This paper explores the complexity of class relations in Nova Scotia fishing communities, using a conception of class which takes into account gender and household relations. The purpose of any class analysis is to better understand the conditions under which people live and work, and the way they act in their lives. Workers often behave in ways that surprise and frustrate Marxist theorists—being passive where they should act, and rising up and resisting in the most unlikely circumstances. It is our view that an understanding of gender and household dynamics as they relate to class would help make sense of such behaviour. There is always a danger, however, that attempts to clarify class positions degenerate into static exercises in labelling and filling boxes.¹ Our purpose in this paper is to show that a more complex, gendered class analysis can illuminate otherwise anomalous characteristics of the pattern of labour relations and capital accumulation in an industry.² We use a specific case study of the fishing industry to illustrate our general point.

We find that the literature on class, both theoretical work and applied work on the fishing industry, has two problems: it tends to focus on the individual, ignoring household dynamics and gender, and it is static, focusing on an individual’s work at a single point in time. In traditional analyses, class position is determined solely by an individual’s
own direct relationship to the means of production,\(^3\) or for
dependent individuals by the class of the (male) head of
household.\(^4\) When the mode of production is understood to
include relations of reproduction as well as production, then
the conceptualization of class must change. Household and
gender relations must be taken into account. Both life cycle
work patterns and spousal work patterns will affect a
person’s current class identification. This is crucial for un-
derstanding class struggle. After some theoretical discussion
of these issues, including an examination of attempts in the
feminist literature to come to terms with class, we illustrate
from our research in Nova Scotia fishing communities how
an expanded interpretation of class provides a better guide
to understanding relations in the industry. We focus on the
behaviour of family household members in relation to each
other, exploring the use of the family household as a crucial
unit in class analysis. The actual dynamics of the formation
of family class consciousness and decision making are not
directly analysed, though this is an important part of the
overall feminist project of reevaluating the traditional con-
cept of class.

Class Revisited In recent years a considerable effort has
been put into a reevaluation of orthodox Marxist class
categories, primarily in order to understand the position of
the expanding “middle class” (such as managers and profes-
sionals). Attempts to locate these predominantly white collar
workers have led to debates over the key defining elements
of Marxian class positions and the notion of contradictory
class location. A number of schemas for revised class
categories have been proposed.\(^5\) In this literature renewed
attention has been paid to the category of petty bourgeois.
However, petty bourgeois is itself a problematic category
in the literature.\(^6\)

Issues surrounding the petty bourgeoisie and contradic-
tory class positions have been at the heart of the literature
on class structure and struggle in the fishing industry of
Atlantic Canada. The main problem in this literature is the
position of fishers, for processing workers are seen as clearly
working class, and owners of fish plants with employees
seen as capitalists.\textsuperscript{7} There is general agreement in the literature that offshore crew are essentially working class, though in terms of ideology they may identify as petty bourgeois, holding onto the notion of the "independent" fisher. Crew on inshore and nearshore boats are argued by the unions and most analysts to also be working class, though through kinship ties many can also be members of family businesses. Furthermore, many aspire to become boat owners themselves, which affects their class identification.

The main debate in the literature and in organizational efforts in the fishery has to do with the status of fishers who own their own boats. Are they small scale capitalists, or petty bourgeois, or in a contradictory class location? Williams and Sacouman were early writers on this issue.\textsuperscript{8} More recently, Clement\textsuperscript{9} identifies five patterns among fishers: subsistence production (no exchange); capitalist commodity production (both company owners and owners of longliners with four or more crew would be considered capitalist); independent commodity production (the fisher has formal and economic ownership of the means of production, has non-exploitive labour relations, faces prices determined by supply and demand, and, therefore, is part of the traditional petty bourgeoisie); dependent commodity production (the fisher is tied to buyers in a relationship of unequal exchange, having formal but not economic ownership); and cooperative commodity production (where the boat owner is either capitalist or petty bourgeois). Williams\textsuperscript{10} has a similar scheme but includes an additional category of semi-proletarian, or semi-proletarian dependent commodity production, where fishers engage in wage labour to help make ends meet. He also recognizes that this wage labour may be sequential, not seasonal, and that the wage labour of other family members may also be involved. We elaborate on this point in this paper.

The class position of dependent commodity producers is considered to be either contradictory,\textsuperscript{11} inherently unstable, or transitory.\textsuperscript{12} The debates on this are part of the larger debate about underdevelopment and the future of independent commodity production within capitalism. Sacouman and Williams argue that part of the process of
underdevelopment is the distorted maintenance of this mode of production, while Fairley argues that straightforward capitalist development is occurring in the industry, with some fishers becoming small scale capitalists. Certain concerns have been clearly manifested in the debate: the implications for class struggle, and the potential for progressive action on the part of fishers’ organizations.

In general, the literature on the Atlantic fishery is very rich, and tends to be grounded in concern for political struggle rather than academic classification. However, it is our view that important implications for understanding class struggle are missed by inadequate attention to gender and household in most analyses.

