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**‘I feel I am in control of my own little  
area’: Agency and Emotion in  
Women’s Household Financial  
Management c.1970-1995**

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September 2021

## Statement

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:     Kate Wall

## Summary

This thesis explores women's relationship with household money during a period of profound change in women's lives and in money management practices. My use of Mass-Observation Project testimony offers an insight into women's experiences and emotions around household money which challenges the trajectory of women's declining financial agency suggested by mid-century oral histories and qualifies the pessimistic conclusions of contemporary sociological studies.

The research historicises women's relationship with household money in late-twentieth-century Britain. Financial independence for all women was a key demand of the Women's Liberation Movement, highlighting the financial dependency many married women faced, made more visible by rising divorce, despite their increasing engagement in paid work. Drawing on women's print media and banks' advertising I demonstrate that household money was an important site for tensions between the companionate ideal of marital sharing and women's autonomy to play out.

By foregrounding the popularisation of high street banking and the revolution in technologies such as ATMs and credit cards, my thesis also disrupts conceptions of finance in the 1980s which dwell on the City. In contrast, I combine a focus on the material, spatial, temporal and embodied nature of everyday financial practices with an emphasis on their emotional resonance. This allows me to locate women's feelings of agency in the complex web of change and continuity in practices and emotions which my analysis reveals.

My exploration of financial advice in women's magazines identifies a rise in expectations of women's agency and expertise. I use M-OP to show that women deployed reflexivity and creativity in negotiating the increasingly complex terrain of domestic finances. I challenge the view that women were marginalised by the popularisation of banking and financial technologies and argue instead that managing household finances in the late twentieth century could provide women with a source of satisfaction and self-actualisation.

# Contents

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Structure</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Research Context and Methodology</b>	<b>18</b>
Historiography	18
Contemporary Sociology: Opening the ‘black box’	25
Mass-Observation Project	32
Magazines and ‘Femail’	40
Banks’ Advertising	43
<b>CHAPTER 1: CASH IS A FEMINIST ISSUE</b>	<b>46</b>
<b><i>Spare Rib</i> and the Women’s Liberation Movement</b>	<b>48</b>
A ‘new but as yet unfocused eye’	51
The Demand for Legal and Financial Independence	55
Wages For Housework	59
‘A Fowler Future’	63
<b>Academic Research into Woman and Money</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>M-OP: Women’s agency in response to male financial control</b>	<b>72</b>
Accepters	74
Resenters	75
Modifier/Resisters	77
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: MONEY AND MARRIAGE</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Money and Marriage in Women’s Print Media</b>	<b>85</b>
1970s	86
1980s	92
1990s	99

<b>Marital Money in M-OP</b>	<b>103</b>
His	106
Ours	114
Mine	124
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>137</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 3: AGENCY AND EMOTION</b>	 <b>141</b>
<b>‘A Woman’s World’</b>	<b>145</b>
‘The Great Unbanked’	148
‘The New Woman’	152
The Feminisation of Finance	158
‘Curse of the Credit Card Wife’	162
 <b>Agency and Emotion in M-OP</b>	 <b>167</b>
Managing Money as an Emotional Practice	168
Control and lack of Control	174
Anger	183
Pride	189
Pleasure	194
 <b>Conclusion</b>	 <b>200</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 4: THE FINANCIAL-SELF</b>	 <b>205</b>
 <b>Financial Technologies and Identity: From Status Symbol to ‘Big Brother’</b>	 <b>208</b>
 <b>Constructing a Financial-Self Through M-OP</b>	 <b>213</b>
Childhood and Employment	217
The Cultural Script: Financial Archetypes	219
 <b>Conclusion</b>	 <b>239</b>
 <b>CONCLUSION</b>	 <b>242</b>
 <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	 <b>251</b>

## Acknowledgements

I couldn't have written this thesis without the support of my brilliant supervisors, Professor Claire Langhamer and Professor Lucy Robinson. I owe them an enormous debt of gratitude for their unflagging enthusiasm for this project and faith in my ability to complete it. They have challenged me intellectually and supported me emotionally; their contribution to this thesis is immeasurable.

I would like to thank the archivists without whom my research would have been impossible. I am grateful to Fiona Courage, Director of the Mass-Observation Archive, M-O Archivist Jessica Scantlebury, and their colleagues at the Keep for helping with my queries and maintaining this wonderful resource. The staff at the four bank archives I visited were incredibly supportive. They helped me to navigate my way through a wealth of material and guided me towards particularly fascinating and fertile resources. They include Sophie Volker and Lyn Crawford at the RBS Archive; Maria Sienkiewicz at the Barclays Group Archives; Karen Sampson at the Lloyds Banking Group Archives; and Zara Moran at the HSBC Archive. Jonathan Colls at ABC very kindly provided me with circulation data for *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Own* and the *Daily Mail* from 1970-1995. The staff at the University of Sussex Library have been supportive, as have the British Library and Brighton University Library where I accessed women's magazines.

I am grateful to CHASE for granting me AHRC funding to pursue this project and for the stimulating Encounters Conferences they organised. I appreciate the interest shown by those who listened and asked questions when I delivered papers on aspects of my research at Encounters, The Mass-Observation-80<sup>th</sup>-Anniversary Conference, and a Sussex History Department Work in Progress Seminar. The University of Sussex Student Support Unit should be acknowledged for providing me with assistive technology when health problems made it difficult for me to work on a screen.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Catherine Pope, for her humour, empathy and sound advice in the many workshops I attended through the Researcher Development Programme; her motivational mentoring; and for the very timely publication of her invaluable book, *How to Finish Your PhD*. I would like to express my gratitude to 'M' who allowed me to interview her in the early stages of my research and spoke to me with such candour. Although her interview isn't included in my thesis it is echoed in the testimony of Mass-Observation Project correspondents.

I am grateful to my parents for showing me that money doesn't have to be a source of marital conflict and to John for proving it. His unstinting support allowed me to devote the (considerable) time and energy it took me to produce this thesis. I should also thank Lydia and Esme for growing into such awesome young women while I've been writing it. Finally, recognition should be given to the women who wrote and write for the Mass-Observation Project: thank you.

## Abbreviations

BGA	Barclays Group Archives
BHPS	British Household Panel Survey
CRAM	Cooper Research and Marketing
HP	Hire Purchase
HSBCA	Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Archive
ISSP	International Social Survey Programme
LBGA	Lloyds Banking Group Archive
M-O	Mass-Observation
MOA	Mass-Observation Archive
M-OP	Mass-Observation Project
MWA	Married Women's Association
PSI	Policy Studies Institute
RBSA	Royal Bank of Scotland Archive
SCELI	Social Change and Economic Life Initiative the
WFH	Wages For Housework
WISP	Women's Individual Savings Plan
WLM	Women's Liberation Movement



## Introduction

The management of money takes place in the liminal space between income and outgoing, earning and expenditure. Since 1980 a wealth of research by social scientists has opened the 'black box' of household finance. However, this subject has inspired comparatively little historical interest. My study explores how women in the late twentieth century exercised agency and expressed their emotions around household money and asks how their experiences related to important social and cultural changes in gender ideologies, norms in marriage, financial practices and concepts of selfhood. Fundamental to my approach is my use of the Mass-Observation Project archive (hence forth M-OP), through which I accessed around 800 pieces of life-writing by women in the 1980s and 1990s responding to survey questions, 'directives', on aspects of household money management. This unique resource enabled me to explore women's responses to changing expectations of their financial agency in this period. I am particularly interested in the circuit through which women's feelings and practices shaped, and were shaped by, the broader culture of the late twentieth century. I explore this context through women's print media and high street banks' marketing, as well as political and academic discourses around money and womanhood.

It is vital to understand household money management practices because government policies and legal changes are shaped by assumptions of what these practices are or should be. Recent examples show how inconsistent these assumptions can be and the seriousness of the consequences. In 2015 'financial abuse' was criminalised under the new offence of 'controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship'. Financial abuse includes 'control of finances such as only allowing a person a punitive allowance.'<sup>1</sup> However, reforms to Child Benefit two years earlier relied on the supposition that the higher earner in a household shared their income with their family: a tax charge was introduced to claw back the benefit if one parent or their

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<sup>1</sup> 'Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship', The Crown Prosecution Service, accessed 7 May, 2019, <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/controlling-or-coercive-behaviour-intimate-or-family-relationship>

partner earned more than £50,000 a year.<sup>2</sup> The Women's Budget Group has argued that the introduction of Universal Credit will facilitate financial abuse. By replacing targeted benefits with a single payment for the household, which is paid into one nominated account, Universal Credit gives an abuser the means to control the rest of the household's access to money.<sup>3</sup>

Given its association with domestic power and control, it is not surprising that money has been a rallying point for first and second wave feminists. The Married Women's Property Acts in 1870 and 1882 were an early victory for campaigners. However, by giving married women the right to their own property, these Acts strengthened the principal of separate property in marriage which also protected men's property and income from any claim by their wives.<sup>4</sup> For women without their own income or capital, and dependent on their husbands, the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 were arguably disadvantageous. A small but significant incursion into this was made by the Married Women's Property Act of 1964, the result of campaigning by the Married Women's Association, which gave a wife the right to one half of any money saved by her from a housekeeping allowance given by her husband.<sup>5</sup>

In 1974 the Women's Liberation Movement (henceforth WLM) adopted 'legal and financial independence for all women' as their fifth demand. The demand was presented by women from the Oxford and High Wycombe women's group to a workshop at the WLM conference in Edinburgh where it was 'enthusiastically received' and subsequently accepted at the conference plenary session.<sup>6</sup> However, what this would mean in practice and how it should be achieved were highly contested.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Claim Child Benefit', UK Government, accessed 7 May, 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/child-benefit> and 'Q&A: Child Benefit Changes', BBC News, 22 September, 2014, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-17854937>

<sup>3</sup> Marilyn Howard, *Universal Credit and Financial Abuse: Exploring the Links* (Women's Budget Group, June 2018), <https://wbg.org.uk/analysis/reports/universal-credit-and-financial-abuse-exploring-the-links/>

<sup>4</sup> Andy Hayward, 'Married Women's Property Act 1882', in Erika Rackley and Rosemary Auchmuty, eds., *Women's Legal Landmarks: Celebrating the History of Women and Law in the UK and Ireland* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2018), 71–76.

<sup>5</sup> Sharon Thompson, 'Married Women's Property Act 1964,' in *ibid.* 263–69.

<sup>6</sup> 'Women Together: Edinburgh', *Spare Rib*, September 1974, 17-18.

Financial change in the late twentieth century is usually associated with imagery of the deregulated all-conquering City which, according to Peter York, from the mid-1980s, became 'central to the collective imagination'; and with the privatisation of public utilities and sale of council houses carried out by Margaret Thatcher's governments.<sup>7</sup> Although these changes certainly had a profound impact on some households' financial practices, my main focus is on the quieter revolution in high street banking which took place from c.1970-1995. This was the key period in the transition from physical to electronic or virtual money. As cash wages were superseded by payment by cheque or credit transfer the proportion of the population with a bank account increased significantly, from c.30% in 1969 to c.80% in 1989.<sup>8</sup> High street banking underwent a technological and cultural transformation.

My period begins when credit cards and cashpoint machines were taking off and ends as internet banking was about to be launched. The first online cash machine using plastic cards with a magnetic strip was opened by Lloyds in 1972. In 1977 1.5 million cashpoint cards were in issue and only seven years later this figure had risen to 13 million.<sup>9</sup> By 1996 80% of men and 74% of women had a cashpoint card.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps most significantly, this period saw an explosion in consumer credit in the form of loans and bank-issued credit cards. Barclaycard was launched in 1966. By 1980 11.6 million credit cards were in circulation and the number had nearly tripled a decade later to 29.8 million.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1970s the gentlemen's club culture of the high street banks gave way to one of commercial competition. By viewing the deregulation of the financial sector and growth in share and home ownership associated with Thatcherism in the context of a twenty-five-year period, I avoid 'an overemphasis upon Thatcher or overly identifying

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<sup>7</sup> Peter York and Charles Jennings, *Peter York's Eighties* (London: BBC Books, 1995), 106.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Berthoud and Elaine Kempson, *Credit and Debt: The PSI Report* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1992), 14. The second figure includes building society current accounts.

<sup>9</sup> Patrick Frazer, *Plastic and Electronic Money: New Payment Systems and Their Implications* (Cambridge: Woodhead-Faulkner, 1985), 51–52, 54.

<sup>10</sup> Jan Pahl, *Invisible Money: Family Finances in the Electronic Economy* (Bristol: Policy Press, 1999), 20.

<sup>11</sup> Berthoud and Kempson, *Credit and Debt*, 46.

the 1980s with the person or her associated ideology', which Stephen Brooke has argued 'obscures a richer historical understanding of that decade'.<sup>12</sup>

The late twentieth century was a period of dramatic change in women's relationship with household money. Between 1970 and 1995 dual income households became the norm and by 1996 two thirds of married women with dependent children were in paid work.<sup>13</sup> At the same time the usually private subject of marital finances was being aired in public through the rise in divorce from a rate of 4.7 per thousand married population in 1970 to 13.6 in 1995.<sup>14</sup> Couples' systems for managing and allocating household money were also changing. In 1970 the 'traditional' practices of the husband handing over his wage packet to his wife or, more common in better off households, giving his wife a housekeeping allowance were still popular but were giving way to the apparently more egalitarian approach of pooling income, often in a joint bank account. By the 1990s more individualised systems involving separate accounts were becoming popular. My study explores women's role in creating these changes in money management practices and the meanings they attached to them.

Until the late twentieth century most economists and sociologists treated the household as a single economic unit and assumed that monies coming into and leaving it were impersonal and fungible. In the 1980s feminist social scientists demonstrated that households were far from the egalitarian and consensual unit this model implied: individuals in the same household could have very different access to resources and standards of living. Viviana Zelizer's ground-breaking 1994 work, *The Social Meaning of Money*, established that money is profoundly personal and relational: monies are valued very differently according to their source, form and use. Zelizer has argued that domestic money became contested in America between 1870 and 1930 because this

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<sup>12</sup> Stephen Brooke, 'Living in "New Times": Historicizing 1980s Britain', *History Compass* 12, no. 1 (1 January 2014): 20, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12126>.

<sup>13</sup> Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Housewifery', in Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Harlow: Longman, 2001), 158.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis, 'Marriage,' in *ibid.*, 73.

was a period of profound social and cultural change.<sup>15</sup> The period 1970-1995 in Britain was also one of profound social and cultural change.

Money is a highly emotive subject. In her research for *The Secret Life of Money* carried out in Australia in the late 1990s, Valerie Wilson found that people associated a range of strong feelings with the word 'money', from worry, stress and anxiety to pleasure, happiness and satisfaction.<sup>16</sup> For married couples the decision as to how collectivised or individualised they want their finances to be is emotive because it can be seen as symbolic of the relationship.<sup>17</sup> As the technologies involved in managing household money changed in my period, so did the experience, materially and emotionally. Updating a spreadsheet on a P.C. is a very different task from filling in a handwritten account book; getting cash from a cashpoint machine in the street is not the same as cashing a cheque inside the bank. As financial practices changed so did the emotions associated with them.

The terminology used around money is emotive, and it is also contested and gendered. At its most neutral, managing household money is what takes place between earning and consumption. However, to manage one's money also means to carry out these activities successfully by living within one's means.<sup>18</sup> Managing money indicates virtue and failure to do so implies profligacy. As well as being emotive, definitions of money management have varied according to gender and class. Financial independence has a different meaning when used to describe a man or a woman. A financially independent man is wealthy enough that he does not need to work. A financially independent woman, on the other hand, is independent of a *man*; she is employed and earning enough to support herself.<sup>19</sup> In low-income households managing money refers to the,

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<sup>15</sup> Viviana A. Zelizer, 'The Social Meaning of Money: "Special Monies"', *American Journal of Sociology* 95, no. 2 (1989): 357–71, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2780903>.

<sup>16</sup> Valerie Wilson, *The Secret Life of Money: Exposing the Private Parts of Personal Money* (St. Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1999), 5.

<sup>17</sup> Supriya Singh, *Marriage Money: The Social Shaping of Money in Marriage and Banking* (St Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1997), 62–65.

<sup>18</sup> Mass-Observation Archive (University of Sussex) (henceforth MOA): Replies to Summer 1984 directive, (henceforth Summer 1984), H1749.

<sup>19</sup> I am paraphrasing the final report of the Swedish Commission on Women's Power 1995 quoted in Charlott Nyman and Lasse Reinikainen, 'Elusive independence in a context of gender equality in

usually female, task of stretching limited resources to make ends meet – ‘I am finding economic pressures which result in me managing and juggling every penny.’<sup>20</sup> For the wealthy, managing money implies the traditionally more masculine pursuits of investing funds and following the stock market.<sup>21</sup>

Developing Zelizer’s case on the social meaning of money, Supriya Singh has argued that ‘money has gender’. She distinguishes between ‘female’ marriage money and ‘male’ market money.<sup>22</sup> Wilson concurs, suggesting that the territory occupied by ‘bisexual or borderline’ money, where ‘official’ money meets ‘personal’ money, is where tensions emerge.<sup>23</sup> This is the terrain my thesis explores. I argue that in the late twentieth century the discourse of high street banking was ‘feminised’ and at the same time the discourse of ‘official’ money infiltrated further into ‘personal’ or ‘marriage’ money as bank accounts and technologies became everyday money management tools in most households.

The significance of my research is that it brings together technological, emotional and cultural themes to offer a new lens through which to examine changes and continuities in women’s lives in the late twentieth century. I intervene in key debates in history and the social sciences about this period. My focus on the difficulties of formulating a campaign around women’s financial independence, and the solutions feminists offered, speaks to recent histories of the WLM which seek to complicate the simplistic narrative arc of rise and fall caused by factionalism. My exploration of financial arrangements adds another dimension to the tension between the ideals of companionate marriage and autonomy in the late twentieth century, or in Marcus Collin’s formulation the decline of mutuality and rise of individualism.<sup>24</sup> My focus on money also provides a valuable perspective on the growth of unmarried household

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Sweden’, in Janet Stocks, Capitolina Díaz, and Björn Halleröd, eds., *Modern Couples Sharing Money, Sharing Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 41.

<sup>20</sup> MOA: Replies to Autumn/Winter 1993 directive, (henceforth MOA Autumn/Winter 1993), B2552, see also S496, H277, S2487.

<sup>21</sup> For example, MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, B2645.

<sup>22</sup> Singh, *Marriage Money*, 154–165.

<sup>23</sup> Wilson, *The Secret Life of Money*, 101, 156–160.

<sup>24</sup> Marcus Collins, *Modern Love: An Intimate History of Men and Women in Britain, 1900–2000*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2003).

formations which blows an icy blast of realism onto Giddens' much criticised welcoming of 'pure' relationships.<sup>25</sup>

My study has, therefore, relevance to broader debates on individualisation in the late twentieth century. Revisiting sociological research from the second half of the twentieth century, including Ray Pahl's study from the late 1970s and 1980s on the Isle of Sheppey, Jon Lawrence has challenged the decline of community thesis advanced by post-war sociologists, suggesting that 'individualism and community were more deeply intertwined than conventional accounts of the period acknowledge.'<sup>26</sup> My reading of M-OP testimony demonstrates that many women sought to make their marital finances 'fair' whilst allowing individual partners a degree of agency and privacy. This speaks to the continued importance and 'intertwining' of the values of sharing and autonomy in the home and wider society. My study also contributes to our understanding of the nature of a distinctive late-twentieth-century 'selfhood', characterised by self-reflexivity and ongoing restructuring through historically contingent and constantly changing cultural scripts. I argue that the 'financial-self' was an important part of many women's identity in this period and explore the contested cultural tools from which it could be constructed.

## Structure

This thesis is divided into four chapters. As essential element of each chapter is women's' testimony from the M-OP archive, housed at the Keep in Brighton. M-OP is the second incarnation of Mass-Observation. The original M-O was founded in 1937 by ornithologist and self-taught anthropologist Tom Harrison, poet and journalist Charles Madge, and artist and film-maker Humphrey Jennings with the intention of producing an 'anthropology of ourselves.'<sup>27</sup> The project lapsed in the 1950s but was relaunched in

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<sup>25</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 88–98; Lynn Jamieson, 'Intimacy Transformed? A Critical Look at the "Pure Relationship"', *Sociology* 33, no. 3 (1999): 477–94, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42857958>.

<sup>26</sup> Jon Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me: The Search for Community in Post-War England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 174, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>27</sup> Charles Madge and Tom Harrison, in *Britain by Mass-Observation* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939), cited in Anabella Pollen, 'Research Methodology in Mass Observation Past and Present: "Scientifically,

1981. A panel of volunteers was recruited to whom surveys or 'directives' are sent three times a year. The size of the panel has varied; in the spring of 1990 they numbered over 1300.

Typically, a directive will focus on two or three broad themes, as disparate as having an affair (Spring 1998) and the Miners' Strike (Summer 1984). The directive responses I make use of are on 'Electronic Money', 'Waste, Thrift and Consumerism', and 'Managing Money', sent out in 1984, 1987 and 1993 respectively. Although directives ask questions, they are not questionnaires but rather suggestions of issues to consider in addressing the broader theme. I follow Dorothy Sheridan by referring to M-OP panel members throughout as 'correspondents'. This term captures the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the archive and those who write for it.<sup>28</sup>

I have structured the first three chapters in a similar way. Each sets up an aspect of the cultural context in which women were interacting with household money, before examining women's practices and feelings through the testimony of M-OP correspondents. This approach allows me to explore the circuit through which individual women's practical and emotional experiences around household money shaped, and were shaped by, their cultural context.<sup>29</sup> My focus narrows as my thesis progresses. Chapter 1 considers the ideological response from feminists and academics to the structural conditions disadvantaging women in their access to and control of household money. Chapter 2 explores changing ideals on marriage and money's place in it, and Chapter 3 considers shifts in individual women's practices and emotions around household money in the context of developments in high street banking. In my final chapter I further sharpen the focus on the individual by examining the ways in

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about as Valuable as a Chimpanzee's Tea Party at the Zoo"?', *History Workshop Journal* 75, no. 1 (April 2013): 213, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbs040>.

<sup>28</sup> Dorothy Sheridan et al., *Writing Ourselves: Mass-Observation and Literacy Practices* (Cresskill, N.J: Hampton Press, 2000), 21–38, 55–60, 76.

<sup>29</sup> Penny Summerfield, 'Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews', *Cultural and Social History* 1, no. 1 (1 January 2004): 68, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478003804cs00050a>. Summerfield uses the term to describe the relationship between individual oral histories and public accounts of historical events.



which women deployed aspects of these cultural scripts to construct and perform financial subjectivities.

In Chapter 1 I argue that financial independence was a central but contested demand of the WLM. I use *Spare Rib*, the most inclusive and outward facing feminist publication in this period, to analyse differing feminist responses to the problem of women's lack of financial independence. I unpack the tensions between solutions as diverse as campaigning for women's employment rights, Wages For Housework, and legal access to husbands' earnings. I argue that efforts to resolve these tensions were encouraged but ultimately hampered by the political and economic context of the 1980s. I explore contemporary research by feminist social scientists as both a product and component of this broader feminist interest in women and household money. Qualitative studies by, among others, Jan Pahl, Lydia Morris, and Gail Wilson, revealed the extent of married women's financial disadvantage in the home and questioned whether married women's increasing participation in the labour market was sufficient to improve their financial position in the household. In the final section of this chapter I examine testimony from M-OP correspondents whose husbands controlled the household money and denied them equal access to it. I use and evaluate Bisdee et al.'s categories of 'accepters', 'resisters' and 'resenters'.<sup>30</sup>

Central to Chapter 2 is the tension between the marital ideal of sharing, which was associated with the companionate model of marriage dominant in the post-war decades, and the financial autonomy to which women, encouraged by the normalisation of married women's employment and the popularisation of feminism, increasingly aspired. I use *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Own* and the *Daily Mail's* 'Femail' section to trace shifts in these ideals and to map the trend towards depicting money as an emotional or psychological issue in marriage. In the second half of this chapter I explore how M-OP panellists negotiated this shifting terrain, focusing my

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<sup>30</sup> Dinah Bisdee, Tom Daly, and Debora Price, 'Behind Closed Doors: Older Couples and the Gendered Management of Household Money', *Social Policy and Society* 12, no. 01 (January 2013): 163, 174, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S147474641200053X>.

discussion on the complexities behind their understanding of marital monies as ‘his’, ‘ours’ or ‘mine’.

Chapter 3 examines the feminisation of finance through the lens of agency and emotion. I argue that alongside the explosion of new banking technologies and adoption of a commercial culture, which transformed high street banking in the late twentieth century, was a re-gendering of banking from almost exclusively male to a more ‘feminised’ image. I evidence this with banks’ efforts to attract more female customers and the employment of women in more customer facing roles. In the second part of this chapter I demonstrate that expectations of women’s financial expertise and agency, as mediated through women’s magazines, increased significantly between 1970 and 1995. Social class is an important thread running throughout my thesis and it is foregrounded in this chapter as banks’ and magazines’ depictions of women’s relationship with household money reflected and perpetuated mid-century class-based assumptions.

I structure my discussion of M-OP around the material, spatial and temporal qualities of money management which I found compelling in women’s testimony to M-OP. Inspired by Monique Scheer, I suggest that emotions are also practices, which further emphasises the importance of ‘feeling’ and ‘embodiment’ to an understanding of women’s experience of household money management at this time of rapid change.<sup>31</sup> My approach to money management as an emotional practice offers a different perspective from that of contemporary social science, one that allows for a wider definition of women’s financial agency and, therefore, qualifies Roberts’ finding that household money was the site of a reduction in women’s power.<sup>32</sup>

In the final chapter of my thesis I bring together elements of the changing cultural context of women and money explored in other chapters and show how some women used this to create a financial selfhood. I argue that the financial-self was an important

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<sup>31</sup> Monique Scheer, ‘Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion’, *History and Theory* 51, no. 2 (2012): 193–220, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23277639>.

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Roberts, *Women and Families: An Oral History, 1940-1970* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 89–90.

aspect of many women's identity and support Hinton's view that writing for M-O provides a uniquely fertile opportunity for 'self-fashioning.'<sup>33</sup> I demonstrate that as some associations between banking and selfhood became problematic, such as the social status conferred by a chequebook, other potential financial identities emerged which could be a source of self-esteem. In the final section my debt to Dorothy Sheridan, Brian Street and David Bloome in treating M-OP as an example of literary practice is most explicit as I analyse the financial autobiographies of three M-OP correspondents in order to identify some of the difficulties faced by women in creating and asserting a coherent financial selfhood in the late twentieth century.

## Research Context and Methodology

### Historiography

My research project originates from the premiss that the everyday life of ordinary women is a subject worthy of historical study. I share Helen McCarthy's conviction that the 'broad narratives of historical change' can be brought into 'sharper focus' when viewed through this 'lens'. McCarthy's magisterial work, *Double Lives: A History of Working Motherhood* published in 2020, charts the transformation of working motherhood from a perceived social problem to a social norm. McCarthy argues that at 'the heart' of this transformation was 'women's changing conception of themselves and their growing determination to claim a life of their own'.<sup>34</sup> Women's agency and selfhood are foregrounded in my research. In following women's earnings into the home, my study can be positioned as an extension of McCarthy's. Women's management of household money also serves as a bridge between women's 'double lives' as it is a form of domestic labour which has one foot in the public, economic sphere.

Twenty-five years earlier, Elizabeth Roberts published *Women and Families*, the second of her oral histories of working-class women's lives. Although Roberts looked at the three decades preceding my study and her coverage of 'Financial, Control and

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<sup>33</sup> James Hinton, *Nine Wartime Lives: Mass-Observation and the Making of the Modern Self* (Oxford: OUP, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> Helen McCarthy, *Double Lives: A History of Working Motherhood* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 8.

Household Management' is brief at a little over four pages, her discussion is the departure point for my research. In the light of her previous work, *A Woman's Place*, which spanned 1890 to 1940, Roberts argues that 'Historically much of the working-class woman's power had derived from her control of the family finances.'<sup>35</sup> However, she concludes that by 1970 this role and the associated status were being undermined.

Roberts identifies three factors as contributing to this decline. First, rising affluence meant that women's skills in making do on a small budget were no longer as valued. It also inspired husbands to reject their fathers' practice of handing over most of their wage packet for their wives to manage in favour of the more middle-class system where the husband kept control of much of the household money, giving his wife a housekeeping allowance. Second, ideals of companionate marriage encouraged shared management of household money, reducing women's sole control. Third, Roberts suggests that developments in banking were, as I also argue, a contributing factor to changes in women's relationship with money. In Roberts' formulation, the decline in cash wages and concomitant popularisation of banking further weakened women's control of household money as the account into which their husbands' earnings were paid would be in just his name or jointly held.<sup>36</sup>

My conclusions differ from those of Roberts as I argue that new banking technologies could offer women opportunities for agency and self-actualisation. This qualifies rather than refutes Roberts' findings. As well as addressing a later period, my central body of evidence, women's writing for M-OP, is from a different cohort of women. Roberts' interviewees were working class and lived in the North-West.<sup>37</sup> Although the M-OP panel includes such women, it is socially broader, with a bias towards the middle class and the South. Nonetheless, my conclusions are, on the whole, less pessimistic.

Avram Taylor and Sean O'Connell's studies of working-class borrowing practices cover a broader period than my study but are, again, more geographically specific: Taylor's

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<sup>35</sup> Roberts, *Women and Families*, 89–90.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 89–93.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 6–7.

study is of Tyneside since 1918, and the oral history interviews which inform O'Connell's discussion of the period since 1880 were carried out in Belfast. Each focuses on credit rather than broad money management and Taylor excludes forms of credit unavailable to the working class before 1945. High street banks and credit cards, which are essential to my study, are therefore missing from his discussion.<sup>38</sup> Taylor and O'Connell foreground women's ('constricted') agency in choosing, accessing and providing credit in working-class communities.<sup>39</sup> O'Connell argues for the cultural impact of women's use of mail order catalogues which made a significant contribution to 'eroding both pragmatic and moral barriers against consumer borrowing'.<sup>40</sup> Although husbands' behaviour in handing over an unopened pay packet for their wives to manage, or taking a significant sum for themselves first, is recognised by both as shaping women's borrowing practices, money in marriage, which I explore in Chapter 2 and was the focus of sociological research in the 1980s and 1990s, is not Taylor and O'Connell's central concern.<sup>41</sup>

Paul Johnson's earlier study, *Saving and Spending: The working-class economy in Britain 1870 to 1939*, draws attention to 'the social symbolism' of money-management decisions.<sup>42</sup> His insights into the subtle differences in status or stigma afforded to credit depending on its source, recipient and purpose, which are developed and applied to the late twentieth century by O'Connell, inform my discussion of M-OP correspondents' feelings about credit.<sup>43</sup> O'Connell is also interested in the gendered social scripts used by men and women to perform a financial-self and in the 'subjectivities which emerge' from oral history interviews.<sup>44</sup> My discussion of banks'

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<sup>38</sup> Avram Taylor, *Working Class Credit and Community Since 1918* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 2.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 160-164, Sean O'Connell, *Credit and Community: Working-Class Debt in the UK Since 1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 287.

<sup>40</sup> O'Connell, *Credit and Community*, 88.

<sup>41</sup> Taylor, *Working Class Credit*, 164, *ibid.*, 20-21.

<sup>42</sup> Paul Johnson, *Saving and Spending: The Working-Class Economy in Britain, 1870-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 6.

<sup>43</sup> Johnson, *Saving and Spending*, 144-192.

<sup>44</sup> O'Connell, *Credit and Community*, 20-25.

advertising and representations of managing money in women's magazines extends this approach, as does my final chapter on the financial-self.

Whilst Taylor and O'Connell depict borrowing to make ends meet as an everyday practice for low-income families throughout the twentieth century, in *The Eclipse of Elegant Economy': The Impact of the Second World War on Attitudes to Personal Finance in Britain* Martin Cohen focuses on middle-class reluctance to spend and financial institutions' reluctance to lend. His central contention is that 'elegant economy' attitudes favouring saving over spending, which were strengthened by war and austerity, were slower to decline than conventional depictions of the rise of consumerism would suggest.<sup>45</sup> As such, like Taylor and O'Connell, he challenges conventional views of the birth of the consumer society in the 1950s and 1960s as a revolutionary breach with the past, reaffirming the significance of the final three decades of the twentieth century as a period of rapid change in attitudes to household finance.

Although Cohen's period is earlier than mine, the experience of war and the post-war decades shaped the financial attitudes of many M-OP correspondents writing in the 1980s and 1990s. I share Cohen's conviction that 'attitudes to personal finance are of greater significance to modern economic and social history than has hitherto been acknowledged', but he tends to infer attitudes from statistics on behaviours; the voices of ordinary people are not as prominent as the actions of politicians in his analysis.<sup>46</sup> As an industry insider, he was a chartered accountant in the 1960s, Cohen offers experiential insights into mid-century banking. He is highly critical of a banking culture which regarded 'proactive commercialism demeaning to their professional integrity.'<sup>47</sup> However, Cohen's antipathy towards 'elegant economy' and the banking culture which perpetuated it sometimes blinds him to the potential of his source material for exploring attitudes to personal finance. His dismissal of banks' approach to potential working-class or female customers in the 1940s and 1950s as 'patronising' is not

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<sup>45</sup> Martin Cohen, *The Eclipse of 'Elegant Economy': The Impact of the Second World War on Attitudes to Personal Finance in Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 221, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 185.

inaccurate, but I have found banks' advertising from this era to be a far richer source on expectations of women's financial agency than Cohen implies.<sup>48</sup> A more detailed and less polemical history of banking is offered by David Lascelles in *Other Peoples' Money: The Revolution in High Street Banking*. Lascelles' insights into the cultural and technological transformations in high street banking are particularly informative, though he has very little to say about how these changes were received by customers.<sup>49</sup>

Alison Hulme's recent study of thrift emphasises that Cohen's 'elegant economy', a phrase he borrowed from Elizabeth Gaskell, is only one iteration of this complex and contradictory concept. Hulme's exploration of different types of thrift and their origins facilitated my interrogation of women's conflicting or ambivalent responses to questions asked by M-OP in 1987 about 'Waste, Thrift and Consumerism', and points to the late twentieth century as a moment of tension between the nationalist/nostalgic thrift of wartime, consumer thrift around purchasing wisely, and a rising ecological thrift. Hulme's insistence on the importance of thrift as a moral position which can be 'embedded in...identity' also supports my argument that the financial-self formed a significant element of women's self-image.<sup>50</sup>

My discussion in Chapter 2 revolves around women's conceptualising of household monies as 'his', 'ours' or 'mine' and the interaction of this labelling with women's feelings of access and entitlement to different funds. Viviana Zelizer's work on *The Social Meaning on Money*, informs this analysis. At the centre of Zelizer's work is the concept of earmarking: the differentiation of monies according to their form, source and use.<sup>51</sup> Earmarking is an essential element of managing household money, whether by putting coins in tins labelled gas, rent and Xmas; paying for petrol by credit card; or using a retirement lump-sum for a big trip. Conceptualising money as 'mine' as distinct

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 184–90.

<sup>49</sup> David Lascelles, *Other People's Money: The Revolution in High Street Banking* (London: Institute of Financial Services, 2005).

<sup>50</sup> Alison Hulme, *A Brief History of Thrift* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), ix.

<sup>51</sup> Viviana A. Zelizer, *The Social Meaning of Money: Pin Money, Paychecks, Poor Relief and Other Currencies*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 21–25.

from 'ours' is a form of earmarking. In the introduction to *Money Talks* Zelizer, with Nina Bandelj and Frederick Wherry, highlights the 'complex mix of cognitive and relational as well as moral and *emotional* efforts involved in earmarking money'. (Emphasis added.)<sup>52</sup> Zelizer suggests that all economic activity involves the management of social relations and the application, adaptation or subversion of cultural norms on the source, type and quantity of money appropriate to that relationship. She calls this process 'relational work'.<sup>53</sup> The concept of relational work emphasises the emotional underpinnings of economic exchange and is particularly relevant to the earmarking of marital money as 'his', 'ours' or 'mine'.<sup>54</sup>

Women's feelings around money management are central to my thesis. (I follow Monique Scheer in making no distinction between 'feelings' and 'emotions'. In my use of the terms, they are synonymous, though 'feelings' can be more flexible, as I outline below.) The wider field of 'emotions history', to which Zelizer's 'relational economic sociology' contributes, informs my approach in this thesis in three fundamental ways: that how people in the past felt is as important as what they thought and did; that feelings, thoughts and actions are usually interdependent; and that culture has a role in shaping feelings.<sup>55</sup> Susan Matt calls the cultural influences on feelings 'emotion rules'. These rules change over time and vary within historical periods according to subjects' class, gender, race, age and other variables, as well as in different contexts, or 'emotional communities', as Barbara Rosenwein has described them.<sup>56</sup>

I prefer Arlie Hochschild's term 'feeling rules.' 'Feelings' foregrounds the embodied nature of emotions which in turn suggests the importance of actions and material objects in initiating or reinforcing affect. This emphasis supports my concern with women's agency around household money and the role of changes in banking

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<sup>52</sup> Nina Bandelj, Frederick F. Wherry, and Viviana A. Zelizer, eds., *Money Talks: Explaining How Money Really Works* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 9.

<sup>53</sup> Viviana A. Zelizer, 'How I Became a Relational Economic Sociologist and What Does That Mean?', *Politics & Society* 40, no. 2 (8 May 2012): 145–74, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329212441591>.

<sup>54</sup> Nina Bandelj, 'Relational Work and Economic Sociology', *Politics & Society* 40, no. 2 (8 May 2012): 193, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329212441597>.

<sup>55</sup> Zelizer, 'How I Became a Relational Economic Sociologist'.

<sup>56</sup> Susan J. Matt and Peter N. Stearns, 'Introduction', in Susan J. Matt and Peter N. Stearns, eds., *Doing Emotions History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 1–13, Proquest Ebook Central.



technologies. Paradoxically, ‘feeling’ is also less distinct from cognitive concepts such as thought, opinion or belief than ‘emotion’. When the 1984 MO-P directive asked panel members, ‘How do you feel..?’ about future developments in banking, responses included ‘I think’ and ‘I see’ as well as ‘I feel’.<sup>57</sup> ‘Emotional’ is often used to indicate the opposite of rational, particularly when applied to women. When I discuss women’s ‘feelings’ about managing money my intention is not to draw this distinction.

Hochschild and Matt have demonstrated the importance of ‘feeling rules’ or ‘emotion rules’ to women’s financial behaviour. In *Keeping up with the Joneses*, Matt charts how in the early twentieth century envy was transformed from a moral weakness to a laudable indication of aspiration and good taste, as Americans came to believe that they could ‘better themselves through spending.’<sup>58</sup> In the late twentieth century, I argue, ‘feeling rules’ around credit were in flux as older conventions about the shame of debt conflicted with newer ideals which framed credit as a source of pleasure and its management as an opportunity for pride. Hochschild has developed the concept of ‘feeling management’, when individuals try to bring their emotions in line with the feeling rules applicable to a particular context; this becomes monetised as ‘emotional labour’ when it is a requirement of paid employment.<sup>59</sup> I suggest in Chapter 3 that as more women were employed in banking their jobs became associated with emotional labour.

Although elements of my approach are used by many of the historians, social, cultural and emotional that I have discussed, the combination I use them in is unique to my project. My emphasis of the mediation of cultural ideas about women and money through women’s magazines and banks’ advertising sets my approach apart from that of that of O’Connell and Cohen. Most significant, though, is the space I devote to women’s own exploration of their relationship with money through my extensive use

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<sup>57</sup> See MOA Summer 1984, H1182, H1297, G848.

<sup>58</sup> Susan J. Matt, *Keeping Up with the Joneses: Envy in American Consumer Society, 1890-1930* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 183.

<sup>59</sup> Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 8–12, Proquest Ebook Central; Arlie Hochschild, ‘Money and Emotion, Win-Win Bargains, Win-Lose Contexts, and the Emotional Labour of Commercial Surrogates’, in Bandelj, Wherry, and Zelizer, *Money Talks*, 161–70.

of M-OP. Before I discuss this unique resource and my methodology in more detail, I will introduce the substantial body of sociological research into women and money which was carried out in the 1980s and 1990s.

