

BOOK REVIEWS

Gender and Jobs, Sex Segregation of Occupations in the World **Richard Anker**

Geneva: International Labour Office, 1998, paperback 45 Swiss francs, xii + 444 pp.

This book is the second to emerge from the International Labour Office's Interdepartmental Project on Equality for Women in Employment from 1992–93. Although it has taken a long time to produce it presents a serious discussion and analysis of the issues associated with measuring gender segregation in cross-national data sets as well as a considerable amount of data analysis. In fact, it is probably the most extensive treatment of cross-national patterns in gender segregation currently in print.

The strength of the book lies in several areas. First, the data set which was collected by the International Labour Office is large in terms of the number of countries represented, and the occupational data is much more detailed than that used in many previous cross-national studies. There is some representation of Southern countries in the data set, which represents a significant advantage over previous cross-national studies. Second, there is an excellent and thorough evaluation of the quality of the data. Richard Anker has previously worked extensively on issues of data quality in Southern countries and has done significant work in Egypt and in India with respect to improving survey data so as to include women's contributions to the labour force more adequately. This experience is reflected in his discussion of the reliability of the data. Third, the book contains a careful discussion of the issues associated with the statistical analysis of the data. While some of his conclusions with respect to segregation measures are certain to provoke commentary, it is clear that decisions that have been made have been well considered.

The discussion of the theoretical issues and explanatory framework is competent, if somewhat conventional. The main theoretical perspectives of the last thirty years are presented. The discussion is most interesting when Anker incorporates some of the findings of empirical investigations of gender stereotyping through enterprise-level surveys in a number of transition economies (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia) and developing countries (India, Cyprus, Sri Lanka and Ghana). While he mentions in this chapter that non-economic theories, particularly as developed by feminist theorists are significant in understanding gender segregation, Anker seems more comfortable expounding the theme of gender inequalities creating labour market inefficiencies and rigidities.

The bulk of the book contains a considerable amount of data analysis of gender segregation and concentration patterns – cross-national comparisons, comparisons over time analysis of the most male and most female occupations, and discussion of where the most change seems to be occurring. While the main features of the data are described in some depth, the conclusions that are reached tend to remain at the descriptive level. Their consequences are not particularly well tied back to the theoretical debates presented at the outset. Many of the findings are in line with what has already been established in this area of research so the main usefulness is having updated data from a wide range of countries. These would include findings such as male-dominated occupations being more common than female occupations, and that female occupations tend to have lower pay, lower status and less opportunity for advancement. There are some surprising findings, however, such as the way in which segregation levels vary greatly across regions; or that segregation does not appear to be related to socio-economic development. One of the problems of

an undertaking of this nature is that in attempting to provide an overview of trends around the world and over time, there is insufficient space to deal with interesting details in any length. Both of these findings warrant more attention.

This book will be an important reference book for those interested in understanding the way in which gender structures the labour market around the world. The material which it provides deserves to be widely discussed and its implications incorporated into the development of policy both with respect to further data collection initiatives by the ILO and other international bodies, but also in terms of practical initiatives to further gender inequality in employment.

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JENNIFER JARMAN

Poverty and Exclusion in a Global World

A. S. Bhalla and Frédéric Lapeyre

London: Macmillan, 1999, £45.00, xvi + 237 pp.

Social exclusion is a term in considerable currency in much of the world, in these global times. Especially, this is the case in the UK, where the Blair Government has established a Social Exclusion Unit that reports directly to the Prime Minister. What is meant by 'social exclusion' is the inter-generational transmission and reproduction of restricted opportunities and capacities for engagement in both the social and the market economy. From a policy point of view the interest is in developing programmes that can break the cycle of reproduction.

The terms used to address the issuer of social exclusion in the UK may well be familiar to most readers of this journal, or to readers of the 'quality press' such as *The Guardian*. At the heart of social exclusion is the relationship between its distributional and relational dimensions. It is the emphasis on relational issues that makes the concept different in kind from the distributional concerns of earlier discussion of 'poverty', seen in purely distributional terms. The interplay of the distributional and relational can be captured through indicators such as long-term unemployment, job precariousness, and propensity to be engaged in activities that diminish, rather than amplify, local social capital formation. It is the combination and dynamic interplay of these that lie at the heart of social exclusion.

The book addresses specific forms of social exclusion in the context of comparative study. Examples from both OECD-type countries such as the US, UK, and France, as well as in emerging market economies are considered in detail. Social exclusion is considered in the emerging market economies of post-socialism, such as Poland, and Hungary, as well as in the largest of all emerging markets, Brazil (about the eighth or ninth largest economy in the world, depending on the data-point). While all of these cases demonstrate ample evidence of social exclusion the causes and the consequences differ markedly from country to country.

The term first emerged in the 1970s in the francophone context and rapidly found widespread acceptance in EU debates, replacing the more restrictive notion of 'poverty' (as typically measured in terms of a 'poverty line'). The French usage, characteristically Durkheimian, stressed exclusion as a rupture of the bonds of social solidarity, while in Anglo-Saxon discourse the term is more restricted. Here it has been proposed that exclusion is an effect of the mistaken attempts by the state to ensure the welfare of all. It is the dependencies created by the Welfare State interacting with the existence of discrimination, market failure and so-called rights that creates clients for whom

social exclusion becomes a customary condition. These clients then serve to reproduce the conditions of their own and their dependents' exclusion, as they find being on welfare more attractive than being engaged in the formal economy of wage-labour. It is the latter views that have characterised much thinking on social exclusion in the US, Australia and Britain.

