

***Divisions of Labour: Sociology in search of a new jurisdiction***  
**In Graham Crow and Jaimie Ellis (eds) *Revisiting Divisions of Labour*. Manchester University Press, 2017**  
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*Introduction:*

*Divisions of Labour* was written on the cusp of a period of change in British society and its political economy. The research was begun in the mid-1970s and, by the time it was published in 1984, Britain was in the midst of the early wave of de-industrialisation. In addition, the first government of Mrs Thatcher took office in 1979 and had been re-elected in 1983 indicating, perhaps, that something was different in the political landscape. She is not mentioned, though the Falklands conflict of 1982 gets a vignette.

We don't get an account of the nature of these social changes and their implications for the practice of sociology set out for us in sweeping theoretical statements as would have been more characteristic of other sociological contributions at the time. Instead, the need for a new and different sociological engagement is implicit on each page in the handling of data and in reflections on the detail of life on Sheppey derived from surveys and from Pahl's familiarity with his respondents. These draw us into the texture of social relations and leave us with sharply posed puzzles about the capacity of sociology (as then constructed) to represent them. There is theory aplenty in the book – especially, around the very organizing idea of divisions of labour, as, for example, is clearly set out in other chapters in this volume – but the direct address of theory, and theorists, in the conventional sense, is done more as a series of barbs and goads. This combination of lightness of touch and acerbic commentary on the state of the discipline along with its exhibition of the craft of sociology, what might be called its inductive theorising, that makes it such a delight to read now. It is the significance of that craft in calling forth a new 'jurisdiction' for sociology that I want to address in this chapter.<sup>1</sup>

I also want to suggest that this theoretical challenge has lasted the course of time and it should be a goad to us today, when we might think we have already absorbed all we could learn from the book. Let me begin with the challenge that is built into its very structure. The book starts with the history of work – formal and informal and the changing relations between them – as a prelude to the fieldwork and survey of present-day Sheppey. But the latter is designed to return the present to the past in order to re-ground our thoughts about possible futures. The narratives of Linda and Jim, for example, would be recognisable as illustrative cases in Pahl's account of the past, while those of Beryl and George seem to live only in the present,<sup>2</sup> at the same time as they potentially are left 'high and dry' by the

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Abbott (2001) calls the constellation of concepts, objects and orientations that define a subject-field a 'jurisdiction'. As we know from writings in the history of science, the ability to delineate a 'jurisdiction' depends in part upon its demise, even if what is in the process of replacing it might be unclear.

<sup>2</sup> George is a stevedore on the docks, while Beryl works part-time. They have bought their own house on a 'new development' and they were in the middle of a 'military campaign' of redecoration from top to bottom. (1984: 304-5).

return of features of life that had seemed to be consigned to the past. They are of the present, but not deeply anchored in it. It is clear that Pahl thinks that it is they, not Linda and Jim, who may be the anomaly in the future.

But it is Beryl and George who would have fit better into the narratives of recent British sociology, for example, that of Goldthorpe and Lockwood et al's (1968a, 1968b, 1969) *Affluent Worker* study and its theme of the privatised, instrumental worker. Pahl does not say much about the political commitments of his respondents, but if Beryl and George appear in hindsight as the 'angels in marble' of the Thatcher project, they are not viewed by Pahl as a secure basis of support for that project. At the same time, however, Linda and Jim are outside the comfortable narratives of class-based politics, which Pahl understands to motivate much sociological commentary, especially that which purported to confront Thatcherism and its sociological conditions. Beryl and Jim have entered the 'middle mass', but that status depends upon maintaining employment, which is likely to be far from secure and subject to changes dictated from offshore.

This is one of the rare occasions where he takes care to underline his point: "the *unprecedented* period, in terms of the patterns of the last 250 years was the boom period of full employment for men in the 1950s and 1960s. That period of rising real wages, of demand for teenage and immigrant labour and of expanding state expenditure in health, social services and education has formed the base level, the conception of what is normal, for politicians, media commentators and many academics" (1984: 313, emphasis in original). The implication is that British sociology had unwittingly organised itself around false assumptions about the continuity of sociological conditions which were shifting even as they were being written into existence as the objects of concern.

Recently, Savage (2010) has also characterised the 1950s and 1960s as constituting British sociology's defining 'moment' in which its characteristic themes – community, class and social mobility – and its political orientation of reformist modernisation were established. Savage addresses Pahl's earlier work in his treatment of this 'moment', but misses the significance of *Divisions of Labour*. Pahl's *Urbs in Rure* (1965), or Hertfordshire villages study, perhaps fits that mould, but *Divisions of Labour* breaks it. The latter is of fundamental importance within British sociology, I shall suggest, precisely because it one of the first to challenge British sociology's post-war 'jurisdiction' (Abbott 2001) from the inside and to begin the delineation of a new moment with which it would have to contend.