### Contemporary Sociology: Opening the 'black box'

Social scientific interest in the distribution of resources within households took off in the 1980s. By the end of the century in-depth qualitative studies had been published by Jan Pahl, Lydia Morris, Gail Wilson, Julia Brannen and Peter Moss, Carole Burgoyne, Heather Laurie, Jackie Goode with Claire Callendar and Ruth Lister, and Jane Lewis. Three large-scale quantitative studies also asked questions about the organisation of money in households. These were the Social Change and Economic Life Initiative (SCELI) in 1986-87, which was analysed by Jan Pahl and Carolyn Vogler; the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) in 1991-95, which was analysed by Heather Laurie, David Rose and Jonathan Gershuny; and the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) which compared data from 1994 and 2002 and was analysed by Carolyn Vogler with Michaela Brockmann, Richard D. Wiggins and Clare Lyonette. The interest in household money was international with similar studies taking place in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden and, at the turn of the millennium, Spain. In Chapter 1 I explore this academic interest in the context of feminism and the WLM. My focus here is on methodological issues which my thesis addresses.

Contemporary sociologists' findings about women's relationship with household money in the late twentieth century were generally gloomy. Women tended to manage money in poorer households where making ends meet would be a source of stress rather than power. Even when women managed household money, they still had less personal spending money and suffered more financial deprivation than their husbands.<sup>60</sup> Men who managed money also controlled decision making but managing money did not give women a similarly dominant role in financial decisions.<sup>61</sup> Women's

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<sup>60</sup> Lydia Morris, 'Redundancy and Patterns of Household Finance.', *The Sociological Review* 32, no. 3 (1 August 1984): 501-2, 506; , *Ibid.*, 78-82.

<sup>61</sup> Carolyn Vogler, 'Money in the Household,' in Michael Anderson, Frank Bechhofer, and Jonathan Gershuny, eds., *The Social and Political Economy of the Household*, The Social Change and Economic Life Initiative (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 234.

increased participation in paid work did not necessarily lead to greater access to and control over household money, though full-time work was more likely to achieve this.<sup>62</sup> When women worked their income was spent on the family, especially children.<sup>63</sup> Though women were happy to access joint funds to spend on the children or household they were far more reluctant than their male partners to spend this money on themselves.<sup>64</sup>

Almost every system for allocating household money could disadvantage women. The least equitable arrangement in terms of decision making and access to money was the housekeeping allowance system.<sup>65</sup> Although joint accounts were often represented as a reflection of a sharing or an egalitarian model of marriage, they could mask unequal control of and access to money.<sup>66</sup> More individualised financial systems which were increasing in popularity by the end of the century often worked to transpose inequalities in the labour market into the home.<sup>67</sup>

My intention is not to diminish the significance of these inequalities: many of them were analysed by M-OP correspondents and will be explored in my thesis. However, M-OP evidence also provides a different perspective and fills some of the gaps left by contemporary research around women's agency in managing money. This includes the

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<sup>62</sup> Carolyn Vogler and Jan Pahl. 'Social and Economic Change and the Organisation of Money within Marriage'. *Work, Employment & Society* 7, no. 1 (3 January 1993): 71–95. <https://doi.org/10.1177/095001709371004>. 'Social and Economic Change', 82.

<sup>63</sup> Lydia Morris, 'Household Finance Management and the Labour Market: A Case Study in Hartlepool', *The Sociological Review* 41, no. 3 (August 1993): 530; Jan Pahl, 'His Money, Her Money: Recent Research on Financial Organisation in Marriage', *Journal of Economic Psychology* 16, no. 3 (September 1995): 373, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0167-4870\(95\)00015-G](https://doi.org/10.1016/0167-4870(95)00015-G); Jackie Goode, Claire Callender, and Ruth Lister, *Purse or Wallet?: Gender Inequalities and Income Distribution within Families on Benefits*, (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1998), 44.

<sup>64</sup> Carole B. Burgoyne, 'Money in Marriage: How Patterns of Allocation Both Reflect and Conceal Power', *The Sociological Review* 38, no. 4 (1 November 1990): 660, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1990.tb00933.x>; Carole B. Burgoyne and Alan Lewis, 'Distributive Justice in Marriage: Equality or Equity?', *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 4, no. 2 (1 May 1994): 107, <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2450040204>.

<sup>65</sup> Vogler, 'Money in the Household,' in Anderson, Bechhofer, and Gershuny, *Social and Political Economy*, 240.

<sup>66</sup> Gail Wilson, *Money in the Family: Financial Organization and Women's Responsibilities* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1987), 176–77; Jan Pahl, *Money and Marriage* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 71–74.

<sup>67</sup> Vogler, Brockmann, and Wiggins, 'Intimate Relationships', 456.

pleasure and self-esteem women derived from practices associated with money management.

Jan Pahl's ground-breaking work *Money and Marriage* was published in 1989 but her interest in this topic began a decade earlier. One of Pahl's most significant contributions to the field has been her development of a typology of couples' allocative systems which has been very influential and was used in the SCIEL study, the BHPS and the ISSP. As I outlined earlier, this facilitated the identification of trends in couples' money management systems, in particular the popularity of 'pooling' in the 1980s and the growth of more individualised approaches towards the end of the century.<sup>68</sup> However, researchers have commented on the difficulties involved in applying the typology 'in the field' and Stefanie Sonnenberg reported in 2008 'an increasing sentiment amongst researchers that these systems of household financial organisation are too broad to capture the subtleties of what people are actually doing with their money'.<sup>69</sup>

Although they have exposed broad trends and lingering continuities, it seems likely in the light of subsequent studies that use of the typology underestimated the prevalence of individualised systems in the 1980s and early 1990s. The definition of 'independent management', which was used in the SCIEL and BHPS questionnaires was narrow – 'We keep our finances *completely* separate' – and did not allow for arrangements where couples pooled some of their income and managed the rest independently. (Emphasis added.)<sup>70</sup> As my discussion of M-OP evidence in Chapter 2

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<sup>68</sup> Pahl, *Money and Marriage*, 49-51, 119; Vogler, Brockmann, and Wiggins, 'Intimate Relationships', 460.

<sup>69</sup> Gail Wilson, *Money in the Family*, 34-35; Stefanie J. Sonnenberg, 'Household Financial Organisation and Discursive Practice: Managing Money and Identity', *Journal of Socio-Economics* 37, no. 22 (April 2008): 544, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soc.2006.12.036>. See also Heather Laurie, 'Multiple Methods in the Study of Household Resource Allocation,' in Julia Brannen, ed., *Mixing Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Research* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995), 158-59; Katherine J. Ashby and Carole B. Burgoyne, 'Separate Financial Entities?: Beyond Categories of Money Management', *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, Special Issue on the Household Economy, 37, no. 2 (April 2008): 461, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soc.2006.12.035>; Vogler, Brockmann, and Wiggins, 'Intimate Relationships', 478.

<sup>70</sup> Heather Laurie and David Rose, 'Divisions and Allocations within Households,' in Buck et al., *Changing Households, British Household Panel Survey, 1990-92*, (Colchester: ESRC Research Centre on Micro-Social Change, 1994), 227; Heather Laurie and Jonathan Gershuny, 'Couples, Work and Money,' in

will show such arrangements were used in the early 1980s, but they were not differentiated in the typology as the 'partial pool' until the 1990s.<sup>71</sup>

Of course, the modifications made to the typology reflect the limited knowledge of household finance which Pahl and other researchers sought to address, indeed Pahl pointed out in 1980 that 'very little' was known about income pooling. Pahl's first version of the typology referred only to the husband's earnings in the 'whole wage' and 'housekeeping allowance' descriptors although in 1980 60% of married or cohabiting women had a job. Although Pahl acknowledged that these were 'crude ideal types drawn from the complexities of reality', I would suggest that her assumptions also speak to the longevity and influence of male-breadwinner discourse, even on feminist sociologists.<sup>72</sup>

The problems with the typology are, though, more fundamental than the wording of some descriptors or its failure to keep up to date with couples' financial practices. The typology includes both objective arrangements, like the existence of joint or separate bank accounts, and more value laden descriptors such as 'pooling' or 'sharing'. As Pahl and other have demonstrated, one individual can control a joint account, something which Pahl and Vogler addressed by breaking the category of pooling into 'male managed', 'female managed' and 'joint pool'.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, as Jane Lewis' research has shown, separate accounts can be used alongside an equal and shared attitude to marital money.<sup>74</sup> Having both these elements in the typology muddies the waters and can distort the findings of research which uses them.

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Richard Berthoud and Jonathan Gershuny eds., *Seven Years in the Lives of British Families : Evidence from the British Household Panel Survey* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2000), 58–59; Jan Pahl, 'Individualisation in Couple Finances: Who Pays for the Children?', *Social Policy and Society* 4, no. 04 (4 October 2005): 383, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746405002575>.

<sup>71</sup> Heather Laurie and David Rose, 'Divisions and Allocations within Households,' in Buck et al., *Changing Households*, 223.

<sup>72</sup> Jan Pahl, 'Patterns of Money Management within Marriage', *Journal of Social Policy* 9, no. 03 (July 1980): 318–23, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279400001367>; Deidre McCloskey, 'Paid Work,' in, Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain*, 169.

<sup>73</sup> Vogler and Pahl, 'Social and Economic Change', 75–77.

<sup>74</sup> Jane Lewis, *The End of Marriage?: Individualism and Intimate Relations* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2001), 165–66.

For my research objectives, I have found Burgoyne and her co-researchers' approach particularly useful as it separates objective banking arrangements from values and foregrounds women's feelings about household money. In 2008 Burgoyne and Ashby suggested it was time to move 'beyond categories of money management'. They found that assessing whether couples treated the ownership of household money as 'distinct,' 'blurred' or 'shared' was more informative than the categories of 'partial pool' or 'independent management.'<sup>75</sup> In Chapter 2 where I explore money in marriage, I organise my analysis around categories influenced by Bourgoyne and Ashby's emphasis on feelings of ownership, though I also make selective use of Pahl's typology.

Another valuable contribution by Burgoyne is her interrogation of the ideas of 'sharing' and 'fairness' in relation to household income. She distinguishes between 'equity' models, in which both partners contribute the same amount to joint funds and 'equality' models in which they receive the same benefit regardless of input.<sup>76</sup> Vivienne Elizabeth's framing of this choice as between the principle of equality in the relationship and a belief in earner entitlement, foregrounds the significance of the WLM and the increase in married women's paid employment in contributing to this tension, which, I will argue is at the heart of late-twentieth-century concerns about how best to organise household money.<sup>77</sup> Vogler et al. concur that a focus on unpicking issues of 'equity' and 'equality' offers the best way forward to deepen understanding of pooling, partial pooling and independent management.<sup>78</sup> My analysis of M-OP testimony from the 1980s and 1990s contributes to this understanding by exploring women's engagement with these questions, the challenges they identified and the solutions they created.

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<sup>75</sup> Ashby and Burgoyne, 'Separate Financial Entities?'

<sup>76</sup> Burgoyne and Lewis, 'Distributive Justice in Marriage'.

<sup>77</sup> Vivienne Elizabeth, 'Managing Money, Managing Couplodom: A Critical Examination of Cohabitants' Money Management Practices', *The Sociological Review* 49, no. 3 (1 August 2001): 390, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.00338>.

<sup>78</sup> Vogler, Brockmann, and Wiggins, 'Intimate Relationships', 477.

A central concern for Pahl and Vogler's research was to differentiate between management of household money and control over it.<sup>79</sup> The concepts of management and control have been influential on subsequent research in the field.<sup>80</sup> Although this distinction foregrounds inequalities in access to household resources and power imbalances over financial decision making, the terminology is contested: as I have indicated, 'money management' can mean radically different activities to women from different social classes. Pahl found that some of her interviewees 'were using the word "management" to mean....overall control and the word "control" to mean...day-to-day management'.<sup>81</sup> More importantly, the imperative to define financial practices as indicative of management or control meant that contemporary sociologists underestimated women's financial agency.

As with her typology, Pahl's definitions of control and management didn't adequately reflect the changes taking place in financial practices in the late twentieth century. Many decisions made by women in the 1980s and 1990s, such as which institution to bank with or which banking technologies to adopt, fall between the control and management descriptors. As such, the control/management dichotomy risks underestimating women's financial role. A focus on categorising financial tasks as indicative of control or management also obscures the extent to which developments in banking technologies were changing the experience of carrying out these practices. The question of who takes responsibility for paying the bills was important to contemporary sociologists in locating financial control. However, the meaning of 'paying bills' was not static. The experiences of handing cash to a clerk in the electricity board, which was common in the 1960s; filling in and posting a cheque which was more usual in the 1970s; or, in the 1980s and 1990s, setting up a direct debit, are materially, spatially and temporally different. My approach, and my use of M-OP,

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<sup>79</sup> Pahl, 'The Allocation of Money,' 244-5; Pahl, *Money and Marriage*, 29, 57; Carolyn Vogler and Jan Pahl, 'Money, Power and Inequality within Marriage', *The Sociological Review* 42, no. 2 (1 May 1994): 263-88, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1994.tb00090.x>.

<sup>80</sup> Fleming, *The Common Purse*, 53-54.

<sup>81</sup> Pahl, *Money and Marriage*, 80.

focuses on how women experienced the rapid change in financial practices and how they analysed their financial agency.

A valuable contribution to this approach is Dinah Bislee, Tom Daly and Debra Price's more recent research into the financial arrangements of elderly couples which acknowledges the importance of women's feelings in locating their agency. The researchers use the categories of 'accepters', 'resenters' and 'modifier/resisters' to explore women's responses to their husband's financial control.<sup>82</sup> These categories offer a particularly illuminating approach to the testimony of M-OP correspondents whose husbands attempted to impose a significant, or in some instances coercive, degree of financial control, as I demonstrate in Chapter 1.

As I have suggested, the impact of late-twentieth-century developments in banking technology received relatively little attention in contemporary research. At the beginning of my timeframe, Todd and Jones' 1972 investigation into patterns of ownership of marital property found that when husbands were paid in cash, roughly 2/3 of wives were responsible for paying bills and rent or mortgages, but when they were paid by cheque or transfer 2/3 of husbands took on these responsibilities. This would seem to support Roberts' conclusion that the spread of bank accounts reduced working-class women's financial role and marginalised their household management skills. However, Todd and Jones' research was not designed to explore this issue and the results weren't interrogated.<sup>83</sup> Singh's research in the early 1990s in Australia in contrast suggested that banking technology could be empowering for women. Singh argues that ATMs and credit cards made it harder for men to deny their wives knowledge of their income and access to funds.<sup>84</sup>

In the UK, it wasn't until Pahl conducted her research for *Invisible Money*, published in 1999, that the impact of the revolution in banking technology which had taken place in the previous three decades was directly addressed. Her conclusions were more

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<sup>82</sup> Bisdee, Daly, and Price, 'Behind Closed Doors'.

<sup>83</sup> J.E. Todd and L.M. Jones, *Matrimonial Property* (London: HMSO, 1972), 29, 92.

<sup>84</sup> Singh, *Marriage Money*, 110–11.



pessimistic, suggesting that that 'new forms of money' were 'reproducing and in some cases reinforcing, some very traditional inequalities within and between households.'<sup>85</sup> Pahl also argued that technologies such as credit cards were 'diminishing collective imperatives' in marital financial arrangements and Singh is in some agreement, predicting that the 'trend towards greater joint management' might be, at least initially, reversed by 'new technologies'.<sup>86</sup> My research contributes to this debate by exploring how women felt about banking technologies including chequebooks, cashpoint machines and credit cards. I focus on the material, spatial and temporal implications on women's money management and explore how their emotions and experiences around banking technologies impacted on feelings of ownership and agency. In the following section I explain how M-OP testimony offers a unique opportunity to test these and other ways of exploring women's complex and changing relationship with household money in the late twentieth century.

## Mass-Observation Project

Fundamental and original to this thesis is my use of the M-OP archive to explore women's practices and emotions around managing household money. M-OP, so called to differentiate it from the original mid-century Mass-Observation, was launched in 1981 by Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Sussex David Pocock, assisted, and in 1990 succeeded, by Dorothy Sheridan.

Although M-OP directive responses have much in common with other life-writing such as letters or diaries, I would agree with Sheridan that M-O staff and correspondents are 'engaged in the process of forging a new genre: "The Mass-Observation directive reply."' <sup>87</sup> However, this phrase with its continuity in terminology from the original M-O, is potentially misleading. Although directives encourage a mixture of what Sheridan terms "'pure" subjective writing on the one hand and social reportage on the other', since 1983 the emphasis has been weighted towards personal experiences and feelings

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<sup>85</sup> Pahl, *Invisible Money*, 74.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 52; Singh, *Marriage Money*, 163–64.

<sup>87</sup> Dorothy Sheridan, 'Writing to the Archive: Mass-Observation as Autobiography', *Sociology* 27, no. 1 (1 February 1993): 34, <https://doi.org/10.1177/003803859302700104>.

rather than being an observer of others.<sup>88</sup> A correspondent who recorded the attitudes and experiences of other people – ‘housewife aged 45’ and ‘22 year old male student’ – to buying on credit in 1984 was the exception.<sup>89</sup> The word ‘directive’, also borrowed from the original M-O, is even more problematic as it implies an authoritarian or prescriptive command. This is very far removed from the intention of M-OP directives which is to serve as a ‘prompt or guide to inspire people’ to respond in their ‘own preferred way.’<sup>90</sup> Some responses stick quite closely to the directive by, for example, numbering their answers to correspond to Pocock’s themes on the 1984 directive; others deviate considerably.

My research questions ask how women managed household money in the late twentieth century and how they felt about it. M-OP correspondence provides a uniquely rich source of experiences and emotions. Matt Cook has described M-OP as an ‘archive of feeling’ and the breadth of emotional responses to household money I encountered in M-OP testimony is remarkable.<sup>91</sup> M-OP offers the depth and intimacy of oral history interviews but with the time for reflection available to letter and diary writers. Correspondents’ interactions with M-OP directives are so varied and eclectic that unexpected lines of research are opened up. It is often the case that the elements of testimony which don’t directly address directive questions are the most valuable and revelatory.

The directives most relevant to my research focus and period are the first part of Summer 1984 on ‘Electronic Innovations in Banking’ and Autumn/Winter 1993 on ‘Managing Money’. I looked at all the responses by women to these directives, which numbered 419 and 283 respectively.<sup>92</sup> I sampled responses to the Spring 1987 directive

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>89</sup> MOA Summer 1984, P1300.

<sup>90</sup> Dorothy Sheridan, ‘The Mass Observation Project: Description of the 1980s Mass Observation directives’, 1-2,

[https://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/observingthe80s/files/2014/01/DS\\_Directive\\_Summary\\_29\\_Feb1.pdf](https://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/observingthe80s/files/2014/01/DS_Directive_Summary_29_Feb1.pdf)

<sup>91</sup> Matt Cook, “‘Archives of Feeling’: The AIDS Crisis in Britain 1987”, *History Workshop Journal* 83, no. 1 (April 2017): 51–78, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbx001>.

<sup>92</sup> ‘Mass Observation Project (MOP) Database 1981+’, Mass Observation, accessed 27 August 2021, <http://database.massobs.org.uk/>. The Summer 1984 Directive was sent with no title. This title is from, Sheridan, ‘The Mass Observation Project’, 11.

on 'Waste, Thrift and Consumerism,' selecting the first 30 in each of the four boxes because the themes of the 1987 directive, and the range of responses to it, were narrower and would inform only a brief element of my analysis. This selection process was informed by Mike Savage's approach of reading until I had established that there was little more to be gained from further responses.<sup>93</sup> I have made more extensive use of married, or previously married, women's testimony because my themes of agency and emotion around money are shaped by this relationship. For the three correspondents whose narratives I explore in greater depth in Chapter 4, I also consulted their responses to other directives including Spring 2008, 'My Lifeline', in order to explore how their financial-self related to other aspects of their lives.

The subject of money is woven into the fabric of M-OP. It was initially known as 'The Inflation Project' because Pocock's intention was to find out about people's everyday experience of the harsh economic climate of the early 1980s and how this related to the 'political mood in the country.' Money was also a source of tension in the early years of M-OP because the project was desperately short of funds.<sup>94</sup> Pocock apologised in the Summer 1984 directive because '[m]oney-chasing' had prevented him from responding personally to all the contributions to the previous directive. One correspondent in her response expressed her concern that 'financial backing must lie behind' what she felt were 'tedious and ill-framed' questions on the Summer 1984 directive.<sup>95</sup> This directive was 'sponsored by' a group of anthropologists, Social Analysis and Anthropology, and Maxwell Stamp Associates, economic consultants. The ten yes/no questions at the end of the directive are likely to have come from one of these groups as they are very different from Pocock's open-ended style. The suggestion by Pocock and the correspondent is that money was an unwelcome or inappropriate

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<sup>93</sup> Mike Savage, 'Changing Social Class Identities in Post-War Britain: Perspectives from Mass-Observation', *Sociological Research Online* 12, no. 3 (1 May 2007): 3.7, <https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.1459>.

<sup>94</sup> Sheridan et al., *Writing Ourselves*, 45, 47–51.

<sup>95</sup> MOA Summer 1984, D153.

distraction from the higher purpose of M-OP. Oddly, Sheridan has found no record of a fee being paid to the archive in relation to the Summer 1984 directive.<sup>96</sup>

A criticism levelled at M-O and M-OP testimony is that the panel is not statistically representative of the population as a whole. MOP correspondents are disproportionately female, older, living in the South-East and middle-class. In its defence, James Thomas has pointed out that 'M-O encompasses a more diverse and larger population sample' than 'most qualitative research'.<sup>97</sup> This is the case in my field. For her ground-breaking *Money and Marriage*, Pahl interviewed 102 couples in Kent. Burgoyne's important research published in 1990 was based on interviews with 13 women and nine of their partners. Large scale surveys, such as the SCELL research carried out in 1986-7, in which 1211 representative households were interviewed, were limited by the wording of self-completion questionnaires and interview schedules, leaving little room for the nuance and subjectivity which characterises M-OP testimony.

The disproportionate number of older people on the M-OP panel serves to redress the imbalance of contemporary research into household money which did not include these voices. Most of the research in the 1980s focused on households with dependent children so the vast majority of women interviewed were under 50.<sup>98</sup> In the early 1990s Lewis compared 39 married or cohabiting couples, most of whom were aged 35-45, with 72 of their parents, who were almost all in their 60s and 70s, but the emphasis was on the younger cohort.<sup>99</sup> It was not until Bisdee, Daly and Price's research, published in 2013, that a specific interest in older couples' money management practices was shown.

Although M-OP includes more older people, it covers a wide range of ages. The oldest correspondent responding to my directives was born in 1897 and the youngest was

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<sup>96</sup> Sheridan, 'The Mass Observation Project', 11; MOA Summer 1984 directive.

<sup>97</sup> James Thomas, *Diana's Mourning: A People's History* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), 37; quoted in Pollen, 'Research Methodology in Mass Observation', 219.

<sup>98</sup> Wilson, *Money in the Family*, 11; Morris, 'Redundancy', 493; Pahl, *Money and Marriage*, 187-88; Burgoyne, 'Money in Marriage', 640.

<sup>99</sup> Lewis, *The End of Marriage?*, 127-129.

born in 1976.<sup>100</sup> As James Hinton remarks about his choice of seven M-OP lives through which to explore the late twentieth century, all of whom were born before the Second World War, 'youth does not have a monopoly on history making.' To adapt his further point, the resistance of an older correspondent who wrote 'I still live in the past I don't have enough money to want a cheque book' is as much a part of the late twentieth century as younger women's' enthusiastic adoption of new banking technologies.<sup>101</sup> The overlapping layers of different generations' reminiscence of the past, reflection on the present and projection into the future generated by my three directives is unique to M-OP and essential to its richness as a resource. It illuminates the complex and uneven nature of changing attitudes to borrowing and spending which characterise my era.

The middle-class bias of the panel was an advantage to my research as it gave me more testimony from women with longer experience of personal banking. I am, however, conscious that this bias is also problematic, and I have endeavoured to include testimony about working-class experience as much as possible. As other researchers have found, I have been helped by correspondents' engagement with their own and their parents' class position.<sup>102</sup> One correspondent expressed surprise that her in-laws had such a different attitude to credit from her parents because both were 'working-class.' Another wrote in 1984 'the older working class like me don't want to change our ways.'<sup>103</sup> This also demonstrates that in contrast to some academics' concerns, M-OP correspondents have no problem in seeing themselves as 'representative', not of the whole population, but of a particular demographic.<sup>104</sup>

Although contributions to the archive are subjective and idiosyncratic, correspondents are outward looking, commenting on the social and political context in which they write. Paradoxically the atypicality of the M-OP panel members is the archive's

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<sup>100</sup> MOA Summer 1984, M380; MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, B2680.

<sup>101</sup> MOA Summer 1984, S496; James Hinton, *Seven Lives from Mass Observation: Britain in the Late Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 4.

<sup>102</sup> Pollen, 'Research Methodology in Mass Observation', 221.

<sup>103</sup> MOA Summer 1984, R1025, S496.

<sup>104</sup> See Sheridan et al., *Writing Ourselves*, 242.

greatest asset for researchers.<sup>105</sup> As Hinton wrote of the original M-O diarists, M-OP correspondents are 'exceptionally self-reflective people'. As such, Hinton suggests, they 'provide us with access to a cultural world that others inhabited with less self-awareness'.<sup>106</sup> Thankfully, M-OP correspondents also have an impulse to record and share their self-awareness.

Both Hinton and Louise Purbrick have commented on the candour of M-OP testimony, particularly in comparison to the 'self-censoring' common in interviews.<sup>107</sup> I found that some responses to the 1984 and 1993 directives had an almost confessional tone, such as a woman who admitted that she 'fell victim to the credit card'.<sup>108</sup> Not all correspondents were this forthcoming, but for my purposes, reticence could be as valuable as revelation. The response of one woman to the 1984 directive, 'As my husband deals with our finances I felt he would be more able to deal with the banking questions etc. and his views are my views on these things', speaks volumes about the survival of mid-century taboos around money-talk as well as gendered and class-based assumptions of women's relationship with household money.<sup>109</sup> Purbrick highlights the 'solitary and anonymous act of writing' as encouraging openness.<sup>110</sup> Hinton suggests that the relationship with the archive is, as 'several people' writing for M-OP commented, 'like talking to a therapist.'<sup>111</sup> Pollen captures something of the tension between these positions and emphasises the performative nature of writing for M-OP when she suggests that 'the particular and heightened conditions of the M.O. encounter – where exchange is simultaneously restricted and enabled by anonymity and the archival screen – creates a distinctive space where these kinds of performances can be enacted.'<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Pollen, 'Research Methodology in Mass Observation', 222.

<sup>106</sup> Hinton, *Nine Wartime Lives*, 17.

<sup>107</sup> Hinton, *Seven Lives*, 3; Louise. Purbrick, *The Wedding Present : Domestic Life beyond Consumption* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 171.

<sup>108</sup> MOA Summer 1984, T546.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, B736.

<sup>110</sup> Purbrick, *The Wedding Present*, 171.

<sup>111</sup> Hinton, *Seven Lives*, 3.

<sup>112</sup> Annebella Pollen, 'Shared Ownership and Mutual Imaginaries: Researching Research in Mass Observation', *Sociological Research Online* 19, no. 3 (2014): 10–11.

The nature of this performative space is determined by individual correspondents and the archive, through the directives. Pocock and Sheridan's different styles influenced the tone and content of the responses they received. Hinton writes that Pocock 'cultivated a bond of trust' between correspondents and the archive which was reinforced by the handwritten response he sent for every directive completed.<sup>113</sup> Pocock addressed directives to 'Dear Observer' and many women in turn wrote their directive responses in the form of a personal letter addressed to 'Dear David' or 'Dear David and Dorothy'. Some correspondents wrote an update of general family news before getting 'on with the directive'.<sup>114</sup> This approach did not necessarily encourage disclosure. The genre of letter writing to friends or family was shaped by conventions of euphemism and evasion evident in a response to the 1984 directive which referred to 'my past troubles'.<sup>115</sup> The impact of Pocock's personal replies to each directive response is underlined by a woman who wrote that she had 'waited with bated breath to hear from the Professor', particularly, she suggests, when she had written something provocative or 'really gone to town' in her directive response.<sup>116</sup> The performance encouraged in this instance appears to be less about intimate friendship and more about intellectual sparring. Another correspondent chose not to mirror the familiarity and informality of the directive. She structured her response as a business report, with contents page and numbered answers presented in what she clearly felt was a more sensible order than they appeared in the directive.<sup>117</sup>

Sheridan's directives were less chatty and anecdotal in style than Pocock's but, conversely, asked more probing questions.<sup>118</sup> At the time of my second directive in 1993 the practice of writing personal responses was undergoing transition, replaced by a standard acknowledgement letter sent to all and a personal response to around a quarter of those who replied.<sup>119</sup> The 1993 directive, written by Dorothy Sheridan, opened by asking Mass-Observers to '[i]magine a historian working fifty years from

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<sup>113</sup> Hinton, *Seven Lives*, 2.

<sup>114</sup> MOA Summer 1984, B078, B736.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, L333.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, D153.

<sup>117</sup> MOA Summer 1984, C126.

<sup>118</sup> Hinton, *Seven Lives*, 2.

<sup>119</sup> Sheridan et al., *Writing Ourselves*, 70–71.

now in the year 2043 on the question of money.’ One correspondent seems to have found this intimidating. She wrote, ‘I do not think I can offer anything of interest to a future historian.’<sup>120</sup> For others, this more solid and distancing ‘archival screen’ enabled a more open response. Most of the correspondents who described money as a problem in their marriages were responding to the 1993 directive.

The concern as to whether M-OP correspondents are a representative sample of the population misses the essential point that they are not merely research subjects. As Purbrick writes, M-OP correspondents are not ‘passive informants’ but ‘interpreters of their own lives.’<sup>121</sup> As such, Sheridan et al. argue, they ‘become researchers themselves’.<sup>122</sup> What Pollen characterises as a ‘meta-metaperspective’, when M-OP correspondents put themselves in the researchers’ shoes, is a particularly valuable aspect of M-OP testimony.<sup>123</sup> A woman demonstrated this when she highlighted the discrepancy between the summer 1984 directive’s assumption of financial knowledge and her own perceived ignorance and, at the same time, recognised that this information would be of value to her reader(s): ‘It must be significant that I could not answer this on my own. I am asking my husband the questions.’<sup>124</sup> As Hinton points out, such interrogation by correspondents of their immediate reactions to directive questions was only possible because a written response allows time for reflection unavailable in an interview.<sup>125</sup> This response demonstrates that my research interest was a preoccupation for contemporary women, which adds another element to my understanding of the relationship between feminism and women’s financial agency at this time.

The text of the directives also provides valuable evidence about the culture in which they were produced. Pocock’s 1984 directive didn’t address the issue of money in marriage. Its implicit assumption is that each respondent was financially autonomous

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<sup>120</sup> MOA, Autumn/Winter 1993 directive, K2655.

<sup>121</sup> Purbrick, *The Wedding Present*, 170.

<sup>122</sup> Sheridan et al., *Writing Ourselves*, 9.

<sup>123</sup> Pollen, ‘Shared Ownership and Mutual Imaginaries’, 3.

<sup>124</sup> MOA Summer 1984, F202.

<sup>125</sup> Hinton, *Seven Lives*, 3.



and in a position to speak for themselves and their household. Gender roles around money, or money's potential to reinforce unequal power in marriage, are not alluded to. This underlines that the work of Pahl, Wilson and other feminist sociologists researching couples' financial arrangements at this time was truly ground-breaking. The only suggestion in the directive that having a partner might be relevant to financial practices is the second of ten short questions which asks 'If you are married and have a current bank account, do you have a joint account/separate accounts/ joint and separate account(s). Sheridan's 1993 directive on the other hand asks about the sources of household income and 'who decides how it is to be used', emphasising that she was part of the same feminist academic culture as contemporary sociologists researching allocation and control over household money.

I am mindful of Ben Highmore's contribution to the Brighton University research network on 'Methodological Innovations: Using Mass-Observation' (MIMO), that in keeping with M-O's 'democratic mission' researchers should 'give space and time to the voices of the ordinary, rather than sift them through till they merge[d] into something else'.<sup>126</sup> My intention has been where possible to approach M-OP testimony as texts with structure and imagery, plot and characters, which are as important and revelatory as the information they impart. This has been particularly fruitful in Chapter 1, where I examine women's responses to their husbands' financial control and Chapter 4 which focuses on women's creation and performance of a financial-self. My treatment of M-OP testimony as, essentially, literature is inspired by Sheridan, Street and Bloome's *Writing Ourselves: Mass-Observation and Literacy Practices*.

## Magazines and 'Femail'

I explore the changing cultural norms around women and household money in the late twentieth century through two main sources: women's print media and banks' advertising. These media were very closely related. Janice Winship has pointed out that advertising revenue was so essential to women's magazines that publishers were 'involved in two disparate but intimately linked selling operations: one to women, the

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<sup>126</sup> Ben Highmore, MIMO, 8 Oct 2009, quoted in Pollen, 'Research Methodology in Mass Observation', 222.

other to advertisers.<sup>127</sup> Anna Gough-Yates has shown that this was particularly the case from the mid-1980s when advertisers took a renewed interest in the potential offered by women's magazines, especially the so-called glossies.<sup>128</sup> Both were important means of communicating, and even creating, changing cultural norms about women's expected relationship with money. Magazines and advertisers also had to be responsive to shifts in the attitudes and practices of their consumers.

This circuit by which magazines both shaped and reflected the norms of a particular culture was particularly evident in the pages of *Spare Rib*. Published from June 1972 until January 1993, *Spare Rib* provided a space for an 'ongoing dialogue' with and between its readers, particularly, but not exclusively, through its 'letters' pages.<sup>129</sup> *Spare Rib's* readers/writers exposed different aspects of women's financial disadvantage, offered a range of feminist remedies, and critiqued each other's approach. These exchanges provide a valuable insight into the problems experienced by the WLM in campaigning for its fifth demand – legal and financial independence for all women. I use *Spare Rib* in Chapter 1 to chart feminist positions on women and money and to explore the changing structural and ideological reasons for the movement's conflicts and silences around this key element of women's emancipation.

The other women's print media I use are *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Own* and the 'Femail' section of the *Daily Mail*. In the 1970s *Woman's Own* was the most popular women's weekly magazine. It had a circulation of 1.7 million in 1970, though this had fallen to 700,00 by 1995. *Good Housekeeping* came out monthly and had a circulation of 190,000 in 1970 rising to 500,000 in 1995.<sup>130</sup> For my research on managing household money I wanted magazines which were aimed principally at married women and had a domestic focus, unlike, for example, *Cosmopolitan*. The readership of both magazines was spread across all age groups, though *Woman's Own* had a higher proportion of readers at either end of the continuum, under 24s and over 65s,

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<sup>127</sup> Janice Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines* (London: Pandora Press, 1987), 38.

<sup>128</sup> Anna Gough-Yates, *Understanding Women's Magazines: Publishing, Markets and Readerships* (Routledge, 2003), 23–24, 56, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>129</sup> Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines*, 136.

<sup>130</sup> Circulation data 1970–1995 provided by Audit Bureau of Circulations Ltd. on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

than *Good Housekeeping*, which had a readership more concentrated between these two groups. The social class of the two magazines' readerships was more differentiated. A higher proportion of *Good Housekeeping's* readers were categorised, according to their husbands' job, as A to C1. This middle-class bias was more similar to the M-OP panel than *Woman's Own's* readership which included a higher proportion classed as C2 to E.<sup>131</sup> As the popular mid-century stereotypes of women and money, the thrifty working-class housewife and the spendthrift middle-class wife, were class specific, it was important for my research to have this point of comparison. In the 1970s the class-related gap between the two magazines' coverage of money was wide but, as I explore in Chapter 3, this had narrowed by 1995.

My reading of *Good Housekeeping* included every volume from January 1974 to December 1998 and I also accessed an almost complete set of copies of *Women's Own* from April 1977 to December 1981 at Brighton University Library. This reading informed my subsequent sampling of *Women's Own* for the years 1982 to 1994, held at the British Library, as it established that money management advice was often published in January and February in the context of new year's resolutions. Sampling of *Woman's Own* highlighted the dramatic change in the magazine's expectation of its readership's financial needs and skills across my period. The *Daily Mail* also had a high circulation of between 1.7 and 2 million from 1970 to 1995 and its 'Femail' page was published daily. The coverage of household money in 'Femail' was more polemical and more topical than in the two mainstream women's magazines I studied. The contested nature of women and money in this era is expressed through pieces on Wages for Housework on the one hand and 'alimony drones' on the other.<sup>132</sup>

Magazines' coverage of domestic money fell broadly into two types: technical advice on budgeting systems and financial products, and articles or agony aunt responses to letters about money as a source of marital problems or unhappiness. Guidance in both these areas changed significantly from the 1970s to the 1990s. In part, this reflected

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<sup>131</sup> Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines*, 166–67.

<sup>132</sup> 'The "Pay Wives" Debate!', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 26 September, 1975, 12 Gale; 'Instead of Alimony', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, October 1980, 12, Gale.

the increasing complexity of personal finance as banking technology developed and competition between institutions grew. There was also a shift in expectations of women's financial agency and autonomy which was part of more general trends in beliefs about gender roles and the meaning of marriage. I explore these developments in Chapter 2 on money and marriage and Chapter 3 on the 'feminisation' of finance.

### Banks' Advertising

As high street banking became more commercialised and competitive from the early 1970s its advertising output soared. This was encouraged by the speed of technological developments which generated a raft of new products to sell. This advertising was also part of the 'cultural circuit' which reflected and reinforced norms around women and money. How women were depicted in advertising changed significantly over the period.

Shifts in banks' advertising to women and coverage of money in women's magazines were closely related. Full page adverts for banks and building societies often appeared opposite *Good Housekeeping's* money column and magazines' money experts recommended financial products. Collaboration sometimes went further: in 1975 *Woman's Journal* and Lloyds Bank jointly produced a special money supplement and *Good Housekeeping* and *Midland Bank* did the same in 1997.<sup>133</sup> One impact of financial deregulation in the late twentieth century was that the differences between financial institutions became blurred; from December 1984 building societies were able to join the clearing system and some already issued credit and cashpoint cards.<sup>134</sup> I include adverts for building societies and other financial institutions which appeared in women's magazines in my discussion of banks' advertising.

The major banks' different archival practices impacted on my methodology. I visited the archives of HSBC in London, which holds Midland Bank; the Barclays Group Archive in Manchester; the Royal Bank of Scotland Archive in Edinburgh, which also holds NatWest, and the Lloyds Banking Group Archive in London, which also holds TSB.

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<sup>133</sup> Lloyds Banking Group Archives, London (henceforth LBGA): 'You & Your Money', 1975; 'Money Matters', *Good Housekeeping*, November 1997, 367.

<sup>134</sup> Frazer, *Plastic and Electronic Money*, 130, 178, 210, 269.

HSBC's archive was in the process of reorganisation as a new archive for the bank was being developed in Hong Kong. A box containing some un-catalogued leaflets provided an opportunity for serendipitous finds.

In contrast, much of the RBS collection after the 1970s was filed in over four and a half thousand individual cardboard folders. The catalogue system could find items with 'women' or 'ladies' in the title but there were very few of these after the early 1970s. This is in itself interesting as it suggests that efforts to attract female customers became more subtle in the 1980s and 1990s, a theory borne out by the output of the other banks. My approach was to sample marketing material for a variety of products spread across the 1980s and 1990s. The items at the RBSA which referred directly to women or ladies were, though, particularly valuable to my research. These included press responses to the opening of the 'Ladies' Branch' in 1964, a bank exclusively for women, and an advertising agency's presentation to NatWest in 1988 about the underexploited women's market for financial products.

Lloyds adverts up to the 1960s were in dated guard books and in chronological boxes from the mid-sixties. This was useful for my purposes as change over time was particularly apparent. Much of the Barclays Group Archive in Manchester was organised in dated guard books. Here, and at RBS, I was also able to view some cinema and TV advertising.

