

particular her debate with Judith Butler (1998) and Fraser's proposed reintegration of the polarised redistribution/recognition scenario.

Butler (1998) has responded to critics of the cultural turn and identity politics by suggesting that such critics effectively render the politics of identity (particularly in relation to sexuality) as "merely cultural". She supports her arguments with a return to second wave feminist debates of the 1970s and 80s. Drawing upon the arguments of Rubin, Butler argues that "...the normative reproduction of gender was essential to the reproduction of heterosexuality and the family... the regulation of sexuality systematically tied to the *mode of production* proper to the functioning of political economy" (40). Put simply, compulsory heterosexuality underpins the functioning of the capitalist economy, thus gay and lesbian struggles may be seen as an undermining of this functioning. Moreover, Butler insists upon the unity of the "economic" and the "cultural", arguing, via Levi-Strauss's analysis of the exchange of women, that "...the regulation of sexual exchange makes the distinction between the economic and the cultural difficult, if not impossible, to draw" (43).

In response, Fraser (1998) criticises Butler's emphasis on the centrality of heterosexuality to capitalism as essentially functionalist, arguing that, like all functionalist arguments, it stands or falls with the empirical relations of cause and effect. Thus Fraser argues that "...it is highly implausible that gay and lesbian struggles threaten capitalism in its actually existing historical form" (146). Fraser also challenges Butler's insistence on the indivisibility of the economic and the cultural. As Fraser argues, Butler's account of this indivisibility draws upon an analysis of pre-capitalist societies, organised by kinship, in which the economic and the cultural *are* fused. It is a feature of capitalist societies, in contrast, that economic and cultural relations are at least partially decoupled and thus a "perspectival dualism" is appropriate.

This "perspectival dualism" also underpins her resolution of the "equality vs. difference" conundrum. She suggests that the "culturalist" theories of contemporary society that fuse economic inequality seamlessly into the cultural hierarchy result in an all-too-present danger of "displacement". That is, economic inequalities are effectively subsumed within, or displaced onto, cultural concerns. In such a model,

...to revalue unjustly devalued identities is simultaneously to attack the deep sources of economic inequality; (and) no explicit politics of redistribution is needed (Fraser, 2000: 111).

Such "vulgar culturalism" is nothing more than the mirror image of the "vulgar economism" that characterised cultural or status differences as deriving directly from economic inequalities. However, in contrast to vulgar culturalism, the current reality in capitalist societies is that the economic mechanisms of distribution are at least partially decoupled from cultural patterns. For example, if a white UK male loses his job because production is re-located to China, this is not because the owners and controllers of capital think of the Chinese as culturally superior (or inferior).

To the problems of displacement may be added the problems of “reification” — that is, the over-simplification of group identities, thus promoting separatism and indeed perpetuating negative within-group inequalities (such as patriarchy). Fraser argues that the theoretical problems of “reification” and “displacement” can be resolved by returning to the Weberian distinction between “class” and “status”. “Class” involves relationships that are constituted in economic terms as specific market situations, most typically defining specific employment and property relations. The “status” order, on the other hand, involves “socially entrenched patterns of cultural value... culturally defined categories of social actors” (Fraser, 2000). This distinction allows Fraser to highlight two analytically distinct dimensions of social justice, one involving the distribution of disposable resources and one involving the allocation of recognition. The latter — central for advocates of the cultural turn — concerns the effects of institutionalised meanings and norms on the relative standing of social actors. Thus:

...what requires recognition is not group-specific identity but the status of individual group members as full partners in social interaction. Misrecognition, accordingly, does not mean the depreciation and deformation of group identity, but social subordination...to redress this injustice still requires a politics of recognition, but in the “status model” this is no longer reduced to a question of identity (Fraser, 2000: 113. See also Scott, 2002).

Claims for both economic redistribution and cultural recognition, Fraser argues, can be appraised against the same evaluative standard of “participatory parity” (Fraser, 2000). Such evaluative standards concern the question of what social arrangements will permit all adult members of society to interact with one another as peers. This argument implicitly resurrects Marshall’s (1948) idea of citizenship. The idea of citizenship concerns the civil, political, and social rights that make possible the effective participation of a person in the society of which they are a member. It comprises the conditions that make it possible to enjoy the styles of life and range of individual choices that members of a society have come to regard as normal.