As Marxist feminists have reiterated over and over, mostly to nodding heads with deaf ears, there are problems with Marx’ original analysis of class, based as it is on an individual’s relationship to the means of production. They have tried to sort out the interrelationships of class and gender, arguing for a gendered analysis of class and a class analysis of gender. The process of developing an integrated, comprehensive theory of gendered class struggle is long and difficult, with work proceeding on the level of grand theory and through empirical studies.

Feminists have strongly criticized Marxist theory because its concepts don’t apply to the household, which is the traditional area of women’s work. Among feminists, there has been more unanimity in the critiques than in the proposed revisions to received theory. Much intellectual effort has been expended in trying to integrate women’s work in the home into the Marxist class framework through the “domestic labour debate.” Radical feminists have argued that the “domestic mode of production” has its own mechanisms of exploitation, creating sex classes which coexist with the classes of the capitalist mode of production. Walby argues that gender interests operate independently and often in contradiction to class interests, and that gender subordination is independently created in the workplace as well as in the home. Others disagree with this “two systems” approach, arguing that the concept of mode of production should be expanded to include both the reproductive and productive
spheres, with relations of reproduction and production seen as interactive and dialectically related. There is continuing debate over the extent of autonomy of the spheres of social reproduction and production.\textsuperscript{20}

Others have posed the problem in terms of women's relationship to the wage in capitalism, focussing on the contradiction between women's roles as wage labour and domestic labour. This dual relationship to the class structure, it is argued, has important implications for consciousness and forms of resistance.\textsuperscript{21} Along these same lines, it has also been argued that the working class should be defined not as those with a particular relationship to the means of production but as all those who are dependent upon the sale of labour power - directly and indirectly. As wage earners women have a direct relationship to the wage, but as domestic workers they have an indirect relationship to the wage experience through their husbands' wage labour.\textsuperscript{22} In this approach women's relationship to the class structure is, at least partially, mediated by the family household, domestic labour and dependence on men. Even when women are themselves wage workers, the integration of gender and class relations gives a distinct meaning to their experience of class in the workplace.\textsuperscript{23} Thus, in the feminist literature, as in the Marxist literature discussed above, there is an emphasis on contradictory aspects of class position. The contradictory forces identified by feminists analysing the class positions of women (i.e. both direct and indirect relations to the means of production) must also be applied in a revised class analysis of men.

Recent feminist work has focused on demonstrating theoretically and empirically the centrality of women's household labour and the relations of reproduction to any analysis of the economic system. This is especially true in the literature on gender and development, which shows that women's work, gender relations and household forms are integrally related to the accumulation process. In a variety of ways they both affect and are affected by the specific form accumulation takes in particular countries and regions.\textsuperscript{24}
The literature on gender and development reminds all political economists of the need for an "analysis of the interconnections between capital accumulation, class formation, and gender relations." The feminist agenda includes showing that gender analysis is not something to be done separately, but is something that profoundly affects the "main business" of Marxist analysis. Ignoring issues of gender and household may quite simply lead to a wrong understanding of the world. "Gendered class analysis" does not mean class analysis of women; it means a new approach to all class analysis.

How can we begin to revise the standard class analysis to take into account these concerns? Feminists have strongly criticized the common sociological approach in which women's class position is assumed to be the same as that of their husbands. The class position of women must take account of both their direct and indirect relation to the means of production - their own productive and reproductive labour as well as that of their husbands. By implication, the class position of husbands must take account of the work of their wives. An excellent attempt to analyse the joint determination of the class positions of family members is the work of Beneria and Roldan, which analyses the class trajectories of wives and husbands and their interactions in Mexico city. They show that advances in the class position of the males are facilitated by downward mobility of their spouses, and they relate this to the general process of capital accumulation.

There have been attempts to assign class locations to households by taking account of the work of both husbands and wives, such as that by Britten and Heath using aggregate data for the United Kingdom. There are many conceptual and empirical challenges in such undertakings. It is our view that such revisions are better explored at the level of local data, with particular issues of class struggle and economic change in mind. In the next section we outline some of the elements involved in this expanded class analysis, and suggest why it should make a difference to the analysis of the fishing industry. Later sections use specific examples from our research to explore how such an analysis could be used.
The Fishing Industry Revisited As mentioned above, most of the class analysis of the fishery has focussed on individuals at one point in time, while ignoring their work histories and family work patterns. But class identification is affected by both, as well as by gender. Rick Williams devotes some attention to the work history aspect in his sketch of a “typical” inshore fisher. He describes a person who began fishing with his father then decided he wanted to be a fisher. He then spent five years crewing in B.C. (working class) to raise capital to buy a boat. Now he owns a boat, is a “highliner,” sells competitively and employs no labour (petty bourgeois, or independent commodity production). However, if the fishing is bad he occasionally still goes to Prince Rupert to crew for a season. His experience on the west coast gave him a belief in unions, and he is active in the Maritime Fishermen’s Union, though his concerns reflect a mixture of working class and independent business ideology.