The authors argue that in the developing countries, those referred to economically as emergent markets, it is the distributional problems of social exclusion that are paramount. The reason is that the major coping mechanisms, in the absence of a strong state sector that regulates and protects individuals in terms of the status of their labour market participation, are located in sources of local social capital at the street and neighbourhood level. In the more developed, OECD-type societies the predominant dimensions are those of excessive individualism and fragmentation of social solidarity; hence, there is an erosion or non-amplification of sources of social capital, and so it is the relational dimensions that are predominant. The archetype is often thought to be the underclass located in inner-city ghettos in large United States cities. Yet, the US representation is hardly applicable to the European context, as the authors develop, initially through a case study of France.

In France the concept of social exclusion entered popular discourse through the work of a leading social justice advocate, Father Wrésinski, which fed into the CERC (Centre d'Etudes des Revenus des Coûts) deliberations. These produced a distinctive methodology for measuring social exclusion in terms of both material and non-material disadvantages, as well as in terms of the intensity of the relation between precarious employment (and unemployment) situations and social deprivation. French policy responses are also distinctive, centring around the notion of a Revenu Minimum d'Insertion Program, a version of reciprocal obligation between the individual and the state, that seeks to ensure the construction of social capital networks rather than their erosion through welfare dependency.

The book also provides case studies of Polish, Hungarian and Brazilian responses to social exclusion. The transitional socialist cases are the most depressing. Having had their economies ruined by socialism, capitalism seems to be finishing off the job socially. Market-first policies destroyed social cohesion, health and happiness for millions of ordinary citizens, condemned to precariousness and labour market exclusion, for whom being 'free to choose' seems increasingly hollow. Civil society remains somewhat underdeveloped outside the Church. By contrast, in Brazil, it is the dense networks of civil society that make the poverty that is at the heart of social exclusion bearable.

The book concludes with a discussion of the links between globalisation and exclusion that suggest the current era as another 'great transformation', this time with global rather than merely national ramifications. Globally, there is a progressive neo-liberal rhetoric of globalisation as a kind of manifest destiny for the present, while, the reality is one of a profound spatial restructuring in which, as one might predict, there remain losers as well as winners. The winners are the established and new knowledge workers in the global cities, such as London, Los Angeles, and Sydney, while the losers are those in precarious and unemployed labour markets everywhere.

The authors are light on policy recommendations in their conclusions as to how the global economy may be re-embedded in society, globally. For such conclusions one needs to turn elsewhere – to that provocative and considered paean to globalisation, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, by the New York Times correspondent, Thomas Friedman, who speaks of the need for an Integrationist-Social-Safety-Net response to globalisation. He focuses on the democratisation of globalization educationally, financially and politically for as many people as possible – and actually has some sound proposals for what this might entail. I cite a small sample from a list he developed under the rubric of the 'Rapid Change Opportunity Act' that he proposes for the US, but it could be applicable more generally:

- Pilot projects for public employment for temporarily displaced workers
- Tax breaks for severance pay for displaced workers
- Increased US lending to Asian, African and Latin American development banks to promote training of women
- Micro-lending to women and small business, and environmental clean-up in every developing country with which the US has significant trade
- Increased funding for the International Labor Organization's new initiatives for building alternatives to child labour in countries where children are most abused
- Increases in the funds flowing to the existing Trade Adjustment Assistance programme (in the US) which provides some small income support and training to anyone who can show that their job was eliminated because of trade
- Expansion of the existing Dislocated Worker Training program to assist anyone who lost a job because of new technology
- Tax credits for educational and training upgrade programmes.

Such schemes would not fit all cases: that is not the point. As Friedman demonstrates, an innovative policy response (Third Way, if you will), is possible and necessary.

Poverty and Exclusion in a Global World is an excellent analysis of the variable conditions of social exclusion in the contemporary world. The analysis and data that the book provides, coupled with a will to policy formation that seeks to avoid the traps it outlines, is long overdue. The book does not present the latter but it does a more than adequate job on the former. The book should be a useful addition to the 'losers' section on any reading lists on 'the consequences of globalisation'.

REFERENCE

Friedman, T. (1999) *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, New York: Harper Collins.

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STEWART CLEGG

Organized Worlds: Explorations in technology and organization with Robert Cooper

Robert C. H. Chia (ed.)

London: Routledge, 1998, £50.00, vii + 195 pp.

Robert Cooper is a dazzling and original thinker whose ideas on organisation influenced a whole generation of researchers in Northern Europe, many of whom now hold chairs. Perhaps better known for his essays in Organization Studies on postmodernism and post-structuralism, this edited collection gives new insight to the full range and quality of Cooper's vision. Published by Routledge, the book is an essential purchase for anyone wishing to get to grips with contemporary thought.

This is the second of two volumes of essays written in Cooper's honour and includes contributions by John Law and Ron Day, as well as an important new piece by Cooper, 'Assemblage Notes'. All the essays strongly reflect the monograph's theme of understanding organisation as technology. In particular, I warmly recommend 'Two Speeds' by Nick Lee, a tour de force which pursues the question of how real stabilities are possible, and 'The Virtualization of the Organisational Subject'; by Richard Sotro, a superb analysis which explores the exaggeration of

the human subject that accompanies a world of information. Contemporary thinking doesn't get much better, or more perceptive than this.

In my view this is the superior, and better edited, text. The book's status as a potential landmark arises mainly from its inclusion of a fifty page long 'Epilogue – Interview with Robert Cooper' at the end of the book. Elicited by questions from Jannis Kallinikos and the editor of the collection, Robert Chia, and ranging over topics such as otherness, bounded rationality, social systems and order/disorder, this series of ten responses offers a definitive statement of Cooper's thinking.