However, I shall go further to suggest that it does so more effectively than other attempts, including, most recently, that of Savage himself. The latter self-consciously articulates a 'politics of method' that was operative in British sociology's early defining moment. However, in our present moment he effectively depoliticises the sociological undertaking and aligns it with 'knowing capitalism' (2010: 248), that is a capitalism increasingly organised as a knowledge economy. Where Savage turns sociological reflection inward onto the question of how it can ensure its continuity within the academy,<sup>3</sup> Pahl turns it outward. For

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<sup>3</sup> At the close of his discussion of the 'politics of method', for example, Savage leaves us to a technical discourse and the bloodless politics of the academy: "if there is a future for the social sciences, it consists in

Pahl, the task always remained *how to know capitalism and its effects in order to ameliorate them*. His *presence* in the social world he studies is palpable. This is something he carried into the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas which began its review in 1983 and reported - to the consternation of the Conservative Government - its recommendations as a 'call to action for Church and Nation' in *Faith in the City* (1985).<sup>4</sup> This is something to which I will return in consideration of sociology's jurisdiction as a 'public sociology'.

### *Divisions of Labour's moment*

Savage's outline of post-war British sociology ends just before the effects of the Robbins Report (1963) became evident. This recommended the expansion of higher education, an expansion which brought many new sociology departments into being, particularly in the newly-created Universities of Essex, Sussex, Lancaster, York, Warwick, Kent and East Anglia, as well as the Open University (and, of course created and expanded provision at older universities, too). These were all departments that would quickly be seen as defining a new sociological imagination and Pahl himself spent much of his career at the University of Kent before moving to the University of Essex late in his career. This expansion also brought a new generation of students into the university, students without an experience of war or national service, and also many who were the first in their families to go to university, including increasing numbers of female students.

Between the period described by Savage and the publication of *Divisions of Labour*, lay the election in 1964 of the first Labour Government since the 1945-1951 Labour governments which were widely seen as the architect of the post-war welfare state. Disappointment with the 1964 government and its Labour successors, culminated in the election in 1979 of a Government committed to dismantling of the welfare state. At the same time, influenced by the US civil rights movement, anti-colonial struggles (particularly significant in British sociology for the émigrés from South Africa who took up positions in the discipline made available by its expansion), the women's movement and the movement against the Vietnam War, a new spirit of radicalism entered the university. It was particularly influential in sociology, which moved politically in a different direction to that of the wider public (at least, as expressed in electoral support and the policies that such support facilitated).<sup>5</sup>

The 1970s became a period of intense criticism of existing approaches within sociology, especially of empirical sociology, and a rediscovery of Marx and Marxism, frequently in the

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forming intellectual and technical alliances with ways of knowing – from the humanities, sciences, and informational systems – with which they are currently only weakly affiliated.” (2010: 249).

<sup>4</sup>Woodrow Wyatt reported Mrs Thatcher complaining that, “there's nothing about self-help or doing anything for yourself in the report.” (2000: 22). There is a nice irony that Pahl reports that a book on *Self Sufficiency* is on Beryl and George's shelf (1984: 304), but concludes that Linda and Jim, “had more enterprise, initiative and determination to achieve, yet they were oppressed by circumstances they could not control” (1984: 309).

<sup>5</sup> This is something that Michael Burawoy later described as the 'scissors movement' that confronts any revived public sociology: “the aspiration for public sociology is stronger and its realization ever more difficult, as sociology has moved left and the world has moved right” (2005: 6).

form of highly abstruse theoretical argument. This occurred alongside the charge that existing sociologies falsely universalised the experience of men and neglected issues of gender; the mainstream of the discipline, the 'post-war jurisdiction', then, was under assault theoretically and empirically. On the one hand, existing approaches to inequality and employment were argued to be deficient from the point of view of their conceptualisation of class, and, on the other hand, they were argued to be too focused on formal, paid employment to the neglect of unpaid work and the labour of the household. By the 1980s the rising tide of Marxism had receded and a new rapprochement in class analysis was being forged around what was to all intents and purposes a Weberian form of class analysis, especially as articulated by Goldthorpe and other colleagues (Goldthorpe 1980, Marshall et al 1988)). Compared with Marxist approaches, this extended the number of classes and displaced the specificity of the capital-labour relation, albeit continuing the emphasis on the centrality of the labour contract (a contract that Pahl would argue, was becoming increasingly precarious for many workers). Proponents of class analysis continued to defend vigorously the occupation of the male 'head of household' as the index to the class position of the other members of the household (Goldthorpe 1983a).

The problem for class analysis was that the increase in women's employment, together with the concentration of women's employment in routine non-manual jobs, meant that the distributions of women and men in the class structure looked very different. Once the class position associated with female employment was taken into account, a significant proportion of households would be made up of members in different class positions – that is, would be 'cross-class families' (McRae 1986). Goldthorpe's (1983a) response that this could be ignored because male class position did most of the explanatory work, appeared uninterested in exploring the question of why class was mediated for women but not for men, while the argument that 'cross-class' households had distinctive sociological properties constituted a reification of class. For example, why regard class as the independent variable in a series of 'determinations' – such as, educational attainment, morbidity, and mortality – but not in the decisions associated with people's intimate lives? Pahl's response was probably too quiet to be heard above the din – the idea of a 'cross-class' household was a reification, but its deconstruction was best addressed through empirical research and not by ignoring it. Class and gender should be brought together, but not directly in theory, until after a careful consideration of their mutual constitution through sociological research.