At all the archives I viewed examples of adverts featuring women from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s to trace developments from these into the late twentieth century. Lloyds, Midland and the Westminster all produced 'women's series' of adverts in the post-war period. In my analysis of banks' marketing and advertising I was mindful that representations of women did not necessarily represent the collective view of the institution. A letter in the Barclays archive made it clear that advertising could be agreed at a 'low level' and 'under time pressure'. Staff at different levels, from the chairman to women cashiers in a local branch complained about marketing they

considered to be ill-judged or in poor taste.<sup>135</sup> Indeed, a handful of adverts which were amended or withdrawn are especially informative as they underline the contested nature of women's relationship with household money, and with high street banking, in these decades of rapid change.

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My use in combination of M-OP testimony; campaigns and advice about money from women's print media ranging from *Spare Rib* to 'Femail'; and banks' evolving efforts to attract women customers in the post-war decades and across my period of 1970 to 1995, enables me to construct a complex account of how women responded and contributed to changing expectations of their relationship with household money in the late twentieth century.

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<sup>135</sup> Barclays Group Archive, Manchester (henceforth BGA), 968/855, Letters in response to staff complaints about, 'If it's your first time...' mortgage campaign, 1995.

## Chapter 1: Cash is a Feminist Issue

In September 1976 a *Spare Rib* reader presented an impassioned case for the centrality of money to women's liberation. Joan Hall argued that money did not just give women 'the power to buy a washing machine or pay a baby-sitter' but also

the power to walk out of a job or a marriage you don't like, the power to tell Social Security snoopers to piss off, the power to insist that your mate stop doing overtime, or change jobs, so he can do his share of the housework. The power of women to work less and to control the conditions of their work.

The letter concluded with the plea that 'we should...start finding a million more ways of organising on this most basic aspect of women's exploitation and oppression.'<sup>1</sup>

The WLM had adopted 'legal and financial independence for all women' as its fifth demand in 1974. Nearly a decade later in an article for *Spare Rib*, Rada Gungaloo regretted that the campaign for the fifth demand had 'hardly taken off': its supporters had not 'unfurled a banner to which women in their 1000s could rally' and, consequently, the demand for legal and financial independence remained little more than 'a manifesto declaration'.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter I explore the WLM's creative and varied approaches to the problems of women's financial inequality and dependency. These include campaigns against discrimination in the social security system, in favour of Women's Right To Work and, more controversially, for Wages For Housework (henceforth WFH). Although, as Gungaloo complained, financial independence was not always a high-profile issue in the WLM, I will argue that it was an arena for important debate in the pages of *Spare Rib* which developed the WLM's understanding of, and approach to, women's financial inequality. Examples of wider media treatment of the subject will show that interest was not confined to the WLM. However, I will also explore the reasons why the

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<sup>1</sup> 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, September 1976, 4.

<sup>2</sup> 'Women and Marriage – two views on dependency and state policy', *Spare Rib*, November 1983, 19.

campaign for the fifth demand was not as successful as those who supported it had hoped.

As I have indicated, in the 1980s and 1990s, women's financial inequality in the household was a focus for an important body of social scientific research. The academic research carried out by Pahl and others was feminist in its inquiries and methodologies. In the second section of this chapter I argue that this research should be understood as an extension of the WLM's demand for women's financial independence. In *Spare Rib*, solutions to women's financial inequality were usually located outside the household – higher wages, independent assessment for benefits, a wage from the state for housework. What happened to money when it entered the household was rarely addressed. Academic research plugged this gap by exploring how money was distributed within the household.

In the third section of this chapter I drill down further into the ostensibly personal and private by using M-OP testimony to examine women's responses to their husbands' control over household money. This section furthers my analysis in several ways. M-OP correspondents' experiences of male financial control underline the real-world importance of the WLM's campaigns for women's financial independence and academic research into household money. Through my discussion of women's strategies to resist or modify male financial control, I redress the tendency in contemporary research to underestimate women's agency. I use more recent research to suggest that financial power in marriage is not located in money management systems but in how couples' day-to-day money talk is conducted or shut down, and show that this discursive process can be accessed through M-OP.

The overarching theme of this chapter is women's agency: as WLM campaigners or letter writers to *Spare Rib*; as academic researchers or participants in research; as resisters to their husband's financial control; or as M-OP correspondents testifying to the financial inequality in their marriage. In bringing together the WLM as represented in *Spare Rib*, some coverage of women's financial dependency in the mainstream media, contemporary academic research, and the voices of women outside the



feminist movement, I also begin to construct the cultural circuit which is central to this thesis.

## *Spare Rib* and the Women's Liberation Movement

*Spare Rib*, founded by Marsha Rowe and Rosie Boycott in 1972, became a 'key national institution' for the women's movement.<sup>3</sup> Although it was only identified on the cover as 'A Women's Liberation Magazine' from its fourth birthday issue in July 1976, from the outset *Spare Rib* was intended to disseminate the 'vital importance of women's liberation' and to find 'collective...solutions to women's problems.'<sup>4</sup> Its circulation of 20,000 gave *Spare Rib* a far wider reach than other WLM publications such as *Red Rag*, *Shrew* or *Wires* and the magazine's significance as a forum for debate within the WLM further increased after the final National Conference was held in Birmingham 1978.<sup>5</sup>

*Spare Rib's* role in what Winship describes as 'the creation and affirmation of a collective feminist culture beyond its pages' was inseparable from its participatory philosophy, with readers' articles and letters creating an 'ongoing dialogue' in its pages.<sup>6</sup> Melanie Waters points out that the letters and review pages were the only elements which maintained a continuous presence in the magazine's many changes of format over its twenty-one year run.<sup>7</sup> Generous space, on occasion as much as five pages, was devoted to readers' correspondence.<sup>8</sup> The ambition was to be more than an internal publication for the WLM: *Spare Rib* was intended to 'reach out to all women' including those who had 'no previous contact with the Women's Liberation Movement'.<sup>9</sup> As well as offering an insight into the views of activists from different groupings within the WLM, letters to *Spare Rib* indicate how a wider constituency of

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<sup>3</sup> Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines*, 144.

<sup>4</sup> 'Facsimile of Spare Rib manifesto', British Library, accessed 4 August, 2021, <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/facsimile-of-spare-rib-manifesto>

<sup>5</sup> Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines*, 123, 143–44; Eve Setch, 'The Women's Liberation Movement in Britain, 1969–79: Organisation, Creativity and Debate' (PhD thesis, University of London Royal Holloway, 2000), 143–47.

<sup>6</sup> Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines*, 134–6.

<sup>7</sup> Melanie Waters, "'Yours in Struggle': Bad Feelings and Revolutionary Politics in *Spare Rib*", *Women: A Cultural Review* 27, no. 4 (October 2016): 455, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09574042.2017.1301131>.

<sup>8</sup> 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, September 1984, 4–5, 44–6.

<sup>9</sup> *Spare Rib*, May 1977, 3; Marsha Rowe, ed., *Spare Rib Reader* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), 607.

interested women engaged with feminist debates around household money. Evidence I will include from other print media, especially the 'Femail' section of the *Daily Mail*, demonstrates the reach of the WLM, as represented in *Spare Rib*, particularly in the 1970s.

Twenty-first century scholarship of the WLM has moved away from the narrative arc of earlier histories which focused on national organisation and the divisions between socialist and radical/revolutionary feminists, the latter often blamed for the movement's decline.<sup>10</sup> Shifts have also taken place in assessments of *Spare Rib's* trajectory. In the introduction to the *Spare Rib Reader*, published to mark the first one-hundred issues, Marsha Rowe is critical of *Spare Rib's* early issues. She describes the 'jumble of articles' and photographs which 'echoed titillating...or anti-women attitudes' and presents the emergence of a more 'articulate feminist editorial content' as clear progress.<sup>11</sup> Writing in a less celebratory context, and in the light of the collective's bitter and public rift over Zionism and racism in 1982-3, Janice Winship is less sanguine about the magazine's evolution and laments some of the 'excitement and adventure of the early issues.'<sup>12</sup> Winship suggests that by the mid-1980s, *Spare Rib's* collective had come to see itself as the 'conscience' of the women's movement and was 'editorially prescribing...its "shoulds"'. As such, *Spare Rib* had developed a tendency to stifle discussion of women's experiences which were deemed not to conform to the feminist ideal, side-lining them as 'personal and private' rather than political.<sup>13</sup>

Selina Todd in 1999, and Joanne Hollows in 2013, have extended Winship's critique by arguing that the early potential of *Spare Rib* to tackle important aspects of women's

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<sup>10</sup> Eve Setch, 'The Face of Metropolitan Feminism: The London Women's Liberation Workshop, 1969-79', *Twentieth Century British History* 13, no. 2 (1 February 2002): 171-90, <https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/13.2.171>; Jeska Rees, 'A Look Back at Anger: The Women's Liberation Movement in 1978', *Women's History Review* 19, no. 3 (1 July 2010): 338, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2010.489343>; Sarah Stoller, 'Forging a Politics of Care: Theorizing Household Work in the British Women's Liberation Movement', *History Workshop Journal* 85 (April 2018): 98, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbx063>.

<sup>11</sup> Rowe, *Spare Rib Reader*, i, 9-10.

<sup>12</sup> Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines*, 133.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 134-9, 147.

lives diminished as the magazine established a clear socialist-feminist identity from the mid-1970s. Todd has argued that *Spare Rib* struggled to resolve second wave feminism's most iconic tenet, the personal is political, and that domestic relationships was a subject on which the magazine found it 'easier to maintain an uneasy silence'.<sup>14</sup> In '*Spare Rib*, Second-Wave Feminism and the Politics of Consumption', Hollows shows that women's role in the household economy was a topic particularly vulnerable to marginalisation as associations with housewifery and capitalism meant that consumption became a subject 'not feminist enough' for discussion in *Spare Rib* after 1974.<sup>15</sup> These concerns are particularly relevant to my reading of *Spare Rib* as the subject of household money was doubly-damned, being associated with materialism and located in private, domestic relationships.

My analysis of *Spare Rib*'s coverage of women's relationship with household money broadly endorses Todd and Hollows' theses. The 'personal' issue of household money management as a site of gendered inequality or source of matrimonial conflict was touched on but not explored in *Spare Rib* at a time when conventional women's magazines were, as I discuss in Chapter 2, offering advice on the pros and cons of joint accounts and how to manage a mean or feckless husband. However, in the mid-1970s the issue of women's financial independence and the campaign for the fifth demand became a focus. At the same time WFH offered an analysis of women's subjugation which foregrounded the financial and crossed into the more private territory of domestic gender roles.

In her challenge to the conventional interpretation of the WLM's rise and fall, Eve Setch has argued that divisions within the movement were 'a sign of vitality' and that these were 'part of its structure rather than the cause of its demise.'<sup>16</sup> Melanie Waters reaches a similar conclusion in her exploration of *Spare Rib*. Applying affect theory to

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<sup>14</sup> Selina Todd, 'Models and Menstruation: Spare Rib Magazine, Feminism, Femininity and Pleasure', *Studies in Social and Political Thought*, 260, (2017): 25, <https://doi.org/10.20919/sspt.26.2016.54>, first published in, *Studies in Social and Political Thought*, 1, (1999).

<sup>15</sup> Joanne Hollows, 'Spare Rib, Second-Wave Feminism and the Politics of Consumption', *Feminist Media Studies* 13, no. 2 (2013): 268–87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2012.708508>.

<sup>16</sup> Setch, 'The Face of Metropolitan Feminism', 186, 190.

illuminate some of the ‘virulent discourse’ in *Spare Rib*, Waters argues that intense feelings were an essential aspect of the political struggle and activism of the WLM, and she commends the collective for creating a space in which ‘bad feelings’ could be expressed.<sup>17</sup> These perspectives inform my analysis of the, sometimes acrimonious, disputes aired in *Spare Rib* over solutions to the problem of women’s financial inequality. I argue that the disagreement between supporters of WFH and advocates of the socialist-feminist emphasis on paid work was a positive force which led to developments in feminist theory and strategies. In the 1980s a more inclusive approach to the fifth demand, which was rooted in women’s everyday lives, was being put forward with renewed energy. However, by the end of the decade internal difficulties for the magazine’s collective, which led to its closure in 1993, combined with the political context, meant that the issue lost prominence.

The following discussion breaks *Spare Rib*’s coverage of money into four sections. looking at the early years, the campaign for the fifth demand, WFH, and the 1980s.

### A ‘new but as yet unfocused eye’<sup>18</sup>

When *Spare Rib* was launched in July 1972 it both mimicked and subverted the format of conventional women’s magazines. The incongruity between content and tone prompted one reader to parody it as a ‘Marxist *Woman’s Own*’.<sup>19</sup> The first issue described itself as ‘the new women’s magazine’ and included a fashion feature on jeans with real people instead of models; an article on skin care which got ‘behind the dirt’ of makeup; and recipes with an emphasis on reducing preparation effort. In keeping with this style, *Spare Rib*’s discussion of money in early editions gave a feminist slant to the practical tips and consumer complaints common in conventional magazines such as *Good Housekeeping* and *Woman’s Own*. An article offered advice on how to get a mortgage as a single woman; a divorced reader complained about her treatment by a TV rental firm, which told her she must have a guarantor, when her

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<sup>17</sup> Waters, “‘Yours in Struggle’”.

<sup>18</sup> Winship, *Inside Women’s Magazines*, 133.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Letters’, *Spare Rib*, October 1975, 4.

feckless ex-husband would have faced no such restriction; and a housewife described the similar trouble she faced getting credit to buy goods worth £50.<sup>20</sup>

However, the opportunity to explore structural and cultural sexism within the financial services sector was not developed. The male mortgage broker's assurance, used in the title of the article, that the 'problem' was not an unwillingness to lend but 'the ability of the single girl to afford the mortgage repayments' was allowed to stand. The impact of the letters highlighting sexist practices in the financial services sector was diluted by others citing more positive personal experiences such as the bank manager who had been 'marvellous' throughout one reader's divorce process.<sup>21</sup> As *Spare Rib* achieved a 'more articulate feminist editorial content' personal finance almost disappeared from its letters and news pages.<sup>22</sup> An exception to this was a report about a meeting in April 1975 where a solicitor advised cohabiting and same sex couples to make wills and avoid joint bank accounts, which suggests there may have been an appetite within the wider movement for more information from a feminist perspective on managing household money.<sup>23</sup>

Coverage of women and money from a feminist perspective in a conventional women's magazine highlights *Spare Rib's* comparative reticence. In September 1975 *Good Housekeeping* published '20 facts Every Woman Should Know About Her Rights'. The thrust of the article was to explain how the Sex Discrimination Bill and implementation of the Equal Pay Act would impact on women's lives. 'Women and Money' featured prominently and addressed the credit and mortgage inequalities raised in *Spare Rib*. In addition, four of the five points on 'Women and Marriage' were about finances.<sup>24</sup>

Sexist advertising was a popular subject in *Spare Rib* in the 1970s. Readers were encouraged to send in examples and these included adverts for financial products such

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<sup>20</sup> 'News', *Spare Rib*, December 1973 17; 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, May 1973, 4; 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, October 1974, 4.

<sup>21</sup> 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, July 1973, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Rowe, *Spare Rib Reader*, 20.

<sup>23</sup> 'News', *Spare Rib*, August 1975, 23.

<sup>24</sup> '20 facts Every Woman Should Know About Her Rights', *Good Housekeeping*, September 1975, 72-73.

as one from Prudential Life Assurance asking 'How Much is Your Wife Worth'.<sup>25</sup> However, as Winship, Todd and Hollows have pointed out, conflict between idealism and pragmatism meant that the magazine was partially financed by advertising for brands such as Sabre men's toiletries which reinforced gender stereotypes.<sup>26</sup> A particularly jarring example of this inconsistency was an advert for Grattan catalogues, which actually appeared next to an article on sexism in advertising and yet reflected assumptions of women's dependency and passivity in financial decision making with the tag line 'My husband found this Philips 22" colour TV for the family and this portable PYE 14" for me.'<sup>27</sup>

As the magazine's identity and finances became more established its advertising policy also became more reflective of its socialist-feminist stance. In contrast to the home-spun aesthetics and anti-capitalist ethics of most advertising in *Spare Rib* from the mid-1970s, the decision to carry a regular and prominent advert on its back cover for a financial company seems significant.<sup>28</sup> The Women's Individual Savings Plan (henceforth WISP) from Langham Life Assurance was 'designed by women, solely for women'; later adverts allied the product even more closely to the WLM with the tag-line 'MISS MRS MS – WISP is for you!'<sup>29</sup> WISP, described as the 'brainchild' of company director Dorothy Genn, also featured in *Good Housekeeping's* 'Money' column in November 1974, where its benefits for women were favourably compared with conventional life assurance policies.<sup>30</sup> *Spare Rib's* relationship with WISP suggests an acknowledgement that personal finance was important for women and a field in need of feminist analysis and reform. This was taken further by a reader who wrote in about her positive experience of the company, commenting that WISP was 'an idea which has some potential for furthering women's independence'.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Spare Rib*, October 1973, 21.

<sup>26</sup> Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines*, 132–33; Selina Todd, 'Models and Menstruation, 27–29'; Hollows, 'Spare Rib, Second-Wave Feminism and the Politics of Consumption', 272.

<sup>27</sup> *Spare Rib*, February 1974, 16.

<sup>28</sup> Rowe, *Spare Rib Reader*, 19; Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines*, 127–28; Hollows, 'Spare Rib, Second-Wave Feminism and the Politics of Consumption', 272–78.

<sup>29</sup> Back cover, *Spare Rib*, October 1974, and October 1977.

<sup>30</sup> 'A Better Policy for Women', *Good Housekeeping*, November 1974, 18, 20.

<sup>31</sup> 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, January 1978, 5.

Women's financial position in the home was addressed in an article in the fifth issue of *Spare Rib*, in November 1972, by Michelene Wandor. She offered a wide-ranging critique of the nuclear family and women's 'suffocation' within it. Women's financial dependency on their husbands was identified as fundamental to what was 'wrong' and Wandor deftly implicated the role of companionate marriage mythology in perpetuating this: 'In most middle-class families this *dependence* is seen as *sharing*'. (Original emphasis). Winship has suggested that too often the stance adopted in *Spare Rib* involved the rejection of conventional lifestyles in favour of radical alternatives, and that this could serve to diminish, or even denigrate, the reality and everyday messy compromises which characterised most *Spare Rib* readers' personal lives.<sup>32</sup> Wandor's article characterises this problem, as the only solution offered is the replacement of the nuclear family with 'more communal forms of living'.<sup>33</sup>

As *Spare Rib*'s socialist-feminist identity became secure the magazine's coverage of money became more overtly political. Jane Gardiner's series of didactic articles exploring financial terms such as 'inflation' and 'profit', which began in March 1974, is indicative of this shift. Gardiner explained, 'We think it's important that as women we begin to lose some of our shyness about economics'.<sup>34</sup> At the same time three alternative approaches to women's financial inequality were being advanced. The WLM's fifth demand calling for 'financial and legal independence for all women' was adopted at the WLM conference in Edinburgh in July 1974 as the international Wages For Housework movement was gaining support. For most of the 1970s, though, *Spare Rib*'s socialist-feminism meant that paid work featured most prominently as the route out of financial dependency. Tensions between these three positions caused acrimonious disputes in *Spare Rib* but contributed to a more unified approach by the early 1980s.

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<sup>32</sup> Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines*, 124–27.

<sup>33</sup> 'Family Ever After', *Spare Rib*, November 1972, 11.

<sup>34</sup> 'Inflation', *Spare Rib*, March 1974, 23.

## The Demand for Legal and Financial Independence

Three of the WLM's original four demands – equal pay, equal educational and job opportunities, and free 24-hour nurseries – related to women's financial inequality in the context of paid work. Katherine Grieve, who helped formulate the fifth demand, explained the broader ambition behind it. The intention was to challenge the 'idea' of women's dependence and its reinforcement through discriminatory laws on benefits, pensions, taxes, student grants and employment rights, as well as practices limiting women's access to credit and mortgages. It was anticipated that, under the umbrella of the long-term goal, a variety of specific campaigns would improve women's material conditions in the short-term and 'give rise to a new political consciousness in thinking about the state and the family.'<sup>35</sup>

However, a balance between realism and idealism was particularly difficult to achieve in the context of women and money. Grieve recognised the conflict between fighting for the removal of barriers to financial independence whilst protecting the rights of the many married women who depended on a degree of financial support from their husbands, but conceded that there was no 'general solution' to this.<sup>36</sup>

Although the fifth demand identified the centrality of money to women's liberation it essentially stopped at the threshold and did not confront unequal control over, and access to, money in the home. A reader's letter in January 1976 exposed this gap whilst unwittingly highlighting some of the difficulties inherent in campaigning for a political solution to financial inequality in marriage. Rachel Marks wrote,

I am a single girl and for some time now have been concerned with Mean Husbands.... I don't mean poor families as such, but those...where the wife...does not know how much her husband earns...and is given very little.

Marks underlined the severity of husbands withholding money by relating this behaviour to physical domestic abuse, writing, 'Along with Battered Wives this really makes my blood boil!' Her proposed solution was to legally enforce the idea that 'the

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<sup>35</sup> 'Dependence and a New Political Consciousness', *Spare Rib*, July 1974, 21.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*



money is not the husband's alone, but...should belong to both.' This idea was not new. Marks referred to an article in the *Times* in which Joan Bakewell endorsed the Married Women's Association's (henceforth MWA) campaign to make married couples' earnings belong to the family unit.<sup>37</sup> The MWA had been instrumental in achieving the Married Women's Property Act of 1964 which gave women the right to half of any housekeeping money they received from their husbands. An apparently small concession but significant to the many women who saved part of their housekeeping allowance for personal spending or an escape fund.<sup>38</sup>

This letter got right to the heart of the dilemma at the centre of the fifth demand by suggesting that married women's condition of dependency should be improved, a stance which could undermine the campaign for financial *independence*. Also, in this context gender equality could only be achieved at the expense of women's autonomy. Mark's argued that, 'Everything a woman earns should also be regarded as belonging to the family'. Many feminists would have balked at giving husbands a right to their wives' earnings, particularly as this would undo the gains achieved by the Married Women's Property Act of 1882, an important milestone for first wave feminism.

If Mark's letter generated any responses from *Spare Rib* readers, they were not selected by the collective for publication. Achieving a feminist political solution to the issue of 'mean husbands' was clearly problematic, and in the absence of a problem page, the space where conventional women's magazines addressed the topic, this common predicament for married women was side-lined by *Spare Rib*.<sup>39</sup> Unequal distribution of household resources would appear to be a good example of the magazine's more general 'uneasy silence' on women's relationships with men which Todd identifies.

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<sup>37</sup> 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, January 1976, 3; 'Marriage is No Meal Ticket', *Times*, 30 April, 1975.

<sup>38</sup> Thompson, 'Married Women's Property Act 1964,' in Rackley and Auchmuty, *Women's Legal Landmarks*, 263–69

<sup>39</sup> See for example, 'Mary Grant', *Woman's Own*, 14 October, 1978 and 'Angela Williams', *Woman's Own*, 19 December, 1981. *Spare Rib's* problem page format by Anna Raeburn was axed in 1974, see Todd, 'Models and Menstruation', 26.

A campaign which attracted much greater interest from *Spare Rib* readers, prompting many letters and articles, and which was included under the banner of the fifth demand, was opposition to the Department for Health and Social Security's 'cohabitation rule'.<sup>40</sup> This DHSS ruling deemed a woman living with a man 'as husband and wife' to be financially supported by him and reduced or rescinded her benefit payments accordingly. The 'sex snoopers' who investigated and applied this rule attracted vitriol from *Spare Rib's* contributors for their gross intrusion into women's private lives. An indication of the level of anger this provoked is shown by a piece in *Spare Rib* from the Coventry Women's Right to a Decent Income Campaign describing how they had occupied the DHSS offices in protest at the arrival of special investigators in the city.<sup>41</sup>

Mainstream publications also took up this fight. Under the heading 'Snoopers' and illustrated with a picture of a razor and shaving brush among a shelf of makeup, the *Daily Mail's* 'Femail' section published an article in August 1975 reporting on the Claimants Union's campaign against the cohabitation rule. Although it included the DHSS defence that cohabitees shouldn't get financial privileges denied to married couples, the emphasis was on the injustices perpetrated, such as the divorcee whose benefits were stopped because an anonymous informer accused her of cohabiting with her decorator.<sup>42</sup>

However, like the solution to 'mean husbands' supported by Marks and the Married Women's Association, the campaign against the cohabitation rule ran the risk of side-stepping, or implicitly endorsing, the assumption of *married* women's financial dependency on which the rule was based. This point was made by a *Spare Rib* reader who suggested that MP Jo Richardson's Bill to end the cohabitation rule, 'whilst a very important step forward, is, in its present form, seeking to eliminate one injustice,

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<sup>40</sup> 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, November 1974, 4; 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, May 1975, 4; 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, July 1975, 4; 'Sex Snoopers with a Human Face', *Spare Rib* May 1976, 30, 'Odds and Sods', 45; 'Got the S.S. Shakes', *Spare Rib*, June 1976, 28; 'Sex Scoop Snoop', *Spare Rib*, February 1979, 11.

<sup>41</sup> 'S.S. Hasslers: Anger Mounts', *Spare Rib*, July 1981, 9.

<sup>42</sup> 'The Snoopers', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 20 May, 1975, 10, Gale.

whilst perpetuating another.’<sup>43</sup> Women organising around the demand for legal and financial independence addressed this potential stumbling block by including attacks on DHSS policies which disadvantaged married women with their attacks on the cohabitation rule. As well as married women’s lack of entitlement to claim supplementary benefit in their own right, those forced to give up paid work due to ill health had to prove they were unfit to do housework before they could claim disability benefits.<sup>44</sup>

The demand for women to be treated independently by the social security system was further complicated by many women’s need to have their financial dependency on their husbands recognised if they divorced. This paradox was evident in an issue of *Spare Rib* which publicised the demand for legal and financial independence and included a page of legal advice which reassured women of a husband’s legal duty to ‘provide for you and your children’ even after divorce and, in the wife’s case, until she remarries.<sup>45</sup> As I will discuss, this tension became more urgent when legislation to reduce women’s rights to maintenance was introduced in 1984.

Campaigners for women’s legal and financial independence recognised that it was difficult to mobilise around a demand which challenged ‘a complex web of government regulations’ rather than a single issue.<sup>46</sup> As I have shown, this was further complicated as legislative changes which would benefit some women were potentially against the interests of others. At the same time WFH offered an alternative approach to women’s financial independence which attracted more impassioned support but also provoked strong opposition.

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<sup>43</sup> ‘Letters’, *Spare Rib*, May 1975, 4.

<sup>44</sup> ‘News’, *Spare Rib*, January 1976, 24, 43; ‘News’, *Spare Rib*, February 1976, 24-5; ‘News’, *Spare Rib*, May 1976, 30.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Sex Snoopers with a Human Face’, *Spare Rib*, May 1976, 30; ‘Law: Who owns the children?’, *Spare Rib*, May 1976, 38.

<sup>46</sup> ‘News’ *Spare Rib*, February 1976, 24.

## Wages For Housework

The most vocal feminist campaign of the 1970s to improve women's financial position came from the International WFH movement which demanded a payment from the state to all women in recognition of their caring, catering and cleaning work in the home. WFH offered a political analysis of women's economic inequality, whilst recognising the everyday domestic reality many of them faced; the movement also had the advantage of a message which could be distilled to a banner slogan. The rousing 'Money is Power' letter to *Spare Rib* which opened this chapter was putting forward WFH arguments and praising its 'ground-breaking-offensive.'<sup>47</sup>

WFH has generally been examined in the context of feminist theorising about housework rather than as a potential solution to women's financial dependency. Setch points out that in their early statements and publications, Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, who inspired the WFH movement, did not prioritise, and even rejected, the idea of payment.<sup>48</sup> However, it is clear that the decision to demand, in Dalla Costa's vivid formulation, 'money of my own, paid into my own hands', ignited and popularised the campaign.<sup>49</sup> In a letter to *Spare Rib* in 1989 members of Black Women For Wages For Housework described their seventeen years in the movement as 'fighting for women's financial independence'.<sup>50</sup>

Selma James first tackled married women's financial independence in *Spare Rib* in March 1973 in an article attacking government proposals to stop paying Family Allowance directly to mothers and, instead, to incorporate it into the main earner's tax credits. James argued that for many women, Family Allowance was '*the only money she can call her own*'.<sup>51</sup> (Original emphasis). Support for continued payment of the benefit to mothers came from women outside, and even opposed to, the WLM, such as the *Daily Mail's* Linda Lee-Potter.<sup>52</sup> However, although the payment of Family

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<sup>47</sup> 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, September 1976, 4.

<sup>48</sup> Setch, 'The Women's Liberation Movement', 182.

<sup>49</sup> Mariarosa Dalla Costa, 'A General Strike', in Wendy Edmond and Suzie Fleming, eds., *All Work and no Pay: Women, Housework and the Wages Due* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1975), 126.

<sup>50</sup> 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, September 1989, 5.

<sup>51</sup> 'Whose Family Allowance?' *Spare Rib*, March 1973, 17.

<sup>52</sup> 'Hands Off', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 22 March 1972, 7. Gale.

Allowance to women was popular, whether the money was actually for women, or for their children, was contested. James attracted criticism when, in an uncompromising article a few months later, she described Family Allowance as 'ours by rights', denying that it should be seen as 'for the children or for the family' and denouncing 'the guilt we are usually made to feel about using the money ourselves'.<sup>53</sup> One *Spare Rib* reader's lengthy critique of her article described the suggestion that a payment intended for children was the route to women's financial independence as 'insulting'.<sup>54</sup> Women's ownership of 'wages' for 'housework', on the other hand, was unambiguous.

As a 'mobilising force, rather than a model for a future system' WFH was remarkably successful, not least because the audacity of its demand attracted mainstream media attention.<sup>55</sup> In 1975 the 'Femail' section of the *Daily Mail* published a debate on the idea to 'Pay Wives' and a BBC camera crew attended the WFH mother's day meeting in London in 1977.<sup>56</sup> The movement's assertion that 'All Women Are Housewives', resonated with many women.<sup>57</sup> A *Spare Rib* reader from Jamaica who had felt like an 'onlooker' on 'the European and metropolitan women's movement' wrote of WFH that '[f]or the first time...something fundamentally relevant to all of us is on the stage.'<sup>58</sup> The formation of Black WFH and other subsidiary groups, including Wages Due Lesbians, speaks to the breadth of the movement's appeal.<sup>59</sup>

WFH also provoked strong negative opinions, attracting criticism for being both too radical and too reactionary. A series of letters to *Spare Rib* in 1976 and 1977 debated the movement's merits and the majority of those published remained sceptical. The WFH argument that 'money is power' was countered by the view that taking payment would imply 'you've given in, you've accepted compensation and admitted defeat' in the gendered and unequal division of household labour. Others maintained that 'a

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<sup>53</sup> 'The Future of Family Allowance: The Feminist Position', *Spare Rib*, September 1973, 18-19.

<sup>54</sup> 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, November 1973, 23-4.

<sup>55</sup> Setch, 'The Women's Liberation Movement', 191.

<sup>56</sup> 'The "Pay Wives" Debate!', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 26 September, 1975, 12, Gale; 'Daffodils, Cards and Wages', *Spare Rib*, May 1977, 28.

<sup>57</sup> Wendy Edmond and Suzie Fleming, 'If Women were Paid for All They Do', in Edmond and Fleming, *All Work and no Pay*, 1975, 6.

<sup>58</sup> 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, May 1977, 5,38.

<sup>59</sup> Setch 'The Women's Liberation Movement', 187.

wage from the state would only entrench...more firmly' the position of housewives as 'dependent' or, to put this point another way, '[f]inancial autonomy may change the degree of oppression, but not the forces that create it'. In 1977 debate tipped into open hostility when the conflict between WFH and the rest of the WLM in Bristol was aired in the pages of *Spare Rib*, culminating in the Bristol Women's Centre's decision not to publish WFH activities in their newsletter.<sup>60</sup>

As *Spare Rib*'s socialist-feminist identity became established, access to paid work and trades union activity to improve wages and conditions were emphasised in the magazine as the primary solution to women's financial inequality. Justifying the selection of articles for the *Spare Rib Reader* commemorating the magazine's first ten years, Marsha Rowe wrote, 'The longest section is on paid work, since this is the area most consistently covered by *Spare Rib*, demonstrating how basic and important a place it holds in women's lives.'<sup>61</sup> This consistent coverage was reflective of the collective's priorities but support for WFH suggests that for many women their domestic and caring roles loomed largest as a source of anger and an arena for change. For housework to be identified as economically *productive* gave value to these women's daily lives.<sup>62</sup>

Exchanges in *Spare Rib* are suggestive of a growing tension between WFH and campaigns focussing on the workplace. In January 1977 a member of 'A Woman's Right to Work' accused WFH of failing to get to 'the root of the problem'; a supporter of WFH countered that socialised housework solutions, such as nurseries and laundries, were a capitalist trap to lure women into taking on a second job from which they would be thrown back into housework when they were no longer needed. One letter writer set the interests of working women and WFH in direct opposition by arguing that working women would have to pay higher taxes to subsidise the 'wages' of

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<sup>60</sup> 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, April 1976, 4; 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, November 1976, 5; 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, November 1977, 4; 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, January 1978, 5. See also, 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, September 1976, 4.

<sup>61</sup> Rowe, *Spare Rib Reader*, 1982, 21.

<sup>62</sup> See Poldi Fortunati, 'The Housewife', in Edmond and Fleming, *All Work and no Pay*, 13–19; Setch, 'The Women's Liberation Movement', 154–92.

women who decided to stay at home.<sup>63</sup> Social class underpinned some of this tension. In a humorous but insightful article on WFH for the *Guardian*, Jill Tweedie admitted that it was 'among career women' that 'they set up a high level of irritation'. WFH's analysis of women's financial dependency which foregrounded their responsibility for housework and childcare alienated many middle-class feminists who did not want to be reminded, as Tweedie put it, of their 'slave state.'<sup>64</sup>

Conflict over the merits of paid work for women in the 1970s were shaped by the increase in married women's part-time work. In 1981, 3.8 million women were employed part-time, an increase of over a third since 1971. WFH's concerns about these women's treatment by employers were not far-fetched. Part-time earnings were only 58% of men's full-time hourly rate in the early 1980s, and only four-fifths of the hourly wage earned by women working full time; these workers were the first to be laid off when trade was poor.<sup>65</sup> A study into part-time work in Coventry warned of the 'development of a new form of work which is highly exploitative and heavily gender-specific.'<sup>66</sup> Helen McCarthy found that this worsening in women's employment conditions was reflected in women's 'downbeat' responses to surveys about their working lives.<sup>67</sup> *Spare Rib* collective member Jill Nicholls was put off by WFH's 'assumption' that 'women only go out to work for money' and 'given the chance they'd stay at home', but for many other women this was a refreshing recognition of their feelings about their job.<sup>68</sup>

Sarah Stoller argues that the wider WLM's engagement with the issue of housework in the mid-1970s is indicative of the influence of the WFH campaign.<sup>69</sup> At the National Conference in April 1976, Brighton delegates' proposal for 'a seventh demand and campaign around the sharing of domestic labour and care of dependants' was

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<sup>63</sup> 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, January 1977, 5; 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, May 1977, 5, 38; 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, November 1976, 5.

<sup>64</sup> 'Slave Wages', *The Guardian*, 3 May, 1976, 9, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>65</sup> McCarthy, *Double Lives*, 347-8.

<sup>66</sup> Veronica Beechey and Tessa Perkins, *A Matter of Hours: Women, Part-time Work and the Labour Market* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 6, quoted in *ibid.*, 348.

<sup>67</sup> McCarthy, *Double Lives*, 348

<sup>68</sup> 'Daffodils, Cards and Wages', *Spare Rib*, May 1977, 28.

<sup>69</sup> Stoller, 'Forging a Politics of Care', 100-102.

discussed and, although the proposal was not adopted, the workshop agreed that it was 'a priority to organise publicly around housework'. The explicit rejection of wages as a solution to housework in favour of 'socialised facilities' and efforts to 'raise consciousness about sharing it' is a clear rejection of WFH by the wider WLM, but it also demonstrates the extent to which WFH had set the terms of the debate.<sup>70</sup> I would argue that WFH also kept the discussion on women's financial independence alive and urgent.

The political and economic climate of the 1980s forced feminists to 'regroup'.<sup>71</sup> Rising unemployment in the late 1970s and early 1980s weakened the case for paid work as the only route to women's financial independence and pushed other solutions up the agenda. In revisiting the question of women's financial dependency in the 1980s, the WLM as represented in *Spare Rib*, consciously avoided the divisions between women in employment and women at home which had characterised many responses to WFH.

### 'A Fowler Future'<sup>72</sup>

A refocussing on the problem of women's financial inequality is demonstrated in the April 1982 edition of *Spare Rib* which included an editorial and two major articles exploring the subject. These articles reconnected the personal and the political in women's relationship with household money by drawing together the interests of women in the workplace and the home. The editorial attacked the Labour Party's 'Alternative Economic Strategy' for talking about 'the national economy but not how we live our daily lives' and for ignoring the impact of 'reproduction, unpaid work, the family and the community' on women's employment opportunities. Significantly, the editorial also addressed the problem of unequal distribution of resources within the household by suggesting that a question which should be addressed was, 'who controls the domestic purse strings?'<sup>73</sup> As the lack of response to the 'Mean Husband's

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<sup>70</sup> 'News', *Spare Rib* 47, June 1976, 27.

<sup>71</sup> Stoller, 'Forging a Politics of Care', 114.

<sup>72</sup> *Spare Rib*, February 1986, 10.

<sup>73</sup> 'Editorial', *Spare Rib*, April 1982, 3.



letter in 1976 indicates, this was a topic with which *Spare Rib* had not previously engaged.

This issue's feature article explores women's financial position in the household through interviews with women in South Wales about the impact of the recession. Mary, who 'jokingly refers to herself as the family's accountant,' offers a detailed description of her efforts to make her husband's pay packet cover their very modest outgoings. This was the first time *Spare Rib* had addressed women's role as household money managers and its importance was underlined by the cover illustration of a screwed-up note showing a failed attempt to balance a family budget.<sup>74</sup>

The division between women with or without paid employment was bridged in a piece which presented arguments by two campaign groups, the Women's Right to Work and Wageless Women, and emphasised that their aims were 'different' but 'complimentary'. Wageless Women shared WFH's challenge to the traditional left by insisting that, [w]hether we're being paid by an employer or not, our lives are still productive', however, they emphasised that they were not 'asking for a wage to do housework'. Consciously rejecting the essentialising potential of some of WFH's publicity, Wageless Women's argument was formulated around gender equality in the benefits system: 'wageless men have an independent income and it's not tied to whether they do housework.'<sup>75</sup>

The early 1980s brought a further challenge to the WLM in the move against the perceived overgenerosity of divorce courts in the granting of maintenance to ex-wives. This backlash was apparent in 'Femail's' coverage of divorce. In 1971 an article welcomed the Law Commission report proposing that homes should be treated as joint assets even if they were solely in the husband's name and detailed the personal experiences of four women left homeless or impoverished under the current rules.<sup>76</sup> Two articles published in 1977 and 1979 stuck a more hostile and sensationalist tone.

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<sup>74</sup> 'Surviving the Recession', *Spare Rib*, April 1982, 6-8,19

<sup>75</sup> 'A Right to a Job/ A Right to an Income', *Spare Rib*, April 1982, 20-21.

<sup>76</sup> 'What today's marriage news really means to women...', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 27 October 1971,10. Gale.