One can imagine another equally “typical” fisher who inherited his father’s boat and never had the wage-labour experience, or one who worked on offshore boats for awhile, or one who drove a cab in the city for years. Each of these would have a different identification and orientation towards the struggles in the inshore fishery. Understanding the patterns that operate should enable us to better understand class behaviour at a given point in time. Furthermore, work patterns may differ by community, or may be changing over time, which will help us understand the changing class dynamic across communities.

Women’s work histories also affect their current work behaviour. Women may move between formal wage labour and informal activities such as babysitting, selling handmade goods, taking in boarders and so on. The class position of these informal sector activities is seldom examined. For women there is also the ever-present work of reproduction, the class position of which has been subject to scrutiny in the domestic labour debate. The combination of productive and reproductive work undertaken by most women adds complexity to their class position and class consciousness.
In fishing communities there is another kind of women’s work activity that is often ignored, and that is the work that wives of fishers do for the family enterprise, generally without pay. There are certainly implications for class analysis of women who are not only fish plant workers but are also working for their husbands’ fishing operations. Most of the research on the fishery has ignored the implications of the complex work histories and pluralistic work patterns of the individuals involved in the industry.

For the most part, household/spousal work patterns have also been ignored in analyses of class relations in the industry. One of the questions that motivated our own research was ‘Who works in the fish plant?’ It seemed to us that it made a great deal of difference whether it was wives of fishers, wives of fish plant workers, single people, people whose spouses were unemployed, or those whose spouses worked in unrelated industries. The employees’ class identification and the terms of struggle in the plant (and in the fishery) should be profoundly influenced by the answer to this question. For example, analysing the relation between fishers and plant owners, and separately analysing the relationship between plant owners and processing workers makes little sense if the fishers are married to the plant workers. Their interests are intertwined. Higher prices for fishers may mean lower wages for plant workers. This may be acceptable to the wives of fishers, given unequal gender relations; it may not be acceptable to women plant workers whose husbands work outside the fishing industry, or alongside them in the plant.

There are many examples which illustrate that spousal work patterns should be an essential part of the analysis. For instance, Clement tries to explain the internal dynamics of coops in the fishing industry by analysing the complex class relations within the coops. He points out that coops contain within them all the classes of capitalism, creating internal class struggle. He emphasizes that the member fishers may be independent commodity producers in their own fishing enterprises, but that in their role as co-op members they function as capitalists in relation to the processing workers. This helps explain why coops have a very bad
record as employers, in terms of wages. However, gender relations are ignored, even though most fishers are men and many processing workers are women. Nowhere, furthermore, does Clement take into account the household relations between co-op plant workers and member fishers, or between crew and boat owners for that matter. How this complicates the class struggle within the coops, and how it affects their potential for progressive action, is illustrated in the final section of this paper.

Spousal work patterns and gender relations also need to be more closely addressed in the analysis of semi-proletarianization of fishers (dependent commodity production). We expect it makes a difference whether it is fishers who take wage jobs, or their wives, or even their children. If it is the fisher himself, it may give him a contradictory sense of his class, and may incline him more to a working class analysis of his situation, with implications for the kind of political action in which he will engage. If it is his wife, given asymmetrical gender relations in the household, her proletarianization may facilitate his acquiring a purely bourgeois class identification, which of course may also limit his wife’s political action. We would expect differences in the struggles over time and by area, depending on the form this so-called semi-proletarianization of the fishing household takes.

A final general point about the importance of household and gender relations to a class analysis is that the terms of struggle are both shaped by, and in turn shape these household relations. How do household strategies for survival, individual strategies regarding work, and strategies of capital interact over time? Does capital encourage (or benefit from) a particular spousal work pattern rather than another? Do households choose a pattern of labour allocation as a conscious part of class struggle? If so, what are the gender implications of this choice? We can look for evidence that capital has consciously tried to manipulate family work patterns through hiring practices, for example, to strengthen its hand. The state has of course also played a role in altering the work patterns and this has changed the class and gender relations in the fishing industry.
In other words, an expanded class analysis enables us to take a fresh look at the processes of struggle and economic change in the industry and in the communities. In the remainder of this paper we use two types of data from our research to examine some of these issues. First, we document the family work patterns, exploring the combinations of individual class positions and the question of a family household class position. Second, we examine changes in industrial relations in two communities, showing that using the household as a unit of analysis helps clarify our understanding of the struggles.

Household and Lifecycle Work Patterns and the Complexity of Class In this section we examine household survey data from a sample of six Nova Scotia fishing communities. We are interested in individual work history patterns and spousal work patterns. The purpose is to show the complexity of the work patterns and therefore of class positions. We suggest implications for class relations in the industry, which are more fully explored in the next section. The six communities include two larger fishing centres, dominated by National Sea plants, three medium size communities with independently-owned fish plants, and one small community with a co-op buying station but no processing plant. With these data we are able to examine overall trends and differences in patterns by age group and by community. First we look at the individual work histories, then we examine combined work patterns of wives and husbands.