On the face of it, however, Pahl's response to all this ferment looks not so much quietly considered, but rather insouciant. After all, his class analysis of the survey data gathered for *Divisions of Labour* was based on a three-class scheme, formed from collapsing the Registrar-General's seventeen socio-economic groups, together with a fourth, residual class. There was barely a nod to the wider debate over class when he sets out his scheme. At the same time, however, his address of *divisions* of labour and the inclusion of formal and informal work, as well as self-provisioning activities, was a radical challenge to standard class analysis that showed with the influence of feminist approaches and a willingness to open up the empirical analysis of work to a wider set of concerns, and as I shall suggest, a wider understanding of social consequences.

When Pahl identifies emerging 'polarisation', it is very different from a putative polarisation familiar from class analysis; put somewhat simply, it is a polarisation *within* a 'class' and not polarisation *between* classes. Indeed, the case studies of Linda and Jim and Beryl and George are precisely an illustration of the polarisation within the working class. The two couples might easily live next door to each other, but their fates are very different. Linda and Jim buy their council house, but ultimately cannot keep up their mortgage and end up trying to live year round in a holiday chalet; Beryl and George had moved from council housing into the private sector. These different trajectories extend to their children. The lives of Linda and Jim's children are constrained by the straitened circumstances of their parents; Beryl and Jim are able to help their children, especially with doing up their own houses.

Sociological commentary on *Divisions of Labour* was comforted by a familiar word – 'polarisation' – but uncomfortable with drawing out the implications of the analysis or connecting them to contemporary politics. Linda and Jim fitted a sociological interest in the 'underdog' and Pahl provided a fine sociological account of their lives that challenged an emerging discourse on the 'underclass'. However, most readers did not wish to engage with Beryl and George and understand how their narrative exemplified a 'polarisation' that was occurring within the same 'class' (the same, that is on the sociological criteria that Pahl was challenging)

Something of the significance of Pahl's approach can be judged in retrospect from a consideration of the context of the general field of social stratification research in Britain. The Social Science Research Council (later to become the Economic and Social Research Council) had since the 1960s funded an annual workshop on social stratification – the Social Stratification Research Seminar – which brought together all those whose research they funded, together with other invited participants. For the first time in 1984, gender was addressed as the focus of the meeting, bringing together feminist researchers and mainstream stratification researches. Pahl presented *Divisions of Labour*.<sup>6</sup> Significantly, his paper was not selected for the volume of papers from the seminar that Rosemary Crompton and Michael Mann (1986) edited.

A new edition of the Crompton and Mann book was published in 1994, together with a new introduction where they comment that the relationships between gender, class and stratification continued to be unexamined. This was notwithstanding the great growth of interest in and research on gender, albeit focused on the, 'individual and interpersonal, rather than the collective and structural' (Crompton and Mann, 1994: viii). But, in the interim, "sociological interest and research in stratification, together with its major organizing concept, class, have not flourished over the last decade" (1994: viii). They associate this 'decline of class' with social and economic developments that displaced the traditional manual worker and the turn to consumerism (both developments registered by

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<sup>6</sup> I should say at this juncture that I had been a member of the seminar since the early 1970s when a graduate student and at the 1984 meeting was discussant of the papers by Pahl and Lockwood which were presented in the same session, having been appointed to a lectureship at the University of Edinburgh in 1980. The meeting, I recall, was stormy.

Pahl, as Strangleman notes) as well as with conceptual confusions within the discipline over the meaning of class.

Once again, they do not reference Pahl, but this is odd, because, in the meantime, he had published a paper that challenged class analysis at its heart (Pahl 1989) and is a continuation of the argument of *Divisions of Labour*. Pahl called his article, 'Is the Emperor naked?' to indicate what he considered to be the rather threadbare nature of class analysis, and, in this context, we might regard Crompton and Mann's new introduction as a discussion of Hamlet without mentioning the Prince. The omission was also odd, given that there had been a very bad-tempered and dismissive response to Pahl's paper by Goldthorpe and Marshall (1992), articulating 'the promising future of class analysis' and a further response by John Scott (1994), 'Class analysis: back to the future.' Apparently, all was well with class analysis, just when, if Crompton and Mann are to be believed (and they were writing broadly in the same tradition as Marshall, Goldthorpe and Scott), there was a 'decline of class'. This is odd. It is as if the significance of the consciousness of 'class' on the part of sociologists had trumped its relative absence in the consciousness of others. Now we get an opportunity to see Pahl's sociological imagination at work on theory – – their puzzle at the declining salience of class - to public issues of changes in the production and reproduction of inequalities?

### *Rethinking class, I: the problem of change*

The response to Pahl was rather simple and straightforward. Notwithstanding a common view of him as a Weberian,<sup>7</sup> Goldthorpe and Marshall's, and Scott's, judgement was that his critique applied to Marx and not to Weber. Marxist class analysis had either converged in all essentials with a revised Weberian approach, as in the case of Erik Olin Wright, or had been supplanted by it, and Weberian class analysis had a promising future as a programme for research. Yet this rather missed Pahl's point. It may be the case that the linkages between structure, consciousness and action (SCA) had been clearly specified in Marxist approaches, albeit without the expected consequences, but this could not absolve Weberian class analysis from the challenge of also addressing linkages in a way that was more consistent with social developments. Yet this seemed to be what Marshall and Goldthorpe concluded; Weberian class analysis, quite properly for them, was unconcerned with a 'theory of history', which lay outside the proper focus of a scientific research programme.