Lawyer, Fenton Bressler, claimed that men were now the 'second-class citizen' or 'Cinderella' of divorce while the 'ex-wife cashes in.' Discussion of ordinary hard-working, and often 'innocent', men being penalised was bolstered by details of the multi-million-dollar settlements received by celebrities such as Zsa Zsa Gabor.<sup>77</sup> The *Daily Mail* contributed to a widespread public belief by the early 1980s that many divorced women were 'alimony drones'.<sup>78</sup> This encouraged support for legislation to limit women's entitlement to maintenance, which was covered in 'Femail' under the heading 'Ex-wives may lose "meal tickets."' <sup>79</sup>

Lewis has pointed out that the 1984 Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act assumed women to be 'fully individualised...free standing, employed individuals' when the reality was that most women seeking divorce at this time had followed the convention of putting home and family first, combined with employment which was often part-time and low-paid.<sup>80</sup> Women fighting for the WLM's fifth demand faced the difficulty of defending a protection, maintenance payments, that women had been granted because of their financial dependency in marriage. This was further complicated because feminist arguments in favour of financial independence for women were used by those in support of the Bill. Joyce Hopkirk argued in 'Femail' that remaining financially dependent on an ex-husband was damaging to women's mental health and self-esteem.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, the Law Commission report which recommended the legislation was welcomed by the chair of the all-party divorce reform group as 'wise' because it treated wives not as 'helpless dependents but as adult human beings with a need and a right to attain their independence when a marriage breaks down.'<sup>82</sup> These comments indicate how widely the ideal of women's financial independence was accepted a decade after the fifth demand was adopted, which speaks to the influence

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<sup>77</sup> 'Mister second class citizen', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 9 November 1977, 13, Gale; 'Husbands, the Cinderellas of today!', 'Femail', 13 February 1979, Gale.

<sup>78</sup> Michael D. A. Freeman, ed., *The State, Law, and the Family: Critical Perspectives* (London: Tavistock, 1984), 2.

<sup>79</sup> Carol Smart, 'Marriage, divorce, and women's economic dependency: a discussion of the politics of private maintenance', in *ibid.*, 9-24; 'Ex-wives may lose "meal tickets"', *Daily Mail*, 1 February, 1982, 11, Gale.

<sup>80</sup> Lewis, *The End of Marriage?*, 114.

<sup>81</sup> 'Instead of Alimony', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 8 October, 1980, 12.

<sup>82</sup> 'Children and Husbands Deserve a Better Deal', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 16 December, 1981, 13.

of and the WLM on mainstream opinion. But they also meant that women opposing the 'clean break' divorce faced a harder task in justifying their objections.<sup>83</sup>

Although divorce law reform in the 1980s appeared to be moving away from the assumption of women's financial dependency, changes to the social security system reinforced it. From 1983 unemployment benefit claimants had to have childcare arrangements already in place to be considered available for work. As McCarthy points out, this was 'notionally gender neutral but obviously aimed at mothers with young children.'<sup>84</sup> The following year women with employed husbands were made ineligible for places on job creation schemes. The impact of these measures was aggravated because women, particularly working mothers, were disproportionately impacted by Thatcher's policy of putting public sector contracts out to private tender which led to cuts in staff and pay.<sup>85</sup> In an article called 'A Fowler Future' in reference to Norman Fowler, Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, Rights of Women concluded that, 'the government has further affirmed its commitment to making women dependent on men.'<sup>86</sup>

However, as *Spare Rib* pointed out, government policies didn't support women staying at home either, as eligibility for a maternity grant was narrowed and Child Benefit was frozen.<sup>87</sup> In an impassioned article published in 1989, Kathy Sutton argued that, as women were usually responsible for managing household budgets in low-income families, ten years of the Thatcher governments' economic and public spending policies had disproportionately affected women who had to 'bear the brunt' of increasing poverty.<sup>88</sup> Campaigns by Rights of Women and other groups advocating that married and cohabiting women be assessed independently for benefits became less urgent as the existing safety net of the welfare state was being withdrawn from women just as increasing numbers needed it.

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<sup>83</sup> 'News', *Spare Rib*, July 1984, 13.

<sup>84</sup> McCarthy, *Double Lives*, 371.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 370–71.

<sup>86</sup> 'A Fowler Future', *Spare Rib*, February 1986, 10.

<sup>87</sup> 'Thatcher's Britain', *Spare Rib*, December 1987, 7–15

<sup>88</sup> 'Poverty in Britain – Women bear the Brunt', *Spare Rib*, May 1989, 15–16.

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The adoption of the fifth demand in 1974 demonstrated that the achievement of financial independence for women was a priority for the WLM. Many of the changes they fought for had been achieved by the end of the 1980s. Independent taxation for married women had been introduced, pension rights had been equalised and some of the worst iniquities of the social security system, the 'housework test' and married women's lack of access to carers allowances, had been removed. However, as the previous section has shown, many obstacles remained.

To some extent weaknesses within *Spare Rib* made it difficult for the campaign to achieve more. Dependency on advertisers and editorial inexperience contributed to incongruities in early editions. When the magazine adopted a clearer socialist-feminist identity in the mid-1970s, there was a shift in emphasis from the personal to the political which side-lined the issue of household money and prioritised employment as a route to independence. The popularity of the WFH movement was, in part, a reaction against this tendency. However, *Spare Rib* also provided a forum in which diverse and opposing ideas about women and money could be aired. From this a clearer understanding of how economic, social and political structures contributed to women's financial inequality emerged. The WLM's engagement with women's financial dependency contributed to the cultural and intellectual climate from which academic interest in women and household money emerged in the 1980s. This will be explored in the next section.

## Academic Research into Woman and Money

As *Spare Rib's* influence waned, academic research was already underway into women's financial inequality. This research addressed issues raised by the WLM and tackled by *Spare Rib's* collective and readers. The caution which the campaign for the fifth demand had shown about crossing the threshold into the private sphere of marital relationships – their reluctance to confront the 'mean husband' – had limited their challenge to women's financial dependency. When social scientists took up the

issue they focussed on the mechanisms within households, between married couples, which contributed to women's financial inequality.

The research into household money undertaken by Pahl and others in the 1980s was rooted in the perspective of the women's movement. The determination to break open the 'black box' of household finances reflected a belief that the private, domestic sphere was as worthy of study, and as complex, as the public sphere. Wilson made the feminist assumptions underpinning her research explicit, stating her beliefs that 'women's daily life is a worthwhile field of investigation' and that 'women are important in determining the standard of living of their families.'<sup>89</sup> Feminist analysis of the patriarchal family as a site of women's oppression informed researchers' interest in questions of unequal power in marriage and how this related to control over and access to household money.

The explosion of research into household money in the 1980s can be located in the context of more generalised sociological interest in the 'dark side' of family life which was informed by feminist critiques of the family.<sup>90</sup> Pahl's interest in the topic of household money began as a study of the experiences of fifty 'battered women' at a Women's Aid Refuge. She likened the secrecy which often surrounds money with the concealment of violence within the family, blaming the idealisation of domestic privacy for both.<sup>91</sup> Wilson's research was part of a larger study on depression in women. Wandor's provocative argument in *Spare Rib*, that the ideal of marital sharing served to gloss over women's financial dependency, was something Wilson observed and interrogated in her research.<sup>92</sup>

This more pessimistic stance was also a response to the overly optimistic sociology of the family in the 1960s and 70s. In 1960 Blood and Wolfe in America suggested that married women's paid work had increased their power in marriage so much that 'the

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<sup>89</sup> Wilson, *Money in the Family*, 1,49-50.

<sup>90</sup> Janet Finch and David Morgan, 'Marriage in the 1980s: A new sense of realism?', in David Clark, ed., *Marriage, Domestic Life and Social Change: Writings for Jacqueline Burgoyne, 1944-88* (London: Routledge, 1991), 55-80.

<sup>91</sup> Pahl, 'Patterns of Money Management', 316; Pahl, 'The Allocation of Money', 258.

<sup>92</sup> Wilson, *Money in the Family*, 1-2, 143-6.

predominance of the male has been so thoroughly undermined that we no longer live in a patriarchal society.<sup>93</sup> In the light of the provision of maternity and family allowances, the rise in women's earnings and the fall in alcohol and tobacco consumption, Wilmott and Young felt confident that the days when women and children had a lower standard of living than their husbands or fathers were, if not entirely passed, then very nearly so. Marriages, they wrote, were becoming a 'financial partnership' in the 'move towards symmetry'. Though they did acknowledge that evidence for this was 'not as full as we would like.'<sup>94</sup>

Researchers into household money in the 1980s used methodologies which can be characterised as feminist: for *Money and Marriage* husbands and wives were interviewed separately to ensure that women's voices and experiences were heard. The radicalism and value of this methodology is underlined by comparison with research into matrimonial property carried out only a decade earlier: Todd and Jones deemed it 'indelicate' to interview spouses separately, although they acknowledged that this 'created serious problems' 'from the point of view of obtaining opinions.'<sup>95</sup> Separate interviews were also time-consuming and, therefore, expensive. In the second phase of the SCEL study couples were interviewed together but a degree of privacy was achieved by giving each partner a separate booklet to complete before the interview.<sup>96</sup>

The threats to women's economic position in the household from the Conservative government's policies, which inspired the relaunch of the campaign for the fifth demand by Rights of Women, also stimulated academic research. Pahl highlighted that reducing direct taxation and increasing indirect taxation was potentially detrimental to women as it could not be assumed that husbands would pass on the increase in their pay packets to their wives, who would be faced with higher prices in the shops.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> R. O. Blood and D. M. Wolfe, *Husbands and Wives: The Dynamics of Married Living* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1960), 18–19.

<sup>94</sup> Peter Willmott and Michael Young, *The Symmetrical Family: A Study of Work and Leisure in the London Region* (London: Routledge, 1973), 78–84.

<sup>95</sup> Todd and Jones, *Matrimonial Property*, 4–5.

<sup>96</sup> Vogler and Pahl, 'Social and Economic Change', 73.

<sup>97</sup> Pahl, 'Patterns of Money Management', 314–15.

Morris was concerned with the impact of unemployment on the distribution of money within households. The Fowler review of the social security system, criticised by Rights of Women in *Spare Rib*, prompted fears that Child Benefit would be means tested or abolished.<sup>98</sup> Pahl used her research to defend the benefit by demonstrating its importance to women, especially those with limited access to other household monies.<sup>99</sup>

From the mid-1970s *Spare Rib's* socialist-feminist collective prioritised paid work and trades union activity as the route to women's financial independence and equality. By the 1990s the limited gains from this approach were recognised. Vogler and Pahl's analysis of the SCEDI data set out to establish whether married women's increased participation in the labour market was giving them more say over how household money was allocated and more equal access to spending money. They concluded that, although women's full-time work was associated with greater financial equality, women's part-time work was not.<sup>100</sup> Morris found that in households with a very low-income, women's earnings could increase their husband's spending money, rather than their own or their children's standard of living, as it would be used to cover essential household expenses, freeing up more of the husband's earnings for his personal use.<sup>101</sup>

Researchers into household money were influenced by feminism in their questions, methods and aims. They also took feminism as an object of study and explored the extent to which the challenge to separate spheres ideology had increased women's financial equality in the home. Some of Vogler and Pahl's findings were positive: couples who pooled their money and managed it jointly held relatively egalitarian values about breadwinning and housework.<sup>102</sup> Any optimism that the normalisation of ideologies of gender equality would lead to financial equality between couples was

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<sup>98</sup> 'A Fowler Future', *Spare Rib* 163, February 1986, 10.

<sup>99</sup> Jan Pahl, 'Who Benefits from Child Benefit?', *New Society*, 25 April 1985, 118.

<sup>100</sup> Vogler and Pahl, 'Social and Economic Change', 93.

<sup>101</sup> Lydia Morris, *The Workings of the Household: A U.S.-U.K. Comparison* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 120–22.

<sup>102</sup> Vogler and Pahl, 'Social and Economic Change', 85.

tempered, however, by Burgoyne's qualitative research on pooling couples. She found that women still had less spending money than men because their lower earnings made them feel less entitled to access joint funds.<sup>103</sup> In the mid-1990s Charlott Nyman found that even in Sweden, 'the most equal country in the world', women had less money than their husbands. Her conclusion was that this was caused, in part, by an ideology of motherhood, which ensured women spent more of their earnings on their children.<sup>104</sup>

The research questions asked and conclusions drawn by researchers speak to the tensions between equality and autonomy as feminist priorities. Vogler and Pahl were primarily interested in women's equality in control of, and access to, household money. They presented the jointly managed pool as the ideal.<sup>105</sup> However, Rosanna Hertz, in California, suggested that pooling limited autonomy and that separate accounts were more egalitarian.<sup>106</sup> In 2013 Fran Bennett and Sirin Sung identified financial autonomy as a particular aspiration for women which policy makers should not ignore.<sup>107</sup> In Chapter 2 I will chart the shift in women's magazines' coverage of household money from an emphasis on marital sharing to the promotion of financial autonomy for women.

In her study of New Zealand cohabitees, Elizabeth found that couples adopted independent management for feminist reasons – because it offered 'a solution to the problem of financial dependency for women in couple relationships.' She found that, although the autonomy offered by independent management could equalise control over money it perpetuated unequal access to funds.<sup>108</sup> Vogler and Pahl also warned that 'independent management' could worsen financial inequality in the home. Pahl

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<sup>103</sup> Burgoyne, 'Money in Marriage'; Burgoyne and Lewis, 'Distributive Justice in Marriage'.

<sup>104</sup> Charlott Nyman, 'Gender Equality in "the Most Equal Country in the World"?', *Money and Marriage in Sweden*, *The Sociological Review* 47, no. 4 (1999): 766–93, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.00195>.

<sup>105</sup> Vogler and Pahl, 'Social and Economic Change', 78.

<sup>106</sup> Rosanna Hertz, *More Equal Than Others: Women and Men in Dual-Career Marriages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 93–98.

<sup>107</sup> Fran Bennett and Sirin Sung, 'Dimensions of Financial Autonomy in Low-/Moderate-Income Couples from a Gender Perspective and Implications for Welfare Reform', *Journal of Social Policy; Cambridge* 42, no. 4 (October 2013): 701–19, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0047279413000330>.

<sup>108</sup> Elizabeth, 'Managing Money, Managing Coupledness', 391, 407.



argued that when women's income dropped on motherhood, independent management would leave them with very little money, and when they returned to work, often part-time, this would be exacerbated by norms which made women responsible for paying for childcare.<sup>109</sup> Vogler pointed out that if couples had separate finances and contributed equal amounts to a household kitty, inequalities in the labour market would be carried into the home, as women's lower wages would leave them with less money for themselves.<sup>110</sup>

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By the 1990s, feminist critiques of inequalities in the home, both in terms of domestic labour and access to resources, were widely disseminated. An M-OP correspondent in her sixties confessed in 1993, 'I am an old-fashioned female (not proud of it) who relies on her husband to look after the finances.' Adding, 'Feminists would despair of me'.<sup>111</sup> By the late 1990s, women's financial inequality was far better understood than it had been in the 1970s. Crucially, it had been demonstrated that, although legal and structural changes could create conditions favouring women's financial equality, without shifts in attitudes and behaviours around money in private homes and intimate relationships, women would remain financially disadvantaged. Changing social norms and expectations influence individuals' behaviour. But in order for social norms to change, some individuals are required to act in defiance of them.<sup>112</sup> The following section explores individual women's responses to inequality in access to and control over household money in their marriages.

## M-OP: Women's Agency in Response to Male Financial Control

As I indicated in my methodology section, research into household money in the 1980s may have underestimated women's financial agency for two reasons: the control and management definitions didn't include new financial practices carried out by many

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<sup>109</sup> Pahl, 'Individualisation'.

<sup>110</sup> Vogler, Brockmann, and Wiggins, 'Intimate Relationships'.

<sup>111</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, H2045, see also S2207.

<sup>112</sup> Anderson, Bechhofer, and Gershuny, *Social and Political Economy*, 8–11.

women such as choosing to have a cashpoint card or opening new accounts; and the feeling of agency women achieved through some 'management' functions was not explored. Analysis of the SCEL data in 1993 appears to have compounded this underestimation of women's financial agency. As I stated in the previous section, Vogler and Pahl used the SCEL data in 1993 to link couples' attitudes to breadwinning and housework to their money management systems. However, they found that husbands' attitudes were more influential than wives'. The joint pool was operated by couples with the least sexist/traditional men and the male-controlled housekeeping allowance system was used by couples with the most sexist/traditional men. Wives' attitudes were found to be statistically 'insignificant.'<sup>113</sup>

Jackie Goode, Claire Callender and Ruth Lister's interviews with couples in receipt of benefits published in 1998 challenged this. They found that 'women's attitudes... were the more salient in determining ...allocation patterns' and that 'women's experiences, attitudes and activity influenced couples' decisions rather more than suggested in previous studies.'<sup>114</sup> Bisdee et.al's 2008-9 study of older couples focused on women's feelings and behaviours and developed a typology classifying women as either 'accepters', 'resenters' and 'modifier/resisters'.<sup>115</sup> These categories offer an illuminating approach to the testimony of M-OP correspondents whose husbands attempted to exert control over household finances. Although these women's experiences were not typical of the M-OP panel members who responded to these directives, they are particularly revealing of women's efforts to have agency over household money and of the cultural and structural conditions of the late twentieth century which made this difficult. However, as I will establish, apparent 'accepters' were not necessarily as docile as the term suggests.

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<sup>113</sup> Vogler and Pahl, 'Social and Economic Change', 93.

<sup>114</sup> Jackie Goode, Claire Callender, and Ruth Lister, *Purse or Wallet?: Gender Inequalities and Income Distribution within Families on Benefits*, (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1998), 84,103.

<sup>115</sup> Bisdee, Daly, and Price, 'Behind Closed Doors'.

## Accepters

Some M-OP correspondents were happy to relinquish financial control and responsibility to their husbands. A 72-year-old widow answered the 1993 directive with, 'my husband was "in charge" and I was glad!!'<sup>116</sup> Other apparent accepters seem to have been less content with the situation than they would like to appear. One woman wrote 'My husband and I won't have a [cheque guarantee] card on principle', presenting this as a shared moral decision. However, her next comment, 'even though it would be easier (for me!)', and her acknowledgement that without a card their current account is 'virtually useless' suggest that this wasn't really her choice.<sup>117</sup> If she is not yet a 'resenter' of her husband's financial control, it is implicit in her testimony that she might soon become one. The first correspondent's defiant tone and the second's slight defensiveness suggest that both women felt that there was a 'right' answer to the directive's questions on who makes the decisions and takes responsibility for finances in their household, and that male control was the 'wrong' response.

The category of 'accepters' used by Bisdee et al. implies passivity. However, M-OP evidence demonstrates that acceptance could be an active decision involving trade-offs and compromises arrived at over many years. A correspondent in her early sixties in 1993 described financial control in her marriage as following the conventional pattern: 'My husband is a very conscientious budgeter and takes charge of our major finances. It is left to me to juggle the daily expenses'. She describes this as an 'amicable arrangement', giving him 'freedom to invest or spend the larger part of our income' and giving her freedom to spend her smaller amount 'without enquiry'. She acknowledges the disadvantage of this arrangement – 'I DO have difficulty making ends meet' – but she has accepted a degree of financial hardship 'for the ability to spend money on any family member, or to give to charity – outgoings that would not often be approved by [her] spouse if he knew their extent.'<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, F1560.

<sup>117</sup> MOA Summer 1984, M1313

<sup>118</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, A2168.

Price, Bisdee and Daly found that a common act of female resistance to male financial control was 'secret' gifts of money to children or grandchildren. However, their interviews with husbands suggested that these 'intergenerational transfers' are not always as secret as the wife believes.<sup>119</sup> Women, like the M-OP correspondent above, may not in fact have escaped their husband's scrutiny; husbands may also have been following a strategy of compromise by allowing their wives a degree of unendorsed discretionary spending as a price for keeping their overall access to money quite low.

The M-OP correspondent above maintained a degree of uncertainty about her position, describing her freedom as 'constrained'. Although she writes that it was '[q]uite from choice' that she handed her wages to her husband to be paid into the joint account when she was working, she also acknowledges that she would have preferred to have kept her wages 'to take advantage of bargains and buy gifts'.<sup>120</sup> Although a few women whole-heartedly endorsed their husband's financial control, others arrived at a more tenuous accommodation based on denial, sacrifice or compromise. The boundary between the categories of 'accepters' and 'resenters' is fuzzy and subject to change.

## Resenters

A sixty-seven-year-old retired social worker who responded to the 1993 directive was a self-confessed 'resenter'. She wrote, 'an ideal situation for a couple is for everything to be discussed in the open, then resentment (like mine!) cannot build up.' She points out the gap between her husband's perception of financial control in the marriage and her own: 'I guess he would say that I have an equal share in deciding how we spend our money but my own feeling is that I have never ever had any real say in it because he has always paid the bills and kept control of the banks, insurance etc.' Her description of her attempts to bridge this gap gives an insight into reasons why money can be difficult for couples to talk about. When she has 'protested' her husband goes through

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<sup>119</sup> Debora Price, Dinah Bisdee and Tom Daly, 'Money practices among older couples: patterns of continuity, change, conflict and resistance', in Susan Millns and Simone Wong, eds., *Wealth and Poverty in Close Personal Relationships: Money Matters*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 67–68.

<sup>120</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, A2168.

it all with her 'to demonstrate that there is nothing is hidden'. He seems to interpret her protest as a lack of trust. She, on the other hand, finds 'the detail of looking after money in this way too boring to sustain an interest.' She wants more open communication, not because she thinks he is hiding things, but to share decisions on more interesting topics such as 'how much we would spend on, say, holidays for the year'.<sup>121</sup>

Other M-OP correspondents described more extreme male financial control. Two cases underline how difficult it was for some women to turn resentment into resistance. A forty-four-year-old woman's account shows how a high-earning husband could exercise control over domestic finances in a way which impoverished his wife and children:

Family situation: husband's salary = income. I have Child Benefit of £26.20 a week...my husband seems to think that this covers all our food – 5 of us, 3 meals a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year...I don't know how much he earns – he's just into the 40% tax range.<sup>122</sup>

At the other end of the country and income scale, a woman living on Shetland described how a partner's financial control could be used to exert coercive power over other aspects of the relationship:

I used to manage the finances, but R has taken over handling the money...He seems to be afraid now whenever I have any money, as if he thinks I'll leave him if ever I get my fare for the ferry...I never know exactly where the money goes. I just get the child benefit, if R doesn't get his hands on it first.<sup>123</sup>

Although the typology I have adopted from Bisdee et al. foregrounds women's attitudes and actions, the category of 'resenter' has the potential to exaggerate the role of women's failure to act at the expense of the structural factors perpetuating the financial inequality in their marriages. Although earning money did not necessarily increase women's access to household funds, it is significant that neither of these women worked outside the home. The first was frustrated in this because 'there only

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<sup>121</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, B1533.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., S1399.

<sup>123</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, C41.

seems to be child care and elderly care to do' and on Shetland the only local work was 'poorly paid – cleaning and catering work.'<sup>124</sup> Both also had children and the woman on Shetland was home-schooling, further limiting her ability to earn money. In these two cases the men's controlling behaviours were extreme and would likely, since 2015, fall under the offense of 'coercive control' as instances of 'financial abuse.' Few opportunities for resistance were available to their partners.

### Modifier/Resisters

Other correspondents were able to resist. One, whose husband suggested, a few months into their marriage, that she 'keep an account book', simply refused, telling him that she 'wasn't going to start off married life under scrutiny.'<sup>125</sup> For another, writing in 1984, having a joint account and developments in banking technology facilitated her resistance. Her husband didn't let her have a chequebook, so she 'got annoyed' and 'went to the bank and ordered a cash card.' However, her resistance was only partially successful as she really wanted much greater financial autonomy: 'I...often wish I had a separate account for "my" money, but my husband doesn't agree.'<sup>126</sup> This correspondent is a modifier but might get her own account and become a resister.

Two older correspondents did not have joint accounts, so they had no access to money beyond what they were given. For both women, attempts to persuade their husbands to relinquish financial control did not succeed and the only way to lift themselves, and in the second case her children, out of relative poverty was to find paid work and keep control of their own wages.<sup>127</sup>

A sense of how much the question of money had overshadowed her marriage is indicated by one woman's opening statement: 'My biggest mistake over money was not having a definite understanding when we were first married.' The couple's 'first marital argument' was over which system they should adopt to allocate household

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., S1399, C41.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., R860.

<sup>126</sup> MOA, Summer 1984, R463.

<sup>127</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, F1560, W768.

money: she wanted him to give her his whole wage packet to manage, he insisted on only giving her a housekeeping allowance. She didn't know how much her husband earned, which she described as another 'dreadful mistake', particularly as she suspected it was sometimes 'quite a lot'. The situation seems to have been tolerable when she was working, but, as continues to be the case for many women, having children revealed the iniquities in their financial system. The housekeeping allowance left her with no money for 'personal things' and clothes for herself. She decided that she would 'have to work'. This was not an easy choice to make as it involved leaving her toddler with her mother and taking the baby with her to the house where she worked as a 'general dogsbody'.<sup>128</sup>

As I have indicated, there was a shift from the whole wage to the housekeeping allowance system in the post-war decades which Roberts associates with a loss of female power in the household. It is likely that the conflict this correspondent describes was replicated in many other households. Vogler has drawn on Shrove's argument that the power to set the agenda and create the context within which future decisions are made is crucial.<sup>129</sup> Once this couple's financial system had been set, on the husband's terms, as him retaining control of his wages and giving her a housekeeping allowance to buy food and other essentials, future negotiations were limited to how much that allowance should be. Which expenses the allowance should cover, or the wife's entitlement to money for her own needs while she was bringing up their children, were off the agenda so could not be discussed.

A widow born in 1917 explicitly associated 'money with power' because her husband 'often quoted "he who earns the money pays the tune"'. As with the previous respondent, before they married she and her husband had 'never discussed money' and once married she found him not 'amenable to change'. She took on paid work, despite his objections, and writes with evident pride, 'I paid my own way and most of that of my sons.'<sup>130</sup> These correspondents were two of the increasing number of

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<sup>128</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, F1560.

<sup>129</sup> Carolyn Vogler, 'Money in the Household: Some Underlying Issues of Power', *The Sociological Review* 46, no. 4 (1 November 1998): 698, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.00136>.

<sup>130</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, W768.

mothers taking on paid work in the post-war decades whom McCarthy credits with turning working mothers from a social problem to a social norm. For many, including this correspondent, earning was a source of pride and self-esteem.<sup>131</sup> However, it was suggested by Michael Young that the financial necessity driving these correspondents was also shared by others: he argued in 1949 that husbands were handing over a smaller proportion of their pay packets to their wives, forcing them to take on paid work.<sup>132</sup>

Bisdee et al. found that the husband developing health problems was a driver of change in couples' money management systems.<sup>133</sup> The widow cited in the previous paragraph explains that her husband's poor health and redundancy meant that she 'took over organising all our finances'.<sup>134</sup> She writes, rather chillingly, '[h]e died a pauper and in debt to me, but not before I had pointed out to him that he had made money his God and his God had let him down.'<sup>135</sup> For this correspondent and the other 'resister' who had taken on paid work as a 'dogsbody', having limited access to household money meant they didn't have enough to buy what they needed, but their frustration was also about wanting a greater role in managing and organising their households' finances.<sup>136</sup> Both write in considerable detail about their current financial arrangements, and both also tell anecdotes about getting the better of a financial advisor! Being good with money was clearly a source of pride and self-worth for these women and this, as much as economic necessity, seems to have driven them to resist their husbands' financial control.

For one correspondent writing to M-O was a form of resistance, and one which proved effective. She opened her account with, 'There are two of us in this household, both over 65. One of us has infinitely more money than the other so I propose to start this Part in two sections, one headed His and the other headed Hers.' At the end she added

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<sup>131</sup> McCarthy, *Double Lives*, 210,385.

<sup>132</sup> Michael Young, 'Distribution of Income within the Family', *The British Journal of Sociology* 3, no. 4 (1952): 305–21; cited in McCarthy, *Double Lives*, 211.

<sup>133</sup> Bisdee, Daly, and Price, 'Behind Closed Doors', 165–66.

<sup>134</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, W768.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, F1560, W768.



a 'Postscript' to say that her husband had read through this outline of their finances and having 'realised for the first time' how different their 'circumstances' were had 'offered another £50 per month housekeeping allowance.'<sup>137</sup>

Research in the 1980s focused on categorising different allocative systems and identifying the variables which determined them. Exploring women's responses to these systems brings our understanding of household money much closer to the lived reality. It foregrounds women's actions but at the same time highlights that factors such as income level, job opportunities, receipt of Child Benefit, bank accounts and technologies, and a husband's personality, were also significant in facilitating or limiting women's financial agency.

Applying Bisdee et al.'s typology of 'accepters', 'resenters' and 'modifiers/resisters' to M-OP testimony exposes the importance of interaction and negotiation in shaping couples' financial practices.<sup>138</sup> Goode, Callender and Lister view financial control as 'embedded in the interactions between partners', rather than located in particular allocation systems.<sup>139</sup> Similarly, in the opening chapter of *Modern Couples: Sharing Money Sharing Life*, Charlott Nyman and Sandra Dema outline the difference between much of the research carried out in the 1980s and 1990s on money and marriage and their twenty-first century study: 'Rather than analysing the classical variables, we are interested in the processes and dynamics that govern the interaction of couples in relation to money issues.'<sup>140</sup> Stephanie Sonnenberg has called for a discursive approach to research into household financial organisation which would analyse 'the day-to-day linguistic practices...by which...spouses...co-define notions of gender, equality, entitlement, ownership and so on.'<sup>141</sup>

As my discussion so far has shown, although M-OP correspondents write as individuals, they often describe negotiation with their husbands. One correspondent set out an

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., C2142.

<sup>138</sup> Bisdee, Daly, and Price, 'Behind Closed Doors'.

<sup>139</sup> Goode, Callender, and Lister, *Purse or Wallet?*, 30.

<sup>140</sup> Charlott Nyman and Sandra Dema, 'An Overview: Research on Couples and Money' in Stocks, Díaz, and Halleröd, *Modern Couples*, 27.

<sup>141</sup> Sonnenberg, 'Household Financial Organisation', 541.

example of how financial decisions were arrived at in her marriage like a script: 'In fact, I usually make spending decisions, with due deference to my husband!! E.g. me: "Don't you think X needs painting?" Husband: "Oh yes, I suppose so. Will you ring someone about it?"'<sup>142</sup> This is example of the 'everyday talk about money-related issues' which Sonnenberg argues is so valuable.<sup>143</sup> Although obviously humorous, the exchange is revealing. It is intended to show that the correspondent has the financial decision-making power, but the imperative to convince her husband that he makes the decisions, suggests that he actually retains considerable power.

## Conclusion

Women's financial independence was an important, challenging, and complex goal for the WLM, which, despite increasing numbers of married women in paid work, was not fully achieved. Considerable progress was made, though, towards greater financial equality and autonomy for women by 1995. The Equal Pay Act which came into force at the end of 1975 established the principle that women should not be paid less than men for work which was deemed similar, equivalent or of equal value. The 1975 Sex Discrimination Act tackled discriminatory practices in the provision of goods and services including in the financial sector. Labyrinthine National Insurance rules which left many married women with reduced pensions were reformed in 1977. In 1984 the iniquitous 'housework test' was removed from disability benefit and in 1990 independent taxation for married women was implemented, signalling a broad acceptance that married women should have a degree of financial autonomy. The WLM can be credited with campaigning for these measures and for creating a climate that made women's financial independence, autonomy and equality widely accepted ideals. However, many married women, particularly older women who had stopped work on marriage and younger women with children remained, at least partially, financially dependent on their husbands.

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<sup>142</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, B1512.

<sup>143</sup> Sonnenberg, 'Household Financial Organisation', 541.

WFH helped to focus attention on the home as a site and source of women's financial inequality. In the 1980s and 1990s feminist academics developed a clearer understanding of the factors contributing to this and established that ideologies of male breadwinning and female maternal sacrifice continued to support unequal access to and control over household money. Pahl's typology of allocative systems was used to identify the household allowance system as the most unequal, but even pooling, encouraged by the ideal of the companionate marriage, could conceal financial inequality.<sup>144</sup> Some of the women I described as resisters or resenters were subject to an allocative system categorised by Pahl as the 'male whole wage', which was associated with abusive relationships and involved the husband having sole control over and access to household money.<sup>145</sup> The opportunity to discuss the 'mean man' was not taken up by *Spare Rib*. Though the problem of financial abuse was identified by academics in the 1980s, it was not legislated against until 2015.

Meanwhile, individual women experienced unequal access to, and control over, money in their marriages, and some of them described their experiences for M-OP. Correspondents exercised agency by challenging their husbands, taking on paid work or gaining access to joint accounts. Individual women's actions towards financial equality and autonomy were part of a collective process which informed cultural expectations about women's entitlement to money in the late twentieth century. The pride which women expressed around earning and supporting themselves and their children in the post-war decades informed the focus on financial autonomy as a source of self-esteem in women's magazines in the 1980s and 1990s, which I explore in the next chapter.

M-OP testimony has also demonstrated that the agency exercised by some women to achieve a degree of financial equality and autonomy in their marriages was not a choice available to others. Male power to shut down discussion of domestic money is identified by M-OP correspondents as an important factor in this. Money talk is a recurring theme in M-OP testimony which I will return to. In the next chapter I pick up

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<sup>144</sup> Burgoyne, 'Money in Marriage', 653.

<sup>145</sup> Vogler and Pahl, 'Money, Power and Inequality', 268.

the competing ideals of male breadwinner, marital sharing and women's autonomy. I explore the shifts in women's magazine's presentation of these ideals and how women navigated the tensions between them.

## Chapter 2: Money and Marriage

Judith Treas has suggested that, 'separate purses' or 'common pot' approaches to the organisation of money 'go to the heart of the conjugal family's identity – as a corporate unit or a collection of individuals.' Sociologists have used a variety of terminology to express this dichotomy. Treas also deploys the more ideologically loaded antitheses of 'privatized versus collectivized' models of financial organisation.<sup>1</sup> Burgoyne foregrounds the role of paid employment when she expresses the 'conflict' as being between the ideal of 'marital sharing' and a belief in "rights" to ownership of earnings'.<sup>2</sup> As my discussion of M-OP in the second half of this chapter will show, although the money management practices of some couples in the 1980 and 1990s consistently followed one of these competing ideals, those of many others were carried out in the untidier territory between them.

Fleming concurs with Treas that the 'organising principles' governing their approach to money are the 'foundation' of a couple's 'relationship style'.<sup>3</sup> He uses a tripartite scheme which, though Fleming does not take this step, can be historicised to describe the broad cultural trends around money and marriage in the second half of the twentieth century. What Fleming terms the 'principle of gendered division of responsibilities' corresponds to the male-breadwinner model of marriage prevalent in the post-war decades.<sup>4</sup> This ideal is best expressed by the husband giving his wife a housekeeping allowance, the most popular financial arrangement in the 1960s.<sup>5</sup> Fleming's second set of principles, those of 'sharing' and 'togetherness' are related to the ideal of the more equal companionate marriage which was dominant by the 1980s and was associated with the system of pooling household money, usually in a joint account. In the late 1990s and 2000s more independently managed financial systems

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<sup>1</sup> Judith Treas, 'Money in the Bank: Transaction Costs and the Economic Organization of Marriage', *American Sociological Review* 58, no. 5 (1993): 723, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2096283>.

<sup>2</sup> Burgoyne, 'Money in Marriage', 638.

<sup>3</sup> Fleming, *The Common Purse*, 24.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>5</sup> F. Zweig, *The Worker in an Affluent Society*, (London: Heinemann, 1961), cited in Pahl, *Money and Marriage*, 49–50.

which prioritised the principle of ‘individual financial autonomy’ were becoming more popular and were encouraged in women’s media.<sup>6</sup>

The first part of this chapter traces these shifts in ideologies in the coverage of marital money in women’s print media from the early 1970s until the late 1990s. Claire Langhamer has identified the importance of guidance offered by ‘everyday experts’ in women’s magazines to ‘our understanding of the dynamic relationship between everyday emotional experience and standards and norms’.<sup>7</sup> As I argued in Chapter 1, feminist and sociological interest in household money both reflected and informed this broader media conversation. The second section uses M-OP testimony to explore how women responded to, and shaped, these cultural shifts in the feelings and practices associated with marital money.

## Money and Marriage in Women’s Print Media

My discussion is centred on two women’s magazines: *Good Housekeeping*, a monthly glossy with a more middle-class readership and *Woman’s Own*, which had a broader circulation and was the most popular women’s weekly in the 1970s. I will argue that the norms referenced, and advice offered, in these two magazines speak to the different class experience of their readers, but also to the class and gender stereotypes used by some writers. ‘Femail’ offers an alternative perspective which is, I suggest, more immediately responsive to the topics in the news and issues grabbing the public imagination. As I established in Chapter 1, ‘Femail’ could also take a polemical stand on issues around women and money, as they did with the cohabitation rule and maintenance payments to divorced women. A 1975 column in *The Times* by Joan Bakewell and two from the *Observer* by Katharine Whitehorn in 1982, which directly addressed money in marriage, are also discussed.

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<sup>6</sup> Fleming, *The Common Purse*, 24.

<sup>7</sup> Claire Langhamer, ‘Everyday Advice on Everyday Love: Romantic Expertise in Mid-Twentieth Century Britain’, *L’homme: Zeitschrift Für Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft* 24, no. 1 (2013): 44, <https://doi.org/10.25595/1125>.

In spite of their differences, I will argue that across these media broad trends emerge in coverage of money and marriage. In the 1970s, when bank accounts were new or unknown to many women, practical aspects of money management were foregrounded. In the 1980s this gave way to treatment of money as an emotional issue and a potential source of marital conflict. In the 1990s a psychological discourse was applied; money management was presented as an opportunity for self-actualisation. Discussion of household money in these media also reflected the shifting ideologies of marriage I outlined above. In the 1970s women's magazines offered a class-based view of gender roles in household money management. *Good Housekeeping*, with its more middle-class readership, endorsed male expertise and authority. *Woman's Own*, on the other hand, assumed that women were more financially responsible than their husbands. By the 1980s the dominant discourse, particularly in *Good Housekeeping* was of sharing and equality; this was tied to the normalisation of joint banking. In the 1990s greater financial autonomy for women was encouraged, facilitated by an individual bank account.

## 1970s

In 1977 both the 'Femail' section of the *Daily Mail* and *Good Housekeeping* magazine carried articles which cast bank managers in the 'unlikely' role of 'marriage guidance counsellors'. As 'Femail' explained, 'Financial stresses bring emotional strains. So the men who help us handle our money are...counselling us through personal dilemmas.'<sup>8</sup> *Good Housekeeping* called on a bank manager with forty years' experience to comment on two couples' budgeting systems and offer advice on how to 'steer a course' through these turbulent waters.<sup>9</sup> However, though women's magazines and newspaper columns showed a keen interest in the subject of money and marriage at this time and presented the subject as a current and pressing concern, articles and responses to readers' letters in 'Femail', *Good Housekeeping* and *Woman's Own* in the

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<sup>8</sup> 'All bank customers – but not one is talking about money', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 3 February 1977, 14. Gale.

<sup>9</sup> 'Managing Money for a Happy Marriage', *Good Housekeeping*, March 1977, 102-3.

1970s frequently reinforced traditional assumptions about gender and social class in relation to household finances.

These two articles can be seen as a response to concerns about the rising divorce rate in the 1970s. They also reflect the spread of personal banking from the 1960s which made the bank manager a familiar figure to more *Daily Mail* readers, but one still endowed with authority. The problems faced by the two couples in *Good Housekeeping* were also particular to this time period: a newly married couple's inability to budget because they hadn't needed to when living with their parents reflected a time when cohabitation before marriage was a rarity; the practice of keeping cash for a month's outgoings in a drawer, criticised by the bank manager, was less popular as chequebooks, cashpoints and credit cards became more commonplace. The emphasis in *Good Housekeeping* on both partners needing to learn money management skills also reflects the increasing complexity of banking technologies.