Approximately 30 percent of the male spouses had fished, 30 percent had worked in the plant, and 15 percent had done both. We are interested in movements among boatowning (petty bourgeois), crew, and wage labour (particularly in the fish plant). We found that 70 percent of men who had owned their own boat at some time had also worked in a crew position and three-quarters of them had other wage work experience, with 17 percent having worked in the fish plant. Typically those who owned their own boat had spent only 60 percent of their working lives self-employed and a pattern of multiple job holding throughout
the year also characterized about 40 percent of them at least some of the time. Of men who had ever worked in the fish plant (45 percent of our sample), 40 percent had also fished at some time and a quarter of those had moved between plant and fishing more than once. While the most common direction of move was from the plant to crew, 15 percent had owned boats before going into the fish plant, and 10 percent left the plant to buy their own boats. For these men, it is likely that the experience of owning a boat, or the aspiration to become a boat owner coloured their consciousness while they were in a working class position.

In general, then, there is considerable evidence for complex individual class positions of male fishing industry participants over the course of their lives. Interpreting male fish plant workers as strictly working class, or boat owners as petty bourgeois will limit our ability to explain their behaviour. \(^{43}\) We found considerable variation in the patterns by community. For example, in the largest port all of the boat owners had wage work experience, whereas in the smallest, most traditional community, only 25 percent had done anything other than fish. The pattern of multiple job holding during the year was particularly common in the Eastern part of the province, where the fishing is poorer. We also found differences by age group, with the younger cohort less likely to hold multiple jobs, or move from one class position to another.

Turning now to the work patterns for women in the communities, we found them to be equally complex. Approximately three-quarters of women have done wage work at some time since marriage, typically for about a third of their married lives. Much of this wage work experience was outside the fishing industry, primarily in the service sector; however 40 percent have worked in the fish plant at some time. Women have also been active in various forms of self-employment, such as babysitting, selling crafts, or selling Avon products. In addition to doing most of the domestic labour for their households (wives of fishers do essentially all the household work), women engaged in subsistence production of various sorts, including keeping gardens, making clothes and preserving food. These activities,
which are often associated with independent commodity production, have declined rapidly in recent years, with the younger cohort more likely to substitute wage work for subsistence activities. We also found that subsistence activities remain more common in the Eastern part of the province where, as mentioned above, the fishing is poorer. Women whose husbands have been boat owners have also engaged in a variety of work (generally unpaid) that supports the fishing enterprise. This adds another dimension to the class fabric of their work histories. As emphasized above, in our view it is critical to class analysis to link up the work experiences of household members, and in this paper we focus on the spousal work combinations. In examining spousal work patterns, we are particularly concerned with combinations of work which are relevant to understanding class relations in the fishing industry, in both the harvesting and processing sectors. Therefore we focus on the work of wives of fishers (owners and crew), wives of male plant workers, and husbands of female plant workers.

We found that almost half of the wives of boat owners worked for wages during at least part of the time their husbands owned the boat. In fact, one-quarter of the wives of boat owners worked at the plant at some time while their husbands owned boats. We found this to differ by community and by age group. In the larger fishing ports the recent trend has been away from wives of fishers (both crew and owners) working outside the home. This implies more consistent family class positions emerging. In smaller communities it is still common to have wives of fishers working in the plants, which affects the struggles of both fishers and plant workers against the plantowners.

We also collected data on the extent to which wives of boat owners contributed labour directly to the fishing enterprise. We found that the amount and kind of work contributed by wives has changed over the years. Since World War II they have become more involved in the bookkeeping tasks and less involved in production of supplies or processing of the catch. Among the wives of the current boat owners, the most common involvement was in bookkeeping work (50-60 percent do books and bills) and running errands.
(50 percent). One quarter of the wives also arranged sales. Only 25 percent of wives now prepare meals for the men or ever fish with their husbands. Interestingly, in our sample we found no differences in the extent of involvement in the fishing enterprise between those wives who also held paid jobs and those who did not. From interviews with key informants in the communities we know that many of the larger independent fishers have their wives working as partners (often unpaid), running the business side of things. These households fit the traditional model of petty bourgeois, though of course the class position of these wives is still problematic.

When we examined the spousal work patterns for men who have been fish plant workers, we found that their wives were more likely to have a history of work outside the home than the wives of fishers. Almost three-quarters of the wives worked outside the home during the time the men were in the plant and almost forty percent worked in the plant at the same time as their husbands. The class position of most of these households thus appears to be working class, although as mentioned above many of the men would have also fished and some would have been boat owners, affecting their class identification.

It is also crucial to know the work patterns of the husbands of female plant workers. In our sample, 40 percent of the wives had worked in the fish plant at some time. There was great variation in the pattern of their husbands' work by community. In the larger ports (dominated by National Sea), the more common pattern was for husbands of female plant workers to work in the fish plant or do other wage work, whereas in the smaller ports the husbands were more likely to be fishers. We also found variation by age, with the younger generation more likely to have both husband and wife working in the fish plant. This is particularly significant for class struggle in the processing sector, which we examine in the last section of the paper.