But Pahl had drawn his criticism from Lockwood (1981) and the latter's criticism of Marxism for their theory of action which constituted the 'weakest link in the chain'. The point for Pahl was that the links of the SCA chain were weak or *missing* - not that they were an irrelevant concern - and that the problem lay with the concept of class which was ceasing to do useful work. It should not have escaped the attention of Pahl's critics that a similar argument on the part of Lockwood was the basis of the latter's Weberian argument at the ESRC Social Stratification Seminar that, while social stratification was gendered, gender was not itself a principle of stratification in the same way as *class* or *status* (Lockwood 1986).

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<sup>7</sup> Crow and Takeda (2011) rather see him as Durkheimian in his orientation, which I think is correct as I shall suggest in the conclusion to this chapter.

This was because the idea of a class society, or status society, made sense in stratification terms, and, indeed the historical transformations giving rise to capitalism might be understood as a transformation from status society to class society, but it was difficult to imagine gender as descriptive of a social formation in the same way (see also, Scott 1996).

I will leave aside the consternation this argument caused at the seminar. Clearly, many feminists *could imagine a society organised around the principle of gender* and, indeed, they named it – *patriarchy*.<sup>8</sup> Importantly, Lockwood (and Marshall and Goldthorpe and Scott) was not making an empirical point, but a ‘theoretical’ point. Indeed, Lockwood thought it unlikely that capitalism empirically *would become a class society*; in other words, he did not accept Marx’s account of increased social polarisation as a consequence of the contradictions intrinsic to capitalist class relations. Nonetheless, *the idea of a class society was integral to the principle of class*. Using the language of Giddens, class was integral to *structure*, but not necessarily to *structuration*.<sup>9</sup> As Giddens (1973) put it, it was possible for there to be class societies without classes and for classes to exist in societies, such as state socialism, that were defined analytically as not being class societies because of the absence of market exchanges based in private property.

It might be argued that all that is being said is that there are other factors that intervene between class (as conceived analytically) and the structuring of social classes as groups - for example, factors like gender and race and ethnicity. But this is precisely to argue for a hierarchical ordering of concepts (and, perhaps, mechanisms), without a proper accounting for that ‘ordering’. Essentially, Pahl suggests that the interactions among different factors – let us call them what he called them, *divisions of labour* - should be addressed without assuming priority to one factor over the others. More importantly, what counts in everyday life is that these interactions are integral to the construction of experience and they do not necessarily constitute that experience as contradictory (as is implied by a hierarchical order of intervening and countervailing factors. See, Holmwood and Stewart, 1983). Sociologists who give priority to ‘class’ will always be asserting the ‘objectivity’ of their account against the (‘false’, or ‘mediated’) subjectivity of actors, and, at best, always risk talking past them (at worst, for Pahl, they invoke a ‘directionality’ contained in the principle of class, but which in the ‘last instance’ never comes).<sup>10</sup>

Here is the paradox that Pahl thinks he has skewered. Class analysis begins from an assumption about the direction of social change that derives from a mechanism integral to a particular understanding of the linkages of SCA. However, social changes are different from what was expected and the response is to say that the possibilities were ‘real’, but ‘unrealised’. The consequence however, is that ‘class’ cannot provide an account of those changes that did occur. Social change shifts from being internal to class analysis – one of its

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<sup>8</sup> From a different perspective, Elias & Scotson (1965: 146-7) suggested that it is difficult to envisage communities without women and children, but not difficult to envisage them without men.

<sup>9</sup> Pahl (1989: 710) expresses himself favourable to Giddens’ theory of structuration, but I see the latter as being directly bound up in the same problems that Pahl otherwise acutely sets out.

<sup>10</sup> The first criticism is directed at Weberian approaches, the second at Marxist ones. It is a criticism made explicit in the article, but which also informs the criticisms of theoretical claims about the future of work in chapter 12 of *Divisions of Labour*.

objects - to being something that exists in the 'environment' external to it; that is social change produces effects that impinge upon class formation, but class analysis is no longer the means of accounting for social change.<sup>11</sup>

This, then, is the first of Pahl's summary conclusions about the weakness of class analysis: "class as a force for social and political change is problematic since the links in the SCA chain are inadequately theorized and there is little empirical indication that the model has much relevance in practice" (1989: 715).

### *Rethinking class, II: the problem of class structure*

What Pahl thinks he has demonstrated in *Divisions of Labour* is a polarisation *within* what, from the perspective of class analysis, would be called the *same class*. That polarisation derives from an analysis of formal employment, household labour and self-provisioning and would be undiscoverable from an analysis that concentrated just on formal employment, which is, of course, the basis of defining class position within the standard approaches. In the later article, he reinforces this point about the artificiality of class analysis. It is worth setting out the different elements of the critique because, as far as I am aware, his argument has been dismissed on first principles and not by looking at the cogency of the different arguments he makes setting out the limits of class analysis. In doing so he also relies on a more familiar idea of polarisation between 'classes', suggesting that this, too, is beyond class analysis, partly because of its emphasis on *employment*, which means a neglect of the advantaged (as well as missing the polarisation that occurs among the disadvantaged).

Following the summary conclusion with which I ended the previous section, he goes immediately into two other conclusions: "Secondly, as a classificatory device class does little to help us to understand the life styles of the privileged and adds nothing to the brute facts of poverty when considering the other end of the social structure. Finally, it is apparently well-nigh impossible to operationalize the concept in order to make international comparisons" (1989: 715).