Fraser’s particular concern is with the ways in which the citizenship idea can generate valid claims to cultural recognition. Thus, she argues that not all recognition claims can be met. Elements of (collective) identity claims that discriminate against certain categories of group members, such as women, for example, would not be valid on this basis. Fraser’s arguments, therefore, suggest that we do not have to “choose” between redistribution and recognition, economic and cultural, but rather, both elements are essential to the politics of inequality — which would include class politics.

Gender and class: the debate within quantitative class analysis

We now turn to a more specifically sociological debate on gender and class, relating to a dominant strand of "class analysis" prominent in the 1970s, 80s and 90s. The occupational structure is often used to generate "class" groupings, and this approach to the measurement of class may be described as the "employment aggregate" approach. It is so widespread that the occupational structure and the class structure are frequently referred to as if they were synonymous.

Throughout the 70s and 80s, two major cross-national projects, both of which developed their distinctive employment-based class schemes, were established. The *International Class Project*, directed by Erik Wright (1997), was explicitly Marxist in its inspiration and the scheme(s) he devised classified jobs according to a Marxist analysis of relations of domination and exploitation in production. The CASMIN (Comparative Analysis of Social Mobility in Industrial Societies) project used an occupational classification initially derived from Goldthorpe's study of social mobility (1980).

These classifications were used to gather survey data in a range of different countries (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992, Wright, 1997). This approach to "class analysis", however, came under criticism from feminists (Acker, 1973). This was not least because of the "conventional view" in earlier studies of social mobility (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Goldthorpe, 1980 and 1983) of taking the man's occupation to be that of the "head of household" and gathering "men only" sample data (it may be noted that Wright, whose approach to quantitative "class analysis" takes the individual rather than the family to be the unit of analysis, has always included men and women in his analyses).

However, in some contrast to the "conventional view", feminists argued that the *processes* of class formation and emergence — the divisions of capital and labour which led to the development of the bourgeoisie, and mass proletariat — were intimately bound up with parallel processes of gender differentiation (Bradley, 1989). Such accounts focused on the processes whereby the sexual division of labour which culminated in that stage of modern capitalism we may loosely describe as "fordist" was characterised by the "male breadwinner" model of the division of labour, around which "masculine" and "feminine" gender blocs were crystallised.

Thus feminist criticisms of employment aggregate class analysis derive from the observation that, because the primacy of women's family responsibilities has been explicitly or implicitly treated as "natural" and men have been dominant in the employment sphere, this approach has effectively excluded women from any systematic consideration in quantitative "class analysis". Two major strands of criticism may be identified:

- That the primary focus on paid employment does not take into account the unpaid domestic labour of women. Thus women's contribution to production is not examined or analysed (as in, for example, the debate around "domestic labour"). In addition, the expansion of married women's

paid employment has, apparently, rendered problematic the practice of taking the “male breadwinner’s” occupation as a proxy for the “class situation” of the household.

- That the “class” (i. e. employment) structure is in fact “gendered”. This fact makes it difficult to construct universalistic “class schemes” (that is, classifications equally applicable to men and women). The crowding of women into lower-level occupations, as well as the stereotypical or cultural “gendering” of particular occupations (such as nursing, for example), results in patterns of occupational segregation which give very different “class structures” for men and women when the same scheme is applied. Even more problematic, it may be argued, is the fact that the same occupation (or “class situation”) may be associated with very different “life chances” as far as men and women are concerned (for example, clerical work).

The second criticism above emphasises the *de facto* intertwining of class and gender within the employment structure (Crompton and Mann, 1994). As noted above, the occupational structure emerging in many industrial societies in the 19th and early 20th centuries was grounded in a division of labour in which women took the primary responsibility for domestic work whilst male “breadwinners” specialised in market work. Today this is changing in that married women have taken up market work, and this has had important consequences.

When Goldthorpe’s major national investigation of the British class structure was published, (1980, 1987), it was subjected to extensive criticism on the grounds that it focused entirely on men, women only being included as wives. However, Goldthorpe took the “conventional view” and argued that as the family is the unit of “class analysis”, then the “class position” of the family can be taken to be that of the head of the household — who will usually be a male. Thus were the assumptions of the male breadwinner model incorporated into sociological class analysis in Britain.