When we examined the current family work patterns in our sample, we found that none of the wives of current boat owners were in the plant, though 63 percent were doing wage work. This differed by area, with the wives of
owners on the more prosperous South Shore more likely to be at home. We found that 18 percent of the wives of crew and 21 percent of the wives of male plant workers were in the plant,\textsuperscript{48} again with differences by community.

Looking at the husbands of female plant workers, 46 percent were also in the plant, none were owners, 23 percent were crew, and 8 percent were unemployed or retired. In one medium size inshore port none of the female plant workers' husbands worked in the plant, and 75 percent were crew, whereas in the large National Sea dominated ports 67 percent and 80 percent of the husbands were also plant workers and none were crew. These differences by community should help explain observed differences in industrial relations.

In conclusion, our data illustrate the complexity of household class positions in the fishing industry. We find differences by community, which seem to be related to the nature of the fishery in each area (inshore/offshore, prosperous/marginal, corporate/independent). These differences also reflect the stage of capital accumulation, since the ports studied represent the spectrum from traditional small scale fishing to monopoly capital. We find some evidence that male work patterns have become more stable, with less movement between fishing, plant work and other work, at least in the more corporate communities. The evidence also suggests that clearer family class positions are emerging in the more corporate sectors of the industry. This means that the class interests of family members are compatible; for example, both are wage workers, or both are dependent on one income, whether it be from wage work or self-employment. Contradictory household class positions characterize the more marginal sectors of the industry, with the class interests of family members potentially conflicting. In such cases, the class identification of either spouse can deviate from what one might predict by observing only their individual relationship to the means of production. Unequal gender relations in the household and the workplace will affect what the dominant class interest in the family household will be and what the household strategy will be regarding the allocation of labour.
Analysis of Particular Struggles In this section we use particular examples from our community case studies to demonstrate that an expanded class analysis helps clarify the state of industry relations. In our first community, a medium size port, the fishers co-op built a processing plant in 1950. Fishers earned low incomes and their wives worked in the plant for low wages. The benefit of the co-op was that the people felt they were working for themselves and they were keeping some surplus in the community. Since the fishers owned the co-op and their wives worked in the plant there was a perception of it as a family affair; men caught the fish, women processed them. Therefore, despite the fact that women were doing working class jobs and earning low wages under poor conditions, the petty bourgeois class consciousness of the husbands prevailed and there was no talk of unionization in the plant. Women essentially saw themselves as family help (processing the catch) in a petty bourgeois enterprise.

In the early 1970s, as a result of untimely expansion followed by a refusal of the Nova Scotia government to provide support, the co-op was sold to private interests. This was a period of crisis in the fishery. Many fishers sold their boats and more women entered wage labour. Conditions in the plant worsened, if anything, under private management. But fishers needed to sell their fish to the plant and their wives, along with other women, needed the wage, so unionization was still not on the agenda. A fight for higher wages could have negatively affected the price of fish and even the sale of fish to the plant. Once again the family household work patterns affected the potential for working class consciousness and militancy of women wage workers.

When fishing improved and fishers' incomes rose in the late 1970s, it no longer made economic sense for wives of fishers to work for low wages in the plant. Rather than raise wages to keep the labour force, the owner (thanks to a government-supported ferry) was able to use a more marginal female labour supply in a nearby community. These women were married to men who had low paid, often
seasonal jobs outside the fishery, such as cutting pulp or working on the roads. At first there was no sense of class consciousness among these women and no sign of resistance. They were grateful to have the work. The fishers’ wives, as part of their household strategy, withdrew from the labour force even though some said they would have preferred to stay. In this case, the household strategy and gender relations within the household took precedence over women’s wishes and employers needs.

In the 1980s the plant ceased buying fresh fish from local fishers and began to process northern cod to supply a fast food chain in the USA. A new manager was hired to double productivity and increase the quality of fish, with no corresponding increase in pay for the workers. Women on the line bore the brunt of these changes. Most of the women from the nearby community were the most stable, if not the main, breadwinners in their households. They were unprepared to continue working under deteriorating conditions and they sent for a union organizer. The employer’s response was to threaten to close the plant. The women called the employer on his threat and after a lengthy struggle the union was certified.

When we first interviewed these women several years ago they showed no signs of militancy of any sort. In this case, however, the women’s class position was not only the dominant one in their households, but as well the position of their husbands was not in conflict. As a result, their household strategy reflected a working class consciousness and led to working class struggle.