Some of these issues have come into direct focus again for us following the publication of Thomas Piketty's (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Most significantly for present purposes, Piketty shows an accumulation of income in the top 10% reaching its height in Europe and the US at the turn of the 19th/20th centuries, since when there was a secular decline in their share (with fluctuations) until the late 1970s, after which there was a reversal, with inequality rising again almost to reach its previous levels (and predicted to

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<sup>11</sup> This is, perhaps, no more evident than in Goldthorpe's (1990) 'principled' repudiation of historical sociology, anathema to many, but especially Pahl who begins, as we have seen, from the location of his concerns in history. Goldthorpe uses the language of Lakatos's (1970) research programmes to justify the 'scientificity' of his approach. He fails to acknowledge the sting in Lakatos's argument that scientificity is better demonstrated by falsification, than 'purification' and that the restriction of scope which Goldthorpe describes as a progressive problem shift has the form of what Lakatos calls a 'degenerative problem shift', which begs the question of the status of hard core assumptions that are being defended.



exceed them as the 21st century unfolds). The force of Piketty's argument is to challenge Kuznets' (1953) theory that the maturing of capitalism and long-term economic growth would bring about a decrease in income inequality (and, by implication, also of wealth). Kuznets presented data for the years 1913-1948 and his analysis was seen to be further reinforced by post-war developments up to the mid-1970s, a period Piketty describes as the 'Trente Glorieuses' and which is broadly aligned with British sociology's moment, as set out above, namely the high point of the development of the welfare state and reducing inequalities.

The question we need to ask is if the 'return of inequality' reinforces sociological 'business as usual' – that is, the business of mainstream class analysis - or if it confirms Pahl's suspicion articulated at the very moment when the trend in inequality was beginning to be reversed, that the mainstream approach was unequal to the task.

Picketty shows the inertial power of wealth to accumulate and for top incomes to convert into assets. The likely future of capitalism is to continue the present trend of widening inequalities in incomes and wealth (especially the latter) and, further, not only will the fortunes of the 10% outstrip the 90%, but this will be even more pronounced for the 1% and the 0.1%. In other words, the logic of capitalism is to produce a patrimonial order where inheritance increasingly triumphs over merit. It is clear from the graphs of the income shares of the top 10% that Piketty presents, the two key moments in the development of postwar British sociology – the professional consensus in the immediate post-war period and the radical critique in the 1970s were both shaped by the downward trend of reducing inequality, but each is out of step with subsequent developments of widening inequality. Of course, the political sensibilities of sociologists – 'professionals' and 'radicals' alike – are sympathetic to the goals of reducing inequality and, therefore, are unlikely to see the discipline as implicated in the great reversal of that trend.

In this context, then, the paradox of Piketty's book is that, among sociologists, the typical response has been that it is a welcome re-statement of what we already knew. Moreover, it is also seen to be dependent on weak sociological categories, namely an analysis in terms of distributional shares (proportion of income and assets accruing to the top 10% and bottom 10%, etc), rather than social relations (see, Savage 2014). In fact, there is little substance to the latter claim. It might appear that any discussion in terms of distribution by 'shares' is concerned only with position within a distribution order, rather than with the mechanisms by which that order is produced and reproduced. Yet, most class analysis operates on the basis of class position as a proxy for place within a distributional order and this is precisely one of Pahl's points.<sup>12</sup> The different classes that are identified (with the possible exception of a 'petit-bourgeoisie' which appears in class classifications but is frequently elided for purposes of subsequent analysis) are represented as hierarchically ordered. Their use to

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<sup>12</sup> See, especially, his later sally (Pahl 1993) against Goldthorpe and Marshall, where the latter presents classes as 'demographic groupings' – or what Pahl calls 'lumps': "why should readers assume that lumps or categories are anything other than proxy indicators of highly complex processes of accumulation and reproduction of advantageous characteristics? The nature of current employment relations seems to be a tiny screed on which to project central concerns of sociological analysis" (1993: 257).

demonstrate the consequences of inequality for other outcomes - such as educational attainment, mortality and morbidity, etc – are no better than approaches which represent inequality as a continuum. Indeed, class schemes approach the explanatory power of the latter only when they multiply the number of classes, thereby, moving their schemes closer to a continuum.

One problem is that class schemes seek to identify discontinuities – boundaries - in relation to factors which are continuous in their distribution - for example, income, authority, working conditions etc. As Prandy and Bottero (1997) comment, this is indicated by the use of terms such as 'level', 'degree' and 'chances' to describe them (see also, Prandy and Blackburn 1997, Bland 1979). This is why an increase in the number of classes improves the performance of the scheme and, presumably, lies behind Erikson and Goldthorpe's comment that the number of classes could be, "as many as it proves empirically useful to distinguish for the analytical purpose in hand" (1992: 46). In this sense, social stratification moved closer to Pahl's idea that what he was observing was increasingly a middle mass of small gradations, albeit that there was a need to address the broader divisions of labour than simply those deriving from employment. Moreover, to speak simply of a 'middle mass' also misses a sense that the labour contract was becoming more precarious for many workers, including those currently affluent while their employment remained. What was also becoming evident, for Pahl, was that a shared 'precarity' was also associated with the specific emergence of an underclass, even if he did not use this designation pejoratively.<sup>13</sup> That is, insofar as unemployment befell some, but not all, the many of those who were unemployed were increasingly separated from other means of 'getting by', disadvantaged both by the operation of the labour market and by the benefits system.