Cooper's radical and alternative vision of organisation has its start in Weber's and Durkheim's recognition of our living in *organised* worlds. Interested more in process than structure, there are for Cooper no 'simple locations' (137). Against the study of organisations and 'their special features', his work weaves a 'generic methodology' among the 'scattered and heterogeneous nature of organisation' (140). Slipping aside intellectual barriers, Cooper seeks out sameness where others would only see difference: what Cooper is creating is organisation theory, rather than the more usual theory of organisations.

Further, in so far as he is making a *social theory* of organisation, Cooper has moved away from his early work with the Tavistock Institute and now sees organisation as 'a repeated process of *social-cultural regeneration* in which society recursively includes its members as raw material or organising' (140) Human beings are to be seen as participators in reality. Yet this is not to grant them sovereignty, but to recognise more fully their 'cyborg' ability to participate with machines. Renewal comes not from the moral, but from the 'uncanny compulsion to repeat' (135). While the emphasis is on a human embeddedness in technology, there are no moments in Cooper's text where he slips into a human relations mode, or switches into a 'people' emphasis of organisational behaviour.

Several ideas informing Cooper's vision are familiar, notably the rational impulse of modernisation and the division of labour from the writings of Weber and Durkheim. But in each case, deploying inversions like the 'consumption of mass' and the 'labour of division', Cooper finds ways out of the disenchantment associated with the iron cage and moves away from the hegemony of solidarity. Cooper's way is neither to celebrate the inevitability of modernity, nor to denigrate it for its consequence. Instead, three general themes run through his work: *systemness* (acknowledging Marilyn Strathern's focus on 'enhanced systematization' or – as in universities – systematisation gone mad), *interdisciplinarity* (Gillian Beer's characterisation of 'over-interpretation' is contrasted with the more normal 'under-interpretation' of simple location) and *imagination* (Heidegger's concept of the Open has the mouth reaching out to the world through language and language being the flower of the mouth) (141–7).

Yet similar as Cooper's project sounds, it ends up being utterly unfamiliar. For he is not concerned to detail any single organising impulse in society. His work is more about gathering all the various impulses and creating a space in which these can be viewed as existing alongside each other; or, perhaps better, co-creating and renewing each other. As befits someone who makes connections, Cooper is always concerned to reincorporate into our understanding what others cut out. Like Kurt Schwitters, who made his pictures from the detritus of the world, Cooper pictures his worlds through the cuttings on the floor. Cooper is not concerned to get us to see what is already fixed in our gaze, but to get us to glance aside to see what has been discarded by the 'gaze', thrown away by use.

Cooper's work is often difficult. Aimed at scholars of the highest calibre, his attention to complexity is unwavering and his writing is dense with acknowledgement to his sources. This outstanding volume will no doubt serve as a virtual bible to the cognescenti who have already cottoned on to Cooper's project. For others fed up with the world being cut up into concepts so

mean that they can run the gamut of commodification, this volume will also be a good place to begin. Cooper's stitching together of ideas is helping to change understandings about the very place of technology and organisation in our world.

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ROLLAND MUNRO

Society, Work and Welfare in Europe

Christine Cousins

London: Macmillan Press, 1999, £42.50, paper £13.99, viii + 210 pp.

Society, work and welfare in Europe is an ambitious book which works towards an understanding of the complexities of cross-national comparisons in employment and welfare-state structures in European societies. This in-depth comparative analysis, of Germany, Spain, Sweden and the UK, contributes to the current debate on the convergence and divergence of these societies. The four countries are seen to represent differing approaches to employment regulation and social protection. When discussing the policies of the flexible labour market, reference is also made to other European Community member States such as France and the Netherlands. The chapters of the book show how these processes of change are accelerating a convergence between European countries, although there remains substantial diversity in national responses which reflects the legacies of past institutional, social and political structures and differences in the forms of neo-corporatist arrangements. Not only is this study an empirical analysis of changing relations between work and welfare, but it also stands as a contribution to the theoretical sociological debate on how to approach processes of social change in the contexts of globalisation, neoliberalism and European integration. My admiration for the book derives precisely from the balance it strikes between the empirical evidence of the case studies and the sensitivity it shows for current debates on social issues.

The analytical framework of the book derives from a 'societal' perspective (as formulated by Rubery in 1988) in which the differences between the countries are explained through the interrelationship of political, economic and social factors. The book comprises three parts. While the first part of the work discusses the broad patterns of development in the four countries, the second deals in more detail with the key debates within changing patterns of employment, 'non-standard' work, deregulation of labour markets, and women and employment. The complexities of economic change are examined in the debate on the transition from mass production to flexible specialisation. This process is illustrated by the cases of the industrial district phenomena in Catalonia and Baden Württemberg in Germany, and the changing division of labour between firms in the car industry in Spain. In Cousins' understanding, the regional and economic development in the different member states is a highly uneven process, depending on historically rooted and institutional features. The third part of the book deals with two important areas in the relationship between work and welfare: women and social policies, and poverty and social exclusion. The relationship of this last chapter to the argument as a whole is made clear through the linking of the literature on social exclusion with the debate on labour market participation and mechanisms of social protection. This is just one example of the marked integration of the entire work.