We next illustrate the implications of this approach for clarifying class relations in the industry with a brief case study of another community, a larger fishing port which has been an industry centre for over a hundred years. It has had two large processing plants since the early nineteen hundreds, one of which is a National Sea plant, recently modernized. The plants have been the largest employers for the town and surrounding area. It had an offshore fleet until the early 1970s when National Sea consolidated its fleet in other ports. Recent years have seen the rise of a few successful midshore boats, owned by independents.
Up until World War II, no women were employed in the fish plants, though they worked in the service/trade sectors. Most married women did not work outside the home. The early pattern for men, when processing was minimal, was to crew on the schooners and then do small boat fishing as part of a package of subsistence activities. This pattern seemed to follow both seasonal and cyclical lines, with men doing a combination of inshore and offshore fishing over a period of years, including going away to fish. In the period between the two World Wars, the men were increasingly involved in processing (wage work), and there was also an increase in small boat fishing as well as a continuation of work in company-owned offshore boats. The incomes and social standing of the fishers (inshore and offshore) and the fish-handlers seems to have been equally low, and men moved between these two types of work. In this context, it is not surprising that in the organizing efforts of the 1930s, fishhandlers and fishers (offshore) formed one union and waged an ardent, lengthy, but ultimately unsuccessful struggle for recognition. These men had a shared class consciousness. Furthermore, they were strongly supported in their fight by their wives.

After their bitter defeat, and after World War II, relations changed in the industry. More men turned to inshore fishing, moving between crew and owner status. Increasingly, once they got their own boats they were almost exclusively self-employed, though a few ended their working lives in the plant. At the same time, the companies began hiring women in the plants, a change variously explained by the labour shortage of the war and by technological changes in processing. It is our opinion that the change had also to do with the bitter labour struggles which had just occurred and the companies' desire to maintain its cheap (docile) labour policy.

The ensuing period saw much more passive labour relations in the community. Many wives of the fishers who sold to the companies now worked in the fish plant. These fishers were in dependent commodity production, tied to the companies who had monopsony power as buyers. They were further tied by their wives' wage work in the plants,
and often by the work of their children.\textsuperscript{50} The companies had considerable leverage over these families. In terms of consciousness, it seems that these inshore fishers developed more of a bourgeois consciousness of "independence," facilitated by their wives' proletarianization. The combination was not conducive to political action on either front—in the plants or on the boats.

When we look at changes in the community in the last twenty years, we find that gradually less and less wives of fishers worked at the plant. This is partly due to higher incomes for fishers in the area. More and more the male labour force is being divided between boat owners, crew and plant workers, with less movement among these positions. A further trend is for the number of boat owners to decrease, so that more and more men are in a working class position in terms of their own relation to the means of production. The men who remain as boat owners have been able to achieve more independence from the companies, due to the rise of the fresh fish market and independent buyers. They are also less tied to the companies through family links, for increasingly their wives do not work in the plants.

Most male plant workers' wives worked outside the home throughout the post-War period; however, only in recent years have they tended to work in the plant. Increasingly the trend has been towards husband/wife teams in the plant, and for the female plant workers to be married to plant workers rather than to fishers.\textsuperscript{51} There are also many female plant workers who come from outside the community and who are typically married to men not involved in the fishing industry (working at low-wage jobs), or are single parents. In terms of the family class orientation of the plant workforce, then, it has become more clearly working class in recent years.

How has this affected relations in the plant? Relations between workers and management have been very bad in recent years. The paternalistic strategy which the company successfully employed in the past is no longer used, nor is it workable. The withdrawal of fishers' wives from the plant probably contributed to this, as it did in the community
discussed above. The corporate strategy as described by both
the company and the workers is much like any capitalist
labour strategy. Class struggle in the plant has become more
pronounced, the lines more sharply drawn. The company’s
strategies include technological change, speed-ups and
dividing the labour force through recruitment strategy.
During one of our visits, this seemed to be working in
capital’s favour, for the workforce was demoralized and
frightened for their jobs. However, a later visit reassured
us that class struggle was alive and well, and there was
more sign of resistance by the workers who, as analysed
above, have a fairly clear class position. Resistance has
mainly taken the form of turnover and individualized
responses to the bad conditions. The company is feeling
the effects. These workers have a great deal of potential
power, although, as usual in an underdeveloped region, this
is offset by the pressure of a reserve labour force. Manage-
ment is looking for a more desperate workforce (single
parents, women whose husbands are unemployed). They
also have the ever-present option of closing the plant. At
the time of writing, after our fieldwork was completed, there
was a strike in this plant, confirming our expectation that
clearer household class positions should facilitate increased
worker resistance.

Conclusion The theoretical debates about class and the
literature on class structure and struggle in the fishing in-
dustry focus on the individual at one point in time and
ignore both women’s unpaid and paid work, the family
household and gender relations. Feminist research, on the
other hand, has shown the importance of these issues to
class analysis. In this paper, we have argued that women’s
work, gender relations and household strategies are neces-
sary to understanding class relations and class struggle in
the fishery.

Using data from our study of fishing communities we
have explored ways of modifying class analysis using the
family household as a unit of analysis. Class is a dynamic
and complex relationship affecting, in the majority of cases,
women and men who live together in unequal gender rela-
tions within households. By looking at women's and men's work histories (domestic and wage labour) and their family work patterns and strategies, we are better able to understand their class position and their class consciousness. Using the household as the unit of analysis, it appears that class conditions gender relations and gender conditions class relations. The challenge for political economy is to more fully understand these processes. Research is needed on the dynamics of family decision-making, the formation of class consciousness, and the interaction of class and gender interests at the level of the family.