What should also be evident is that Piketty has a mechanism to account for the determination of that distribution, namely the structural tendency for the rate of return on capital to exceed the rate of growth of income and output ( $r > g$ ).<sup>14</sup> This might be a fairly simple mechanism, although that need not undermine its power, but, in any case, as I have already suggested, sociological class analysis itself allows that such a mechanism 'external' (ie is potentially a topic for 'economics', not 'sociology'). But the situation is worse. 'Capital' (income derived from assets) also lies outside sociological class analysis, which is grounded in the characteristics of employment (or the labour contract). If we regard capitalism, at its simplest, as a system in which there are three classes of income - rent, interest and earnings from employment - then sociological class analysis is focused exclusively on the latter (with the marginal exception of self-employment and, therefore, petty-ownership of the means of production). This is the reason why Pahl argues that class analysis cannot account for the

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<sup>13</sup> Ironically, Goldthorpe and his colleagues had great difficulty in demonstrating clearly demarcated classes, but were eager to argue that there was no 'underclass'. However, it transpired that the underclass was more of a class than other groups designated as classes, while right wing proponents of the pejorative account of the underclass could gain little from that conclusion, since it was less of a class than they were claiming and the factors of precarity associated with risk of falling into such a class were more widely distributed than they supposed, just as Pahl suggests in *Divisions of Labour*.

<sup>14</sup> When Pahl was writing, the main concern was that of a 'profit squeeze' (Glyn and Sutcliffe 1972), but it was the context for the shift in economic policies whose impact was also being felt by Pahl's respondents.

'lifestyles of the privileged' (something called for by Savage (2014) as a 'new' topic for sociology, or an 'old' topic to which it should return).

But it is not only that class analysis fails to address different kinds of 'capital', but that it regards the distribution of kinds of employment – the occupational order that will be represented as discrete class positions with common characteristics - to be determined by processes external to sociological class analysis. This is a consequence of making social change exogenous to class analysis. Thus, while the occupational structure is argued to be a class structure, where different jobs can be aggregated together because they possess a cluster of common market-relevant characteristics (of income, job security, relation to authority, etc), what determines the distributions of jobs with those characteristics – for example, the proportions of skilled and unskilled manual jobs, or the proportion of routine non-manual jobs, etc – is also exogenous to class analysis, which simply takes that distribution as a given and subject to change deriving from other processes.

This is nowhere more evident than in mobility studies. One concern among class analysts (though it is not restricted to this approach, since similar demonstrations could be made within an approach that regarded inequality as a continuum) has been to distinguish between 'absolute' and 'exchange' mobility in order to indicate the openness of society. Thus, a changing distribution of class positions in terms of a decline in the number of unskilled manual positions and a relative increase in non-manual positions will produce increased inter-generational mobility. However, controlling for the changing structure, will provide better insight into the 'openness' of society by indicating the relative chances of achieving a higher occupational position by those whose social origins are outside that 'class' when compared with those who are from social origins of that higher class (Erickson and Goldthorpe 1992). However, what should be evident is that as soon as the question at hand is shifted from that of the 'openness' of society to that of class formation, which is an underlying concern of class analysis, then the nature of changes to the structure of positions will have as much impact as the degree of fluidity (see, Kingston 2000).

At best, then, sociological class analysis is concerned with a different – perhaps complementary – aspect of inheritance to that set out by Piketty, that of occupational class position and the rewards of income it entails. But it excludes other forms of income, deriving from assets, and also proposes that the market processes that determine the shape of the class structure are of interest only in so far as they change the data that enter into sociological explanations and not in their own right. Thus, there might be polarization between 'good jobs' and 'bad jobs' (Kalleberg 2013), something also flagged up by Pahl as potentially an emerging problem, but this is then argued to be a consequence of general conditions in the labour market that are external to class analysis as such. It looks as if Pahl's early objections have been reinforced.

Moreover, as Piketty's data show, while there are trends that are common, there are also significant differences in income inequalities and distributional shares among countries and across epochs. How do we explain those differences? Sociological class analysis would also assign epochal differences to 'economics' for explanation – this was Goldthorpe's argument, for example, and is implicit among his colleagues. Thus, for many sociologists, the trend

outlined by Kuznets, as well as the explanation of it, was a feature of mature capitalism (rather than, say, of 'politics'). Piketty, for his part, sees the downward trend as a consequence of exogenous factors – namely the disruptive (and destructive) effects of war and contingent features of post-war reconstruction involving solidarities forged during those conditions. For Piketty, the 'economic' logic of capitalism is to produce widening inequalities and a fundamentally unequal society unless countered by social and political action, but for sociological class analysis that social and political action is exogenous, too.