Neither of these articles in which bank managers dispensed advice to married couples addressed money as a *cause* of marital conflict. In 'Femail' financial disagreements are caused by high inflation or are merely a symptom of more fundamental marital problems such as infidelity. The *Good Housekeeping* article asserts that money is 'the rock on which many marriage founders' but sidesteps the question of how unreasonable financial behaviour might lead to conflict. Instead, marital money problems are treated as a shared lack of budgeting skills which can be jointly resolved. The article implicitly endorses the male breadwinner's right to control the household's money: one couple's system whereby the husband 'deals with the bills' and pays his wife housekeeping and an allowance for 'clothing for herself and the children' is presented as exemplary – 'if only more people were as sensible'. The second husband's high spending on his shooting hobby is problematised merely as an expense which should have been foreseen. His entitlement to spend such a significant sum from the couple's joint income on himself is not questioned.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



The issues of unequal control and allocation of household money which concerned sociologists researching money and marriage in the 1980s and were brushed over in these two articles were, however, addressed by two other articles in 'Femail' in the 1970s. The villain of both these articles was the 'mean man' who, as the mean husband, was the subject of a Rachel Marks' readers' letter to *Spare Rib* in 1976, discussed in Chapter 1.<sup>11</sup> The first piece in 1975 took a quite light-hearted tone, very different from Marks' letter. It identified six types of 'meanness', including 'snivelling' and 'absurd', and quoted Anna Raeburn, problem page editor for *Woman* magazine, who offered her characteristic view that 'The man who is mean with money is usually mean with sex as well.' However, the 'psychologist's verdict' which accompanied the piece was more serious and stated unambiguously, 'Men feel powerful if they can control their partner's money.' This was reinforced with the disturbing image of, 'Seeing her scratching around, trying to make ends meet, coming and asking nicely for some more cash'.<sup>12</sup> Three years later a second article took this theme further by highlighting research which had found 'a new breed of battered wife...victims of their husbands' financial abuse.'<sup>13</sup>

As I indicated in Chapter 1, Pahl's interest in the subject of household money began when she was researching the experiences of domestic violence victims, many of whom had been deprived of money by their partners. Public awareness of domestic abuse had been raised by the publication of Erin Pizzey's *Scream quietly or the neighbours will hear* in 1974.<sup>14</sup> In her letter to *Spare Rib*, Marks linked 'Battered Wives' and the financial abuse inflicted by 'Mean Husbands'.<sup>15</sup> Cross-fertilisation between very different branches of the press is evidenced by Marks' reference to Joan Bakewell's article on the subject in *The Times*. Bakewell wrote of the 'condition of abject dependence – often amounting to deprivation' to which a husband could reduce a wife and children if he 'hold[s] tight the family's purse strings' or is a

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<sup>11</sup> 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, January 1976, 3.

<sup>12</sup> 'The mean man (there always is one) in every woman's life', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 12 November 1975, 10. Gale.

<sup>13</sup> 'Yours – and mine!', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 11 July 1978, 12, Gale.

<sup>14</sup> Erin Pizzey, *Scream quietly or the neighbours will hear*, (London: Penguin, 1974).

<sup>15</sup> 'Letters', *Spare Rib*, January 1976, 3.

‘wastrel’. She pointed out that this problem was not addressed in sex discrimination legislation because it ‘concern[s] women in the home and within marriage’ and supported the MWA’s campaign to give women a right to the household’s income.<sup>16</sup>

In *Woman’s Own*, which had a circulation of 1.5 to 1.85 million in the 1970s, the approach to the problem of ‘tight’ or ‘wastrel’ husbands was very different from the *Mail’s* sensationalism and *The Times’s* call for a legislative solution.<sup>17</sup> Problems around money in marriage were presented as every-day and personal rather than structural. Requests for advice from *Woman’s Own* readers appeared on either the consumer page, ‘At Your Service’, or on Mary Grant’s problem page, reinforcing the accepted working-class norms that managing the finances was both an intrinsic part of a woman’s housekeeping duties and a potentially problematic aspect of marriage.

In 1978 a fifty-year-old mother of five, whose husband spent too much of the household money on drinking, smoking and gambling, asked Mary Grant whether it was worth her finding part-time work. Mary Grant’s advice was to get a job and to keep her earnings in a separate account. Addressing the underlying problems of her husband’s selfish financial behaviour and its impact on the family was presented as futile: ‘You won’t change him.’ The wife was expected to work around the problem of money in her marriage rather than tackle it directly.<sup>18</sup>

This advice reflects the mid-century experience of the two M-OP correspondents I looked at in the previous chapter who circumvented their husband’s financial control and refusal to discuss the subject by taking up paid work outside the home. By the late 1970s, though, it was out of step with Mary Grant’s approach to other aspects of marital conflict. Martin P.M. Richards’ and B. Jane Elliott’s comparisons of Mary Grant’s problem page in the 1960s and 1970s reveal a shift in her advice about sex towards ‘a new emphasis on the importance of communication in marriage’.<sup>19</sup> Her

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<sup>16</sup> ‘Marriage is no meal ticket’, *The Times*, 30 April 1975, 9. Gale.

<sup>17</sup> Circulation data 1970-1995 provided by Audit Bureau of Circulations Ltd. on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Mary Grant’, *Woman’s Own*, 14 October 1978, 79.

<sup>19</sup> Martin P.M. Richards and B. Jane Elliott, ‘Sex and marriage in the 1960s and 1970s’, in Clark, *Marriage, Domestic Life and Social Change*, 36.

response to the mother of five in 1978 suggests that money may have been an aspect of married life which continued to be regarded as difficult to talk about even when sex was losing its taboo status. In the early 1990s, Lewis commented on the reticence about money she observed in the 'older' couples she interviewed.<sup>20</sup> Mary Grant's advice indicates how the taboo around discussing money, which sociologists in the 1980s hoped to break, was perpetuated in the media.

Mary Grant's advice to have her own separate bank account, whilst addressing this reader's specific circumstances, is also indicative of *Woman's Own's* more general ambivalence about joint accounts in the 1970s. In 1977 a reader wrote to 'At Your Service' to ask whether, now she had given up work, it would be better to switch from separate bank accounts to a joint one. Deidre Sanders cited the pragmatic, if rather gloomy, advantage that the letter writer would have access to her husband's income should he die but also pointed out the risk that she 'may lose track of spending.' A joint account and a separate one for housekeeping were recommended. Despite its focus on the practical, behind the advice are implicit assumptions about money and marriage: housekeeping money belongs to the wife and should be protected by her from her husband's overspending.<sup>21</sup> As well as reinforcing the gender roles of breadwinner and housewife, this advice reflected the reality that, in households where money was short, it made practical sense for one partner to take responsibility for managing essential household funds.

In her advice to the mother of five, Mary Grant told her to 'take charge' and explicitly challenged the 'idea that men, generally, are good with money and ought to control it'.<sup>22</sup> In *Good Housekeeping*, on the other hand, the assumption of male financial competence shaped the magazine's coverage of money in the mid-1970s, when it was often written by men. The regular 'Money' column was an opportunity for the magazine to appeal to the aspirations of its middle-class readership; topics such as investments, inheritance and saving for school fees were regularly featured. A column

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<sup>20</sup> Lewis, *The End of Marriage?*, 168–71.

<sup>21</sup> 'At Your Service', *Woman's Own*, 16 July, 1977, 57.

<sup>22</sup> 'Mary Grant', *Woman's Own*, 14 October 1978, 79.

written in 1974 shared *Woman's Own's* caution about joint accounts, but for different reasons and with reference to contrasting gender stereotypes. The columnist, Michael Smith, suggested that 'Husbands... might object to losing...financial privacy', implicitly endorsing the view that it would be reasonable for a husband to keep his earnings and spending secret from his wife. As I have shown, for Marks in *Spare Rib* and some of the M-OP correspondents I discussed in Chapter 1, a wife not knowing her husband's earnings was indicative of excessive male financial control.

Smith's article in *Good Housekeeping* perpetuates stereotypes of financially irresponsible wives whose spending must be monitored by her husband when he weighs up the experience of some men, that joint accounts are ineffective as a means to 'control a compulsive shopper of a wife', with the opinion of others, that a joint account could 'act as a positive restraining influence' on a wife who 'might think twice about spending her husband's hard earned cash on another new dress if she had to draw on their joint account'.<sup>23</sup> The assertion that joint accounts might offer an opportunity for men's surveillance of their wives' spending is in marked contrast to the idealistic tone adopted about joint accounts in 'Managing Money for a Happy Marriage' published just three years later. The bank manager featured in the latter opined that 'a newly married couple would be advised to start a joint bank account into which both salaries are paid automatically' and he associated joint banking with marital trust, commenting that it is 'strange that people who trust each other enough to commit their lives to each other still have reservations about money'.<sup>24</sup> This identification of trust as central to happy and healthy marital money management was a trend which continued in the 1980s.

Banks' advertising from this period also promoted joint accounts as the natural choice for a couple getting married. A NatWest advert published in *Woman's Own* which depicted a couple on top of a wedding cake suggested that as your rent, car, holidays

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<sup>23</sup> 'Money: A joint account for better or worse', *Good Housekeeping*, March 1974, 10,12.

<sup>24</sup> 'Managing Money for a Happy Marriage', *Good Housekeeping*, March 1977, 102-3.

and fuel bills were all going to be joint, it made sense for your bank account to be joint too.<sup>25</sup>

In the 1970s the models offered to women on the organisation and distribution of household money in the *Daily Mail's* 'Femail' section, *Good Housekeeping* and *Woman's Own* were varied and sometimes contradictory. Pieces in 'Femail' and *Good Housekeeping* deployed the familiar tropes of the mean husband or spendthrift wife to shock or entertain. When advice was offered in women's magazines, it was class specific, with male control usually assumed and reinforced for *Good Housekeeping's* middle-class, and sometimes male, readership and female competence and management of household money presented in *Woman's Own*. In the later 1970s *Woman's Own* continued to imply that allowing a husband access to all the household money was a risk, whereas *Good Housekeeping* portrayed joint accounts as the ideal and emblematic of a trusting relationship. The more fundamental questions of each spouse's entitlement to, and control over, domestic monies was distanced in *The Times* article by Joan Bakewell as an issue for judges and politicians to rule on, sensationalised in the *Daily Mail* and brushed over in women's magazines.

## 1980s

In the 1980s three features of press coverage of money in marriage stand out and help to illuminate the climate in which the academic interest in the subject also took root. These are an interest in the systems used by couples to organise their money; an idealisation of joint bank accounts as symbolic of trust and communication in marriage; and a focus on the emotional power of money. In the early 1980s Pahl created her typology of allocative systems – 'whole wage', 'housekeeping allowance', 'pooling' and 'independent management' – which she and others modified as research into the field expanded.<sup>26</sup> In *Money and Marriage* published in 1989 she tentatively addressed the correlation between marital happiness and the systems couples used to manage their finances, and reported a 'significant association between male control of

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<sup>25</sup> 'Are you thinking about a joint account?', *Woman's Own*, 4 November, 1978. See also Lloyds Banking Group Archive (henceforth LBGA), 1674, 1963-1968; HSBGA, UK 1108-1243, 'Personal Financial Services at the Midland' August 1981; BGA 1265/2, 'The Getting Married Scheme' December 1981.

<sup>26</sup> Pahl, 'Patterns of Money Management'.

money and marital unhappiness.<sup>27</sup> By 1990, Burgoyne was anticipating the focus of women's magazines in the subsequent decade by addressing the psychological impact of financial autonomy on women's 'self-esteem' in her research.<sup>28</sup>

Central to the shifts in couples' money management practices in the late twentieth century, and in media attitudes to the topic, was the increasing rate of married women, especially mothers, working outside the home. By 1976 a quarter of mothers with pre-school children were in paid work, a figure which had doubled in twenty-five years.<sup>29</sup> 'Femail' had tackled the issue in typical polemic style with a 1977 column headed 'Isn't being a proper wife enough?' which asked for readers' views on whether the 'working wife trend' had 'gone too far.'<sup>30</sup> However, two years later, 'Two Pay Cheque Marriages' were identified as the norm in a 'Femail Special Analysis' which offered three very positive case studies.<sup>31</sup> In the late 1970s an ambitious report commissioned by the Labour government recommended an expansion of childcare in response to this shift, but the recommendations were not taken up.<sup>32</sup> This was the context in which *Woman's Own* launched a campaign for working mothers which called for 'Fair Care for Children and a Fair Deal for Mum'.<sup>33</sup> This, and other articles in *Woman's Own* in the early 1980s, stressed the economic necessity of working for many married women.<sup>34</sup>

In 1982 journalist Katharine Whitehorn tackled the impact of this change on marital finances, writing two columns for *The Observer* looking at how couples with 'two pay packets...divide up their joint finances'. In her small sample of 4 professional couples and 3 office cleaners she found that traditional gendered spending responsibilities – 'His responsibility for the roof over her head, her responsibility for the stew under his nose' – remained common. But class differences were also apparent: wealthier

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<sup>27</sup> Pahl, *Money and Marriage*, 176–77.

<sup>28</sup> Burgoyne, 'Money in Marriage', 652.

<sup>29</sup> McCarthy, *Double Lives*, 324.

<sup>30</sup> 'Isn't being a proper wife enough?', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 25 January 1977, 12, Gale.

<sup>31</sup> 'Two Paycheque Marriages', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 7 June 1979, 12-13, Gale.

<sup>32</sup> McCarthy, *Double Lives*, 337–38.

<sup>33</sup> 'At Your Service', *Woman's Own*, 24 February, 1979, 55.

<sup>34</sup> 'Go to work or go without?', *Woman's Own*, 13 September 1980, 50, 53, 55; 'How to survive as a working mother', *Woman's Own*, 20 September 1980, 48-9.

couples could 'get away with a very shaky system' because there was 'enough money sloshing around' whereas the cleaners had 'tougher patterns' for organising household money.<sup>35</sup> Press and academic interest in the topic reinforced one another: the readers' responses invited by Whitehorn were used by Pahl to inform *Money and Marriage*.<sup>36</sup>

The 'overwhelming majority' of those who wrote to Whitehorn in response to her first article 'favoured joint accounts'. That by the 1980s joint accounts and pooling were considered the norm was underlined by couples who had more individualised systems and reported that others saw their arrangements as 'little short of revolution' or, highlighting again cultural associations between sex and money, 'somehow rather indecent'.<sup>37</sup> A 1982 article in 'Femail' about a high earning couple who 'tackle the potentially explosive problem of domestic finances by having separate bank accounts and splitting the bills', perpetuated the idea that such arrangements were abnormal or unnatural. When it highlights the 'cool efficiency of the arrangements', and credits the wife's business skills with achieving this, a contrast with cultural expectations of emotional warmth and female nurturing in marriage is implied.<sup>38</sup>

Whitehorn described the approach to marital money presented by most of the women who wrote to her as one of 'easy-going trust'.<sup>39</sup> Trust was emphasised in *Good Housekeeping's* 'Managing Money for a Happy Marriage' in 1977 and this was endorsed in a 1988 article which highlighted 'an enormous amount of trust' as the essential feature of the ideal marital relationship with money. As in 1977, a joint account for 'most purchases' was promoted as emblematic of this trust. In other respects, though, this article was very different from the one published in 1977. Expert insight was provided not by a bank manager, but by Dr Jack Dominian, head of the Marriage Research centre at the Middlesex Hospital. This change is indicative of a shift in perspective: the problem of money in marriage is presented as essentially emotional rather than technical. Money is described as carrying 'hidden meanings' about 'love',

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<sup>35</sup> 'Cheque mates', *The Observer*, 31 January, 1982, 41. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*.

<sup>36</sup> Pahl, *Money and Marriage*, 75-77.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>38</sup> 'Our marriage works – because she does!', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 22 February 1982, 12, Gale.

<sup>39</sup> 'What's mine's yours' *The Observer*, 28 February 1982, 42. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*.

power' and 'control'. As the title implies, 'Money: the root of all evil in marriage?' was bleaker in tone: 'real people' are said to associate money in marriage with 'pain and anger', illustrated by the case of a controlling husband who allows his wife no personal spending money or say in financial decisions.<sup>40</sup>

This emphasis shares the wider popular, political and academic disquiet about 'the family' in the 1980s, which Janet Finch and David Morgan characterise as 'a new sense of realism'.<sup>41</sup> Clear parallels can be drawn with the academic research into money and marriage which took off in the early 1980s. The issues tackled by feminist sociologists, such as breadwinner entitlement and gendered expectations of behaviours around money, are explored in the article, and financial equality between spouses is explicitly prioritised. The advice given is that money should be 'fairly distributed' with no individual having more say in decisions 'because they hold the purse-strings', and each partner should be able to spend money 'without being watched by the other'.<sup>42</sup> This is very different from the approach to money in marriage taken by *Good Housekeeping* in the 1970s when male control and scrutiny were accepted, and the goal was merely for finances to be better organised.

The 1988 *Good Housekeeping* article presented joint banking as the norm and the ideal. Academic research carried out at the time offered a more complicated picture. In *Money and Marriage* Pahl suggested that joint accounts were the default choice: the lack of a joint account implied that the couple either had no bank account at all or that 'one or both partners rejected the idea of a joint account.' Sixty-six of the one hundred and two couples she interviewed had a joint account.<sup>43</sup> Analysis of the SCEL data from 1211 couples in 1986-7 also found that 50% pooled their money, usually by means of a joint bank account. However, Vogler and Pahl only categorised 20% as having a 'joint pool' where both partners were responsible for organising the

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<sup>40</sup> 'Money: the root of all evil in marriage?', *Good Housekeeping*, November 1988, 72-74.

<sup>41</sup> Finch and Morgan, 'Marriage in the 1980', in David Clark, ed., *Marriage, Domestic Life and Social Change* 55-80.

<sup>42</sup> 'Money: the root of all evil in marriage?', *Good Housekeeping*, November 1988, 74.

<sup>43</sup> Pahl, *Money and Marriage*, 88-9.



household's money and had equal access to funds.<sup>44</sup> In the 1980s joint accounts were the norm for married couples but the meanings of 'joint', 'pooling' or 'sharing', and what they involved in practice, were contested.

Realism around marriage in the 1980s is more evident in *Woman's Own* than in the more aspirational *Good Housekeeping*. The marital financial problems presented reflect the lower household income of the average *Woman's Own* reader and the impact of the 1980s credit explosion on personal debt. In November 1987 an eight-page special called 'Help' devoted two columns to questions about money. A woman asked whether she and her fiancé should open a joint bank account. The response maintained the sceptical approach to joint accounts adopted in 'At Your Service' ten years earlier, focussing on the disadvantages, particularly that the reader would be responsible for her partner's debts.<sup>45</sup>

This mood of realism was expressed by couples in Janet Ashkam's 1984 study who felt that 'marriages needed to be "worked at"'.<sup>46</sup> The 1988 *Good Housekeeping* article shared this attitude, acknowledging that a '[f]air division of money and power is never an easy thing for married couples to work out'.<sup>47</sup> This suggests that the 'easy-going trust' Whitehorn admired may have been more effortful than her correspondents implied.<sup>48</sup> Significantly, the emotional labour required to understand their partner's point of view and to resolve differences is clearly identified in the *Good Housekeeping* article as a women's responsibility. One woman interviewed suggests that her husband's unwillingness to spend is not a sign of his 'meanness' but of 'genuine fear' and another who admits to rather despising her husband for his extravagance is 'learning to relax her puritanical attitudes'.<sup>49</sup>

A similar shift from money as a practical to an emotional problem can also be detected in *Woman's Own's* problem page. In 1987 a young woman wrote that she was losing

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<sup>44</sup> Vogler and Pahl, 'Social and Economic Change', 75–78.

<sup>45</sup> 'Help and your money', *Woman's Own*, 28 November 1987, 45.

<sup>46</sup> Clark, *Marriage, Domestic Life and Social Change*, 57.

<sup>47</sup> 'Money: the root of all evil in marriage?', *Good Housekeeping*, November 1988, 74.

<sup>48</sup> 'What's mine's yours' *The Observer*, 28 February 1982, 42. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*.

<sup>49</sup> 'Money: the root of all evil in marriage?', *Good Housekeeping*, November 1988, 73–74.

trust in her husband after he lied about withdrawals he had made from their joint account. Angela Willans ('Mary Grant' was now writing under her real name) advised that her husband was afraid of her and she should stop treating him like a 'naughty-boy'. As with her advice in 1978, the expectation is that the wife should change her behaviour, but instead of practical steps such as getting a separate account, she, like the readers of *Good Housekeeping*, must become, 'more caring and sharing.'<sup>50</sup>

In the summer of 1988 three articles in 'Femail' wrestled with the conflicting ideals of marital sharing versus individual, particularly female, financial autonomy. This equivocacy is indicative of the shift towards more individualised approaches to household money which took place in the 1990s. The first presented dual career couples and women's desire for their own separate bank account as normal and reasonable: 'working women with their own income today resent it when marriage puts their money under dual control.'<sup>51</sup> The piece recognised and challenged the symbolic status attributed to joint accounts by arguing that, 'a joint account is not necessarily a sign of a closer relationship'.<sup>52</sup> A few weeks later, 'Banking on a good marriage' reported Leicester Marriage Guidance's view that the reason for the low divorce rate in the area was the popularity of joint accounts. 'Femail' journalist Miranda Ingram adopted a critical stance, suggesting that the 'fully joint account' is a 'test of true love rather than a support', but her scepticism is outweighed by interviews with three celebrities who endorse joints accounts.<sup>53</sup>

The contested status of joint accounts and their power to signal values around gender roles in marriage is amplified by the very different reasons given in their support. Victoria Gillick, whose campaign to prevent doctors prescribing contraception to under 16s without parental consent implies that she did not prioritise privacy in family life, offered a more negative spin on the popular association between joint accounts and marital trust by suggesting that separate bank accounts were an indication that one

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<sup>50</sup> 'Angela Willans', *Woman's Own*, 21 March 1987, 63.

<sup>51</sup> 'Money matters need a balance', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 29 June 1988, 12, Gale.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> 'Banking on a good marriage', 'Femail' *Daily Mail*, 19 July 1988, 13, Gale.

partner was 'trying to hide something from the other.' She went on to criticise 'these independent career women' who see themselves as 'separate individuals'.<sup>54</sup>

Conservative M.P. Theresa Gorman, in contrast, characterised joint accounts as a step forward for women in contrast to the 'demeaning' practice of husbands giving their wives an allowance.<sup>55</sup> These two views convey the dilemma faced by many women, and by feminism, in regard to household money: how to resolve the tension between financial autonomy and financial equality in marriage. M-OP correspondents' views on, and solutions to this tension are the subject, of the second section of this chapter.

In August 1988, 'Femail's' 'Meanwhile, back at the bank' confirmed the link between '[m]odern marriage' and 'sharing...financial resources'. But the article reported a study which found that banks and building societies continued to insist on dealing with husbands about issues to do with joint accounts. This meant that women felt it 'necessary to have their own personal account to make the financial institutions – not their husbands – see them as individuals'.<sup>56</sup> The influence of banking business models and technologies on women's household financial practices will be explored in Chapter 3. The point I wish to make here is that, taken together, these three articles in 'Femail' suggest both a move towards women having their own bank accounts and continuing support for joint banking as the ideal. This duality speaks to the extent to which the subject of money in marriage had become contested by the late 1980s. The post-war ideal of the companionate marriage was challenged by feminist demands for women's autonomy reinforced by the growth in married women's paid employment.

Contemporary sociologists like Pahl, whose research demonstrated that joint accounts could provide a cover for male financial control, can be seen as contributing to this shift, though she went on to highlight the disadvantages to women of individualised money management systems. The 1988 'Femail' articles have in common with each other, and with *Good Housekeeping* at the time, an emphasis on the emotional power of money, which was absent in most coverage of marital money in the 1970s. 'Money

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> 'Meanwhile, back at the bank', 'Femail' *Daily Mail*, 26 August 1988, 12-13, Gale.

matters need a balance' closed with the statement, 'Remember that there is no point in negotiating a financial deal unless you agree on the emotional deal behind it.'<sup>57</sup>

In the 1980s the media coverage I have explored offered a variety of sometimes contradictory messages about money in marriage. Money was identified as a potential source of conflict in marriage and its emotional resonance was emphasised. Joint accounts were both normalised and idealised as a marker of a healthy and trusting marriage; they were presented as having the potential to emancipate women from the obvious dependency of the allowance system by enabling equality of access to and control of marital money. However, the gap between this ideal and the less trusting, shared or equal relationship with marital money experienced by many women was increasingly recognised. Towards the end of the decade, separate bank accounts for married women, particularly if they were earning, were being presented in 'Femail' as a favourable choice.

## 1990s

In the 1990s the emotional power of money put forward in the 1980s developed into a psychological discourse around money in marriage. The tension between ideals of sharing in marriage and women's financial autonomy focused on the symbolism of individual bank accounts, which were increasingly presented as being in women's best interests.

In 1994 *Woman's Own* ran a feature asking, 'Can this marriage be saved?' One example featured a wife who had discovered that her husband hadn't been paying the mortgage. It was headed 'Money lies have ruined our love.' The response was radically different from the no-nonsense approach taken by Mary Grant/Angela Willans in the 1970s and 1980s. The problem was diagnosed as low self-esteem and the couple was predicted a happy future 'if they let themselves feel worthy of it.'<sup>58</sup> Anna Gough-Yates has pointed out that, in the late 1980s and 1990s, popular psychology became very

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<sup>57</sup> 'Money matters need a balance', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 29 June 1988, 12, Gale.

<sup>58</sup> 'Can this marriage be saved?', *Woman's Own*, 28 January 1994, 48-9.

fashionable in glossy magazines.<sup>59</sup> As this example shows, money was one of many subjects approached in this way and by the mid-1990s weekly magazines like *Woman's Own* were also following this trend. Psychoanalytical discourse had been used previously, for example by 'Femail' in 1975, pathologising male meanness. The key difference in the 1990s is that it is applied to the woman reader and development of self-esteem is prioritised.

This psychological approach was used in *Good Housekeeping* when it returned to the topic of money in marriage in 1994. The title of the article, 'Are you trapped by a mean man?', looks like a throwback to the 1970s, but the by-line suggesting that '[b]eing tied to someone else's purse strings can leave you lacking in self-esteem', shows that the focus has shifted from the mean husband's personality to the issue of financial dependency and its psychological impact on women. As in 1988, the emphasis is on money as a source of conflict in relationships, but the tone is more uncompromising, citing four examples of men restricting their wives' access to money and labelling this 'abuse of power'. The expectation that women should adapt themselves to accommodate the emotional needs of others, expressed in 1988, is challenged by one woman's declaration that that 'instead of spending on others, I now enjoy economising.' Working to build communication and trust is replaced by the more assertive and individualist injunction for women to 'take charge of their own affairs' and gain 'control over part of the family income'.<sup>60</sup>

*Good Housekeeping's* expert this time is neither a bank manager nor a marriage researcher but a consultant psychologist. In keeping with this therapeutic approach, the benefits promised are individuals' personal growth and feelings of 'self-worth'. Economic dependency is described as a form of 'learned helplessness' which can contribute to depression and one married woman who overcame this by opening her own bank account is quoted as saying, 'Now I feel like a grown up'. In keeping with the conventions of women's magazines, one incentive for this financial and psychological

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<sup>59</sup> Gough-Yates, *Understanding Women's Magazines*, 77, 108, 113, 127.

<sup>60</sup> 'Are you trapped by a mean man?' *Good Housekeeping*, March 1994, 112-3.

self-improvement is that it will 'pay dividends for your relationship'.<sup>61</sup> But, unlike *Good Housekeeping* articles in 1977 and 1988 in which marital breakdown is seen as the worst outcome, a woman whose over-spending husband left her is presented as better off both emotionally and financially without him.

In 1994 the money management system recommended had also changed. Joint banking was no longer presented as the ideal; instead readers were encouraged to ask 'What would it mean to have my own bank account? What have I got to lose by discussing this idea with my partner?'<sup>62</sup> *Good Housekeeping's* 'Money Management Course,' which ran from June 1992 to April 1993, also promoted independent financial arrangements. The first instalment categorised women into four 'types'. The top two, 'Competents' and 'Triers', both have their own bank accounts; 'Copers' and 'Casuals' on the other hand leave financial decisions to their partners. The options presented are, therefore, autonomy or passivity; the 1980s ideal of shared management of joint finances is not even mentioned. The first step of the course is to assess your financial situation, and this too is an individualised process which involves writing down your 'share of the mortgage, proportion of the housekeeping...holidays...childminder and so on.' The role of a husband or partner in this is as someone to or from whom the reader will have financial commitments.<sup>63</sup> An article published in October 1996 summed up the new orthodoxy on marital money when it offered the following advice: 'Financial planning should be complementary yet independent, working towards your joint objectives without compromising financial control.'<sup>64</sup>

What exactly this meant in practice, though, remained shrouded in mystery. In a letter to *Good Housekeeping* in 1995 a reader, whose income had dropped because she was retraining, found it hurtful that her husband continued to spend money on new clothes for himself but didn't offer to buy clothes for her. Psychologist Jenny Cozens advised that they 'work out a way to deal with the finances fairly', but unlike Dr Jack Dominian a few years earlier, gave no indication of the guiding principles which should

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> 'Money management course', *Good Housekeeping*, June 1992, 111.

<sup>64</sup> 'Of course we have no secrets...', *Good Housekeeping*, October 1996, 62.

underpin this conversation.<sup>65</sup> The weakening of prescriptive gender norms meant that, as Lewis puts it, '[t]he "ought" in regard to the behaviour of men and women in families' had become 'less specified' by the 1990s. She suggests that the space this opened up for negotiation may be 'positive' but was not 'easy'.<sup>66</sup> Criticism of the 'mean husband' in the 1970s was made in the context of the expectation that the male breadwinner would use his earnings to provide for his family. The erosion of breadwinner ideology and increasing assumption that married women should also have an income from paid work made the 'mean husband' more difficult to either identify or challenge.

In 1991, financial advisor Sacha Grochowska, wrote a piece in *Woman's Own* on 'Life after marriage' which, like the *Good Housekeeping* article in 1994, adopted a feminist discourse, contrasting 'our new independence' with the recent past when women were 'kept and managed'. She supports the impression given by *Good Housekeeping* that pooling household money was being rejected by women in favour of keeping their earnings in their own separate account: 'Years ago, "what's mine is yours and what's yours is mine", was supposedly the general rule.... Now the tendency can be... "what's yours is ours and what's mine is mine."' She injects a note of economic pragmatism, though, when she points out the '[r]eality...that bills need to be paid, food and clothing bought'.<sup>67</sup> The idea of 'complementary but independent' financial planning advocated in *Good Housekeeping* was less relevant for women whose earnings were essential to the day-to-day running of the household.

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From the early 1970s until the late 1990s important changes took place in coverage of money and marriage in women's print media. In the early 1970s money was presented as a practical issue to be solved, and advice on how this should be achieved was class and gender specific. Familiar stereotypes were deployed: male control of a spendthrift

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<sup>65</sup> 'Problem page', *Good Housekeeping*, March 1995, 70.

<sup>66</sup> Lewis, *The End of Marriage?*, 5.

<sup>67</sup> 'You and Your Money', *Woman's Own*, 11 February 1991, 41.

middle-class wife or female protection of the housekeeping from a feckless working-class man. The rising divorce rate and publicity about domestic abuse led 'Femail' to identify marital money as a problem. In the 1980s magazines reflected academic interest in marital money and tackled the issues of unequal access to, and control of, household money. Joint accounts were endorsed in *Good Housekeeping* as the solution to this and presented as emblematic of marital trust. 'Femail' presented arguments for and against joint accounts, and *Woman's Own* cautioned against the financial risks joint accounts could entail for women. Emphasis was on the emotional rather than the practical aspects of marital money and the emotional labour this entailed was to be done by women. By the 1990s dual income households were normalised and women's financial autonomy was being encouraged, though again, *Woman's Own* recognised the real-world limitations of this aspiration. Psychoanalytical discourse was applied to managing money and it was presented as a potential source of self-esteem for women.

## Marital Money in M-OP

The previous section has demonstrated that household money management was a significant arena in which changing cultural ideals and norms about marriage in late-twentieth-century Britain were played out. Expectations of married life changed as the mid-century male-breadwinner model gave way to one based on jointness in earning and organising money. By the end of the century a new emphasis on women's financial autonomy was sometimes in tension with this marital ideal. In the late 1970s and 1980s, women's print media suggested that a couple's approach to money was a key indicator of whether a marriage was 'good', particularly because it demonstrated the level of trust in the relationship. In the 1990s the suggestion that marital money could contribute to a woman's individual self-worth was added to this emotional and psychological burden.

In this section I use M-OP testimony from 1984 and 1993 to explore women's experiences of these shifts and trends. Many M-OP correspondents referred to transitions in marital norms and positioned their own attitudes and practices around money on this continuum. They did this by comparing their approaches to household



finances with those of their mothers or daughters, or by highlighting changes since the early years of their marriages. When combined with the huge age-range of M-OP panellists this offers a rich, multi-layered and complex view of changes and continuities in ideas and practices.

When conducting preliminary work to shape the BHPS questions on household money, Heather Laurie noted that her interviewees had a 'tendency...to report financial arrangements which present the marriage as an equal partnership.'<sup>68</sup> Many M-OP correspondents also performed a 'good marriage' by demonstrating sharing and jointness or by distancing their approach to money from the male-breadwinner ideology dominant in mid-century. This speaks to the continuing strength of the companionate model of marriage and its influence over financial arrangements. Correspondents also analysed the tensions they experienced between competing ideologies of 'marital sharing' and "'rights" to ownership of earnings.'<sup>69</sup> As well as presenting their insights into money in marriage in the late twentieth century, M-OP correspondents offered their work-arounds and solutions to the tensions between conflicting ideals and resulting disputes between themselves and their partners. Women's agency in challenging inequalities around household money in their households contributed to the changing norms evident in the media coverage I discussed in the last section, and also informed the focus of academic research into marital money in the 1990s.

A correspondent in her early fifties wrote in response to the 1987 directive on 'Waste, Thrift and Consumerism', 'I think it is important that every man, woman and child should have a certain small sum of money to call his/her own to spend without reference to anyone else.'<sup>70</sup> Bennett and Sung found that money of your 'own', or 'money in your own right' was much more important to women than it was to men; many men found the concept 'meaningless'.<sup>71</sup> Lewis' research comparing the attitudes of older and younger couples suggested that a heightened awareness of the tension

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<sup>68</sup> Laurie, 'Multiple Methods', in Brannen, *Mixing Methods*, 160.

<sup>69</sup> Burgoyne, 'Money in Marriage', 638.

<sup>70</sup> MOA Spring 1987, R1478.

<sup>71</sup> Bennett and Sung, 'Dimensions of Financial Autonomy', 707–8.

between ‘my’ and ‘our’ money was related to generation as well as gender. Lewis found that, although having their ‘own’ money was ‘important’ to most of the older women she interviewed, there had been ‘no discussion as to “joint” and “separate” money’ in their marriages.’ Most of these women had married in the 1950s, when breadwinner ideology was dominant and the housekeeping allowance system was prevalent. For many of their daughters though, most of whom established their households in the 1980s, this tension had been discussed with their partners and ‘a mechanism for deciding “own” money’ established.<sup>72</sup> As the previous section demonstrated, by the 1980s the risks of unequal power and control around marital money were covered in women’s print media and the importance of discussion and compromise emphasised.

M-OP testimony confirms that distinguishing between collective and individual money was important to women of all ages. The generational divide Lewis describes is less clear cut as the panel is weighted towards older women, many of whom were far from reticent on a variety of topics. However, most of those who had adopted a system such as partial pooling which gave each partner money to manage and spend independently, or had discussed the subject of having their ‘own’ money with their partners, would have fallen into Lewis’ younger generation as they were born after the war.

Whilst I am mindful of its limitations, I will, where relevant, use some of Pahl’s typography of allocative systems to describe couples’ financial arrangements: housekeeping allowance, pooling, the partial pool and independent management. However, although the popularity of these systems changed over my period, I am more interested in the underlying principles on which they might be based. Central to this is the question of ‘ownership’ of household money. Ashby and Burgoyne’s descriptors are useful. They define couples’ attitudes to the ‘ownership’ of marital money as ‘distinct’ where a clear line is drawn between individual and household money; ‘shared’ if money is described as jointly owned; and ‘blurred’ if a couple’s

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<sup>72</sup> Lewis, *The End of Marriage?*, 128-129, 167-69.

views are inconsistent or in transition.<sup>73</sup> However, the 'distinct' label does not distinguish between husbands' or wives' individual ownership. This has the potential to obscure the legacy of mid-century male-breadwinner ideology which was, as this chapter will show, still influential in the 1980s and 1990s. In *Money and Marriage* Pahl highlights the distinctions couples draw between '[h]is money, her money', and 'our money'.<sup>74</sup> These labels get to the heart of the matter by giving weight to '*perceptions*' of money in the relationship as perceived ownership of household resources shapes each partner's sense of entitlement to control and access them. My approach to this section is organised around Pahl's labels, though 'hers' has been replaced by 'mine' to reflect the perspective of the women's M-OP testimony I am using.

Although some M-OP correspondents felt they had resolved the tensions between 'his', 'our' and 'my' money in their marriages, for many others achieving this balance remained problematic. Some M-OP correspondents explicitly reject male-breadwinner ideology, but its legacy is evident in the practices of many older, and some younger, correspondents. Testimony from a few correspondents suggests, paradoxically, that the apparent equality offered by joint banking and the feminist challenge to gendered roles in marriage could make it harder for women to challenge continuing male financial privilege in their marriages. Acceptance of earner entitlement which bolstered men's assumed right to control household money in the mid-century also justified women's demands in the late twentieth century to have greater financial autonomy. The trend towards more individualised money in marriage, while it offered opportunities for women's autonomy, could also reinforce unequal access.

## His

As my discussion of women's print media has shown, by the 1980s sharing of household income in joint accounts and shared decision making about financial expenditure were the dominant ideals. However, in her research for *Money and Marriage* Pahl found that a significant minority of women, 24%, saw their husband's

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<sup>73</sup> Ashby and Burgoyne, 'Separate Financial Entities?', 467.

<sup>74</sup> Pahl, *Money and Marriage*, 125.

income as primarily his rather than belonging to the household.<sup>75</sup> As I have indicated in my discussion of the mean husband, breadwinner ideology dictated that a husband should provide for his family. However, the belief that a husband's earnings were 'his' implied that he could control access to this money and determine how it should be spent, saved or invested. Although this view was described by a correspondent quoted in Chapter 1 as a 'Victorian outlook', this section will show that it remained influential in the late twentieth century.<sup>76</sup> Responses to the 1984 and 1993 directives, on 'Electronic Banking' and 'Managing Money', provide insights into the longevity of breadwinner ideology and its implications.

A correspondent who was in her early sixties wrote that she had saved 'something' for 'old-age' and added, 'the rest is my husband's money.' She recognised that her approach to household money was, in 1984, outdated, describing her preference for the 'old-fashioned ways', with her husband giving her 'house-keeping cash per week'.<sup>77</sup> This correspondent's awareness that readers will regard her acceptance of these attitudes and practices as old-fashioned speaks to the prevalence of discourses on marital sharing and women's autonomy in the 1980s and 1990s.

Other M-OP correspondents highlighted changing norms in household money management since the mid-century by referring to practices used earlier in their own marriage or by their parents. One recalled how in the early years of their marriage, when she had 'considerably more money' than her husband, funds would be transferred from her account to his so that her husband could write the cheques to pay for major household items. The correspondent explores the role of the male-breadwinner model in this behaviour when she describes its roots as 'a sort of male "pride" which doesn't operate now'. She emphasises how much beliefs around gender roles and marital money have transformed in the intervening decades by adding, 'my daughters don't understand it at all!'<sup>78</sup> Less light-hearted in tone is the recollection of another correspondent who describes her mother's experience in the 1930s. She

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>76</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, W768.

<sup>77</sup> MOA Summer 1984, Y1212.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., H643.

writes that her mother 'had to ask for the housekeeping money' and analysed the impact of this arrangement when she commented that it allowed her father to keep 'all the power in his hands'. She contrasts this with her own experience of receiving housekeeping money 'regularly'.<sup>79</sup>

Of course, a husband giving his wife a housekeeping allowance, even if it is a regular sum, can reinforce the idea that the household money belongs to him. Although contemporary research showed that the housekeeping allowance system was declining in the late twentieth century, dropping to only 8% of couples in 2002, in the mid-1980s it was still used by nearly a quarter of married couples. Vogler and Pahl's analysis of the SCEL data found that couples using the traditional housekeeping allowance system reported the lowest level of equality in access to personal spending money.<sup>80</sup>

The increasing popularity of pooling and joint accounts gave women potential access to more of the household money than under the allowance system, but it remained a popular budgeting practice for couples to earmark a sum for 'housekeeping' which was usually managed by the wife. A reply to the 1984 directive by a woman in her early thirties shows how even this practice could disadvantage women. Her testimony reports that they have a joint account from which her husband withdraws every week 'his pocket money and my housekeeping money'.<sup>81</sup> The terminology suggests that her husband's allowance was to spend on himself, but hers was to spend on the family. Pahl's research for *Money in Marriage* confirms that this correspondent's experience was not unusual: 44% of the husbands she interviewed had an earmarked sum of money for personal spending, but this was true for only 28% of wives.<sup>82</sup>

Although a housekeeping allowance might notionally include a sum for personal spending, putting the two together meant that, unlike men's 'pocket money', women's

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., M361. Zelizer has also explored this crucial distinction in her discussion of the 'battle' in late nineteenth and early twentieth century America to replace 'dole' money, given to wives by their husbands when requested, with a regular fixed allowance. Zelizer, *Social Meaning*, 48–53.