In this paper we have illustrated in a preliminary way the implications of class positions and class struggles in the fishing industry. We have demonstrated that an expanded class analysis clarifies the state of relations in the industry. Insights are gained which go beyond those possible using the traditional, individually-based class framework of most Marxist analysis.

Notes

We would like to thank the people in the communities we studied and the members of our research team, Joyce Conrad, Suzan Ilcan, Beth McIsaac, Kathy Moggridge and Daphne Tucker for their contributions. This research was supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Women and Work Strategic Grant and by the Donner Canadian foundation. All papers out of this joint research are co-authored, with alternating order of names.

1. This accusation has been made of much of the debate over the proper class location of the "new middle class." It has also been made of the "domestic labour debate"; see, for example, Eva Kaluzynska, "Wiping the Floor With Theory" Feminist Review 6 (1980).

2. There are, of course, many class-related issues in the feminist literature which we do not address in this paper. For example, we focus more on struggles in the sphere of production than on intra-family relations and domestic labour.

3. We are referring particularly to the literature on a reevaluation of Marxist class categories, such as Eric Olin Wright, "Class Boundaries in Advanced Capitalist Societies," New Left Review 98 (1976) pp. 3-41 and Class, Crisis and the State (London: 1978) as well as Nicos Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Class (London: 1973). See also attempts to enumerate the class composition of Canada, such as Wallace Clement, Class, Power and Property: Essays on Canadian Society
MacDonald & Connelly/Communities

(Toronto: 1983); and Henry Veltmeyer, *Canadian Class Structure* (Toronto: 1986). The literature on class consciousness takes more account of formative factors such as father's occupation. For an interesting example of such work on the fishery see Trevor Lummis, *Occupation and Society, The East Anglian Fisherman, 1880-1914* (Cambridge: 1984).


5. Veltmeyer, *Canadian Class Structure*, summarizes the positions. One approach is to add all these workers to the traditional working class, since all are dependent on selling their labour power. However, it seems that the identification and interests of these workers is often more similar to the capitalist class than the working class. Some writers thus emphasize the similarities between this group and capital, either in terms of their real economic control (though not ownership) of the means of production, their ownership of significant “human” capital, or their control over their own or other people's labour. Depending on the factors emphasized, the group is then viewed as forming a new class (either a professional-managerial class, as argued by Barbara and John Ehrenreich, “The Professional-Managerial Class” in Pat Walker (ed.), *Between Capital and Labour*, Montreal: 1978, or a new middle class, as argued by G. Carchedi, “On the Economic Identification of the New Middle Class,” *Economy and Society* 4/1 (1975) or occupying a contradictory class position, as in Wright, “Class Boundaries,” or being part of the petty bourgeoisie, as in Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Class* and Judah Hill, *Class Analysis; United States in the 1970s*, (San Fransisco: 1975). Veltmeyer, *Canadian...*, and Clement, *Class...*, essentially take the latter position, at the same time acknowledging the contradictory aspects of their class location.

6. There are debates about the definition of petty bourgeoisie, for example, whether they may purchase any labour power; there is some disagreement about their relation to the working class and whether they can be part of a progressive alliance for social change; there is also interest in the evolution of this class, whether it would wither away or stubbornly persist.

7. The problem of classifying fishers on the East Coast is reflected in the law, where until recently all fishers were excluded from trade union legislation and classified as co-adventurers (self-employed), based on the fact that crew are paid on a share basis rather than with a wage. Newfoundland was the first to change the law, so that all fishers (other than captains on big company trawlers) are now able to be members of the union. Nova Scotia changed the law in 1971 for crew on large trawlers.


11. Ibid.


14. Fairley, "The Struggle for Capitalism...," argues that the NFFAW is dominated by the larger boat owners and the union's agenda has become the development of capitalist production in the fishery. Most other Marxists argue that the contradictory class position of fishers means there is the potential for more progressive organization and struggle in the industry. Both Williams, "Implications of Political Economic...," and Clement, *The Struggle to Organize*, emphasize the mixture of working class and independent commodity producer ideology in fishers' attempts to organize and in the issues they pursue. Peter Sinclair, "Fishermen of Northwest Newfoundland," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 19/1 (Spring 1984) argues that for Newfoundland the direction of development seems to include both an increase in small capital (as emphasized by Fairley) and a growth of dependent commodity production (as emphasized by Sacouman and Williams).

15. A literature on women and fishing that begins to redress this imbalance, and of which this research is a part, is now emerging. Gradually all researchers working on the political economy of the fishery are being sensitized to the need to include gender in their analyses.


17. See, for example, Bonnie Fox (ed.), *Hidden in the Household: Women's Domestic Labour Under Capitalism* (Toronto: 1980).