There are other issues of a fundamental kind, too. Sweden, for example, is much more equal than the USA and remains more equal after a period of widening inequality than other countries achieved during the period of reducing inequality (see, also, Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). Might the social and political formations of different national distributional orders also be a relevant question for analysis? Does it mean the same to be in, say, 'Goldthorpe class' VII in the USA as it does in Sweden? Is the greater equality between classes in Sweden an issue of 'social relations', or are 'social relations' simply the definitional basis for determining what are to be judged the 'same' classes in the USA, Sweden and elsewhere (where differences in class structure, for example would be assigned to differences in level of industrial or post-industrial development)?<sup>15</sup> Would it mean the same in class terms for there to be a society in which there was inequality, but no poverty (as defined, say, by the EU definition of falling below 60% of median income), compared with a society of poverty amid abundance, as Prasad (2012) describes the situation in the USA? Finally, are class positions to be judged the same over time – say, between 1920 and 1970, or 1950 and 2000 – merely differing in their proportional representation, such that there are fewer occupations judged to be 'Goldthorpe class' VII, in earlier compared to later periods, but the meaning of 'Goldthorpe class' VII, itself, remained stable across the different time-periods?

What should be obvious is these differences potentially represent outcomes of social struggles for reform and amelioration, yet their success (or otherwise) cannot be represented within class analysis. The failure to address SCA, as Pahl observed, can't be neatly insulated from other aspects of class analysis. They seem to be mutually implicated.

Perhaps the most telling part of Pahl's critique is where he argues that class analysis has failed to address issues of consumption, which itself reflects the increasing role of credit associated both with house purchase and consumption led growth. Here he points to the way in which 'advertisers' and 'market researchers' have moved away from class to address markers of 'identity' and 'lifestyle'. Market-based 'class position', apparently, doesn't do work in the 'market'. This has been an argument that has also recently been made by Burrows and Savage (2007), but the answer is clearly not, for Pahl, the replication of the problems of class analysis in the analysis of identities.

Let me conclude this section with Pahl's own solution, and, once again it returns us to SCA as itself the basis of a new research programme designed to advance theoretical

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Goldthorpe's (2010) response to Wilkinson and Pickett's (2009) argument about distributional differences that they don't understand class analysis, but, it is Goldthorpe, himself, who wishes to deny distributional differences any significance for class analysis.

understanding: “from informal social networks, through families, kinship links and the whole range of formal and informal associations of civil society people are engaging in voluntary solidaristic and collective activity for a variety of goals” (1992: 719). This emphasis on *association* evokes Oliver Cromwell Cox’s (1948) great critique of the sociological analysis of class stratification where the sociologist defines ‘objective class/occupational positions’ according to some set of criteria, assigns populations to these classes (or aggregates), and then considers their ‘subjective’ responses to membership in these common aggregate groups. It remains the standard sociological approach, whether these aggregates are called classes (whether using neo-Marxist or neo-Weberian conceptualisations) or some other term (‘occupational groups’, etc). As Cox suggests, variation within supposedly discrete aggregates is potentially as considerable as that which divides groups. The real substance of class, for Cox, lies in the associations that are formed among people; that is in solidarities, constructed through action. ‘Class’ (‘identity’) is constructed in action and association, not from the a priori definitions of sociologists, or as E.P. Thompson (1966) put it in his preface to *The Making of the English Working Class*, it is a ‘relationship’, not a ‘thing’.<sup>16</sup>

### *One nation sociology?*

Ray Pahl was deeply concerned with inequality and its consequences in terms of distress and disrespect – this, after all, is the source of his empathy with Linda and Jim. He showed their great resilience and resourcefulness in the face of the forces ranged against them and, if they had difficulty ‘getting by’, others in similar situations were likely to fare less well (we now know from his follow up interviews, discussed by Lawrence and Elliott above, just how badly things did go for them). In an early chapter of the book, he refers to the period in between 1945 and 1970 as the ‘years of incapacitation’. He writes, “the unions got stronger and led their members to believe that collective solidaristic action would lead to a permanent position on the rising escalator of incomes. Men were pulled out of their households and, as it were, put in the block vote with other men in an all-male fraternity. It was held to be a victory when overtime was ‘won’, embodiment of these principles keeping the men away from home when their wives were at their busiest feeding the children and putting them to bed. Those in these expanding and flourishing unions and factories were the affluent workers. They were also most likely to want to own their own homes – so when the factory closed or laid them off, they had little to fall back on and still had a large mortgage to pay.” (1984: 57). The contrast between Linda and Jim and Beryl and George points to a possible fate where economic and social change potentially spills them off the escalator of rising incomes.

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<sup>16</sup> Pahl, in fact, cites E.P. Thompson to similar effect, though that can be a little misleading. Most commentators associate Thompson’s critique of theory with the critique of Althusser and structuralist Marxism, but he is criticising class stratification approaches: “sociologists who have stopped the time-machine and, with a good deal of conceptual huffing and puffing have gone down into the engine room to look, tell us that nowhere at all have they been able to locate and classify a class. They can only find a multitude of people with different occupations, incomes, status-hierarchies and the rest ... Of course, they are right, since class is not this or that part of the machine, but the way the machine works once it is set in motion...” (cited in Pahl 1989: 717)

This theme of incapacitation is carried into his analysis of public policy: “perhaps the clearest embodiment of these principles can be seen in the way New Towns were planned. Neighbourhood units were laid out some distance from the main shopping and recreational facilities in the town centre, with just a few shops within walking distance for daily needs. Men went to the industrial estates, segregated some distance from the living areas, so that earning and consuming were kept physically separated. There was no expectation that women would want to have employment close to their homes or that opportunities for part-time work might encourage women to combine the care of small children with paid employment” (1984: 79). ‘Work on the side’ for ‘cash in hand’ would help people to get by, but the benefits system increasingly regarded this as ‘cheating’ and encouraged jealous neighbours to inform on those working in the ‘informal economy’.<sup>17</sup>

