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Sara Delamont's feminist agenda which incorporates a 'non-traditional approach to the text'(page i) is one of the most striking and refreshing things about her book. The clarity and openness with which Delamont writes is guaranteed to engage the most jaded reader, whether a disinterested, young, 'post-feminist' or battle-weary, committed feminist. I speak as one who belongs to neither of these extremes, but as someone, like the vast majority of us, who is positioned in between. This book is a joy to read and is a provocation to think better and harder about feminist research .. and whether intended or not, feminist teaching and activism. The book draws on a range of research, and argues for the need for further empirical feminist sociology. In fact a sub-theme of the book is the engagement with postmodernism, an epistemological foundation about which the author is ambivalent. Indeed, Delamont argues for a combination of theoretical approaches, and uses the term 'post-industrial' throughout to reflect her chosen position.

The book argues that there is a public narrative, in part based upon research, that argues men have been lost 'the battle of the sexes', that women are victors- 'having it all' whilst men flounder in a 'gender crisis'. Delamont sets out to test this through a review of research, in Britain from the mid-1800s to the present day. Drawing on three dates for comparison, she looks at the socialisation of children through to young adulthood. She then moves on to consider four sites of potential conflict which come under constant media scrutiny, 'Stigma, deviance, bodies and identity'; 'Consumption, locality, and identity'; 'Work and identity: the indignities of labour' and finally 'Homelife and identity: domestic bliss?' Each chapter draws on research, critically assesses it, and finally offers a verdict on the central question, 'have women changed and men not?'. Reassuringly the verdict at the end of most chapters is that the evidence is inconclusive. Her overall conclusion is that there have been changes for both men and women in some areas, but that much remains the same.

Sara Delamont has been working and publishing in this area for over twenty years. Her expertise is reflected in the text. As a feminist sociologist her concern about postmodernism is that it undermines feminism, although she uses Jane Flax's work to counter this. It is a measure of her skill that where I felt that I did not agree with the research cited, or its use, I began to think I had turned into a 'postmodernist' without noticing! In her section on employment, Delamont provides a brilliant discussion of the controversial work of Catherine Hakim, showing how choice of data matters, and reading of data can provide different outcomes. I was struck repeatedly by the choices made in this book and how they were presented.

My only concern with the book as a whole is that the centrality of gender in the argument marginalises other kinds of difference, particularly 'race' and sexuality. Of course, this is the point of feminist analysis, to centralise gender, but the focus on industrial change as the basis for social change means that discussions of class are present throughout. The issue of 'race' is absent in all but passing until the chapter on deviance where it debuts alongside sexuality. The section on families states simply that the highest number of single parent families is found amongst African Caribbeans (p. 97). This is the kind of 'social fact' that has been used to pathologise African Caribbean families for decades, and its lack of comment leaves it open to such interpretation. At times Delmont uses the term 'Anglo-Saxon' and when citing other work puts 'white' in quotations, so there is clearly a recognition of what is at stake. Where difference is not marked out, the reader is left to imply that the first sections deal with Anglo-Saxons or white ethnic groups. In the vignettes, I suspect the absence of 'race' renders whiteness(es) invisible. This is particularly perplexing given the excellent section arguing for a recognition of national specificity within Britain, and cautions about London-centric studies being generalised. So are the South Asians 'British' or 'English', and should they somehow be part of the story of change rather than a marker of non-Anglo-Saxonness? If 'the category "boy" needs to be disaggregated' (38), so too do those of 'girl', and those centrally under investigation, 'men' and 'women'.

It is probably asking the impossible to do this and Delamont has done so much already within this text. She has covered a huge range of data and made them accessible and interesting. She has written in a way that acknowledges potential dispute and dissent, and so enabled this reader to engage with the text and even venture a criticism. For all of this she is to be applauded.

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