<sup>80</sup> Vogler and Pahl, 'Money, Power and Inequality', 270, 281; Vogler, Brockmann, and Wiggins, 'Intimate Relationships', 460.

<sup>81</sup> MOA Summer 1984, T1309; MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, D2123.

<sup>82</sup> Pahl, *Money and Marriage*, 148.

personal spending could be perceived to be in conflict with their family's needs.<sup>83</sup> An M-OP correspondent in 1993 expressed this tension when she wrote that her main concern about the possibility of losing her job was that she would have to 'ask' for 'pocket money on holiday' which would come out of their 'living expenses'.<sup>84</sup>

Elizabeth has described 'the need to ask and seek approval for money to cover personal purchases' as 'one of the hallmarks of financial dependency for women.'<sup>85</sup> M-OP correspondents felt strongly about this subject. A woman in her early seventies wrote 'it's appalling if a wife has to ask her husband for a new skirt or what have you' and kept her own individual bank account specifically to avoid this situation.<sup>86</sup> A part-time social worker in her early forties sought to distance her own marriage from such behaviour: 'He pays money into the Joint Bank Account to cover supermarket expenses, clothing etc., which I have free access to.'<sup>87</sup> These women's comments confirm that having to ask for money was considered incompatible with modern, companionate marriage, but also suggest that this was still common enough behaviour to require a denial.

Some correspondents made light of asking for money. A housewife who received a 'small monthly allowance' of £125 in addition to weekly housekeeping money wrote, 'Needless to say I'm always negotiating for an increase.'<sup>88</sup> Although she presents her husband as generous and open to persuasion, what Hochschild terms the marital 'economy of gratitude' will have conferred unequal power on the requester and bestower.<sup>89</sup> For households 'on a fairly tight budget' couples might need to check with each other before withdrawing money from a joint account.<sup>90</sup> However, traditional gendered expectations of financial roles remained influential. A husband asking his wife's 'permission' to spend joint money on 'lesser purchases' was presented by a 28-

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<sup>83</sup> Goode, Callender, and Lister, *Purse or Wallet?*, 42–45.

<sup>84</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, C1939.

<sup>85</sup> Elizabeth, 'Managing Money, Managing Coupledness', 400.

<sup>86</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, G1416.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, D826.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, H2682, see also M1395.

<sup>89</sup> Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Second Shift* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 19.

<sup>90</sup> MOA Summer 1984, B789.

year-old writing in 1993 as evidence of his 'odd attitude to...finances'.<sup>91</sup> The view expressed by Angela Willans/Mary Grant in *Woman's Own* in the late 1980s, that a wife who checked her husband's spending was infantilising him, may be shaping this correspondent's disquiet.

The testimony of an educational psychologist, in response to the 1993 M-OP directive, illuminates particularly vividly some of the themes I have discussed so far. She writes that when they were 'younger' and her husband was the 'only breadwinner' he would 'never refuse' her 'anything she fancied' and would 'even encourage' her to 'buy an expensive dress' she had seen, though they were 'struggling'. Significantly though, she adds that he 'knew full well' that she 'would never buy it' because she was too aware of their 'financial state!'<sup>92</sup> Like the husband writing cheques from his wife's earnings to pay the bills, this example of 'doing gender' appears to have served as a ritual to fortify her husband's male-breadwinner pride by them pretending to each other that his earnings were high enough to have allowed such extravagance. In this way, the power of the bestower can be enjoyed, but without the financial cost; that the item to be purchased is 'an expensive dress' reinforces the gendered nature of this interaction.

The power relationship inherent in such exchanges is foregrounded when the correspondent contrasts this past display of largesse with the present when 'he says, "no" to things like a video recorder'. She resists acknowledging the unequal power implicit in this by suggesting that her husband could be 'talked round' or that she could just 'buy one' if she 'wanted to' without having to 'ask permission'. However, she also admits that she won't actually do this. Although the correspondent does not make this connection, it seems significant that at the time of writing she was the 'major breadwinner'.<sup>93</sup> Her husband's assertion of financial control may have served to compensate for the loss of his breadwinner status, particularly in the purchase of technology, usually considered a masculine domain. Fleming concluded from his study that female self-control had a greater impact on limiting women's spending than either

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<sup>91</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, H2347.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., N2208.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

direct or indirect control by their husbands.<sup>94</sup> This M-OP correspondent's testimony demonstrates how difficult it is in practice to untangle those different threads in the everyday spoken and unspoken dialogue of couple relationships.

Burgoyne and Lewis found that women's reluctance to spend household money on themselves, or their priorities, if all of most of it was earned by their husbands was compounded by their 'lack of sense of entitlement to reward' which the researchers attribute to society's failure to value women's domestic contribution as 'work'.<sup>95</sup> M-OP testimony supports these conclusions. A woman in her early forties with dependent children presented her domestic role as not enough to entitle her to spend £4 a week on an evening class. She felt the need to bolster her claim by citing her financial contribution to the household and frugal habits: 'This is a luxury but I work full time and run the house so I think the money I spend on my one indulgence is justified. I don't smoke. I rarely drink.'<sup>96</sup>

In the 1980s women's difficulty in claiming economic reward for their caring work for the home and family became particularly acute. The influence of second wave feminism on popular discourse meant that, for younger women especially, the term 'housewife' was loaded with negative connotations.<sup>97</sup> As I discussed in Chapter 1, much of the opposition to WFH within the wider WLM reflected a rejection of the housewife identity. By the 1980s these views were influential outside the feminist movement. Based on her research for *Money and Marriage* Pahl suggested that some women did not want to endorse 'an ideology in which the husband's sharing of money was seen as a reward for the wife's domestic work'.<sup>98</sup> The normalisation of married women working outside the home, including those with young children, reinforced the idea that housework and childcare did not count as work and that women's economic contribution to the family was what mattered.

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<sup>94</sup> Fleming, *The Common Purse*, 61.

<sup>95</sup> Burgoyne and Lewis, 'Distributive Justice in Marriage', 110–11.

<sup>96</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, D156, see also W571 and Summer 1984, R463.

<sup>97</sup> McCarthy, *Double Lives*, 323–28.

<sup>98</sup> Pahl, *Money and Marriage*, 128



In this context one M-OP correspondent's assertion of her right to financial reward for her domestic role is particularly striking. She writes 'I am given housekeeping, which I consider my "wage". I consider being a mother and wife as a job, and I have no qualms about putting down housewife under "profession" on forms.'<sup>99</sup> Her emphatic tone underlines the point that by the 1990s it could no longer be taken for granted, as it was in the 1950s, that housewifery was a worthwhile and full-time job. It suggests too an awareness that in the 1990s her view is not merely old-fashioned, but almost subversive. M-OP testimony illuminates how women living through the transition from the breadwinner and home-maker model to the normalisation of the dual income family processed the tension between these contradictory ideals. A sixty-three-year-old writing in 1993 articulated her inner conflict: 'Sometimes I feel a bit guilty about contributing so little to our joint income but on the other hand I feel he gets good value for money, as I do all the housework, cooking, laundry, correspondence, etc. He rarely even makes a cup of coffee or washes up.'<sup>100</sup>

As my section on magazines established, by the 1980s the breadwinner ideology which underpinned men's claim to greater control of, and access to, household money was contested; an ideal of marriage in which resources were shared became more dominant and feminist arguments for gender equality were normalised. In response to the SCEL research in 1986-7, 70% of couples reported that big financial decisions were arrived at jointly. However, 23% felt that husbands had the final say and only 7% said wives had the final say.<sup>101</sup> The difficulty in pinning down decision-making power in marriage is demonstrated by an M-OP correspondent who wrote that 'major expenditure' was decided by them both, but that she gave her husband 'the casting vote' because it was 'his money that pays'.<sup>102</sup> The implication in this testimony, that the ideal of marital sharing might work to conceal inequality, is supported by a correspondent who wrote in 1984: 'Decision making is apparently taken jointly though really I have to give way to my husband as he has the earning power and I can't justify

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<sup>99</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, A1706.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., W2568.

<sup>101</sup> Vogler and Pahl, 'Money, Power and Inequality', 273-74.

<sup>102</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, M1395.

going against what he wants.’<sup>103</sup> This testimony suggests that the SCEL data may have underestimated continuing male-breadwinner dominance over financial decision making in the 1980s and 1990s.

Unequal influence over household spending had an impact on women’s and children’s lives. One correspondent regretted that they hadn’t been to a holiday camp when her children were young, but her husband wasn’t keen and as ‘he paid the largest amount towards the holiday’ she ‘didn’t pursue the issue.’<sup>104</sup> A younger woman who was in her mid-thirties in 1984 wrote that she would have liked to buy a dishwasher or tumble drier but ‘[m]y husband’s ideas differ from mine’ and ‘as he has the only real income I go along with him.’ She seems more resigned than accepting, though, when she adds, ‘labour saving devises would mean more to me than him!’<sup>105</sup> This testimony supports Stephen Edgell’s findings in 1980, that the types of decisions which husbands dominated tended to be infrequent but were also the decisions couples perceived to be the most important.<sup>106</sup>

A correspondent who was in her early forties in 1993 analysed financial decision making in her marriage in greater depth and with palpable anger. Despite her considerable financial agency, she describes herself as dealing with ‘all matters financial’, she wrote, ‘when it comes down to deciding “big” things then we usually discuss it and HE gets his own way. That is the power of EARNING rather than being supported and it is a power I really dislike because it causes an inequality which I don’t think is fair.’ Her testimony also suggests that the decline in more blatant gender inequalities around household money, such as men’s right to a bigger share of household resources or their position as the bestower of an allowance, may, paradoxically, have made it more difficult for women to challenge the less tangible issue of unequal decision-making power. Her account goes on, ‘Sometimes we’ll argue over it but he doesn’t understand and totally denies that he makes the decisions

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<sup>103</sup> MOA Summer 1984, M388.

<sup>104</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, S1680.

<sup>105</sup> MOA Summer 1984, P1357.

<sup>106</sup> Stephen Edgell, *Middle-Class Couples: A Study of Segregation, Domination and Inequality in Marriage*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1980), 57–59.

saying how can that be when I only give him pocket money.’<sup>107</sup> A psychological study in 2001 found that men were more likely to gloss over inequality in decision making whereas women were more likely to report it, as this correspondent does, as fixed and gendered, with themselves at a disadvantage.<sup>108</sup>

M-OP correspondents were largely aware that breadwinner ideology and the accompanying male rights to access and allocate household money were, by the 1980s, no longer fashionable. Some looked back on the antiquated behaviour of their early married lives, or their mothers’ experience, to show how much progress had been made. However, the tacit assumption that men’s earnings were ‘his’ continued to influence approaches to money in M-OP correspondents’ marriages in the 1980s and 1990s. Although many of these correspondents married in the post-war decades when breadwinner ideology was dominant, younger women also felt its effects. The dominant ideology of marital sharing and increasing acceptance of gender equality could conceal continuing male privilege in access to, and control over, household money in the late twentieth century, making it more difficult for women to identify and challenge these gendered inequalities in their marriages.

## Ours

Large scale quantitative surveys carried out between 1987 and 1995 found that a consistent 50-52% of couples chose to categorise their approach to money as, ‘We share and manage our household finances jointly.’<sup>109</sup> In women’s print media in the late 1970s and 1980s joint accounts were associated with the core marital ideal of trust and were presented as a move towards greater gender equality. However, this generally positive view of joint accounts was tempered by concerns that they might disadvantage women, by making it difficult for them to manage a tight household budget, or by giving a controlling partner the power to limit women’s access to their

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<sup>107</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, G2486.

<sup>108</sup> E. Kirchler, C. Rodler, E. Holzl, and K. Meier, *Conflict and Decision Making in Close Relationships*, (Hove: The Psychology Press, 2001), cited in Carolyn Vogler, Clare Lyonette, and Richard D. Wiggins, ‘Money, Power and Spending Decisions in Intimate Relationships’, *The Sociological Review* 56, no. 1 (15 February 2008): 122–23, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2008.00779.x>.

<sup>109</sup> Laurie and Gershuny, ‘Couples, Work and Money’, in Berthoud and Gershuny, *Seven Years in the Lives of British Families*, 58–59.

own earnings. Academic research in the 1980s and 1990s demonstrated that joint banking could conceal unequal access to, and control over, household money and by the 1990s magazines were encouraging women to open and manage their own individual accounts. M-OP testimony illuminates the complexity of attitudes towards joint banking in the 1980s and 1990s with strong feelings expressed both in favour of, and against, joint banking. It also highlights women's agency in attempting to resolve this tension.

A woman who married in the late 1950s shows how joint banking could protect women from the potential harm of breadwinner ideology and associated male control of household money. Writing in response to both the 1984 and 1993 directives, the correspondent explains that when she was about to marry, she was planning to transfer all the money from her own account into her husband's new one, which would be solely in his name. The bank manager strongly advised against this and persuaded her husband-to-be to open a joint account instead. The correspondent expresses her gratitude to this bank manager for protecting her interests by preventing her from making, what she recognises with hindsight would have been, a serious mistake. This event clearly remained very significant to her: she recounts the story in response to two directives nine years apart and implies that her marriage would have been more problematic had she gone ahead and given her husband individual control over all their money. This incident also suggests that the depiction of bank managers as marriage guidance counsellors in articles in *Good Housekeeping* and 'Femail' was not entirely fanciful, though by the late 1970s perhaps a little nostalgic.<sup>110</sup>

Joint banking was popular with the M-OP panel. The summer 1984 directive asked, 'If you are married and have a current bank account, do you have a joint account/separate accounts/joint and separate account(s)'. The vast majority of married women who answered this question confirmed that at least one of their accounts was joint. Responses to the 1993 directive suggest that many women

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<sup>110</sup> MOA Summer 1984, MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, P1326; 'All bank customers – but not one is talking about money', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 3 February 1977, 14; 'Managing Money for a Happy Marriage', *Good Housekeeping*, March 1977, 102-3.

strongly associated sharing financial resources and decisions with an ideal marriage. A widow began by writing that she and her husband had ‘always pooled’ their cash and she develops this picture of togetherness by adding, ‘when we had a bit extra we shared it when it was short we both tightened our belt.’<sup>111</sup> The elevation of joint banking to an ideological status is evident in the testimony of a correspondent who wrote in 1993, ‘We have a joint account....We don’t *believe* in separate accounts and just dip in to the central pool.’<sup>112</sup> (My emphasis.)

The M-OP testimony cited above may well have a performative element. The less polished quality of M-OP correspondence from this era, when it was handwritten or manually typed, is particularly valuable as edits and corrections reveal which ideals of marriage and money correspondents wanted to present. One woman initially wrote that if she ran out of money for food she would ‘get more’, but then suggested that this was the ‘wrong word’ and corrected herself to ‘TAKE MORE’, making it clear that she was not given money by her partner and emphasising instead her freedom of access to household money. She underlines the distance between their financial arrangements and the gendered inequalities associated with the housekeeping allowance system when she adds, ‘If my husband runs out he will perhaps say to me “Got any spare dosh, love?” Then we will probably turn out my purse and share the proceeds.’<sup>113</sup>

Many women responding to the 1984 directive had closed their individual accounts and opened a joint one on marriage.<sup>114</sup> Two younger women who were engaged in 1984 had already opened joint accounts with their fiancées.<sup>115</sup> For one, marriage represented a significant financial, as well as emotional, transition and the ideal of sharing was at its core: ‘marriage brings with it a set of new rules and sharing financial decisions’.<sup>116</sup> Singh’s description of opening a joint account as ‘a secular ritual’ for the

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<sup>111</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, C2737.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 1993, C2677.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., B1120.

<sup>114</sup> MOA Summer 1984, B1140, B789, N1228, T1309, W729.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., D1306.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., D1085.

middle-class Melbourne couples she studied in the 1990s could usefully be applied to many M-OP correspondents.<sup>117</sup> As cohabitation before, or instead of, marriage became more common the pooling of income, whether in a joint account or another form of kitty, could take on even more significance as a rite of passage. One young woman wrote about pooling money when she lived with her boyfriend as a transition to adulthood: 'I felt more responsible when it was our money'. In the absence of a ring or ceremony, 'sharing' finances was 'a kind of commitment to each other.'<sup>118</sup> Ashby and Burgoyne's 2008 study found that the timing of the transition from independent to shared finances continued to shift but remained significant: by the twenty-first century the arrival of a baby was the point at which some married or cohabiting couples made this change.<sup>119</sup>

However, M-OP evidence demonstrates that a joint account did not necessarily have a symbolic significance or indicate an ideological commitment to sharing. A joint account could be opened some way into married life for practical reasons, such as women needing access to their husband's income in an emergency, because he was working abroad, or, as one correspondent put it bluntly, 'in case one of us dies'.<sup>120</sup> As I have discussed, advice from *Woman's Own* about joint banking in the 1970s and 1980s tended to stress such practical considerations.<sup>121</sup> In some cases the switch to a joint account was made reluctantly. A fifty-five-year-old woman reported in 1993 that, because it was 'difficult to pay workmen' if her husband had forgotten to leave her a signed cheque, he 'eventually...agreed to make his bank account into a joint one'.<sup>122</sup>

It is clear from this and other testimony that joint accounts did not necessarily indicate a shared approach to finances. A correspondent in her early sixties wrote in 1984 that her husband's account had been changed into a joint account when they married and went on, 'But I treat it as his, and have never signed cheques drawn upon this account

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<sup>117</sup> Singh, *Marriage Money*, 55.

<sup>118</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, P2698.

<sup>119</sup> Ashby and Burgoyne, 'Separate Financial Entities?', 470.

<sup>120</sup> MOA Summer 1984, W863, see also 1984, M1237, P1282, P894.

<sup>121</sup> 'At Your Service' *Woman's Own*, 16 July 1977, 57, 'Help and Your Money', *Woman's Own*, 28 November 1987, 45.

<sup>122</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, W1923.

except “on his behalf” i.e. when he says “pay for the car-service with my cheque book””.<sup>123</sup> A key focus for research into marital money in the 1980s and 1990s was the gap between ideology and reality in the pooling of marital money. As I indicated in the first part of this chapter, Vogler and Pahl’s SCEL study established that half of the 1211 couples questioned were ‘pooling’ their money, usually in a joint account, but only 20% had equal decision-making power over, and equal access to, these funds.<sup>124</sup>

As I have demonstrated, articles in *Good Housekeeping* in the late 1970s and 1980s emphasised the importance of marital trust and treated joint banking as symbolic of this trust. M-OP testimony shows that the relationship between financial arrangements and trust was more complex. One correspondent endorsed this association, writing that she could use the joint account and Visa cards ‘whenever I like’ and summing up the approach to money in her marriage as, ‘Basically, we both trust each other.’<sup>125</sup> However, in her Melbourne study Singh noted that couples who had separate accounts, or held assets in individual names, also talked about trust as essential to their financial arrangements.<sup>126</sup> Arguably, more trust in a partner is needed in the absence of a joint account, as in the case of an M-OP correspondent who wrote, ‘My husband makes decisions knowing that I trust him.’<sup>127</sup> Joint bank accounts could also facilitate monitoring of a partner’s spending, a behaviour which is the antithesis of trust. A woman who was in her mid-twenties in 1984, and whose current and building society accounts were in joint names, wrote that ‘one of the main reasons’ she avoids using cheques is that she has to write them down in a book, adding that her husband ‘is very fussy about these things and will tell [her] off if anything goes wrong.’<sup>128</sup>

Overall, M-OP evidence supports Lewis’ finding that there are ‘very real limitations on what can be inferred from the existence of joint...accounts.’<sup>129</sup> Ashby and Burgoyne’s categories offer greater insight. The correspondent cited above was gradually paying

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<sup>123</sup> MOA Summer 1984, M361; see also *Ibid.*, M1729.

<sup>124</sup> Vogler and Pahl, ‘Social and Economic Change’, 77.

<sup>125</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, T1843.

<sup>126</sup> Singh, *Marriage Money*, 62–67.

<sup>127</sup> MOA Summer 1984, Y1212.

<sup>128</sup> MOA Summer 1984, H1131.

<sup>129</sup> Lewis, *The End of Marriage?*, 165.

her husband back £1000 which he lent her to do a secretarial course. The imperative to settle this debt suggests that this couple perceived ownership of money in their marriage to be 'distinct' even though it was held in joint names.<sup>130</sup> The couple's Debenhams card, which the correspondent used 'sometimes' to buy 'underwear and material', was in her husband's name. This meant that she had to take him with her when she shopped, which she described as 'pretty awful.'<sup>131</sup> Both joint and individualised arrangements appear to have been used to oversee this correspondent's spending, reinforcing the point that financial behaviour reveals more about ideologies of money and marriage than do the names on an account.

As Burgoyne's 1990 research established, women were often reluctant to access money in a joint account for personal spending because it was earned by their husband. Burgoyne concluded that 'Pooling money in a joint account may remove the overt labels of ownership, but the source of that money may retain a powerful influence upon the minds of both parties.'<sup>132</sup> One M-OP correspondent plots a careful path through the competing values of shared ownership and individual entitlement. She writes that both their incomes go 'into the same pool', though she also has a separate account. When buying household goods, she carefully differentiates between the collective and individual elements of her purchases by, for example, charging the price of ordinary cotton sheets to the joint account and paying the difference from her own account for the more expensive linen sheets she prefers.<sup>133</sup> It is clear from her testimony that she will go to considerable lengths not to spend money from the joint account on her personal priorities. Despite the very shared ethos she espouses, her sense of ownership and entitlement is limited to the money in her own account.

Support for joint banking was not universal among M-OP correspondents. In 1984, over a quarter of those who answered the questions at the end of the directive indicated that they had only separate accounts. The middle-class bias in the M-OP panel is relevant here. Many professional women would already have a bank account

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<sup>130</sup> Ashby and Burgoyne, 'Separate Financial Entities?', 467–69.

<sup>131</sup> MOA Summer 1984, H1131.

<sup>132</sup> Burgoyne, 'Money in Marriage', 662.

<sup>133</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, W1835.



for their salary before they married and couples with a high income could afford to follow the mid-century male-breadwinner pattern of treating the wife's income as her own rather than the household's. For some M-OP correspondents separate finances represented an explicit rejection of joint banking. In the 1980s articles in 'Femail' suggested that joint accounts could be a source of marital discord rather than a symbol of harmony, a view endorsed by a correspondent who wrote that she and her husband would 'have unending arguments' if they had a joint account.<sup>134</sup>

Women who had remarried were particularly likely to reject joint banking.<sup>135</sup>

Correspondents explained their caution in terms of lessons learned in their first marriages.<sup>136</sup> One wrote that she was 'biased against' joint accounts because she had lost 'all the money' she had 'in the world', including an inheritance from her father, when her ex-husband declared himself bankrupt.<sup>137</sup> Warnings in *Woman's Own* about the risks of joint accounts were evidently not exaggerated. Given the prevalence of joint banking and its associations with the marital ideals of sharing and trust, the vehemence of a woman in her mid-twenties who wrote in 1984, 'I do not have a joint account and would never consider having one' is striking.<sup>138</sup> Another correspondent, also in her mid-twenties, described a complex system of accounts and standing orders, each administered individually by either herself or her partner. Her acceptance of the disadvantages of these arrangements – 'Admin' and 'Double bank charges' – implies that the 'joint account problems' they avoided were, in her view, onerous enough to justify costs in both time and money.<sup>139</sup> These young or divorced women were at the forefront of the increase in more independent money management systems in the 1990s, and the corresponding shift in discourse towards an emphasis on autonomy rather than jointness.

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<sup>134</sup> MOA Summer 1984, B1155.

<sup>135</sup> Carole B. Burgoyne and Victoria Morison, 'Money in Remarriage: Keeping Things Simple – and Separate', *The Sociological Review* 45, no. 3 (1 August 1997): 363–95, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.00069>.

<sup>136</sup> MOA Summer 1984, W573.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, R469.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, B077.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, W763.

Some women who wanted the advantages of joint banking without the pitfalls of pooling all their money adopted the partial pool. This term describes a system where ‘both partners put some proportion of their earnings into the common pool and use retentions for personal spending money.’<sup>140</sup> Women who used the partial pool to organise household money did so because it avoided the surveillance solely joint accounts could bring – ‘we each like privacy and I’d hate to have to justify all my purchases’ – and any marital conflict this might cause – ‘we never have quarrels about money’.<sup>141</sup> One correspondent elaborated, ‘Necessary bills get paid on time and we both have some “personal” money that can be used as desired without any need to feel guilty.’<sup>142</sup> The reference to guilt is telling. In the previous section I used M-OP correspondence to show that women’s personal spending could be perceived to encroach on ‘family’ money, particularly if their housekeeping allowance was intended to cover both. The partial pool offered a solution to this problem.

Data from the ISSP suggests that the partial pool was the fastest growing style of household money management between 1994 and 2002.<sup>143</sup> It seems likely that the trend towards partial pooling was already underway in the 1980s and early 1990s but was not identified. The questions asked on earlier surveys, the SCLEI and BHPS, made it hard to differentiate between partial and full pooling and the category was not used in analysis of the results.<sup>144</sup> The M-OP panel included women who were driving this trend. Indeed, their testimony indicates that some of these women were evangelical about partial pooling. One wrote that she was ‘always recommending it to friends as a good way to minimise bad feeling over who spent what on something frivolous and unnecessary’.<sup>145</sup> Others had clearly shared their system, commenting, ‘Everyone I know thinks this is odd’ or that ‘contemporaries’ were ‘surprised’ by it as ‘most couples have only one general “fund”’.<sup>146</sup> These reported reactions speak to the ubiquity of pooling

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<sup>140</sup> Laurie and Rose, ‘Divisions’, in Buck et al., *Changing Households*, 223.

<sup>141</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, G2640; MOA Summer 1984, H722.

<sup>142</sup> MOA Summer 1984, H722.

<sup>143</sup> Vogler, Brockmann, and Wiggins, ‘Intimate Relationships’, 460.

<sup>144</sup> Laurie and Rose, ‘Divisions’, in Buck et al., *Changing Households*, 227-8; Vogler and Pahl, ‘Social and Economic Change’.

<sup>145</sup> MOA Summer 1984, T919.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., H722; MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, T540.

and a resistance to change, underlining how slowly and unevenly shifts in couples' approaches to household money in the late twentieth century took place.

Sociologists have disagreed about what the rise in partial pooling has meant in terms of ideologies of money in marriage. Laurie and Rose include the partial pool with the 'common pool' under 'shared management'.<sup>147</sup> Fleming concurs, listing partial poolers under a heading of 'Systems based on common ownership and "togetherness"'.<sup>148</sup> Pahl on the other hand conflates partial pooling and independent management of money because they 'both express an essential individualism.'<sup>149</sup> Vogler et al. also take this view, grouping the partial pool and independent management together because in both systems 'couples operate largely as two separate, semi-autonomous economic units'.<sup>150</sup> This divergence is largely because the 'partial pool', as with the other categories in Pahl's typology of allocative systems, can describe very different approaches to household money.

Ashby and Burgoyne's categories are, again, useful. A couple who pool very few expenses, keeping the bulk of their incomes separate, are likely to have a more 'distinct' perception of ownership of household money; a couple who use a joint account for almost everything but keep a small amount in separate accounts would appear to have a more 'shared' ethos. I would argue, though, that more significant than the extent of household expenses covered by the pool is the couple's perception of a 'fair' division of the surplus. Burgoyne and Lewis' application of research into distributive justice highlights the distinction between a concept of 'fairness' based on 'equity', where each partner contributes the same amount, and 'equality', where each partner receives the same benefit.<sup>151</sup>

A number of M-OP correspondents made it clear that they received the 'same amount of "personal" money' or "'pocket money'" as their husbands.<sup>152</sup> One thirty-six-year-old

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<sup>147</sup> Laurie and Rose, 'Divisions' in Buck et al., *Changing Households*, 227.

<sup>148</sup> Fleming, *The Common Purse*, 26.

<sup>149</sup> Pahl, 'Individualisation', 384.

<sup>150</sup> Vogler, Brockmann, and Wiggins, 'Intimate Relationships', 459.

<sup>151</sup> Burgoyne and Lewis, 'Distributive Justice in Marriage'.

<sup>152</sup> MOA Summer 1984, T919.

explained that the remainder after bills were paid out of the joint account was transferred to their separate bank accounts, 'half each.'<sup>153</sup> A correspondent with young children who worked part-time was particularly explicit about applying the principle of 'equality', writing, 'We each have an equal monthly personal allowance for clothes entertainment etc. despite the difference in our earnings.'<sup>154</sup>

Other partial poolers followed the principle of equity, putting 'equal amounts' into the joint kitty.<sup>155</sup> One remarried correspondent who thought that their partial pool arrangement was 'the fairest way to manage...finances' wrote that she and her husband began by splitting their expenses 50/50 when they were both earning roughly the same amount, but had changed this to proportional contributions when they retired as her pension was lower than his.<sup>156</sup> Contributing the same proportion of each income can be seen as a compromise between Burgoyne's equality and equity and was the approach taken by many of the couples in Hertz's 1980s study of dual-career couples in the U.S.<sup>157</sup> This M-OP correspondent's reference to their widening income gap is significant. If incomes are roughly equal, whether the principle of equity or equality is followed will make very little practical difference. However, if incomes are very different and contributions are equal, the lower earning partner will have less money for personal spending. As Vogler et al. have pointed out, as women's earnings remain on average lower than men's, the disadvantaged partner in a partial pooling system based on the principle of equity is more likely to be female.<sup>158</sup>

In the late twentieth century the marital ideal of sharing and jointness was dominant and joint banking was popular. This is evident in the support for joint accounts among the M-OP panel and in correspondents' performance of these ideals. However, joint accounts did not necessarily mean that household money was treated as 'ours'. Although associated with the ideal of trust, joint accounts could facilitate monitoring

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<sup>153</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, T1826.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., M2681.

<sup>155</sup> MOA Summer 1984, H722.

<sup>156</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, T540.

<sup>157</sup> Hertz, *More Equal Than Others*, 98.

<sup>158</sup> Vogler, Brockmann, and Wiggins, 'Intimate Relationships', 455.

and control of a partner's spending. Some M-OP correspondents rejected joint banking and others developed 'partial pool' systems which gave them privacy and autonomy in personal spending. The next section will explore why it was important to many women to have some money of their 'own' and different ways of achieving this. More individualised arrangements were increasingly popular, but as my discussion of equity v. equality has indicated, partial pooling or independent management also had the potential to disadvantage women.

## Mine

Two thirds of the women Pahl interview for *Money and Marriage* said it was 'important' for them to have "some money you know is your own".<sup>159</sup> Burgoyne's 1990 study found that women's sense of ownership of money was reinforced if it was kept in a separate account in their own name.<sup>160</sup> In 1984, around a quarter of married or cohabiting M-OP correspondents reported having only separate accounts and a similar number had both joint and separate.<sup>161</sup> In this section I will explore which monies M-OP correspondents claimed as their own and what they did with their 'own' money, and how this differed from money which was 'his' or 'ours'.

Although research in 2002 showed that over half of couples used the joint pool to organise their household money, 10% used 'independent management, with a further 17% using the somewhat individualised partial pool, figures which had increased since 1994.<sup>162</sup> The trend towards independent management of household finances in the late twentieth century was particularly marked among younger, wealthier, dual-earner couples and couples where one or both partners had been married before.<sup>163</sup> As I

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<sup>159</sup> Pahl, *Money and Marriage*, 130.

<sup>160</sup> Burgoyne, 'Money in Marriage', 651,660.

<sup>161</sup> Although the question which asked this directly referred to only 'current bank account(s)' many respondents also wrote about savings accounts with building societies or the Post Office and I have included these in my estimates.

<sup>162</sup> Vogler, Brockmann, and Wiggins, 'Intimate Relationships', 460.

<sup>163</sup> Jan Pahl, 'Individualisation in Couple Finances: Who Pays for the Children?', *Social Policy and Society* 4, no. 04 (4 October 2005): 383, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746405002575>; Carole B. Burgoyne and Victoria Morison, 'Money in Remarriage: Keeping Things Simple – and Separate', *The Sociological Review* 45, no. 3 (1 August 1997): 369, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.00069>; Julia Brannen and Peter Moss, 'Dual Earner Households: Women's Financial Contributions After the Birth of the First Child', in

indicated in Chapter 1, Elizabeth found that independent management, which was often adopted because it promised an 'egalitarian' approach to household money, could in practice perpetuate gendered inequalities, a finding endorsed by Vogler and Pahl. Towards the end of this section I will explore M-OP correspondents' experiences of independent management.

In the 1990s coverage of marital money in women's magazines shifted its emphasis from togetherness and sharing to independence and autonomy. Articles on money management in *Good Housekeeping* and *Women's Own* associated having a separate bank account and managing their own money with women's 'new independence'.<sup>164</sup> In her research for *Invisible Money*, published in 1999, Pahl noted 'an increasing concern with financial autonomy' among her interviewees.<sup>165</sup> A number of M-OP correspondents gave 'independence' or feeling 'independent' as a key reason for having their own separate bank account.<sup>166</sup> Feeling 'some' or 'a little bit' of independence seems to have been especially important for women who were no longer earning and so more conscious of their financial dependency on their husbands.<sup>167</sup> Most of these women's individual accounts were opened well before the 1990s, but M-OP testimony suggests that women's desire for their own separate money was becoming more imperative. A 'comfortably off' fifty-year old who managed the joint accounts and used 'we' throughout her description of their finances wrote, 'I have no money of my own and this is a source of worry to me.'<sup>168</sup> Another correspondent of a similar age and in similar circumstances expressed the same concern: 'I suddenly felt insecure without any money of my own and decided to save my own income.'<sup>169</sup>

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Julia Brannen and Gail Wilson, eds., *Give and Take in Families : Studies in Resource Distribution* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 83.

<sup>164</sup> 'Are you trapped by a mean man?' *Good Housekeeping*, March 1994, 112-3; 'Money management course', *Good Housekeeping*, April 1992, 111; *Good Housekeeping* Oct 1996, 62; *Woman's Own*, 11 February 1991, 41.

<sup>165</sup> Pahl, *Invisible Money*, 67.

<sup>166</sup> MOA Summer 1984, S1089, B58, B1155, D1157; MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, W571.

<sup>167</sup> MOA Summer 1984, D1157, B1155.

<sup>168</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, R1025, see also C1990.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, C1190.

A comparison between two M-OP correspondents' comments is suggestive of generational shifts in attitudes to financial dependency. A retired teacher born in 1930 acknowledged as a matter of fact that her 'total contribution to the household' was not very large and doubted that she 'could live on it'.<sup>170</sup> In contrast, a twenty-five-year-old expressed her gratitude for 'the protection of a caring husband who provided financially' when she was made redundant. The latter's testimony suggests that financial dependency on a husband was no longer the norm and that by 1993, supporting a wife was something a less caring husband might, legitimately, resent.<sup>171</sup> The growing expectation that married women should earn a living may have made the *feeling* of independence afforded by a separate bank account even more important to them.

Burgoyne's 1990 research found that the belief in 'earner entitlement', which made some women reluctant to access joint funds if the bulk was earned by their husbands, could also encourage them to stake a personal claim to their own earnings. A correspondent writing in 1993 expressed this when she wrote, 'part-time work...gave me money I considered "my own"'.<sup>172</sup> The association between earning and ownership which gave women an opportunity for financial autonomy could, however, disadvantage them when they stopped work. A fifty-six-year-old wrote in 1993, 'Now that I am no longer earning any money I feel that it is my husband's money rather than "ours"'.<sup>173</sup> One correspondent's 1984 testimony shows her awareness of these issues and offers her solution. Before they had children both salaries were paid into a joint account. The correspondent wrote that when she 'became pregnant' she discussed with her husband that she wanted to use the Child Benefit as her "'income'". She explained that it was 'very difficult to give up the privilege' of having her "'own" money'. She opened an account in her own name at the Post Office for this purpose.<sup>174</sup> Born in 1957, this correspondent is the archetype of Lewis' younger generation who

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., W2586.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., M2652.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., M1996.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., W571.

<sup>174</sup> MOA Summer 1984, L1331.

articulated and negotiated the status of 'joint' or 'separate' money more explicitly than their parents.<sup>175</sup>

This correspondent was by no means unique in staking a claim to the Child Benefit, Family Allowance, and Child Benefit which replaced it in the mid-1970s, were paid directly to mothers, encouraging many women's sense of ownership of the funds. Many M-OP correspondents referred to 'my' Family Allowance or Child Benefit, or included it in a list of their personal income.<sup>176</sup> Burgoyne and Lewis reported that 'nearly all the wives' in their 1994 study 'treated Child Benefit in quite a different way from the "joint" money', which indicated 'an implicit sense of ownership.'<sup>177</sup> As I pointed out in Chapter 1, this ownership was contested. Selma James' description in *Spare Rib* of Family Allowance as 'ours by rights' provoked an outraged response, but was an attitude shared by an M-OP correspondent who wrote in 1993, 'I get child allowance still for all 3 children which I put in a building society and consider "my" money'.<sup>178</sup> In contrast, others emphasised that Child Benefit was 'used solely for the children'.<sup>179</sup>

The strength of the taboo against spending 'money intended for children' on anything else is evident in the testimony of a woman who used her 'child allowance' for 'petty cash' and was at pains to point out that she would keep a note of the amount in a book and ensure that this amount was spent on 'the children's clothes, shoes, etc.'<sup>180</sup> One woman's response to the 1993 directive offers an insight into the tension she faced between an obligation to spend Child Benefit specifically on the children, her own need for personal spending money, and her responsibility for feeding the whole household: 'I try to give the children...a treat from the family allowance...the rest if any I spend on myself or the odd loaf of bread.'<sup>181</sup> In Zelizer's original formulation Child

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<sup>175</sup> Lewis, *The End of Marriage?*, 165–68.

<sup>176</sup> MOA Summer 1984, M340, B042, T1309; MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, S2694, M1171, C2079.

<sup>177</sup> Burgoyne and Lewis, 'Distributive Justice in Marriage', 109.

<sup>178</sup> 'The Future of Family Allowance: The Feminist Position', *Spare Rib* 15, September 1973, 18–19. 'Letters', *Spare Rib* 17, November 1973, 23–4; MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, A1706.

<sup>179</sup> MOA Summer 1984, N880, see also, J958.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., J958, T959; See also MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, S1680.

<sup>181</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, E2659.



Benefit would be a 'special purpose money' – it has a social and moral meaning which limits the extent to which it can be used for other, more general, purposes.<sup>182</sup> More recently Zelizer has suggested that this term is misleading because all domestic monies, and indeed all monies, have social meanings.<sup>183</sup> In the case of Child Benefit these meanings and their relational nature around ideals of motherhood are, though, particularly apparent and, as M-OP evidence demonstrates, contested.

Although women might label their earnings or other income as 'mine' and keep it in a separate, individual account, this did not necessarily mean that they spent this money on themselves. Pahl found that only one of the 53 working women in her *Money and Marriage* study used her earnings for personal spending money and in 1995 drew attention to the 'growing body of evidence' across many different cultures and household types that women were in fact 'more family-focused in their spending than men.'<sup>184</sup> Testimony from an M-OP correspondent who adamantly described her income as 'all MINE' initially appears to counter this, as she wrote 'It will get used... for things I want as opposed to family needs'. However, the item she suggested she might buy was 'a new fridge'.<sup>185</sup> Similarly, most of the women who did not spend Child Benefit directly on their children spent it on something for the whole household, including a dishwasher, furnishings or electrical goods, a holiday, and Christmas.<sup>186</sup>

A prevalent aspect of women's altruistic spending was gift giving. Zelizer argues that, as the practice of gift giving expanded in the early twentieth century, 'gift money' as a 'sentimental currency' became 'women's money', and shopping for gifts became a 'central task' for 'modern housewives.'<sup>187</sup> A striking number of MO-P correspondents identified present buying as a primary use for their own money.<sup>188</sup> Buying presents for their husbands from the joint account was felt to be particularly problematic.<sup>189</sup> In

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<sup>182</sup> Zelizer, *Social Meaning*, 21–25.