However, I have also suggested that Pahl regarded sociology itself as suffering ‘incapacitation’. He was no radical in the sense that would have been understood by other sociologists at the time. Indeed, the nature of his engagement, whether with those in precarious positions or senior managers and others reflecting on success almost precluded the normal kind of radicalism. Anyone’s ‘private’ troubles and their social structural causes interested him and amelioration could be directed at all private troubles for which a social structural cause could be identified. So what was the politics of the new jurisdiction for sociology that Pahl was setting out? In this concluding section, I will set out some speculations – I regret that I didn’t have the gumption to ask him directly while he was alive.

I think a clue lies in his involvement with the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Commission on Urban Priority Areas, which coincided with his research for *Divisions of Labour* and which was deeply influenced by that research. My tag for this section – ‘one nation sociology’ – is not intended to evoke one nation conservatism, but an ‘Anglican’ conception of the nation as it was developing in concerns over rising unemployment, inequality and poverty. I shall suggest that Pahl was setting out a sociology that drew part of its inspiration from a particular moment in Anglicanism and its turn toward social issues that made it no longer the ‘Tory party at prayer’, as the familiar jive had it. Pahl’s sociology, as this chapter should suggest, indicates a strong ‘dissenting’ tradition, but he had an ‘Anglican’ faith in sociology, understanding it as a broad church made up of different positions. But I also mean something more by my reference to a new Anglican sensibility, and it turns on the figure of ‘polarisation’ that plays such a role in his work and in the Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Commission.

When Pahl (1992: 714) refers to metaphors of the military (class struggle) being replaced by the market (individual lifestyle), I don’t believe that he regrets the passing of ‘military engagements’, which may also characterise some of the conflicts among sociologists at the time. What he regrets is the individualising of social responsibility and what he is seeking to articulate is the emergence of new collectivities and new responsibilities – social solidarity, rather than class war. And here the Anglican church in its declaration of faith in the city

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<sup>17</sup> Although the unemployed also faced material barriers to ‘working on the side’, since “they cannot afford to go to the pub in order to make essential contacts, and, they cannot afford the tools and equipment to do such jobs as decorating or car repairs” (1984: 96).

(playing on both the role of faith ministering to the city, and faith in the poor of the city) can stand as an example.

What distinguishes the Anglican ministry is that there is a responsibility for all members of the parish – whether those members accept that responsibility or not. Unlike other religious faiths, the responsibility is not only to the members of the congregation (temple, mosque, etc), but to all, including those of no faith. It is this which provided the capacity for the church to intervene on social issues of the day and initiate inter-faith dialogues as well as provide their capital (physical spaces) to be available to other religious groups for meetings. It has become particularly significant in British cities, especially those with significant ethnic minorities and people of different faiths. In this context, it is no accident that the then Archbishop, Robert Runcie, should accept a responsibility in relation to designated urban priority areas following riots in 1981 (and, subsequent to the Report's publication, in 1985) in Brixton (London), Handsworth (Birmingham), Chapeltown (Leeds) and Toxteth (Liverpool). The concerns were precisely those that engaged Pahl – problems of poverty, inequality, and disrespect – and much of the Report draws on his research. It seems to me that Ray Pahl accepted a similar responsibility for sociology. Unlike, his Isle of Sheppey study, where the ethnic minority population was tiny and remains so to this day, urban priority areas required a direct address of ethnicity and a Britain different from that described in the earlier community studies addressed by Savage (2010) as searching for an English Middletown.<sup>18</sup>

This was another respect in which sociology's jurisdiction was changing and changing, perhaps, through the influence of a different kind of agency than that expected by most sociologists – not government or class-based agency, but that of the church. Significantly, the studies addressed by Savage neglected race and ethnicity. The *Affluent Worker* study, for example, looked at a geographically mobile workers who moved to Luton, but did not address non-white workers who were also present (see, the restudy by Devine (1992)). Similarly, Coates and Silburn's (1970) study of poverty in Nottingham, *Poverty: The Forgotten Englishmen*, forgot the people from the Caribbean who were alongside them. There were studies of race and ethnic minorities – for example by Little (1948), or by Rex and Moore in Sparkbrook (1967). These are absent from Savage's account of British sociology's moment, but such issues could hardly be absent from any new jurisdiction. 'One nation sociology' would necessarily be a sociology of multicultural Britain and for multicultural Britain.

I think it is significant that Pahl should be attuned to a problem of existing approaches to social stratification in the analysis of these issues. The argument that he was beginning to articulate in *Divisions of Labour* proposes that an adequate address to social inequality, would need to make its *dynamics*, and not its *categorisation*, central to a new sociological jurisdiction. It would also need to find a new language to connect the private troubles of inequality to public discourses that could generate political motivations to ameliorate them.

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<sup>18</sup> As Lassiter (2012) has argued, the Lynds excluded the African-American population of Middletown in their representation of its typicality, notwithstanding that the proportion of African Americans was proportionately higher than many other US cities.

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