However, he subsequently modified his original position in adopting, with Erikson, a “dominance” strategy, in which the class position of the household is taken as that of the “dominant” occupation in material terms — whether a man or a woman holds this occupation. Furthermore, although Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) still insist that the unit of class analysis is the household, their class scheme has been modified in its application to women as individuals. For example, class IIIb (routine non-manual) has been categorised as “intermediate” for men, but “labour contract” for women.

As noted above, Wright’s analysis generally takes the individual, rather than the household, to be the unit of class analysis. However, in respect of economically inactive housewives, Wright (1997) employs a similar strategy to that of Goldthorpe. Thus he introduces the notion of a “derived” class location, which provides a “mediated” linkage to the class structure via the class location of others. Wright is sensitive to the issue of gender, and the fact that gender is a major sorting mechanism within the occupational structure as well as reciprocally interacting with class. Nevertheless, he argues that while gender is indeed highly relevant for understanding

and explaining the concrete lived experiences of people, it does not follow that gender should be *incorporated* into the abstract concept of "class". Thus in his empirical work, "class" and "gender" are maintained as separate factors.

We can see, therefore, that in responding to feminist criticisms, both Goldthorpe and Wright insist that class and gender should be considered as *distinct* causal processes. This analytical separation of class and gender may be seen as part of a more general strategy within the employment aggregate approach in which the continuing relevance of "class" is demonstrated by the empirical evidence of "class effects" (Goldthorpe and Marshall, 1992). Although, therefore, Goldthorpe and Wright have apparently developed very different approaches to "class analysis", their underlying approach to the articulation of gender with class is in fact the same. It may be suggested that this stems from the similarity of the empirical techniques used by the CASMIN and *International Class Projects*: that is, the large-scale, cross-nationally comparative, sample survey. This kind of research proceeds by isolating a particular variable — in this case, employment class — and measuring its effects.

Feminist criticisms, therefore, were important in making explicit the fact that the "employment-aggregate" approach within "class analysis" is largely concerned with the *outcomes* of employment structuring (via its analysis of occupational aggregates or "classes"), rather than the *processes* of this structuring. To paraphrase Goldthorpe and Marshall, employment aggregate "class analysis" now appears as a rather less ambitious project than it once appeared to be. In a parallel fashion, it may be suggested that a major weakness of Wright's class project (not specific to the gender question) is that the linkage between Marxist theory and his "class" categories has not been successfully achieved.

Although important issues have been clarified, therefore, this debate can go no further, and Wright argues that it is necessary to get on with "...the messy business of empirically examining the way class and gender intersect". Whilst one may be in broad agreement with this sentiment, it may be noted that Wright's preferred methodology focuses only upon the association between job categories and biological sex. However, developments within the employment structures of the advanced service economies suggest the need for further investigations into occupational change, organisational structuring and family interactions, using approaches that recognise the actual complexities of both class and gender, rather than simply relying on the proxies of employment and biological sex. Studies of the *actual* inter-twining of class and gender will require some variant of the case study method, rather than relying on the large-scale survey alone.

Thus one sociological response to the limitations of quantitative class analysis has been to develop theoretical frameworks that encompass a range of dimensions of inequality — in particular, class, gender, and race (Bradley, 1996; Anthias, 2001). For example, Anthias suggests an approach in which gender, race and class are all seen as central elements in structuring resource allocation. In developing her "integrationist" approach, she argues that there are three dimensions of social stratification. First, outcomes relating to life conditions, second, the "set of predispositions and opportunities structured by the placement of individuals within

the different ontological realms of production, (class) sexual difference (gender) and collective formations (race)", and third, the dimension of collective allegiances and identities. She argues that this approach encompasses both the material and the "symbolic" (cultural) in the structuring of social inequality — unlike previous approaches, in which "class" was seen as pertaining largely to material distribution, whereas race and class were regarded as cultural constructions.

Thus her approach has some parallels with that of Fraser, who, as we have seen, argues that both redistribution (economically defined class) as well as recognition — culturally defined gender, sexualities, and ethnicities — have to be seen as necessary to achieve participatory parity. However, although I would be broadly sympathetic to Anthias's objectives, I would suggest that her discussion incorporates some problematic assumptions.