<sup>183</sup> Bandelj, Wherry, and Zelizer, 'Advancing Money Talks', *Money Talks*, 11.

<sup>184</sup> Pahl, *Money and Marriage*, 129; Pahl, 'His Money, Her Money', 373–74.

<sup>185</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, C1990, see also N403.

<sup>186</sup> MOA Summer 1984, B042, R1096, M340, T1309.

<sup>187</sup> Zelizer, *Social Meaning*, 78–91.

<sup>188</sup> MOA Summer 1984, J742; MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, M388, H2682, M2681, P425, S2047, C1939.

<sup>189</sup> MOA Summer 1984, B663, L2281, L1331.

autumn 1998 M-OP issued a directive on 'Giving and Receiving Presents'. The responses, which Purbrick used in her research for *The Wedding Present: Domestic Life Beyond Consumption*, provided a 'wealth of evidence' confirming that not only gift giving but also the obligations of gift receiving, such as remembering who gave what and thanking them for it, were predominately women's responsibilities.

Anthropological theories of gift exchange have emphasised its importance in the formation and reinforcement of social relationships but have also argued that (women's) gift giving is undervalued in comparison to the market exchange underpinning (men's) paid work. Although the power involved in gift giving can, therefore, be difficult to locate, more obvious is the skill and labour required to understand and apply the complex and shifting social meanings involved in choosing, buying and giving presents.<sup>190</sup> The prominence M-OP correspondents give to gift buying as a spending priority would seem to support Burgoyne's finding that present buying with their 'own' money was an important component of self-esteem for women in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>191</sup>

Women's altruistic spending should, though, be understood in the context of long-standing cultural attitudes which idealised mothers as selfless, potentially limiting their freedom to spend on themselves. In a 1979 *Woman's Own* piece entitled '21 Good Reasons for Getting a Job', the first reason suggested was 'The family needs more money' and the last was 'You'd like a personal income'.<sup>192</sup> Though not explicitly described as a rank order, this list reinforced expectations about what a woman's priorities should be. An M-OP correspondent's 1993 testimony reflects these expectations. Initially she subverts cultural norms by writing that she can blow the money in her account on 'chocolates or the cats [sic] home without feeling guilty'. However, she makes it clear that this is a joke by immediately performing a more socially acceptable unwillingness to spend on herself, writing that her 'excessive economy' must 'drive' her family 'mad'.<sup>193</sup> Nyman found that even in Sweden, 'where

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<sup>190</sup> Purbrick, *The Wedding Present*, 27–48.

<sup>191</sup> Burgoyne, 'Money in Marriage', 658.

<sup>192</sup> '21 good Reasons for Getting a Job', *Woman's Own*, 9 June 1979, 48–49.

<sup>193</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, G1416.

gender equality has been an explicit [government] goal for several decades', women have nonetheless internalised the idea that 'they must manage money, see to the needs of others...put their own needs last and not demand too much.'<sup>194</sup>

Women felt more able to spend income from some sources on themselves than others. Goode et al.'s interviews carried out in 1997 found that irregular incomes such as overtime, tips or inheritance were regarded as belonging more to the individual than regular incomes like wages or benefits.<sup>195</sup> Pahl reported a similar phenomenon.<sup>196</sup> M-OP evidence suggests that these 'informal' earnings were important to women. Two correspondents used interest from savings, one on 'some bit of "nonsense"', and the other to 'buy myself something extra.'<sup>197</sup> Another used the commission she earned from running a mail order catalogue 'for something I wouldn't have bought', and an unemployed woman whose student daughter lived at home at weekends described the 'token sum' of £10 a week she paid towards her keep as a 'benefit for me only.'<sup>198</sup>

Zelizer points out that labelling women's earnings as frivolous 'pin money' as opposed to male-earned 'real money' was a well-established discourse by the early twentieth century.<sup>199</sup> M-OP testimony shows that it remained popular nearly a century later. This distinction was expressed explicitly by a correspondent who wrote, 'Our family income comes from my husband. I have a "pocket money" job'.<sup>200</sup> Another correspondent's testimony shows how this trivialisation of women's income made it difficult to derive self-esteem from earning. She wrote that she 'enjoyed' her husband's period of redundancy, in part because the 'bits of "pocket money"' she earned 'were now very important and used...to buy the weeks food.'<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Nyman, 'Gender Equality in "the Most Equal Country in the World"?', 767, 778.

<sup>195</sup> Goode, Callender, and Lister, *Purse or Wallet?*, 13.

<sup>196</sup> Pahl, *Money and Marriage*, 126.

<sup>197</sup> MOA Summer 1984, O825, B786.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., B078; MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, L1290.

<sup>199</sup> Zelizer, *Social Meaning*, 61–63.

<sup>200</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, L1290, see also, C1939.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., T1843.

Women's earnings which were spent on the household were often described as paying for 'extras'.<sup>202</sup> As Dolly Smith Wilson has argued, this discourse developed in the post-war decades and, by perpetuating the myth that the family's needs were met by the man's income, enabled significant numbers of married women to engage in paid work without threatening male-breadwinner ideology.<sup>203</sup> Most men in Pahl's *Money and Marriage* study regarded their wife's earnings as not needed by the family and therefore for her own individual use.<sup>204</sup> Lewis found that the perception, and presentation, of women's earnings as 'extra' was particularly prevalent among her older interviewees, most of whom had married in the late 1940s and early 1950s when the male-breadwinner ideal was at its height.<sup>205</sup> However, M-OP evidence suggests that this labelling was still common in the 1990s, even among women who were only in their twenties.<sup>206</sup> As with personal and household needs, the distinction between 'extra' and 'essential' could be blurred. A thirty-eight-year-old used the rent she earned from students to 'pay for extras in the household like insurances, birthdays, Christmas, clothes etc.', some of which might be considered necessities. She added that the money paid by her husband into her account for food 'doesn't go far' so her 'money also supplements that.'<sup>207</sup>

However, M-OP evidence suggests that women earmarking their income for extras did not necessarily diminish its importance, in fact it could mean the opposite, as demonstrated by a correspondent who wrote in 1984 that her wage was 'of paramount importance as it pays for the extras – holidays, replacement furniture etc.'<sup>208</sup> This ambiguity is evident in the testimony of a correspondent who wrote, 'He supplied the bread but I put the jam on it'.<sup>209</sup> Rather than marginalising their income, earmarking it for something 'extra' could render women's contribution to the

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<sup>202</sup> MOA Summer 1984, H272; Ibid., D826, S2694, M2668, M2632, M2681, W2586, A1706.

<sup>203</sup> Dolly Smith Wilson, 'A New Look at the Affluent Worker: The Good Working Mother in Post-War Britain', *20th Century British History* 17, no. 2 (2006): 206–29, <https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwl008>.

<sup>204</sup> *Money and Marriage* 127

<sup>205</sup> Lewis, *The End of Marriage?*, 167–69.

<sup>206</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, S2694, M2668, M2681.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 1993, M2668.

<sup>208</sup> MOA Summer 1984, H272.

<sup>209</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, W563.

household more visible.<sup>210</sup> This is implicit in the testimony of a supply teacher who emphasised that her earnings are used 'for a specific reason...e.g. a weekend away...and last year a video'.<sup>211</sup> Similarly, Smith Wilson has argued that the 'extras' working mothers financed in the post-war period were not 'frivolities' but 'extra lessons...furniture...[a]car or even just a television' which would improve the family's standard of living.<sup>212</sup>

Sociological research into women's feelings of entitlement to household money has tended to focus on spending. Responses to the 1984 directive suggest that for many women simply having a sum of money they could identify as their own was important. The purpose of this money was often expressed in terms of crisis: 'dire emergencies only'.<sup>213</sup> These correspondents didn't articulate the precise nature of the anticipated 'emergencies', but one woman was more explicit, writing that she kept her building society account as a 'useful escape route'.<sup>214</sup> Singh's research pointed to a difference between men's and women's understanding of saving: 'Savings for men were more a mechanics of providing for the future than protecting oneself in the future, as for women.'<sup>215</sup> Whether to make their escape, or to survive if they were abandoned, the huge increase in the divorce rate in England from the early 1970s will have encouraged those women who could afford to do so, to save some money of their own.

Although around half of M-OP correspondents indicated that they had separate bank accounts, only a small number of these were using independent management to organise their household money. Vogler defines this system as one in which 'both partners have their own independent incomes...which they keep separate and each partner has responsibility for different items of household expenditure.'<sup>216</sup> In her study of cohabiting couples, Elizabeth arrived at a broader range of financial practices

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<sup>210</sup> Bennett and Sung, 'Dimensions of Financial Autonomy', 712.

<sup>211</sup> MOA Summer 1984, E1316; see also MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, G2624.

<sup>212</sup> Smith Wilson, 'New Look', 217.

<sup>213</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, J293; See also MOA Summer 1984, N880, D826.

<sup>214</sup> MOA Summer 1984, J958.

<sup>215</sup> Singh, *Marriage Money*, 157.

<sup>216</sup> Carolyn Vogler, 'Cohabiting Couples: Rethinking Money in the Household at the Beginning of the Twenty First Century', *The Sociological Review* 53, no. 1 (2005): 12, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2005.00501.x/pdf>.

associated with independent management. Although some of her interviewees ‘took responsibility for a set range of bills’, others ‘simply paid half the joint expenses as these were incurred’ or ‘operated by periodically balancing how much each person had spent’ and sometimes ‘recourse was made to a combination of these styles.’<sup>217</sup> Fleming has suggested that what distinguishes independent management is the underlying ‘principle that each partner control their own money’.<sup>218</sup> Both the practical and ideological aspects of independent management are apparent in the testimony of an M-OP correspondent who wrote, ‘Our earnings are paid directly into our accounts, and we each decide how that money should be spent’.<sup>219</sup>

Lewis and others have disputed the suggestion that the increasing popularity of independent management is symptomatic of the rise of individualism in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century society. Lewis found that, although the most popular system among the younger couples in her survey would be categorised as independent management, her interviews suggested that ‘it cannot be inferred that the systems were *perceived* in terms of “independent management”’. (Original emphasis). Just as a joint account could mask unequal control of, and access to, household money, separate bank accounts could be used by couples who had a very ‘joint’ or ‘shared’ approach to their finances.<sup>220</sup> The correspondent cited above went on to write, ‘I should say here that I don’t like to think of “his” money and “my” money – as far as I am concerned, what we both earn is “ours”’.<sup>221</sup>

Exploring the social and cultural meaning of money in the early 1990s, Singh distinguished between what she termed ‘marriage money’ and ‘market money’. In contrast to ‘market money’, ‘marriage money’ was ‘cooperative rather than contractual; nebulous rather than calculable.’<sup>222</sup> Singh’s research involved middle-

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<sup>217</sup> Elizabeth, ‘Managing Money, Managing Coupledness’, 399.

<sup>218</sup> Fleming, *The Common Purse*, 27.

<sup>219</sup> MOA Summer 1984, C143.

<sup>220</sup> Lewis, *The End of Marriage?*, 165; See also, Lars Evertsson and Charlott Nyman, ‘Perceptions and Practices in Independent Management: Blurring the Boundaries Between “Mine,” “Yours” and “Ours”’, *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 35, no. 1 (1 March 2014): 65–80, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-012-9348-6>.

<sup>221</sup> MOA Summer 1984, C143.

<sup>222</sup> Singh, *Marriage Money*, 151–53.

income Australians, but her different 'monies' offer a valuable lens through which to examine M-OP correspondents' attitudes to money in their marriages. A woman who wrote in 1993, 'We don't have the kind of relationship where there would be a post mortem', is signalling that her marriage is healthy because money is not handled like 'market money.'<sup>223</sup> Independent management had the potential to treat 'marriage money' like 'market money'. One M-OP correspondent wrote in 1993 that she and her husband adopted a system of taking responsibility for different expenses when they retired. Food and newspapers were her responsibility but, as in reality her husband often bought these, she had to pay him back, 'to the exact penny'. She comments that this 'seemed strange at first'.<sup>224</sup> The practice of keeping track of who owes how much to whom could render 'marriage money' both contractual and calculable.

The nature of the expenditures allocated to each partner under independent management could disadvantage women. M-OP correspondents who described their independent management systems had financial responsibilities reflecting traditional gender roles: the husbands were responsible for council tax and utility bills and the women bought the groceries, cleaning materials, presents and other incidentals.<sup>225</sup> Independent management could look very similar to the housekeeping allowance system. This spending division gave men expenditures which were relatively predictable and clearly delineated; women's household expenditures on the other hand tended to be more frequent and variable. A fifty-five-year-old nurse listed thirteen categories of expenditure for which she was responsible, including her husband's toiletries; her husband was responsible for only five.<sup>226</sup> The retired correspondent above wrote that the expense of Christmas meant she had to withdraw more money from her current account.<sup>227</sup> Christmas would have had no impact on her husband's expenses. Independent management did not necessarily free women from the conflict between their own needs and those of the household: a woman's decision to spend on herself could involve a choice not to buy more expensive food for the

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<sup>223</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, B1120.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., S2311.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., S2311, P425.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., P425.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., S2311.

family or a more generous gift for a relative. Such dilemmas did not arise with fixed costs such as utility bills or council tax.

In her study of Swedish couples in 1996, Nyman found that women's responsibility for the day-to-day running of the house also meant that they took on small but numerous expenses which had not been budgeted for, leaving them with less personal spending money than their partners.<sup>228</sup> The correspondent who emphasised that, despite using independent management, they see the money as "'ours'" presents their approach as quite relaxed, perhaps to distance it from contractual and calculable 'market money': 'We share expenses by saying, "Well, if you pay that Bill each month, I'll pay this one."' Although she writes that this system works 'pretty well', she acknowledges that a few years earlier she found that she 'was paying a great deal more of the household expenses'. Although this was rectified, she suspects that once again she is 'carrying a larger share of the finances' than she 'should'.<sup>229</sup>

M-OP testimony suggests that independent management systems could be particularly problematic if one partner's circumstances change. A radiographer writes that while earning she has paid for 'food and household cleaning materials, window cleaner, newsagent's bill and milk bill'. However, since she has been 'part-time and therefore on half salary' her financial contribution has stayed the same, leaving her with less to spend on the garden or personal items.<sup>230</sup> Similarly, the nurse on the previous page who was responsible for many more categories of expenditure than her husband, was, in 1993, about to retire on only a quarter of her salary. She does not say whether the very detailed list of who pays for what will be reassessed in the light of her reduction in income, but her concern that she has 'no reserves' and will have to 'radically change' her lifestyle implies that such a conversation has not taken place.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Nyman, 'Gender Equality in "the Most Equal Country in the World"?', 779.

<sup>229</sup> MOA Summer 1984, C143.

<sup>230</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, D2589.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., P425.



It is clear from M-OP testimony that independent management worked for some women.<sup>232</sup> In two such cases the correspondents had a higher income than their partners. Independent management allowed these women to have control of their own money whilst showing a degree of generosity to their partners, reversing the gender roles in Hochschild's 'economy of gratitude'. One in her late thirties whose income was around double that of her partner supplemented their 50:50 contribution to the household kitty by paying additional bills, buying the major household items, and contributing £10 extra for a few months to allow her husband to save for their holiday.<sup>233</sup>

Overall, the testimony of M-OP correspondents supports Elizabeth, Vogler and Pahl's caution about independent management as a 'feminist' approach to marital money facilitating greater financial independence for women. However, it should be acknowledged that M-OP correspondents were not necessarily typical of this trend as most of those I have cited were in their fifties or sixties, only one was on her second marriage, and their reasons for using independent management were not, in most cases, ideological. Women whose testimony made it clear that independent management was their preferred approach to household money and/or discussed money regularly with their partners seem to have mitigated at least some of its potential disadvantages.<sup>234</sup> For women whose agency was more constrained, independent management could perpetuate gendered inequalities around household money.

For many women, though, having money of their 'own' in a separate account in their sole name was increasingly important. The impact of second wave feminism, mediated through mainstream magazines' emphasis on financial autonomy, contributed to this. Clearly the prevalence of married women's paid employment made it more possible. The rise in divorce from the 1970s, and extensive media coverage of the subject, will also have contributed to women's feelings of insecurity if they did not have money of

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<sup>232</sup> See for example *ibid.*, G226.

<sup>233</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, C2295, see also H2673.

<sup>234</sup> See for example MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, G226

their 'own'. M-OP testimony demonstrates that making a visible financial contribution to the household, perhaps only through gift buying, was a source of pride for women. The emphasis in women's media on financial autonomy and the psychological discourse linking this to maturity and independence reinforced and reflected these associations between money and self-esteem.

## Conclusion

A woman who many years earlier had been granted personal spending money by her husband after she pointed out the monetary value of her domestic labour, closed her testimony with the statement 'it is never far from my mind.'<sup>235</sup> This, and the M-OP evidence I have discussed in this chapter confirms Bennett and Sung's finding that women 'were aware of, *indeed lived*, the tensions between financial togetherness and autonomy'.<sup>236</sup> (My emphasis.) How to distinguish what is 'ours', 'his' or 'mine' was a question many women grappled with in the late twentieth century. Although having money of their own was important to many women, being able to spend this money freely on themselves was problematic. Gifts and items for the family were many women's stated spending priorities. Having a sum over which they could make autonomous decisions was presented as more important. One woman's response to the 1987 directive sums up the attitude of many others: 'I hate sharing control of my money with anyone, tho' I'm a soft touch to share the actual cash.'<sup>237</sup>

Many women present the late twentieth century as a period of dramatic change in practices and attitudes around marital money. M-OP correspondents' accounts of their past and current experiences complicate the linear trend, from breadwinner ideology to marital sharing and finally to an emphasis on autonomy, which I traced through women's media coverage of marital money from the early 1970s until the late 1990s. The influence of male-breadwinner ideology reached well into the late twentieth century. Mid-century rituals to disguise women's earnings and bolster breadwinner pride were laughed at in the 1980s, and women having to ask for money generally

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<sup>235</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, C2142.

<sup>236</sup> Bennett and Sung, 'Dimensions of Financial Autonomy', 708.

<sup>237</sup> MOA Spring 1987, B1887.

decried. However, some M-OP correspondents who received housekeeping or personal allowances accepted that their husbands set the rate; the conflation of these two sums could make it difficult for women to claim personal spending money; and the higher earner's right to the final say on spending decisions was widely, though not universally, accepted.

M-OP evidence suggests that the earner entitlement which underpinned the male-breadwinner model was strengthened in the late twentieth century. To an extent this was an unintended consequence of some of the WLM's priorities which I identified in Chapter 1. The devaluing of housework, which was also encouraged by the proliferation of household appliances, and the emphasis on paid work as the route to women's liberation, bolstered the idea that earning was the only contribution to the household which counted. Women's claim to their own earnings and justification for keeping them in a separate account was often based on the principle of earner entitlement.

In the breadwinner model, the provider identity tempered earner entitlement with the requirement that men use their income to support their family. These two elements are clearly in tension and, in reality, earner entitlement often dominated, but the expectation of providing offered a standard by which the household and wider community could measure a man's behaviour. The 'mean man' failed to meet this standard. In the late twentieth century the expectation that the man was the sole provider, and as such deserved head of the household status and privileges, was being undermined by the increase in women's paid work and broad acceptance of gender equality. This left earner entitlement intact and removed its ideological counterweight. In 1993 a thirty-one-year-old who managed the money in a household with three children where funds were tight wrote, 'Although I couldn't, and wouldn't really prevent him from going out and spending all the money he earns in his own way, he seems content to let me handle all of that.'<sup>238</sup> Her performance of support for earner

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<sup>238</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, M1201.

entitlement, even though, if it were enacted, it would impoverish her family, is indicative of the extent to which this principle was endorsed by the 1990s.

The ideal of marital sharing was also a strong presence in M-OP testimony, but not always strong enough to counter earner entitlement. Women who had financial systems based on separate finances, and even those using independent management, performed a sharing ethos. Joint accounts were popular and used to symbolise that marriages were healthy and romantic relationships were serious. However, although magazines associated joint accounts with trust, M-OP evidence shows that they could camouflage unequal and controlling relationships. The vehemence with which some women rejected joint banking and the number of correspondents who had separate as well as joint accounts shows that for many the togetherness of joint banking offered insufficient autonomy and privacy. M-OP correspondents of all ages had their own account to give them a feeling of independence. The middle-class profile of the panel will have contributed to these high numbers, but the testimony of women who felt a new impetus to have their own account suggests that this need was becoming more acute in the 1980s and 1990s.

One of the most important contributions to the understanding of household money which my use of M-OP testimony makes is to show the mental and emotional effort which women put in to resolving the tension between marital sharing and financial autonomy. The ‘relational *work*’ which Zelizer argues is at the heart of all earmarking is laid bare. Women worked at deciding what percentage of a linen sheet could be paid for with joint money; whether it was acceptable to spend Child Benefit on school shoes, a lipstick or a dishwasher; whether it was fair to pay the same amount into a joint kitty or to take the same amount out for personal spending; why catalogue commission can be spent on a personal treat but wages should buy the family holiday. M-OP foregrounds women’s agency, insight and ingenuity. Many had identified and understood financial inequality in their marriages, and some were prepared to challenge their husbands about this. Others had established systems, particularly the partial pool, which allowed for joint decision making and equal spending money whilst also ensuring a degree of autonomy and privacy. The actions of these and many

thousands of other women both reflected the shifting cultural trends around household money evident in women's print media and helped to shape them.

The next chapter will examine women's agency in greater depth by exploring their practices around the management of household money. Developments in banking technology and business culture in the late twentieth century ensured that women's experiences of accessing, allocating, and spending household money were transformed.

## Chapter 3: Agency and Emotion

This chapter is concerned with late-twentieth-century ideas about what women should do with money and the feelings they should have about it; and what women actually did with money and the feelings they expressed about it. Central to this is the relationship between women's feelings and financial agency. Psychologist Albert Bandura's focus on 'self-efficacy' makes his discussion of agency particularly relevant to my study. Bandura argues that, 'Among the mechanisms of personal agency, none is more central or pervasive than people's *beliefs* in their capacity to exercise some measure of control over their own functioning and over environmental events.'<sup>1</sup> I suggest that, although women's financial agency is manifested in actions, it is only meaningful if it is also felt. As I discussed in Chapter 2, despite women's increased participation in the labour force, most married women in the late twentieth century were not financially independent of their husbands, especially if they had children. But many *felt* more independent if they had a separate bank account.

Roberts argues that working-class women's power in the household was reduced in the post-war decades because their traditional responsibility for household money management was diminished; this was harmful to women's self-esteem.<sup>2</sup> The liberalisation of credit and the increasing role of high street banks in its provision has also been seen as detrimental to women's agency as household financial managers. O'Connell demonstrates that in the post-war decades working-class women were not only responsible for household borrowing but exercised considerable agency in their dealings with tallymen and check traders. Women were also providers of credit: in the mid-1960s 87% of catalogue agents were women, a role which required daunting administrative, interpersonal and mathematical skills. However, from the 1970s as credit cards and bank loans became available to more affluent working-class

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Bandura, 'Social Cognitive Theory: An Agentic Perspective', *Annual Review of Psychology* 52 (February 2001): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.1>.

<sup>2</sup> Roberts, *Women and Families*, 89–93.

customers, traditional credit sources declined, leaving poorer women marginalised and vulnerable to loan sharks.<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter I add another dimension to this discussion by arguing that, for some women, the popularisation of bank accounts and credit cards from c.1970 offered new opportunities to feel a sense of financial agency. The challenges involved in adapting to these changes were considerable. However, in doing so, many women learned new budgeting skills, used new technologies, and took responsibility for complex financial practices. I use M-OP testimony to demonstrate that household money management continued to offer women opportunities to feel pride and self-esteem in the late twentieth century.

In the first section I use banks' marketing and women's magazines to establish changing expectations of women's financial agency and shifts in the emotional landscape associated with women's money management. Although my focus is on the last three decades of the twentieth century, I include some advertising from the post-war period as a point of comparison, and because these were the years in which many of the M-OP correspondents I discuss in section two established their households and money management practices.

As I demonstrated in Chapter 2, women's print media provides an important element of the cultural circuit around women's relationship with household money. By the 1990s the ideal of marital money presented was increasingly individualised, and this promised greater financial autonomy for women. In this section I revisit *Woman's Own*, *Good Housekeeping* and 'Femail' to develop my argument that cultural expectations of women's financial agency increased significantly in the late twentieth century. As with money in marriage, magazines' discussion of women's individual relationship with money became increasingly psychologised, particularly around spending: the late twentieth century saw the emergence of 'shopaholics' and the concept of 'retail-therapy'. As I will explore, there was a tension between magazines'

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<sup>3</sup> O'Connell, *Credit and Community*, 40–41, 89, 286–92.

and advertising's encouragement of women's financial agency and the potentially disempowering discourse of addiction and emotional need.

In the 1970s, having a bank account became the norm rather than an exclusive marker of middle-class status.<sup>4</sup> In 1969 only 1/3 of adults had a bank account. By 1989 the figure was 80%.<sup>5</sup> As banks competed for new working-class customers, they adapted their advertising to reflect working-class women's traditional role as household money managers. A parallel development was the relocation of processes and decisions from the local branch and its manager to processing centres and head offices.

Computerisation, which began in the 1960s, contributed to this as did the use of cashpoint machines, credit cards, and, from 1989, telephone banking. As well as altering customers' banking practices, these changes, alongside the expansion of lending, provided new opportunities for female employees.

The rise in personal borrowing impacted on expectations of women's financial agency as employees and customers. This was initiated in 1958 when lending controls were relaxed and the Bank Rate was cut, allowing high street banks to compete with other credit sources, particularly finances houses offering Hire Purchase. Midland was the first to take advantage of this, granting 60,000 loans totalling £9.5 million in just six months.<sup>6</sup> The watershed moment was in October 1971 when 'Competition and Credit Control' came into action, ending government limits on bank lending and allowing the high street banks to set their own interest rates. Barclaycard was launched in 1966 and joined by Access in 1972, by which time it already had 1.6 million customers.<sup>7</sup> Over the next two decades personal lending became the main plank of high street banks' business model; this was amplified when they moved into mortgage selling in the early 1980s.

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<sup>4</sup> Lascelles, *Other People's Money*, 124–25.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Berthoud and Elaine Kempson, *Credit and Debt: The PSI Report* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1992), 14. The second figure includes building society current accounts.

<sup>6</sup> 'History Timeline', HSBC UK, accessed 18 August, 2021, <http://www.about.hsbc.co.uk/hsbc-in-the-uk/history-timeline>.

<sup>7</sup> Lascelles, *Other People's Money*, 86–89.



The 1980s was a period of 'unprecedented expansion' for the British advertising industry. As Gough-Yates elaborates, one element of this was the culmination of a shift away from the limited socioeconomic A-E categories towards a more qualitative approach, segmenting the population according to 'attitude' or 'outlook' and grouping them into 'life-style clusters'. These approaches were particularly applied to the 'women's market' as advertisers began to recognise that by continuing to treat 'women' as a single category they were failing to tap into an increasingly lucrative market. New 'psychological and life-style' types were identified, replacing the generic housewives who were the focus of much post-war advertising.<sup>8</sup>

The magazine industry was also undergoing dramatic change in this period. In 1977 a Royal Commission on the Press reported a sharp drop in circulation for many women's magazines. In the 1980s new magazines from German publishers, *Prima*, *Bella* and *Best*, provided stiff competition for *Woman's Own*. In 1982 *Options* was launched which aimed at the younger end of the *Good Housekeeping* readership and the late 1980s saw a proliferation of new glossies. One response to increasing competition was for magazines to adopt the 'life-style'-segmented approach used in advertising.<sup>9</sup> This impacted on coverage of money, with class-based differences in magazines' approaches to the topic narrowing in the late 1980s and 1990s.

In the second half of this chapter I use M-OP testimony to explore how women negotiated this new cultural and technological terrain. I argue that managing money was an emotional practice and that it is through exploring women's feelings about managing money that we locate their financial agency. The most dramatic change in 'feelings rules' about household money was the broader acceptance of credit buying. M-OP testimony charts this change, for example, two correspondents wrote in 1984 that these cultural shifts made them 'regret' not being 'a bit more adventurous' or 'a bit more daring' about credit buying when they were younger.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Gough-Yates, *Understanding Women's Magazines*, 57, 69, 71-74.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 42, 85-87, 96-99, 115.

<sup>10</sup> MOA, Summer 1984, B53, M1329.

Change in feelings about credit was, though, uneven and gradual. O'Connell and Taylor's explorations of the rich variety of credit sources accessed by working-class women throughout the twentieth century underline that mid-century disapproval of credit was a luxury many households could not afford. O'Connell points out that survey evidence first indicated that the majority of the population accepted the use of credit as late as 1979; Roberts and Kynaston have argued that it was not until the end of the century that 'money triumphed' and 'guilt about money' became 'little more than a quaint memory from a repressed age.'<sup>11</sup> M-OP evidence illuminates changes and continuities in feelings around credit. Other emotional themes, such as confidence in the use of new technologies and anger towards banks, also emerge.

### 'A Woman's World'<sup>12</sup>

In February 1942 Charles Barker and Sons advertising office submitted a campaign proposal to the Westminster Bank aimed at 'a very large field of potential new customers...amongst women and girls'.<sup>13</sup> Nearly half a century later in June 1988 Leo Burnett advertising agency delivered a presentation to senior executives of NatWest Bank, the Westminster's successor, which identified 'a market opportunity...amongst a target group which is...largely neglected by banks...- women'.<sup>14</sup> Throughout the mid- and late twentieth century banks discovered and rediscovered women as a potential market. However, institutional assumptions about who these women were, what financial products they would need and the degree of financial agency they might exercise changed significantly over this period.

The Westminster Bank's proposed 1942 campaign exploited short-term changes to women's lives such as the risk of losing a handbag in the blackout or the need to send

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<sup>11</sup> O'Connell, *Credit and Community*, 16; Richard Roberts and David Kynaston, *City State: A Contemporary History of the City and How Money Triumphed* (London: Profile Books, 2002), 36.

<sup>12</sup> Royal Bank of Scotland Archives, Edinburgh (henceforth RBSA), NWB 1/8004, 'It's a Woman's World Too', c.1970

<sup>13</sup> RBSA, WES/1321: Proposed press advertisements for use by Westminster Bank Ltd., 27 February, 1942.

<sup>14</sup> RBSA, NWB/872/3/2: 'NatWest: Quality of Service in Banking for Women', 7 June, 1988.

money home from distant war-work. After the war, though, all the major banks produced advertising specifically aimed at attracting women customers.<sup>15</sup>

In 1964 the National Commercial Bank of Scotland even opened a branch exclusively for women on Princes Street in Edinburgh. Although the experiment was not repeated, the opening of the 'Ladies' Branch', as it became known, is indicative of banks' growing interest in the women's market.<sup>16</sup> In a TV interview, an official from National Commercial explained the reason for this move: 'Statistics show that the number of our...lady customers...are increasing and we think this sort of thing will catch on with them.'<sup>17</sup> However, the perceived banking needs of these 'lady customers' were disputed. The bank's senior management envisaged women customers primarily as shoppers who would use the branch to 'replenish' their purse and 'have a cup of coffee'.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, Margaret Reid, who was appointed to manage the 'Ladies' Branch' and was Scotland's first female bank manager, suggested that her job would involve more than 'cashing cheques for shoppers' and expected to 'transact all types of banking business'.<sup>19</sup>

Despite these efforts to recruit female customers, in 1970 high street banking remained an essentially masculine world. A NatWest leaflet entitled 'It's a Woman's World Too!' celebrated the '[w]omen in front of the counter and behind it' and declared this 'a fantastic change from not so many years ago, when the Bank, was yet another all-male club'. The perceived need for this booklet confirms, though, that change was only just beginning.<sup>20</sup> In the 1970s other advertising depicted personal finance as very much a 'man's world'. A series of adverts showed Barclaycard-holding men standing out from the faceless crowd with adoring women clutching each arm, or leg; another, headed 'A wife deserves some credit', suggested that a husband should

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<sup>15</sup> RBSA, WES/1321: Suggestions for Advertising, 1942.

<sup>16</sup> RBSA, B1393/4: Newspaper cuttings, 2-4 December, 1964.

<sup>17</sup> RBSA, NC/B1/2: Mr. Scott, Scottish Television, 'Here and Now', 2 December 1964.

<sup>18</sup> RBSA, NC/B1/3: National Commercial Bank of Scotland Assistant General Manager William Miller, Southern Television, 'Home at 4.30', 9 Dec.1964.

<sup>19</sup> RBSA, NC/B1/7: Alex Alan and Margaret Reid, BBC Scottish Home Service, 'Today in Scotland', 18 Dec. 1964.

<sup>20</sup> RBSA, NWB 1/8004, 'It's a Woman's World Too', c.1970.

allow his wife a Barclaycard, but on his account so that he could maintain overall control of spending.<sup>21</sup>

Banks' advertising to women in the 1970s presented money management as an emotional activity. A common theme in adverts published in women's magazines was a child's rite-of-passage, which included babies' first birthdays, sons starting their careers and daughters' weddings, the emotional resonance underlined by tears in the eyes of the mother of the bride.<sup>22</sup> Advertisers' identification of 'attitudinal types' involved attributing emotions to potential customer groups. In their presentation to NatWest in 1988, Leo Burnett advertising agency suggested that 'divorcees', an under exploited market, were 'anxious'.<sup>23</sup> In the 1990s financial institutions directly addressed divorced women in their advertising and exploited this perceived anxiety. A particularly hard-hitting Norwich Union advert warned that a divorced woman will have no claim to her ex-husband's pension, accompanied by the arresting image of a woman trapeze artist flying through the air towards a male partner whose folded arms indicate that he will not catch her.<sup>24</sup>

Market research carried out for Provident in 1976 suggested that women's feelings had a strong influence on their choice of financial institution. Women were reported to be more 'sensitive...to the perceived coldness and hostility of banks', more likely to feel 'ill-at ease' and concerned about which banks were 'nicer' to customers.<sup>25</sup> A decade later research for NatWest concluded that women 'react more strongly to bad service/attitude' from bank staff and suggested that the bank should create 'an

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<sup>21</sup> BGA, 493/1: 'One man in 21 has a different kind of spending power', 1970; BGA, 493/2/3: 'A wife deserves some credit', c.1970.

<sup>22</sup> RBSA, NWB/1845/31/c2: 'The Hat' 1960s (undated); 'The bigger his plans the more he'll need the Halifax', *Good Housekeeping*, November, 1975; 102; 'The Abbey Habit and the Cake with Bells on', *Good Housekeeping*, April 1979, 46; 'Get a little Xtra help with the future', August, 1980, 35.

<sup>23</sup> RBSA, NWB/872/3/2: 'NatWest: Quality of Service in Banking for Women', 7 June, 1988.

<sup>24</sup> 'Shouldn't your pension be with someone who...', *Good Housekeeping*, July 1993.

<sup>25</sup> Cooper Research and Marketing, (henceforth CRAM), Peter Cooper Archive Collection, A.97M/GB: 'Research report on people's reaction to "The People's Bank" carried out on behalf of Provident Clothing and Supply Co. Ltd.', August 1976.

empathetic caring environment.’<sup>26</sup> As the face of high street banking became female, the labour this job entailed was also framed as emotional.

In the decades after 1970 the culture of high street banking became less hostile to women, women’s financial agency became more visible in banks’ marketing, and magazines encouraged women to take on greater responsibility for money management. In the following discussion I argue that in response to the need to attract working-class customers, the cultural impact of feminism, and changes in women’s employment patterns, high street banking adopted a more feminine image. Developments in banking’s business model and technology were also significant, as were new marketing techniques and increasing competition in the magazine industry. The trend I will trace is one of increasing financial agency. However, the influence of so many factors ensured that progress was not smooth.

### ‘The Great Unbanked’<sup>27</sup>

In the post-war decades bank accounts were the preserve of the middle class and a theme implicit in advertising was that a bank account, represented by a chequebook, was a marker of middle-class status.<sup>28</sup> For women, this was presented as offering emotional as well as practical benefits. Paying by cheque could give a woman ‘poise’ and save her from ‘embarrassment’ when faced with a supercilious boutique assistant.<sup>29</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s banks made tentative moves to attract skilled working-class customers – craftsmen, policemen, foremen and their wives.<sup>30</sup> However, an emphasis on middle-class cachet undermined banks’ early efforts to recruit less affluent customers. There is a tension between the Westminster’s assurance to women that their account will be valued even if their ‘transactions are few and small’

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<sup>26</sup> RBSA, NWB/872/3/2: ‘NatWest: Quality of Service in Banking for Women’, 7 June, 1988.

<sup>27</sup> Lascelles, *Other People’s Money*, 61.

<sup>28</sup> LBGA, HO/GM/Adv10: ‘Why a Woman Needs a Banking Account’, 1951; See also, LBGA, HO/GM/Adv11: ‘A Cheque Book for Christmas’, 1954; HO/GM/Adv13: ‘If you have a TV set it’s time you had a Cheque Book’, 1954; HSBC Archives, London (henceforth HSBCA) UK/0863-0228: Midland personal cheque series, 1960.

<sup>29</sup> LBGA, HO/GM/Adv 6: ‘I always pay by cheque’, 1947; RBSA, WES/1071/1: ‘Why I bank at Lloyds’, 1945; LBGA, HO/GM/Adv/16: ‘Of course Madam – if you will let us have your cheque’, 1957.

<sup>30</sup> LBGA, HO/GM/Adv18: ‘Examples of press and magazine adverts, 1959’; LBGA, HO/GM/Adv19: ‘Examples of press advertisements for use in 1960’; RBSA, WES/1318/4, c.1951.

and the exclusivity implicit in the promise that an account will be ‘something of a social asset’.<sup>31</sup>

Banks deployed opposing stereotypes of middle-class wives as spendthrift and working-class housewives as thrifty in their marketing. A 1958 Barclays booklet, ‘Banking for Women’, listed being able to ‘shop with a cheque book’ as a key reason to open a bank account. (Original emphasis.)<sup>32</sup> In a scene from Barclays’ ‘Jim and Jane’ series of adverts in the early sixties, which followed a fictional couple’s financial dilemmas, Jim tells Jane ‘sternly’ that they mustn’t go on ‘frittering’ money; he expresses a desire to invest any savings they accumulate whereas Jane hopes to spend them.<sup>33</sup> The few depictions of working-class women and their banking needs were very different from the elegant cheque-writers who populated so many adverts in the 1950s. In 1959 Lloyds used a naturalistic photograph of a middle-aged woman engaged in the more mundane task of shopping for groceries. The stereotype of the spendthrift middle-class wife is inverted with the ‘foreman’s wife’ ‘shopping thriftily’ mid-week by cashing a cheque at the bank with ‘no need to wait for the Friday wage-packet.’<sup>34</sup>

In the 1970s banks set out in earnest to ‘extend the banking habit into a class...largely unfamiliar with it’.<sup>35</sup> This was driven by the decline in cash wages, a trend accelerated by a *Daily Mirror* campaign launched in 1972 after its wages were robbed and a guard killed.<sup>36</sup> The banks also pushed for an end to cash wages: a hard-hitting Barclays campaign from 1980 blamed employers who still paid cash wages for endangering the lives of bullion van drivers.<sup>37</sup> Another key moment in banks’ recruitment of working-class customers was Midland’s ‘bombshell’ decision in 1974 to introduce ‘free’ banking for customers who kept a minimum balance of £50 for six months. Although this was

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<sup>31</sup> RBSA, WES/1318/4: ‘Friends at the Westminster’, ‘In more ways than one’, c.1951.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Banking for Women’, 1958, ‘Barclays Group Archives, accessed 9 May 2016, [www.archive.barclays.com/items/show/633](http://www.archive.barclays.com/items/show/633).

<sup>33</sup> BGA, 3/4810: ‘Jim and Jane’, 1962-3. See also ‘Got enough for that new car yet?’, 1962-3.

<sup>34</sup> LBGA, HO/GM/Adv18: ‘Examples of press and magazine adverts, 1959’.

<sup>35</sup> RBSA, *A History of Banking*, Bank Education Service, July 1975.

<sup>36</sup> Lascelles, *Other People’s Money*, 125.