23. This is well illustrated in Anna Pollert, "Women, Gender Relations and Wage Labour" in Eva Gamarmikow et al (eds.), *Gender, Class and Work* (London: 1983).

24. See, for example, the studies in Eleanor Leacock and Helen Safa (eds.), *Women's Work: Development and the Division of Labour* (Massachusetts: 1986).


27. See, for example, Acker, "Class, Gender..."; Delphy, Close to Home; Michelle Stanworth, "Women and Class Analysis—A Reply to Goldthorpe," Sociology 18/2 (May 1984); Marilyn Porter, Home, Work and Class Consciousness (Manchester: 1983).

28. This continues to be resisted, and the traditional approach defended, by some leading class theorists (Goldthorpe, 1983). See Anne Phillips, Divided Loyalties: Dilemmas of Sex and Class (London: 1987) for a discussion.


31. Williams, "Inshore Fishermen, Unionization...," p 162.

32. One relevant determinant of class consciousness is of course class of origin, routinely decided with reference to father's occupation. The influence of mothers on children's future class identification should equally be investigated.

33. This is sometimes recognized in the literature on unionization, for example. The point is often made that women are not interested in unions because of their short commitment to the job, or because their experience in household work gives them an ideology of "independence."

34. Fox, (ed.), Hidden in the Household.

35. This has been explored in many case studies of women and the labour process. A good example is Anna Pollert's study of tobacco plant workers in Pollert, "Women, Gender Relations and..."


39. The data was collected from 1984 to 1986 and included a household survey which focussed on family work patterns, including paid and unpaid work (n=150). In addition we conducted oral history interviews and interviews with key informants, including fish plant managers.
40. We focus on spousal work patterns both because of their theoretical importance in discussions of class and gender and for empirical reasons. Our data is from a project focusing on women, and our universe for sampling purposes was all households with adult females. As it turned out, only one of our respondents was a single (never married) woman.

41. We divided our sample into three age cohorts, those born since 1950, those born between 1930 and 1949, and those born prior to 1930. Our interest in community in this paper is to document that there are community differences in work patterns which relate to community differences in observed class relations. Given the primary focus of this paper and limitations of space, we are not able to discuss the detailed differences among communities, or the theoretical role of community in class analysis.

42. Our sample was a random sample of households (with adult females) in each community, therefore not every household was necessarily involved in the fishing industry. However, of the male spouses in our sample, only 25 percent had no work history involvement in the fishery.

43. Lummis, *Occupation and Society...*, in a study of East Anglia fishermen considers the boatowners to have a predominantly working class consciousness.

44. Wives of men who owned boats prior to World War II mainly knit lobster heads (75 percent), cooked meals (75 percent), cleaned and salted fish (38 percent) and sometimes fished with their husbands (63 percent). In the period from the War to 1970, 25 percent helped with bookkeeping, while running errands, knitting lobster heads and salting fish declined in importance. Preparing meals remained an important job (77 percent). Fewer women fished with their husbands in this period (31 percent). The pattern remained similar from 1970 to the present for wives whose husbands owned boats during that period.

45. Other papers based on this research examine the sexual division of labour in the plants. There are many differences in the way the husbands and wives experience the labour process, even if they work together in the same plant.

46. Of the men, 22 percent are in the plant, 22 percent are fishing, 29 percent are in other wage work, and 27 percent are retired or unemployed. Of the women, 10 percent are in the plant, 27 percent are in other wage work, and 62 percent are at home (including retired). There is considerable variation in the labour force participation rates of the women under age 65 by community, ranging from 25 percent to 60 percent.

47. Our sample of current boat owners is very small. Our key informant interviews in the communities indicated that in the smaller communities many fishers’ wives do still work in the plant.

48. There is wide variation by type of crew in whether wives of crew work outside the home. Wives of offshore crew, who earn good money and are away for extended periods, tend to stay home, whereas wives of inshore crew, particularly in the smaller ports, have a high labour force participation rate. There is also a life cycle effect, of course, with younger wives more likely to be home with small children.
49. Williams, "Implications of Political Economic/ Class Position of Inshore Fishermen..."; and Clement, The Struggle to Organize.

50. It is our estimation that only 20 percent of the fishing families in our sample from this community who were born before 1930 and had their own boats after the War survived solely on the income from "independent" inshore fishing. There was often a seasonal pattern to the work of wives and children in the plants, with older children working in the summer while mothers stayed home to look after the younger children who were out of school at that time.

51. Today we see a situation in which all the young male plant workers' wives in our sample have worked in the plant in the last two years; furthermore, two-thirds of the husbands of the female plant workers in our sample also worked in the plant.

52. There are still gender differences in the experience of class of the men and women, which affect the possibility of unified action. See, for example, Pollert, "Women, Gender Relations and...".

53. One manager gave an analysis of the power that two-earner families have. He said that neither one feels the responsibility of a primary earner—the women quit for periods of time and want their jobs back, and the men are increasingly slacking off in other ways, such as absenteeism.