First, I would argue that class and gender are concepts of a different order; they do not simply exist within "different ontological realms".² As Sayer has argued (and here his position is very similar to that of Fraser), "class" is not primarily *produced* by cultural distinctions, but is a structured type of economic inequality resulting from the operation of market mechanisms together with the distribution of inherited wealth. "People are born into an economic class or have it thrust upon them through operations of market mechanisms which are largely indifferent to their moral qualities or identity" (Sayer, 2002: 4). In contrast: "Things are utterly different where gender or ethnicity are concerned, for here, the root cause of inequalities are cultural, identity-sensitive and identity-constructing mechanisms/discourses of sexism (and) racism" (*ibid*: 5). Thus class and gender are inter-twined, but not equivalent, concepts.³

A second and related difficulty in Anthias' account concerns the relationship between the material (economic) and the cultural (or symbolic). That is, whether culture and economy should be viewed as constituting an indivisible *totality* (Du Gay and Pryke, 2002; Butler, 1998) or rather, whether culture and economy may be regarded as dual, albeit closely related, systems. Anthias would seem to indicate a "unitary" approach, for example in her statement that: "The world of work (thought of as a material sphere) is also a cultural sphere that embodies gender and ethnic difference at its very heart" (Anthias, 2001). It is to these issues that we now turn.

2 Note that Anthias does recognise that there is a difference between class as compared to gender and race in that no natural reproduction is posited. However, this is a rather different definitional issue.

3 This characterisation of class as "economic" rather than "cultural" does not mean that I do not recognise that class has significant cultural dimensions, and that cultural "disempowering" frequently accompanies economic "disempowering" (Bourdieu, 1973; Skeggs, 1997). Rather, it is to suggest that "classes" are not actually generated by cultural degradations, and that the "economic" and the "cultural" dimensions of class, although inter-twined, may be independently identified and analysed. From this perspective, I would also be rather critical of Acker's (2000) recent suggestions for "revisiting class", in which she suggests that class, race and gender are "...complexly related aspects of the same ongoing practical activities, rather than...relatively autonomous intersecting systems" (205).

Economy, culture and the "world of work"

In this section, I want to argue for (a) the importance of the maintenance of a "perspectival dualism" in respect of economy and culture and (b) how an excessive "culturalism" in respect of research on gender and employment may be argued to have shifted attention from important issues in relation to employment that should be addressed from within a class, as well as a gender, framework.

Debates relating to the economy/culture relationship have a long and distinguished pedigree, as in, for example, Weber's critique of what he perceived to be the "economic determinism" of Marxist thinking in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. As we have seen, the "cultural turn" itself has not only sought to challenge the predominance of the economic, but has also been associated with arguments to the effect that the "cultural" is causally prior to the "material". In evaluating recent arguments as to the relative salience of the cultural and the economic in social life, a useful starting point is a contrast between "dual systems" and "unitary" approaches to the culture and economy question.

Those authors who advocate what might, with some over-simplification, be described as a dual systems approach argue that the crucial differences between culture and economy must be respected (Ray and Sayer, 1999). This approach, like that of Parsons (1937), emphasises the normative aspects of culture and the instrumental aspects of economising. Culture, they argue, involves "a concern with practices and relationships to which meanings, symbols or representations are central: in short, "signifying practices"" (Ray and Sayer, 1999: 5). Cultural phenomena are mutually shared and never simply imposed by one group on another. By contrast, "...economic activities and processes involve a primarily instrumental orientation; they are ultimately a means to an end, satisfying external goals to do with provisioning" (*ibid*: 6). Although economic activities are always culturally embedded, it is possible to distinguish between the cultural or normative and the economic or instrumental activities and phenomena. In respect of class, therefore, a dual systems perspective would draw a distinction between, on the one hand, the "objective" outcomes of class processes, such as material differences in income and wealth and the social relations associated with these, and, on the other hand, the "subjective" and culturally mediated experiences of class relations.