There are few books on the sociology of European societies, notable exceptions being G. Therborn (1995) *European Modernity and Beyond*, J. Bailey (1998, 2nd edition) *Social Europe*,

and P. Brown and R. Crompton (1994) *A New Europe? Economic Restructuring and Social Exclusion*. Otherwise, there are books which concentrate on a single theme such as ethnicity, women and social policies, industrial relations or labour markets. One book which does cover ground similar to Cousins' is D. Edye and V. Lintner (1996) *Contemporary Europe*. However, the gender dimension in Cousins' book is much stronger, giving it an edge over some of the competition. The selection of only four countries means a loss of breadth but a gain in depth, as it provides the opportunity to illustrate the general through the particular societal contexts and enables the questioning of phenomena or relationships in one national context which would otherwise be taken for granted. Furthermore, much of the core material incorporates original research, for example, chapters 2 and 6, and other chapters also include Cousins' earlier work on women in the labour market and in the welfare state in Spain. This is a useful contribution, as there is as yet little available in English in this last area. The book will be accessible to students. The academic content is well condensed and solid but also attractive: tables with a chronology of the main key dates for each country, lay-outs and 'summary' boxes, and the guide to further reading are very helpful.

It is in view of the above that the book is directly aimed at students of European studies, sociology and social policy. However, what remains unstated on the cover blurb is the interest that such a work must have for the field of gender studies. For example, the third chapter discusses the diversity of women's employment patterns, both between and within European countries. It also uncovers gender differences in the workplace by considering occupational gender segregation, women's earnings and unemployment. The fifth chapter concentrates on women and the state, highlighting debates within the field and illustrating the feminist reaction to blind gender theorising. While it contributes to the debate on the relationship between women's paid and unpaid work together with their access to welfare, the chapter which follows it draws on its implications within the context of poverty and social exclusion. Although the book thus shows a clear structure and presents a balanced analysis, I do feel that the gender argument could have been brought more to the forefront in the book publicity, if only to reach the wider readership it deserves.

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MONICA BADIA

The Economic Horror Viviane Forrester

Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999, £39.50, paper £9.99, 144 pp.

The Economic Horror was first published in France in 1996 as *L'Horreur Economique*. Following huge success in France, Italy and Germany it is currently being translated into 20 languages. Its cover bears the slogan 'the global bestseller'. The reader is thus confronted with questions both about the text and about the popularity of the text: why has this short book shot to stardom? It says little, if anything, new. It argues that we are confronted by a new economic reality, in which the networks of global finance and cybernetics – the information age – render most of the human population superfluous to processes of so-called wealth creation. Jobless growth is not a temporary crisis, but a mutation, of the global capitalist economy. Terms such as flexibility and employability are mere covers for the deliberate creation of social insecurity, in the interests of the profits of the few. The many are forced into competition for diminishing numbers of jobs with

diminishing returns. This is a global phenomenon. Far from poorer countries being lifted from poverty through development, poverty invades the previously affluent, developed world as unemployment becomes endemic and social protection is weakened.

Yet work, in the sense of employment, remains the basis of the distribution of the social product – not just materially, but in terms of respect. Life remains governed by work-based exchanges, even as jobs disappear permanently. All of us inhabit the myth of the possibility and moral necessity of paid work. Those without work are simultaneously impoverished and shamed by a system which is both irrational (except in terms of profit) and immoral. The so-called socially excluded are not excluded from society at all: they are ‘screwed into it, incarcerated and *included* in it to the marrow’ since they are ‘included within rejection’ (9) and ‘anchored in repudiation’ (59). The situation calls for ‘a mode of distribution and survival that would not depend on wages’ (128). This is, without reference to Marx, an immiseration thesis for our time; and, without reference to Marcuse, an insistence on the need for a new reality principle to replace the performance principle which underpins the current system of domination and exploitation. Amid so many contemporary arguments about ‘Third Ways’ and the inevitability (and thus – illogically – the beneficence) of capitalism, it is refreshing to read such an impassioned account of its essential malignance. Some may feel that the case is overstated by the lack of qualification of claims about globalisation and the lack of differentiation between nations, classes, ethnicities, genders. But this is partly deliberate, in order to present starkly that which is usually masked in qualification, to hold onto the wider picture, to refuse to set different sections of the population against each other.

The mode of writing may feel strange to a British audience. It is intellectual, but not academic. The author is a journalist and novelist, rather than an academic. Her style is rhetorical and abstract, rather than overtly analytical and empirical. The argument is pitched at a level of generality which nevertheless still successfully asserts, without the use of illustrative vignettes, without reference to personal examples, that what is at issue is the fate and suffering of individuals. The very popularity of the book must mean that it does not only speak to those who, like myself, already share most of its assumptions and analysis. So how does it work?

This book is both rhetorical, and about rhetoric. It is about the rhetoric of work, and its ideological function in disguising what is actually happening. It is also about the difficulty of articulating what is happening in a context where the very concepts of Marxism – terms such as profit, proletariat, capitalism, exploitation, classes, struggle – have been effectively excised from political discourse: ‘How can language take history into account without these mutilated words – when history is fraught with them and still conveys their silent presence?’ (15). Rather than attempting the re-inscription of a rejected analytic language, the rhetoric of the text works by repetitive invocations poised between empirical and literary description – for example, the description of Paris on pages 30–2. Like the best utopian and dystopian writing, it operates at the level of experience, not simply cognition. It is, effectively, a dystopian text which brings to consciousness experiences we routinely repress in order to accommodate to the exigencies of everyday life. In relation to poverty, insecurity and exclusion, it also does this in a way which does not reinforce the division between included and excluded by making ‘us’ sorry for or fearful of ‘them’, but which places us with them in a frame of shared experience, simply more extreme for some than others.