As we have seen, this distinction is also crucial to Fraser's status paradigm, and a parallel may be drawn here with the political response to the "cultural turn" that she seeks to address in her suggestions for the resolution of the apparent conflict between redistribution and recognition. From this point of view, what is required is a *combination* of cultural and economic analyses in order to grasp the totality of "class"/inequality. It is a matter of both/and, not of either/or (see Bradley, 1996; Bradley and Fenton, 1999).

The alternative "unitary" approach depicts culture and economy as constituting an indivisible *totality*. As Du Gay and Pryke have argued:

Instead of viewing a market or firm as existing prior to and hence independently of descriptions of it, the turn to culture instigates a reversal of this perception, by indicating the ways in which objects are *constituted* through the discourses used to describe them and act upon them (Du Gay and Pryke, 2002: 2, my emphasis).

From this point of view, no distinctions can be drawn between economic and cultural practices, for they are one and the same thing. For example, commercial success or failure in retailing (and in many other industries as well) depends on the quality of their interactive service delivery. Employees in these organisations are trained, through a variety of interpersonal and communication management techniques, to exhibit the capacities and conduct that produce certain meanings for customers and thus sales for the company. In such jobs, it is argued, cultural and economic practices are fused. For Du Gay and Pryke, therefore, "cultural economic analysis" is "...an emergent form of enquiry concerned with the practical material-cultural ways in which "economic" objects and persons are put together from disparate parts" (*ibid*: 8).

Whether culture and economy are viewed as dual (albeit closely related) systems or as forming a totality has major implications for empirical research. A dual systems approach to culture/economy is perfectly compatible with quantitative, variable oriented approaches to stratification, which may be extended to incorporate cultural as well as economic variables. It is also compatible with relatively orthodox sociological and anthropological approaches.

A unitary approach to culture and economy is more restricted in its methods. It is clear that "variable oriented" methods would not be appropriate. The methods employed are likely to be fine-grained, ethnographic, and historical. As Du Gay and Pryke note, what is required for cultural economic analysis are the "grey, meticulous and patiently documentary" genealogical methods recommended by Foucault (2002: 8).

In terms of strict logic, if economy and culture are seen to be fused, then the unitary approach cannot raise the question of whether economic or cultural factors are the more significant in social explanation. The economic and the cultural are one and the same thing, and they cannot even be analytically separated. Indeed, it may be suggested that one limitation of a strict application of this totalising "cultural economy" approach is precisely that the possibilities for causal explanation are significantly restricted. "Grey, meticulous and patiently documentary" research may produce insightful historical and ethnographic descriptions, but its advocates tend to ignore the fact that the purpose of social research is not merely to describe but also to explain social and economic inequalities. If we cannot maintain a "perspectival dualism", then causal explanations in relation to class and gender will be problematic. Furthermore, it may be argued that a "cultural economy" approach in respect of research on gender and employment has served to obscure continuing gender inequalities in employment that should be central, rather than peripheral, to debates on gender and class.

To elaborate this argument, it is useful to return to the Butler-Fraser debate. As we have seen, in making her case against Fraser, Butler returns to second-wave

feminist arguments relating to heterosexual normativity. However, other important elements of second-wave feminist arguments are not discussed, in particular, those arguments that had a central focus on gender inequalities deriving from the division of labour between the sexes in relation to both the domestic and employment spheres (these arguments were taken up by Fraser in her reply to Butler). It may be argued that the continuing relevance of these debates is not sufficiently appreciated, and I will elaborate this point shortly.

For the moment, however, I will briefly discuss recent work that has analysed recent developments in gender and employment with reference to the Butler/Fraser debate. Adkins (2002) argues that "identities" have assumed increasing importance/significance in contemporary workplaces and that "The politics of identity are (...) not only at the heart of workplace politics but also of the labour process and the organisation of production" (36). Thus identities — including sexual identities of all kinds — may be mobilised as occupational resources as employment (particularly in services) increasingly becomes a matter of "performance". However, Adkins argues that (a) some aspects of identity (for example, women and emotional labour) may be "naturalised" and thus not capable of being used as employment "claims" by their owners, and (b) some people — e.g. lesbians and gays — may choose to "disidentify" in a workplace context. Therefore, she argues, "...justice via cultural recognition may not be equally available to all" (36), and Fraser, she argues, "takes visibility for granted" (39).

I would certainly not wish to reject Adkins's arguments out of hand. A past tradition in the "sociology of work" (eg. Brown and Brannen, 1970) has demonstrated the interpenetration of the "economic" and the "cultural" within the workplace, and as we have seen, this argument was also important in feminist critiques of "employment-aggregate" class analysis. Rather, it is a question of emphasis. I want to argue that within feminist work on gender and employment, the cultural turn, with its overwhelming emphasis on the question of sexuality, has resulted in a displacement of second-wave feminist debates away from the gender division of labour onto the politics of sexuality, with rather negative outcomes. In contrast to suggestions that "...the significance of issues of identity at work means that a politics of deconstruction (for example, of the hetero/homo binary) is now best suited to the task of addressing workplace struggles" (Adkins, 2002: 36), I would want to argue that workplace injustices in relation to gender are not "merely sexual" and indeed, cannot be addressed at the level of the workplace alone.

Indeed, it may be argued that in respect of the unequal positioning of women within contemporary employing organisations, "workplace injustices" do not only derive from the politics of identity, but primarily from the persistence of male breadwinner assumptions in a non male breadwinner era. For as long as the responsibility for domestic and care work is conventionally assigned to women, then to paraphrase Fraser (1997: 3), it is not the economy, stupid, nor the culture, stupid, but the family, stupid. In brief: although women have entered the labour force in ever-increasing numbers, the empirical evidence suggests that the gender division of domestic labour has not been substantially transformed in that women still retain the major responsibility for domestic work and caregiving (Sullivan, 2000;

Crompton, 1997 and 2001). Thus many women are in part-time employment. Even when in full-time employment, women are less likely to achieve the topmost positions. In part, this is because many women have lower levels of aspirations for promotion, largely because of the perceived — and very real — difficulties of combining an employment career with domestic responsibilities. Thus the broad contours of occupational segregation persist and women are relatively under-represented in the topmost echelons of the occupational structure. Thus the gender division of labour — understood in its broadest sense, that is, to refer to unpaid as well as paid “work” — is a significant factor contributing to gender inequality within the workplace and thus to occupational segregation.⁴

These kinds of arguments were extensively developed within second-wave feminism. They have not yet by any means been exhausted, rather, they have been effectively “over-determined” by the emphasis on sexuality (and the body) that has followed upon the cultural turn in feminist theorising.

Employment and family, gender and class

It is of course, the case that the growing tensions between women’s (particularly mother’s) employment and family life have not been ignored by social science. In the US, Hochschild’s (1997) case study work has been influential and has reached a very wide audience. In social policy, a substantial debate has followed from Esping-Andersen’s (1990) comparative research on the welfare state, which generated a wide-ranging feminist critique in both Europe and the US (eg. Lewis, 1992; Sainsbury, 1994). The topic of work-life balance continues to receive increasing attention in its own right (Glass and Estes, 1997). Thus the topic has received considerable attention but on the whole, however, these discussions have not been located within a “class” problematic.

I would like to conclude, therefore, by arguing that there are many advantages in “bringing class back in” to the study of gender relations and their contemporary reconfiguring. The major advantage of doing so would be to re-focus our attention on the issues related to redistribution that I have suggested were somewhat overwhelmed by the “cultural turn”.⁵ These final remarks are presented as an exercise in middle range theory, and not as an attempt to develop

4 It may also be noted that although “women” may have made some progress in terms of workplace acceptability — although the continuing emergence of high-profile discrimination cases suggests that this is far from complete — “mothers” (and indeed, “parents or carers”) are less acceptable.

5 It is of course the case that academic debates on the “welfare state” are centrally concerned with the issue of inequality. These comments, therefore, relate more specifically to issues relating to gender, employment, the family and “work-life balance”.

over-arching concepts or "grand theory". Rather, I am arguing that we should add a class dimension to debates on women's employment, and family life.

If we do not, then these important topics are in danger of being treated as issues with only gender, rather than class, relevance and implications. In order to illustrate my argument, I will conclude with a brief discussion of the arguments of a highly visible, and contentious, contributor to debates on women, employment and the family.