And it is a dystopian, even apocalyptic, text. ‘A world with no elsewhere’ (130) is bleak, and the future potentially catastrophic. Forrester observes that the liberation from compulsory labour was the foundation of dreams of a good society. It was never conceived, as it now must be, as a potential catastrophe for the mass of humanity who are surplus to the requirements of profit, and who are at risk of elimination. If the choices are socialism or barbarism, Forrester’s bet, it would seem, is on barbarism. And if the alternative, in which the myth of work is exploded and the wage

relation transcended, is posited, there are few signposts to the road to elsewhere. Only that 'the point is not to be colonised any more', but 'to live in full knowledge of the facts'; and that there is not much time.

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RUTH LEVITAS

Work – Quo Vadis? Re-thinking the Question of Work

Jan Holmer and Jan Ch. Karlsson (eds.)

Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997, £42.50, viii + 346 pp.

This book is a collection of conference papers from an international symposium on work held at Karlstad in Sweden during 1996. The editors' aim was to address here the contemporary nature of work and its possible future trajectories. The book's basic premise is that the world of work is in something of a crisis and that this is itself symptomatic of a transition stage in the development of industrial societies. In summarising the contribution several authors make, Holmer and Karlsson note in their introduction:

'... the twentieth century would seem to be a transition phase in the history of work. The employments [sic] and occupations of our time, which were established in the nineteenth century, are proving to be less and less appropriate for the situation today' (3).

And they go on to state that wage labour would seem to have reached a 'culmination'. The book contains sixteen individual chapters and is arranged in three sections: Work, Society and Welfare; Family and Gender; and finally Technology and Organisation.

The first part is by far the most coherent section of the book with all six of the chapters addressing the conference's themes. Ray Pahl addresses the notion of shifts in patterns of work and the ability of households to cope and respond. He speculates as to how a society might best cope with changing patterns of employment over the life course and suggests that '... people would not expect to spend a life time in conventional employment, but would transfer the resources built up in their earlier, intense period in the labour market ... and would then live on these resources in their "down-sized" situation in smaller communities where the quality of life could still be high' (40). As one would expect from Pahl, this somewhat utopian vision is grounded in a critical appreciation of the gap between 'is' and 'ought'. This is in stark contrast to a couple of the other contributions in this section. Adler-Karlsson, in his chapter entitled 'How to get rid of unemployment and transform work into play' suggests five points 'Towards a provisional utopia' that essentially seems to revolve around the state providing a basic income over a lifetime in return for a period of the citizen working for the state. The chapter is peppered with staccato paragraphs that resemble headings or prompts rather than a thought-out thesis. There is little in the way of understanding the way in which this new situation may come about or how this provisional, overtly Eurocentric, utopia fits in and interacts with the rest of the developed and underdeveloped world.

Andrew Sayer addresses 'Contractualisation, work and the anxious classes' by giving a detailed account of the causes of current work place insecurity in both private and public sectors. The chapter ends with the call for '... new national and supra-national social settlements – a new "mode of regulation"' (72), echoing similar comments by commentators as diverse as George Soros and Will Hutton. Again Sayer is alive to just how difficult this could prove. Finally, in this

section there is an interesting and detailed account of arguments over the relationship between benefit levels and willingness to work. In particular, Andrew Sinfield critically engages with the OECD and some of its findings on the subject, tracking the paucity of evidence upon which they construct their theories.

Part Two of the collection examines 'Family and Gender' and begins with a piece by Sheila Allen on gender relations and research on work. In particular, she aims to explore the hidden gendered structuring of work. Part of her conclusion is a rejection of post-modernist theory as unable to offer the conceptual tools ... to build theories by which to understand social and economic life' (164). Kathleen Lynch discusses the limits of liberal education policies, in part by using the writings of the radical educationalist Freire. Other contributions deal with issues of negotiation in dual-earner families, gender segmented labour markets in Spain and patterns of unemployment in Sweden. The final section, 'Technology and Organisation', is the least satisfactory of the book, with little attempt seemingly made to focus chapters around the supposed theme of the collection.

Taken as a whole the collection has some interesting pieces which will be useful to both undergraduates as well as researchers and teachers. Unfortunately the book suffers from trying to include so many items of variable quality and subject matter. Several of the papers have no references whatsoever while others mix referencing styles. While many of the papers are academically rigorous and thoughtful others are rather thin and highly speculative.

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TIM STRANGLEMAN

How Do We Tell the Workers?: The Socioeconomic Foundations of Work and Vocational Education

Joe L. Kincheloe

Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1999, £50.00, paper £13.95, xiii + 450 pp.

There is nothing particularly original in the proposition that the pedagogic assumptions underpinning the ideology and practice of teaching are inseparable from wider patterns of power and domination in society. As this book usefully demonstrates, however, this is not a proposition that is shared by the majority of corporate managers, government officials or teachers involved in the provision of vocational education in the USA. In this context, the book provides both a manifesto that aims to convince vocational educators that the system in which they work is underpinned by oppressive and undemocratic assumptions that need to be challenged and a valuable resource that provides the historical, social, economic and political context in which these oppressive practices have developed. The author argues that a democratic and critical pedagogy capable of challenging fragmented and restrictive ways of thinking within the workplace and the education system is an important prerequisite for any wider project of progressive organisational and societal change.

In Part One of the book the author explores the way that the modes of thinking associated with modernism have resulted in a series of regressive epistemological assumptions underlying dominant conceptions of work and education. In a somewhat idealist interpretation of the development of capitalist modernity the domination of Cartesian-Newtonian modes of thinking are held responsible for a fragmentation of consciousness that found its material manifestation in the forms of degraded and alienated work associated with Taylorism and Fordism. In Part Two

there is a detailed elaboration of the historical development of vocational education in the USA. There is a particular emphasis on the way in which vocational education has been used as an instrument for pacifying organised labour and inculcating the key tenets of WASP culture to successive waves of immigrants.

In Part Three the author assesses the technological implications of post-Fordism and the dangers and possibilities this represents for contemporary vocational education in the USA. The technological developments associated with post-Fordism have not, it is argued, resulted in a 'technopia' of high-skill, empowered workers. Rather, multinational corporations have been able to consolidate and intensify control through the commodification and manipulation of information. This leads to the central proposition of the book: how do vocational educators tell the workers about this new form of 'technopower'? In the context of a discussion of the dominant approaches to the reform of vocational education in the US the author argues for a critical pedagogy focusing on jobs and justice. This requires an approach to vocational education that is organised around a form of 'postformal' thinking that allows educators and students to explore the historical origins and social context of education and labour processes. Drawing on the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, the author argues for a critical pedagogy that allows educators and students to challenge forms of domination in schools and workplaces through a critical self reflection that explores the connections between job, self and society.

In Part Four the author highlights the way that class, race and gender inequalities have contributed to the marginalisation of vocational students in US schools and colleges. There is a particular focus on the way in which positivistic social science in general and behavioural psychology in particular have presented the practice of 'tracking' students to academic or vocational courses as a neutral and scientific process that ignores the social context in which schools operate. The author argues that a critical pedagogy premised on 'postformal' thinking allows vocational students to uncover the ways in which their personal inadequacy is structurally determined and culturally mediated. Demonstrating the way in which modes of thinking are intimately related to social practices and economic rewards dependent on particular forms of cultural capital allows students to see the intrinsic connections between class, race and gender inequality and to build progressive alliances for equality and justice. These themes are explored further in Part Five of the book that explores the relationship between organised labour and vocational education. There is a useful overview of the origins, development and crisis of the US labour movement that highlights the exclusion of organised labour from the vocational education system. The author argues that the increasing 'technopower' of large corporations demands an alliance between vocational education and a new democratic and critical trade union movement in order to contextualize the dynamics of post-Fordism and provide an alternative democratic vision of social change. The potential of such an alliance is demonstrated with reference to a number of recent trade union campaigns (such as the 'Justice for Janitors' campaign organised by US public service unions) that have used the 'critical research' skills of workers in order to construct global networks of solidarity. In this way they have been able to mount successful challenges against large multinational corporations. The final section outlines the new political strategies appropriate to the new times of post-Fordist corporate 'technopower'. The author argues that a critical pedagogy aligned with a democratic and critical trade unionism is ideally placed to determine the content of a new economic citizenship premised on a social contract that counters the power and influence of corporate power with a democratic and ethical vision of 'good work'.

The book is aimed at a particular audience of readers constituted by teachers in US vocational education and it would thus be wrong to be over-critical of the rather simplistic presentation of theoretical issues throughout the book. In a society dominated by corporate individualism and

positivist social science any project premised on a humanistic and collectivist internationalism is to be thoroughly applauded. This book provides both a democratic and empowering vision for vocational teachers and students in the USA and provides a general readership with a fascinating historical insight into the development of work and education and the contemporary struggles around corporate and educational restructuring in the USA.

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British Fashion Design: Rag Trade or Image Industry?

Angela McRobbie

London: Routledge, 1998, paper £12.99, viii + 208 pp.

'Cultural Industries are being touted as an increasingly important sector of production. Sheffield now has a 'Cultural Industries Quarter', where significant local investment has taken place, and Tony Blair has boasted of the positive impact of the designer on the national economy. This book is a valuable intervention in the emerging literature on employment practice within these old and new cultural industries. Not only is the volume a fascinating and skillfully narrated story of a creative workforce and its relation to contemporary British capitalism, but it also sets out to challenge some contemporary social theory concerning these new 'cultural intermediaries', most notably that of Bourdieu (with comments also on Lash, Urry, Beck and Giddens). It would make a wonderfully readable addition to any undergraduate course on contemporary industries, or on gender and employment. It also is a good example of how to fit together different kinds of qualitative data.

At the core of the book is the analysis of 18 interviews with female fashion designers in transition between art school courses and the harsh world of un/employment. This rather bland description of the sample cannot capture the complex and interesting story told here. The success of the book, at least in part, is the way in which McRobbie weaves together the long history of fashion design and its self-image as a cultural industry with the present economic and social realities of graduating as a fashion designer. Although she draws on transcribed interviews with the design graduates over a long period of time, she also cites interviews with their teachers and the fashion journalists who will have such a large impact on the form of employment which they are able to take up after graduation.

Providing context for her interviews McRobbie discusses at length the traditions of fashion and design education. She explains why art schools have historically dominated the sector, and explores the battles within art schools for the recognition of fashion as a 'serious' art discipline. Paradoxically the fashion 'stars' of an art school can be a means by which the institution as a whole has a public face (a 'Tesco's window' for the art school as one interviewee puts it). However this does not seem to guard against the 'fashion girls' being diminished in status when juxtaposed with the 'painting boys'. Importantly, although fashion education is dominated by women, the position of the 'star' fashion design student is, as the author puts it 'more easily occupied' by male students.