Hakim (here I address primarily the arguments in Hakim, 2000) has argued that women are heterogeneous in their preferences in relation to employment and family life, and that three preference groupings may be identified amongst women.⁶ These are: home/family centred (20% of women, varies 10% —30%), adaptive/drifters (60% of women, varies 40% —80%), and work centred (20% of women, varies 10% —30%). These preferences, Hakim asserts, explain both the distribution of women in employment (ie. lower level jobs, part-time work), and the kind of balance achieved between work and family. Home/family centred women will give priority to their families, and if they are in employment at all, will work part-time. Work-centred women will give priority to their employment careers. "Adaptives" will vary in their behaviour ("choices") over their employment and family life-cycles. In rich modern societies, Hakim argues, "lifestyle choices" are the major determinants of employment and family behaviour (72ff). Although her argument is not at all times consistent (see Crompton, 2002), a parallel may be drawn here with assertions to the effect that the politics of identity have superseded those of class, that the "cultural" is now more significant than the "economic" in shaping human behaviour, that consumption is now more important than production in shaping class identities, and so on.

Hakim's arguments, therefore, do not systematically address the consequences of class inequalities. To take a particular example, Hakim argues that the decision to complete a teenage pregnancy "reflects a real choice in most cases" (49). Uneducated teenage girls derive pleasure from the ownership of a child, together with (in Britain) priority access to public sector housing and an independent social welfare income. They are therefore more likely to choose to continue with a pregnancy than the better educated. The dictionary definition of "choose" is "select out of a greater number". Girls who are educated and relatively affluent — in short, from middle or upper class backgrounds — have more choices than those who are not. They can "select from a greater number". Thus it may be suggested that class is the missing link in the determination of "home-centeredness". Indeed, my current research on employment and family life suggests that working-class women are in fact much more likely, in attitudinal terms, to give a greater priority to their families, and to express less interest in employment careers.

These attitudes may reflect a rational "choice" in that middle class women (and their families) are likely to derive greater benefits from investments in

6 It must be stressed that there is no intention here to present Hakim's work as reflecting cultural feminism (of any kind). Rather, it is being used here as a "worked example" in order to illustrate the potential problems of removing "class" from the analysis of women's employment.

employment (much as, in particular historical and societal contexts, it may be rational for women to invest in marriage given a lack of practical economic alternatives). However, to suggest that women's "choices" are operating independently of (economic) class constraints illustrates, for me, the dangers of decoupling "class" from discussions of gender and employment, as well as from discussions of the relationship between employment and family life, gender and the division of labour.

In this paper, I have drawn upon a range of rather disparate arguments in my attempt to establish some principles upon which debates on and research into "gender and class" may fruitfully proceed. These are:

- A case for "perspectival" or "analytical" dualism — that is, that although "culture" and "economy" are inter-twined, nevertheless the consequences of the "economic" and the "cultural" may be independently identified and analysed.
- That "gender" and "class" are similarly differentiated.
- That "class" is primarily an economic concept (ie. "class situations are primarily determined by the workings of markets and production in a capitalist society), whereas "gender" primarily reflects normative/cultural constructions.
- That nevertheless cultural (identity) degradations have economic consequences.

Working on the basis of these assumptions, I argue:

- That a major strand of debate in relation to "gender and class" — that is, the feminist critique of quantitative class analysis and responses to this critique — was flawed from the beginning in that occupational class analysts are primarily focused on (occupational) class *outcomes* rather than the *processes* of class formation.
- That the "cultural turn" in feminism overlaid gender with sexuality and removed class altogether.⁷ Thus the gender division of labour became less significant in feminist debates. Together with the *impasse* that had been reached in the "gender and class" debate in relation to quantitative class analysis, debates in relation to gender, class, and the division of labour petered out, rather than being worked out to a satisfactory conclusion.
- That nevertheless a class perspective remains essential if we are to satisfactorily understand and analyse the consequences of changes in the gender division of labour, and in women's employment patterns in particular.

7 Some feminist writers influenced by the "cultural turn" nevertheless continue to emphasise the importance of class in their analyses (Skeggs, 1997; Reay, 1998). However, it may be suggested that their primary emphasis has been on the mutually reinforcing impact of the cultural and economic dimensions of class in respect of gender, rather than on the impact of the gender division of labour as such.

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