After the Thatcherite appeals to a discourse of self-reliance, McRobbie argues, new cultural workers might reasonably have been expected to have represented the Conservative dream of individual entrepreneurship. They don't. In contrast to Bourdieu's depiction of cultural intermediaries as belonging to an elite stratum, McRobbie found a much less economically privileged group who depended on creative self-employment strategies and a series of micro-

economies of barter or modest financial recompense in order to survive at all. Often this included working for nothing, or next to nothing, and subsidised living with parents or partners. As the author comments, this 'new rag trade' is hardly an ideal situation, and is probably not sustainable over the long term or if any of the women had dependents. Even the most successful students in the year ended up struggling to make ends meet. Success was a stall at Camden Market or a space in the trend-setting Hyper Hyper. The less fortunate are flown overseas to find that the jobs, or even the interviews, don't exist. Another set of experiences revolves around having one's designs stolen/appropriated, either by subterfuge or as part of a supposedly legitimate relationship with a large high street chain ('standard industry practice' (86)). The alternative career paths are teaching 'working as a shop assistant'. Several years after graduation interviewees had done most if not all of these, out of necessity rather than choice.

McRobbie is explicit about her view, consistent with her earlier work in the cultural studies of youth, that the contemporary 'market of images' is of equal importance to any other economic reality. This is a particularly apt observation for the fashion designers as they are making the transition between higher education and the world of work. Early careers can be made on publicity gained from final year shows. Yet fashion has a complicated relationship to this market of images. While many students are encouraged to follow a kind of conceptual art training which might involve designing a collection around a picture or a local 'street style', any social and political issues are inevitably translated back into the more authoritative language of fine arts. This creates students who try to distance themselves from sewing as manual labour and have little real interest in the dynamics of wealth creation and business.

Thus students are vulnerable when they have to survive commercially on their own. McRobbie suggests that a key problem for her interviewees was the lack of a notion of companies as capitalist and exploitative organisations. She comments 'instead of asking why the industry was like this and how it could be improved they tended instead to interpret their experiences individualistically and retrospectively, as part of fashion folklore' (81). This lack of awareness fuels an additional purpose for the book.

McRobbie wants to 'combine the sociological work of demystification with one of reconstitution so that fashion is better able to attend to its own business, particularly in the area of manufacture and production' (12). In an excellent final chapter McRobbie returns to some of the social theory of 'cultural capitalism'. However it is never quite clear how the exposition for the audience of this book will enable fashion to attend to its own business. I expect most readers will come away wondering what forum is possible where sharing of this reconstituted vision can take place. I can only wish that it will be read not only by sociology students but also in the cultural studies seminars of the courses from which McRobbie drew her sample.

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Unions in a Contrary World: The Future of the Australian Trade Union Movement

David Peetz

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, £45.00, paper £15.95, xi + 243 pp.

Despite decades of declining trade union influence and coverage in many parts of the industrialised world, it is only over the past few years that many researchers and commentators

have turned their attention from simply divining the causes of membership reflux to studying the strategies which unions have adopted in response. The new wave of analysis sees unions as more than merely passive actors subject to forces beyond their influence, an assumption that seems to underlie much of the voluminous 'determinants of union decline' literature. It recognises that the ability of some unions to respond is limited, but deems many unions capable of shaping their future through the strategic choices they make.

David Peetz's book *Unions in a Contrary World* fits firmly into this camp. It aims to assess the effectiveness of Australian unions' strategic responses to their particular context. To achieve this it undertakes a detailed examination of the reasons for union decline and the factors that may reverse this trend, before examining the actions of the unions in the light of these findings. The principal method employed is the analysis of a series of survey databases from the 1990s. It is an ambitious project. Peetz carefully untangles the relationships between all of the plethora of interacting forces at play at the individual, workplace, enterprise, national and international levels. An attempt to illustrate this diagrammatically produces a close approximation to the wiring diagram for a small hydroelectric station (figure 1.4, p. 14). Any such endeavour to unravel the tangled skein that is union membership – surely one of the most over-determined variables known to social science – is to be applauded.

Peetz finds the Australian union density decline over the past twenty years to be due principally to three factors. In the 1980s structural or compositional changes in the labour market explained about half of the decline. More critical in the 1990s were the decollectivising strategies adopted by employers and governments towards unions. No surprises to far. These factors figure amongst the 'usual suspects' of the determinants of decline literature. However, Peetz identifies the responses at workplace level of the unions themselves to management agendas for change as an important third factor. It may even, he says, account for part of that part of the decline in density ostensibly explained by employer actions. This basic conclusion challenges much current thinking.

It is perhaps a little disappointing, given the breadth of the analysis, that the book does not engage directly with some of the current debates around the future of interest representation. In particular, we may discern a growing polarisation between those promoting self-empowering, militant actions in the workplace as the most promising path to 'union renewal', and those who see union-management partnership as an equally effective strategy in the appropriate contexts. Peetz does, however, indicate some answers. He notes evidence that workers prefer a generally cooperative, but not acquiescent, relationship between their representatives and their employers. Just as acquiescent unions were likely to lose members, so too were unions which were not seen to be attempting cooperative behaviour where appropriate. Indeed, Peetz found that, 'it was possible for both "cooperation" and industrial action to be not only consistent with union membership growth but also positively associated with each other, because employees who had favourable attitudes towards their union, arising in part from perceptions of union cooperativeness, were more inclined to support what they considered to be legitimate industrial action organised by their union' (54). At the least, this calls for a more contingent approach to union strategy than the universalist prescriptions of many of the participants in this debate. There is also much in the detailed analysis to provoke fresh thinking in old debates. Peetz finds that variation in the degree of compulsion in union membership in the workplace according to occupation and employment status (degree of casualisation) explains about four fifths of the gender gap in union membership rates. Thus the reducing gender gap in compulsory unionism may explain much of the narrowing gap in union density. At this point, however, Peetz throws his characteristic caution aside and speculates that the more 'member-driven' unions which women have tended to join may be more suited to the changed environment than the 'territory-driven' unions to which men have more

typically belonged. Similarly, some of the assumptions underlying the 'union joining' literature are tested. The factors that act to promote union joining are shown to act differently on union leaving decisions. Bad management and bad jobs, for example, may encourage some to join a union, but may, on the other hand, reflect poorly on unions amongst their existing membership, so aiding union exit.

Inevitably, the limitations of the underlying method, survey analysis, restrict the value of the study. It may be that the dynamics of union renewal differ qualitatively from the dynamics of the process of arresting union decline. If so, then a more historically attuned, case-based approach may elucidate the chemistry that underlies surges in membership activity and organisation.

Clearly, this book is mandatory reading for trade unionists and students of trade unions in Australasia. It deserves the attention of scholars elsewhere, however, and not simply those with an interest in comparative labour studies. Certainly, aspects of the Australian industrial relations framework differ from those in other countries. Yet, comparison of the Australian data with findings elsewhere, which is a feature of Peetz's analysis, reveals striking similarities. There is much in this exhaustive and meticulous mining of the rich deposits of Australian survey data to inform the important debates about union strategies and futures in North America and Europe. A valuable contribution to these debates, *Unions in a Contrary World* merits a wide readership.

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PETER HAYNES

Representing Consumers: Voices, Views and Visions

Barbara B. Stern (ed.)

London and New York: Routledge, 1998, paper £23.99, xv + 400 pp.

Representing Consumers is made up of fourteen original articles prefaced by a substantial introduction written by the editor. There are fifteen contributors, who are described by the publisher as 'international'. Since two of them are based in the UK and the remaining thirteen in the USA, this internationalism betrays an Anglo-Saxon projection of the map of the world. Even in the field of marketing, however, writers are not necessarily to be censured for the way their books are marketed.

The collection stands out for its coherence of perspective. It is not, as so often, an ill-matched jumble of papers spatchcocked together by the artful literary skill of an editor. Instead the authors are focused on a common agenda. What is at stake here is a crisis, or revolution, or paradigm-shift in research on marketing. Throughout these papers, the crude empiricism of so much mainstream marketing research is challenged by an 'interpretive turn'. It is not, however, a turn to postmodernism. Craig Thompson, for example, argues that postmodern theorising offers an *etic* account about consumers' lives, one that is not grounded in the accounts of consumers themselves. For Thompson, postmodernism has advanced an elitist critique of consumer culture in which, as in the modernism it has supposedly transcended, the theorist is privileged over his or her subjects.

The key question is: how are consumers to be represented in writing on marketing? Barbara Stern, in her paper entitled 'Narratological analysis of consumer voices in postmodern research accounts', provides a table (65) which distils many of the themes examined in the book. The relationship between researchers' and consumers' voices is analysed through a set of binary

oppositions, in which the authorial researcher dominates the subject consumer. In order to represent consumers accurately, these binary oppositions need to be deconstructed.

Stern draws an analogy between research reports and writing a novel. She focuses on the contrast between the tradition of the omniscient narrator, as in Dickens and Balzac, as against the unreliable stream-of-consciousness narration found in Joyce and Woolf. Although polemical, Stern is subtle – two qualities which characterise the collection as a whole. For all her challenges to the unreflexive self-assurance of the omnipotent narrator, Stern recognizes that narratorless narration is an illusion. Joyce and Woolf are powerful authors who, in Flaubert's phrase, are like God in the universe, 'present everywhere and visible nowhere'. The interpretive turn in marketing is not a straightforward panacea for the problems of authorial dominance. Stern goes on to raise the disturbing question: do we really know James Joyce's Molly Bloom any better than we know Jane Austen's Elizabeth Bennett?

Similar concerns are addressed in Kent Grayson's paper on 'The icons of consumer research'. He asks how we can maximize the representative power of signs while minimising their capacity to mislead and deceive. Peircean semiotics is used to push home the point that the greatest vigilance is called for at the moments of 'iconic experience' when we are persuaded that we have seen the object in the sign and are therefore close to the truth. Here, Grayson argues, is the paradox of representation: 'it may deceive most when we think it works best' (41). There is not, and should not be, any way out of reflexivity.

A crisis in the representation of consumers should surely call forth innovation in the presentation of arguments. Some of the authors are uneasily aware that their contributions are locked into rather conventional frames, even if, as in Stephen Brown's stylistically exuberant though analytically acute discussion of the rhetoric of 'crisis', they are embellished by extravagant literary flourishes which no sober journal would tolerate. There is some limited experimentation: Susan Spiggle's paper is available on the world wide web; one of Barbara Stern's papers incorporates poems by George Zinkhan and John Sherry; Jonathan Schroeder and Russell Belk use photographs; and Morris Holbrook uses stereography in his 'Journey to Kroywen', an ethnography of a city of the East Coast of Nacirema – where else?

The contributors draw their inspiration from a wide range of sources and disciplines, above all from literary critical theory, art criticism, philosophy, semiotics, social and cultural anthropology, and cultural studies. They are unashamedly eclectic, and obviously excited by marketing's interpretive turn. Their revelling in the 'crisis fest' may, as Brown observes, open up possibilities for self-aggrandising: proclaiming a paradigm-shift is not necessarily a bad career move. Even so, these papers are self-critical, and do not wallow in what Gellner called postmodernist 'metatwaddle'. In any case, Brown is surely right (376) in pointing to the 'intellectual torpor' of mainstream research in this field.

What is striking is the lack of inspiration by sociology, despite the emergence of consumption as one of the fastest-growing areas of research in the discipline. Either they do not know of our work, or it has failed to excite them. Together with behavioural psychologists and neo-classical economists, sociologists appear to have been excluded from this intellectual party – or perhaps we have excluded ourselves?