<sup>37</sup> BGA, 29/1612-1753: ‘It can cost £25 a year to pay one man’s wages in cash’, July 1979, ‘Hands Up Those Who Pay Wages in Cash’, May 1980; See also HSBGA, UK1108: ‘A Better Way to Receive Your Pay’, February 1981.

estimated to cost Midland £10 million a year in lost fees, the other high street banks were forced to follow suit.<sup>38</sup>

Banks faced considerable resistance from potential working-class customers. Market research in 1976 reported that many in their sample of men and women from socio-economic groups C1 to D felt that banks looked after the interests of 'big business' and the 'upper classes' and were 'not for me'.<sup>39</sup> In the 1970s and early 1980s the major banks produced leaflets challenging the conception that they didn't 'want to know about ordinary people' and launched products such as Midland's 'Christmas Club' and Personal Credit Plan' which mimicked traditional working-class saving and credit clubs.<sup>40</sup>

As women were understood to manage a greater proportion of the household budget in working-class households, in their drive to attract less affluent customers, banks made particular efforts to expand and improve their marketing to women. Market research also suggested that woman would be more responsive to this advertising as they were 'less reactionary' in their attitudes towards banks than men.<sup>41</sup> Budget accounts, which enabled customers to spread the cost of major bills across the year, were particularly targeted at women from the late 1960s until the 1990s.<sup>42</sup> In 1977 NatWest published a double page advert in *Woman's Own* which depicted the traditional budgeting approach used by many working-class women in the mid-century with an unglamorous image of various food tins labelled for different costs. The text is blunt and to the point: 'Custard tins are places for custard. Banks are places for

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<sup>38</sup> Lascelles, *Other People's Money*, 127.

<sup>39</sup> CRAM, A.97M/GB: 'Research report on people's reaction to "The People's Bank" carried out on behalf of Provident Clothing and Supply Co. Ltd.', August 1976.

<sup>40</sup> BGA, 1265/7: 'Come and Join Them', 1970s; RBSA, NWB/1/8172: 'The Ins and Outs of Bank Accounts', 1976; HSBGA UK/1108/1994: 'A bank account with the Midland is the best way to handle your money', August 1977; HSBGA, UK1108/1243: 'Personal Financial Services at the Midland', August 1981, 'Continuous Credit with a Midland Personal Credit Plan Account', November 1980; O'Connell, *Credit and Community*, 223–35.

<sup>41</sup> CRAM, A.97M/GB: 'Research report on people's reaction to "The People's Bank" carried out on behalf of Provident Clothing and Supply Co. Ltd.', August 1976.

<sup>42</sup> For example, RBSA, NWB/1845/31/c2: television advert, 'The Hat' 1960s (undated); LBGA, 1993, 'Budget Account'.

money'. Though the inclusion of 'Xmas' and 'kid's clothes' adds an emotional layer, and readers are reassured that it is 'not difficult' to open a NatWest account.<sup>43</sup>

In the 1970s images of women as the financially responsible keepers of the household purse became more common. A NatWest TV advert from 1978 makes this shift particularly explicit. On one side of a divided screen an 'ordinary' woman, denoted by her regional accent, speaks conspiratorially to the women in the audience about the advantages of having a bank account and reassures them that they 'only need a few pounds to get started.' Meanwhile, on 'His' side of the split screen any men in the room are entertained by images of sport.<sup>44</sup> As well as referencing female class stereotypes this advert speaks to stereotypes of masculinity, insinuating that working-class men are almost childlike in their relationship with money. This is in marked contrast to the image of banking as a signifier of mature middle-class manhood, which appeared so frequently in banks' advertising in the post-war decades.<sup>45</sup>

Coverage of money in *Good Housekeeping* and *Woman's Own* was quite distinct in the 1970s, reflecting the differing social class and affluence of their readership. *Woman's Own's* money advice was available through the consumer page, 'At Your Service', or on Mary Grant's problem page. 'At Your Service' explained the basics of banking, such as current accounts being 'the sort you need if you want to pay for things by cheque' because in 1977 it could not be assumed that *Woman's Own* readers knew this from experience.<sup>46</sup> As I indicated in Chapter 2, in the mid-1970s many *Good Housekeeping* money columns were written by men and aimed at a male audience, covering aspirational topics such as investment in gold and limited editions or saving for school fees. The implication was that, for middle-class couples, managing household money involved strategic planning with surplus funds, and that this was a male responsibility.

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<sup>43</sup> 'Shouldn't you have a safe place for your money?', *Woman's Own*, 12 November, 1977, 2-3.

<sup>44</sup> RBSA, NWB/1845/11/c2 'His and Hers', 1978.

<sup>45</sup> For example, LBGA, HO/GM/Adv6, 'May I make a suggestion', 1947; LBGA, 1674, 'Now look what Lloyds bank has done to me, c.1960s.

<sup>46</sup> 'At Your Service', *Woman's Own*, 1 October, 1977, 65.



In the 1980s and 1990s the class difference in magazines' and advertisers' representations of women's relationship with household money was reduced.

### 'The New Woman'<sup>47</sup>

The degree of financial autonomy which banks expected married women to exercise in the post-war decades was limited. In a Lloyds advert from 1947 a woman opening an account is told that she 'won't require...[her] husband's signature'.<sup>48</sup> However, Barclays' 'Banking for Women' booklet suggested that the power to decide whether a married woman should have an account lay with the husband, advising wives 'Your first job, if you have no banking account, will be to convince your husband that you need one!'<sup>49</sup> Having a bank account was presented in other post-war advertising as a woman relinquishing some of her autonomy to the experts at the bank: to the Westminster, dealing with income tax and investments were self-evidently a husband's job which, on widowhood, could be taken on by 'that nice man at the bank'.<sup>50</sup>

In 1977 TSB directly addressed the problem of banking's sexist and condescending culture, which NatWest's 'It's A Woman's World Too' had prematurely declared a thing of the past, with a remarkable series of adverts carrying the provocative slogan 'The TSB is different because it treats women the same.' The series was first published as an eight-page 'advertising "spectacular"' entitled 'The New Woman' in *Reader's Digest*, chosen because its readership included '3.3 million housewives'. The accompanying article, reprinted in the TSB staff magazine, argued that 'new attitude[s] and equal pay legislation' had 'caused a social revolution' in women's approach to money, for which they needed either their own TSB account or their own chequebook on a joint account. Modern women were depicted as more financially independent and assertive – not asking their husbands for money for a blow-dry and 'pay[ing] their way' in cabs and restaurants. The article praised the 'great crusade for Women's Lib' and the adverts

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<sup>47</sup> LBGA: *Banknote*, no. 51, 1977, 4-5.

<sup>48</sup> LBGA, HO/GM/Adv6: 'Then you won't require my husband's signature?', 1947.

<sup>49</sup> 'Banking for Women', 1958, Barclays Group Archives, accessed 9 May 2016, [www.archive.barclays.com/items/show/633](http://www.archive.barclays.com/items/show/633).

<sup>50</sup> RBSA, WES/1318/4: 'Of course my husband always used to deal with business matters...', c.1951; see also LBGA, HO/GM/Adv 8: 'My husband suggested it', 1949; LBGA HO/GM/Adv6: 'I always pay by cheque', 1947; LBGA, HO/GM/Adv8: 'I'm glad I bank here', 1949.

were overtly feminist in tone: one featured the 'boss' with 'six men under her' who is assured that the TSB manager ('he or she') will treat her as 'an equal'; another stated that other banks might 'still think women should stay at home' but the TSB thinks you should 'choose your own lifestyle'; and a third suggested that by asking personnel to credit their pay to a TSB account, women would 'strike a blow for independence.'<sup>51</sup>

Advertisers in the late 1970s were under pressure to respond to feminism in part because direct attacks were being made by the WLM on the industry's increasingly out-dated representations of women. This was a regular feature in *Spare Rib* in the early 1970s with readers encouraged to send in examples of the worst offenders. The threat which feminist critiques presented to the advertising industry is characterised by Myra Macdonald as the movement waging 'guerrilla warfare on advertising's sexism.' Feminists' actions included complaints to the Advertising Standards Authority, the (often humorous) defacing of sexist adverts and the establishment of AFFIRM to campaign for censorship of adverts which degraded women. Nonetheless, this series of TSB adverts were exceptional. Gough-Yates states that in the 1970s most British advertisers ignored feminist pressure for change.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the triumphalist tone accompanying its launch, the TSB series also indicates how far feminism had yet to go in the field of finance. A later addition to the series which appeared in *Good Housekeeping* in 1978 featured a man saying, 'My wife opened up a TSB cheque account without asking me. And I thought she loved me...' Although the intention is to present his fears as foolish, the implication is that a wife might still need her husband's permission to open an account twenty years after Barclays made this assumption in 'Banking for Women'. The hurt husband featured in this advert also speaks to the emotional and relational work which was an intrinsic part of women's management of household money.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> LBGA: *Banknote*, no. 51, 1977, 4-5.

<sup>52</sup> Myra Macdonald, *Representing Women: Myths of Femininity in the Popular Media* (London: Bloomsbury, 1995), 87,90; Gough-Yates, *Understanding Women's Magazines*, 67-68.

<sup>53</sup> 'My wife opened up a TSB cheque account...', *Good Housekeeping*, February 1978, 16.

By 1988 though, Deborah Mills, Planning Director for Leo Burnett advertising agency, told NatWest executives that 'Feminism' could no longer be ignored because it had 'trickled through the social structure' and had 'become absorbed into womens [sic] expectations'. Her research showed that the unequal treatment addressed by TSB a decade earlier remained a problem: women found banks '[p]atronising, male orientated, dismissive and intimidating' and complained that they didn't get as much respect, or such good service, as men. Barclays was the worst offender, described as 'for men – the lads' and criticised for having few women in their adverts. Mills emphasised feminism's emotional and psychological impact: women were not just working and earning more, they were '[g]aining confidence' and '[e]xpecting more'.<sup>54</sup>

However, the cultural influence of feminism and the need to appeal to a less affluent audience were having an impact even on Barclays' adverts. In a TV advert for the Connect debit card, a young woman queues at a superstore checkout while her male partner gathers DIY materials he wants to buy. But, because she is paying with a debit card, she gets through the checkout too quickly for him. The reversal of the gender stereotypes when compared with the 'Jim and Jane' series of adverts from the early 1960s is very marked: in this instance the man's spending needs to be curbed and the woman is both in control of the finances and in command of new technologies.<sup>55</sup> The advert taps into traditional working-class expectations of women's superior money management skills and specifically late-twentieth-century ideals of assertive and independent femininity.

In the 1970s the aspirational and masculine focus of many *Good Housekeeping* money columns was juxtaposed with occasional articles by female journalists which, for example, untangled the complexity of women's National Insurance payments or offered financial advice to women going through a divorce.<sup>56</sup> In 1980 this became the dominant tone in *Good Housekeeping's* coverage of money when Margaret Stone, financial editor of *The Times* took over the 'Your Money' column. Stone's monthly

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<sup>54</sup> RBSA, NWB/872/3/2: 'NatWest: Quality of Service in Banking for Women', 7 June, 1988.

<sup>55</sup> BGA, 107/1: 'Television comeback for Connect', October 1988; BGA CD518/596.

<sup>56</sup> 'Babies and Benefits', *Good Housekeeping*, January 1974, 10, 12; 'Making Your Money Count: Single parent finances', *Good Housekeeping*, November 1977, 19, 21.

money page set out to educate women about finance. She encouraged women to take responsibility for a wide range of financial practices and expressed regret that ‘too many women would have to say “Pass” on even ordinary general knowledge type questions about family finances.’<sup>57</sup> She felt particularly ‘strongly about women’s inadequate knowledge of investments.’<sup>58</sup> Although Stone lamented women’s lack of technical knowledge on finance she emphasised their expertise in managing ‘household budgets with meticulous care and efficiency’, and their agency in having ‘a remarkably strong say’ over some aspects of their families’ finances, suggesting that the ‘step from there to the wider reaches of the City and the financial world at large is not so great.’<sup>59</sup> Stone provided married women with tools to protect their financial security, recommending that the family home should be jointly owned and pointing out that Personal Equity Plans, introduced in the 1986 budget could be kept secret from a husband.<sup>60</sup> Stone’s didactic tone is similar to Jane Gardiner’s series on economics in *Spare Rib* in 1974, though Stone’s materialist concerns such as property, investment and banking were not, as I explored in Chapter 1, topics which interested *Spare Rib*’s editorial collective.

The prominence of Stone’s columns and her emphasis on the stock market were part of a broader increase in media interest in financial advice. M-OP correspondents in 1984 and 1993 referred to listening to BBC Radio 4’s ‘Money Box’, which first aired in 1977.<sup>61</sup> In the 1980s personal finance sections in weekend broadsheets ‘got fatter’ and these were joined by a whole range of financial magazine titles; in 1987 the *Sun* launched its ‘Sun Money’ page.<sup>62</sup> A particular focus on financial advice for women is evident. In 1983 Georgina O’Hara, assistant editor of *Woman’s Journal* published *Moneywoman* which promised to give ‘**you** the options’ and let ‘**you** choose’, because it’s ‘your money and your life.’ In the same year *Observer* columnist Katharine

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<sup>57</sup> ‘Your Money: What you don’t know about family finances could cost you money’, *Good Housekeeping*, February 1983, 21; see also ‘Your Money: the family balance sheet’, *Good Housekeeping*, January 1980, 131.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Your Money’, *Good Housekeeping*, December 1982, 153.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Your Money-in their hands’, *Good Housekeeping*, October 1984, 167-169.

<sup>60</sup> ‘Your Money: The Family Home’, *Good Housekeeping*, April 1980, 149; ‘All About PEPs’, *Good Housekeeping*, August 1987, 37.

<sup>61</sup> MOA Summer 1984, B55, T879; MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, C1405, H1198.

<sup>62</sup> Roberts and Kynaston, *City State*, 22,33 and 163–68.

Whitehorn, published 'How to Survive Your Money Problems', which, though not specifically for women, covered topics such as 'Splitting up' with women's best interests to the fore.<sup>63</sup>

In 1990 the cautious and consumer-focused style of *Woman's Own's* money advice changed dramatically when financial expert Sacha Grocholewska was given a weekly full-page on 'You and Your money'. Like Stone, Grocholewska, emphasised women's financial agency: 'Personal banking, financial products, pensions, share ownership and property are the domain of today's woman in the workforce and at home.' She adopted a discourse of female empowerment, emphasising that women should provide a 'role model' for the next generation and that 'The more we know, the stronger we are and the better our financial future will be.'<sup>64</sup> The content of Grocholewska's articles was far more complex than previous money advice in *Woman's Own*, including unit trusts, independent financial advisors, endowments and selling utilities shares. In part this reflects the huge range and complexity of financial products by the 1990s. There is also an aspirational feel to these columns which was new to *Woman's Own*: one reader's problem was what to do with a £75,000 inheritance.<sup>65</sup> The difference between the two magazine's coverage of money which, in the 1970s and early 1980s, was so marked and based on the class of each magazine readership had, by the 1990s, all but disappeared.

However, there remained a tension between this more serious and demanding coverage of money and women's magazines' traditional content and remit to entertain. On occasion Stone made slightly clumsy concessions to the conventions of women's magazines by likening investment to reading recipes or following fashions.<sup>66</sup> In the late 1980s competition in the magazine industry encouraged a more fundamental change in tone. New glossies were using the same life-style and

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<sup>63</sup> Georgina O'Hara, *Money Woman* (London: Sphere, 1983); Katharine Whitehorn, *How to Survive Your Money Problems* (London: Methuen, 1983).

<sup>64</sup> 'You and Your Money', *Woman's Own*, 5 November 1990, 39.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> 'Your Money: Women Investors', *Good Housekeeping*, April 81, 35, 'The Revival of the Gilt Market', August 1982, 111.

attitudinal approaches to define their market and brand as the advertisers on whom their revenue depended, forcing established magazines to revamp their image and 'update their life-style "moods"'.<sup>67</sup> In January 1988 Stone's lengthy and didactic articles were replaced by 'Money Lines' in which the advice was broken into small bite-size chunks mingled with modish colour illustrations.

The impact of this discordance in representations of women's financial agency is particularly evident in the incorporation of finance into two of the dominant tropes of women's magazines in the 1980s: diets and horoscopes. In 1988 money and dieting were linked in a *Woman's Own* piece called 'Lose lbs and save ££s'. In November 1990 Grochowska also advised a reader that addressing her credit card debt was 'like slimming – you have to watch yourself all the time.'<sup>68</sup> Two years later *Good Housekeeping* introduced the 'Money Diet', suggesting that '[d]ebt, like fat, creeps up on you' and offering ways to, '[s]lim down spending and shed that overdraft' including advice to '[s]et a "calorie" or spending limit on a daily or weekly basis'.<sup>69</sup> Although the budgeting advice in this article is similar to that of Stone or the *Good Housekeeping* 'Money Course' which launched a year later, connotations of greed, shame and lack of self-control associated with women's weight and dieting give the piece a moral and emotional subtext at odds with the message of financial empowerment through expertise. This should be seen in the context of heightened and gendered concern about credit cards which I will discuss in the next section.

Horoscopes were ubiquitous in women's magazines and many newspapers in the late twentieth century and predictions on financial fortunes were a key feature of these. Longer astrology articles gave more extensive financial advice according to star sign and described each sign's typical financial attitudes and behaviours. In 1987 *Woman's Own* had a piece by astrologist June Baker-Howard on 'You, your stars and money, money, money!' and in January 1996 *Good Housekeeping* included a similar article. Although the astrological approach potentially trivialised the subject, these pieces

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<sup>67</sup> Gough-Yates, *Understanding Women's Magazines*, 95.

<sup>68</sup> 'Lose lbs and save ££s', *Woman's Own*, 30 January, 1988, 38-39; 'You and Your Money', *Woman's Own*, 19 November, 1990, 38.

<sup>69</sup> 'The Money Diet', *Good Housekeeping*, April 1992, 99-100.

nonetheless assumed women's financial confidence and skill. Baker-Howard, writing at the peak of media enthusiasm for the stock market, six months before the Black Monday crash, encouraged women to 'gamble' take a risk and trust their 'hunches'.<sup>70</sup> *Good Housekeeping's* 'sign-by-sign guide' advised readers to invest in their pensions, Premium Bonds, silver, antiques or ethnic art, and to 'steer clear of property'.<sup>71</sup>

By the mid-1990s the apparent trivialisation of finance, through its absorption into the tropes of diets and horoscopes and fragmentation into bite-size 'tips', was in tension with the re-emergence of expert financial advice offered by Grochowska in *Woman's Own* and in *Good Housekeeping's* 12 part 'Money Course' launched in June 1992, and this tension was unresolved. In November 1997 a *Good Housekeeping* questionnaire asked readers what aspects of money they would like the magazine to cover and in what format. By the mid-1990s women's magazines were confident that 'women are making more financial decisions as they accumulate more power' and 'playing an increasing role in planning their own and their family's finances' but they had become unsure about how best to reflect and support this in their pages.<sup>72</sup>

## The Feminisation of Finance

By the end of the 1950s more women than men were employed in high street banks. However, the vast majority of these women were in backroom positions as typists or operating new machinery for accounting and clearing cheques. Women were paid less than men and it was assumed that they would not be looking for a career in banking. National and Provincial was the first major bank to lift its marriage bar in 1950 but Barclays didn't remove theirs until 1961.<sup>73</sup> Barclays' salary scales from the 1960s show that women were paid less than men as soon as they were recruited. By age 27 a female employee could expect to earn £715 per annum while her male counterpart of the same age was paid £940-1350.<sup>74</sup> The reluctance to promote more women to

<sup>70</sup> 'You, your stars and money, money, money!', *Woman's Own*, 28 March 1987, 22-23.

<sup>71</sup> 'Follow this sign-by-sign guide to you and your money,' *Good Housekeeping*, January 1996, 110.

<sup>72</sup> 'Of course we have no secrets...', *Good Housekeeping*, October 1996, 62-64; 'Money Matters', *Good Housekeeping*, November 1997, 367.

<sup>73</sup> Lascelles, *Other People's Money*, 97-99.

<sup>74</sup> 'Men's Salary Scale', 'Women's Salary Scale 1960s', Barclays Group Archives, accessed 7 February, 2019, [www.archive.barclays.com/items/show/](http://www.archive.barclays.com/items/show/).

customer-facing roles is in part explained by the assumption that customers would not trust women with their financial information.<sup>75</sup> The stereotype of the female gossip was referenced in a cartoon published by the *Glasgow Evening Citizen* in response to the opening of the 'Ladies' Branch'. A female employee behind the counter at the 'All Women Bank' points to the sign above her head saying 'teller' and reassures her customer 'Don't pay any attention to that – I won't tell a soul'.<sup>76</sup>

The male bank manager personified the culture of high street banking in the post-war decades. He was a central figure in banks' advertising, offering men wise but never 'intrusive' advice, and women fatherly protection from their financial folly.<sup>77</sup> By the 1960s, though, banks appear to have been questioning whether the figure of the bank manager might put off women customers. In an illuminating hand-written edit on a draft advert from Midland, the text accompanying an image of a woman paying by cheque has been altered from the instruction to 'go and see the Manager at your local branch. He is there to help you' to 'call in...our staff will be happy to help'.<sup>78</sup>

England's first woman branch manager was appointed by Barclays in 1958, but in the 1970s they remained a rarity.<sup>79</sup> NatWest's 'It's a Woman's World Too!' leaflet rather weakened its case with the revealing declaration 'Women Bank Managers? We've got *one*.' (My emphasis.)<sup>80</sup> Those who did rise to senior positions offered depressing advice to younger women. Marjorie Carey, who was responsible for staff management at Barclays from 1962 and the bank's most senior female employee, advised young girls joining the bank in 1973 to be 'patient... pleasant' and not to get 'too ambitious, or aggressive'.<sup>81</sup> The minefield negotiated by women trying to follow such advice is demonstrated by branch manager Ruth Foreman, who was featured in a special supplement produced by *Woman's Journal* and Lloyds Bank in 1975. Described as

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<sup>75</sup> Lascelles, *Other People's Money*, 99.

<sup>76</sup> RBSA, 1393/4, *Glasgow Evening Citizen*, 3 December, 1964.

<sup>77</sup> LBGA, HO/GM/Adv6, 'May I make a suggestion', 1947; HO/GM/Adv 7, 'Thank goodness I asked your advice in time', 1948.

<sup>78</sup> HSBCA, UK/0863/0228, 'My bank? The Midland of course!', 1960.

<sup>79</sup> Lascelles, *Other People's Money*, 99–100.

<sup>80</sup> RBSA, NWB 1/8004, 'It's a Woman's World Too', c.1970.

<sup>81</sup> *The Spread Eagle*, November 1973, quoted in Lascelles, *Other People's Money*, 104.



having 'invaded' one of the 'few remaining male sanctuaries', Foreman's response to a question about whether she was ambitious was cautious: 'she says no...but once she gets things running smoothly...she is not averse to moving on.'<sup>82</sup>

By the late 1970s increasing numbers of female employees were being recruited and more of them were staying on after marriage and motherhood. Equal pay and sex discrimination legislation, and the cultural impact of the WLM, forced banks to examine their discriminatory employment practices. Pressure for change also came from women within the sector. In a series of three outspoken articles published in Barclays' staff newspaper in 1979, assistant editor Rosemary Hillard criticised the sexist culture at the heart of banking. Hillard was incisive in her analysis of the institutional mind-set which disadvantaged women, such as the assumption that it was a waste of time to offer training to women, who were then accused of being under-qualified for promotion.<sup>83</sup> NatWest's equal opportunities programme in the 1980s was based on a report written by '15 women employees with identified potential' during a three-day think-tank.<sup>84</sup>

The most visible change towards giving high street banking a more female face was made in 1977 when Barclays launched its Personal Banker service. Personal Bankers were intended to reassure 'unbanked' customers, who found banks intimidating, and to sell products like mortgages and insurance which presented new business opportunities for high street banks. Young women (and a few men) with an 'extrovert nature' were selected to take part in the scheme. There was a strong emphasis on appearance: the two-week training course included a session with 'beauty counsellors' and Barclays' Personal Bankers were the first UK bank employees to be required to wear a uniform.<sup>85</sup> Victoria Barnes and Lucy Newton have emphasised that the

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<sup>82</sup> LBGA: 'You & Your Money', 1975.

<sup>83</sup> BGA: *Barclays News*, 'A Woman's Place', October, 1979; BGA: *Barclays News*, 'Why can't a woman be more like a man?' November, 1979; BGA: *Barclays News*, 'Are women their own worst enemies?', December, 1979.

<sup>84</sup> RBSA, NWB/872/3/2, 'Equal Opportunities', 1990.

<sup>85</sup> Victoria Barnes and Lucy Newton, 'Women, Uniforms and Brand Identity in Barclays Bank', *Business History*, (6 September 2020): 6, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2020.1791823>. Lascelles, *Other People's Money*, 124.

recruitment of women as Personal Bankers was not a 'move towards equality in the workplace' as the job was entry level and did not impact on the hierarchy of branch staff or the authority of the branch manager.<sup>86</sup> A Barclays advert for the new service stated that the Personal Bankers' role included arranging to open the branch manager's ('His') office door for a customer, or putting the customer 'in the hands of specialists.'<sup>87</sup>

The Personal Banker initiative was not primarily aimed at attracting more female customers. The advert cited above, which appeared in several local newspapers, featured a male customer and carried the slogan, 'When you have a problem with money, it's nice to know there's someone you can touch'.<sup>88</sup> This references the colloquialism of touching someone for a loan, but the accompanying image of a male customer shaking a female Personal Banker's hand gives it a sexual subtext. The advert was withdrawn after Pamela Emney, the Women Staff Manager who represented female employees, complained that the message was 'distasteful' and 'it could be taken the wrong way by a crank'. Emney's skill, detailed by Barnes and Newton, and success in her pursuit of this complaint reinforces my argument that women within banking were instrumental in changing the industry's sexist culture.<sup>89</sup> However, the battle was far from won. In 1990 another Barclays advert repeated the sexual undertone with a male customer in silhouette whispering into a female employee's ear accompanied by the caption, 'At Barclays this is all you have to do...Ask.'<sup>90</sup>

In the 1970s and 1980s the branch manager's role declined. The increasing complexity of banking called for specialists rather than generalists and credit scoring rendered the manager's judgement on whether to lend irrelevant. The new centralised target-driven sales culture reduced branch managers' influence over their staff and encouraged many old-school branch managers to take early retirement. The expansion of financial products offered by banks created opportunities for women as 'advisors' within

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<sup>86</sup> Barnes and Newton, 'Women, Uniforms and Brand Identity', 7.

<sup>87</sup> BGA 29/1612-1753: Personal Banker campaign, Oct. 1980.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Barnes and Newton, 'Women, Uniforms and Brand Identity', 13–15.

<sup>90</sup> BGA 29/1754 -1905: 'Thinking of changing to a current account that pays interest', c.1990.

branches or at call centres as telephone banking expanded.<sup>91</sup> Marketing for banks' mortgage services in the 1980s and 1990s often featured women advisors.<sup>92</sup> Although the Captain Mainwaring caricature of the traditional bank manager was still present in advertising in the 1980s (Arthur Lowe actually appeared in Barclays TV adverts in 1982), the middle-aged male bank manager was increasingly used for comic effect: a Barclays TV advert for student banking in 1984 showed a student supervising a group of stereotypical bank managers sitting an exam.<sup>93</sup>

As high street banks became more feminised the work of bank staff was presented as more caring or emotional. The image of the attentive female ear was developed in a TV advert for Barclays Connect into a female psychotherapist listening to a young man exploring his compulsive cheque-writing.<sup>94</sup> Women's increased participation in paid employment has been associated with an expectation that they would undertake 'emotional labour', conceptualised by Arlie Russell Hochschild in 1983.<sup>95</sup> In the late 1980s and early 1990s the growth of credit card debt and mortgage arrears, compounded by recession, may have encouraged an association between personal finance and personal problems, which contributed to the re-gendering of customer-facing bank work as female. The feminisation of finance was limited, though, to lower ranks. One of the most senior female executives in retail banking described the industry at this level as still 'enormously hostile to women' at the end of the twentieth century.<sup>96</sup>

### 'Curse of the Credit Card Wife'<sup>97</sup>

In the post-war decades bank accounts were presented as a solution to women's anxiety: the risk of theft was reduced because it was no longer necessary to keep large

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<sup>91</sup> Lascelles, *Other People's Money*, 164–67, 107.

<sup>92</sup> RBSA, NWB/1/925: 'First time buyers. Get it right first time', c.1991; RBSA, NWB/1/1741: 'How a NatWest mortgage advisor can make your life easier', 1993.

<sup>93</sup> BGA, 111/1, 'Three more commercials join Barclays biggest ever television drive', May 1984; BGA, 29/1612-1753, 'After your exams put the different banks to the test', July 1983.

<sup>94</sup> BGA: CD 518/596.

<sup>95</sup> See, Claire Langhamer, 'Feelings, Women and Work in the Long 1950s', *Women's History Review* 26, no. 1 (2 January 2017): 77–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2015.1123025>.

<sup>96</sup> Irene Dorner quoted in, Lascelles, *Other People's Money*, 108.

<sup>97</sup> Clipping, *Daily Star*, 23 June 1984, attached to MOA, Summer 1984, F1145.

sums of cash in the house; a chequebook was a safer way to carry money and valuables could be deposited; an account could also take away the 'bother' of remembering to pay regular bills.<sup>98</sup> With the rise of problem debt in the 1980s, banks and credit card companies were identified as a potential *cause* of financial anxiety. The banks responded to this with advice booklets. In 1987 Midland, published, 'How to cope with debt', which suggested that although borrowing was looked on as a 'natural part of everyday life' it had 'potential dangers'. More cynically, banks went on to monetise fear of being unable to pay back borrowing through the sale of repayment insurance alongside bank loans.<sup>99</sup>

In the 1980s advice on credit cards in women's magazines reflected their readerships' differing financial security. *Woman's Own* was quite cautious about recommending credit cards and published articles about problem debt. In 1981 'At Your Service' suggested that credit cards might be useful to 'help even out costs through the month' but warned readers to 'beware' not to 'run up long term debts' because of the high interest rate.<sup>100</sup> In contrast, Margaret Stone in *Good Housekeeping* was unambiguously enthusiastic, declaring in 1985 that 'One of the many advantages of living in the last quarter of the 20th century is the easy access to credit for virtually everyone.' Credit cards were described reassuringly as 'a more sophisticated form of revolving credit' and praised for giving 'on average, six weeks interest free'.<sup>101</sup> A 1988 'Money Lines' segment advised on timing the purchase of a summer holiday to achieve the maximum period of interest free credit. The inclusion of cards' interest rates offered only a muted warning of the importance of settling the bill in full each month.<sup>102</sup>

The sanguine attitude in these *Good Housekeeping* pieces is striking because, by the mid-1980s, the growing problem of personal debt was recognised and attracting media attention. In February 1984 an article in *Women's Own*, 'Credit: Just another word for

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<sup>98</sup> Barclays *Banking for Women*, 1958; HSBC UK/0863-0228: 'Easier housekeeping', 1954; HSBC UK/0863-0228: Midland calendar series, 1953-4.

<sup>99</sup> HSBC UK/1108: 'How to Cope with Debt', 1987; LBGA, 'The guide to sensible borrowing', 1991.

<sup>100</sup> 'Your Money and Your Life', *Woman's Own*, 3 January, 1981, 22-23, 29.

<sup>101</sup> 'Your Money', *Good Housekeeping*, March, 1985, 137.

<sup>102</sup> 'Money Lines', *Good Housekeeping*, June 1988, 29.

debt', identified this as a significant social problem. Erica Allen wrote that 'today's debtors' were usually 'young families on low incomes', often on benefits, who might be plunged 'into the red' by just 'one unexpected bill.' Detailed advice on what to do about problem debt implied that *Woman's Own* readers might find themselves in this situation. The causes were presented as primarily structural: the 'startling ease with which you can pay with plastic' combined with events such as redundancy.<sup>103</sup> An article in 'Femail' in 1986 also suggested that banks and credit companies needed to take responsibility for their clients' debts and included alarming statistics such as 'Britain's £22,000 million credit card debt'.<sup>104</sup>

M-OP directives capture the rapid rise of public concern about credit card debt. In 1984 Professor Pocock assumed, correctly, that many correspondents used their credit cards only to 'back up...cheques'.<sup>105</sup> In the 1987 directive, in contrast, he cited the 'use and abuse' of credit cards, "'The Credit Card Trap'", and clinics in America for "'spendaholics'".<sup>106</sup> Responses to the directives are indicative of the media's role in escalating public concern. In 1987 a correspondent wrote that in 'in recent months' she had 'read articles in the newspapers of marriages breaking up, and suicides, all through the mismanagement of credit cards.'<sup>107</sup> Much of this media coverage was highly gendered. A *Daily Star* clipping sent in by the same correspondent in 1984 was headlined 'Curse of the Credit Card Wife', and another correspondent referred to an article in the *Daily Mirror* about a 'wife' who 'became addicted to spending'.<sup>108</sup> An M-OP correspondent writing in 1987 who had seen a programme on 'spendaholics' characterised them as 'mostly young women who get carried away with their credit cards'.<sup>109</sup>

This gendering of credit card overspending as a female problem took place despite the fact that credit card use was disproportionately male. *Credit and Debt*, a Policy Studies

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<sup>103</sup> 'Credit: Just another word for debt', *Woman's Own*, 18 February, 1984, 44.

<sup>104</sup> 'The young credit card junkies', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 2 December, 1986, 12, Gale.

<sup>105</sup> For example, MOA Summer 1984, B45.

<sup>106</sup> MOA Spring 1987 Directive on 'Waste, Thrift and Consumerism.'

<sup>107</sup> MOA Spring 1987, F1145.

<sup>108</sup> MOA Summer 1984, F1145, T538.

<sup>109</sup> MOA Spring 1987, L1002.

Institute report published in 1992 found that in married couples husbands were more likely to be responsible for credit cards. Although wives were more likely to be responsible for store card spending, these represented a much less significant source of household credit.<sup>110</sup> As late as 1987 Access and Barclaycards were distributed to twice as many men as women and it was common for women responding to the 1984 directive to write that their husbands had a credit card, but they did not.<sup>111</sup>

By 1990, the dominant discourse on credit card debt in women's print media had shifted from a structural analysis to a focus on individual responsibility. *Woman's Own* finance columnist, Sacha Grocholewska, responded to a reader who had run up debt on her Access and store cards by telling her to 'change' her 'attitude' and 'watch' herself.<sup>112</sup> In a lengthier piece about credit cards a few months later, Grocholewska issued a warning to 'take care' because you 'don't see...the interest rolling up...the moment you don't settle up on time.' But she stopped short of criticising the card companies' practices and praised Barclaycard for being 'very keen to do everything they can to protect their consumers.' The emphasis remained on individual 'discipline' to be a 'clever woman' by timing purchases, budgeting carefully and settling the bill in full on the due date.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, *Good Housekeeping's* money management course in 1992 acknowledged that 'people are concerned that...credit [is] too easy to obtain and that it is perilously easy to get into...major debt' and advised readers to watch out for the warning signs that 'credit is getting out of hand.' But, nonetheless, the overall message was that 'rather than feeling frightened by credit, you should find out how to make it work for you.'<sup>114</sup>

This change from a structural to an individual analysis of problem debt was reinforced by the increasingly psychological discourse in women's print media which I identified in relation to marriage and money in Chapter 2. An article by Rosie Boycott in 'Femail' in

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<sup>110</sup> Berthoud and Kempson, *Credit and Debt*, 18.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 130; MOA Summer 1984, B663, B1140, B1155, G1332, H722, K1200. Janet Ford, *The Indebted Society: Credit default in the 1980s*, London: Routledge, 1988, 186, cited in 'Your Money and Your Life', *Woman's Own*, 3 January, 1981, 22-23, 29.

<sup>112</sup> 'You and Your Money', *Woman's Own*, 19 November, 1990, 38.

<sup>113</sup> 'You and Your Money', *Woman's Own*, 25 February, 1991, 38.

<sup>114</sup> 'Money Management Course', *Good Housekeeping*, August 1992, 95.

1987 focuses on the work of a psychologist specialising in ‘compulsive shoppers’ and highlights the vicious emotional cycle between ‘euphoria’ and ‘guilt’. The accompanying photo of the male psychologist wagging his finger at a woman who is reaching towards a display of expensive-looking ornaments underlines the gendering of the problem.<sup>115</sup> This article suggests that the woman’s marital and other problems are the effect of her spending. Articles in *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman’s Own* and ‘Femail’ in the 1990s took the psychologisation further by reversing this causal relationship and suggesting that ‘low self-esteem’, ‘lack of sexual fulfilment’, emotions such as ‘anger’ and ‘loneliness’, or ‘childhood trauma’ were potential reasons for compulsive shopping.<sup>116</sup> In ‘Shopaholic’s £17,000 secret’ published in *Woman’s Own* in 1994, ‘Stephanie’ said that she was ‘replacing emotions with material things’ and that her shopping was a response to depression and guilt.<sup>117</sup>

Although this psychological explanation for rising personal debt was sympathetic to the women described and to some extent absolved them of blame, it also reinforced the idea that it was an individual rather than a structural problem. None of these articles criticised the card companies’ practices. By the 1990s banks’ advertising of credit cards had adopted a more feminine image and was pushing the psychological discourse to its therapeutic conclusions. In the 1970s credit card spending was usually depicted as under male control. Popular imagery was of a couple shopping for gifts or luxuries, with the man handing over the Barclaycard. In the mid-1970s there was a shift to show credit card shopping as female, but in the limited circumstances of buying school uniform or stocking the freezer.<sup>118</sup> By the end of the century a woman using a credit card to shop for herself was both endorsed and depicted as a relatable response to emotional pain. In 1999 Barclaycard produced a TV advert which featured ‘a lady enjoying a moment of “retail therapy” by buying some shoes’. The ‘moment’ is

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<sup>115</sup> ‘The short, sharp, shock for a shopaholic’, ‘Femail’, *Daily Mail*, 14 April 1987, 12, Gale.

<sup>116</sup> ‘Spend, Spend, Spend’, *Good Housekeeping*, January 1990, 100-102.

<sup>117</sup> ‘Shopaholic’s £17,000 secret’, *Woman’s Own*, 3 January 1994, 14-15.

<sup>118</sup> BGA, 493/2/3, ‘You have a Barclaycard, Christmas is easy’, c.1966-73; 1974-5. BGA 493/3, ‘What are they going to need next term?’, ‘What’s for lunch next month?’, 1975.

described in the staff magazine as being 'of particular significance as she is enjoying shopping following a slight falling out with her partner.'<sup>119</sup>

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By the mid-1990s women's magazines assumed that their readers were responsible for a huge range of complex financial practices and influential in planning as well as managing household finances. Banks' advertising also depicted women as having greater financial agency. Although advertising in the post-war decades showed women opening accounts or spending with chequebooks, if a man was in the picture he was always in charge. As I have shown, by the late 1980s this was no longer the case. The cultural influence of feminism was significant in changing magazines' and advertisers' depictions of women's relationship with household money. However, other factors including competition in the magazine and banking industries and the rise of credit card debt worked to slow and complicate this trend.

The higher profile of female employees reinforced the acceptance of women's financial competency. However, this was also undermined by the depiction of female employees' labour as primarily emotional. Media and marketers were focussed on women's feelings about money. These included worry about debt and the loneliness causing compulsive shopping, as well as maternal pride in a son's success or daughter's marriage. In the following section I use M-OP testimony to explore how women negotiated the complex and sometimes contradictory expectations of women's relationship with household money in the late twentieth century.

## Agency and Emotion in M-OP

So far in this chapter I have explored what banks, through their advertising, and magazines, through their financial advice, suggested women should be doing and feeling around household money in the late twentieth century. This section uses M-OP testimony to explore what women actually did to manage household money, how they

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<sup>119</sup> BGA, *Arena*, 'Barclaycard. "One card. A million uses"', May 1999; See also, LBGA Lloyds/TSB: 'Credit cards', 2002



described their feelings about these activities and what this tells us about women's financial agency and household power in the late twentieth century.

In the first part of my discussion I use M-OP testimony to expand on my argument that emotions, or feelings, are central to an understanding of women's financial agency. I introduce the concept of 'emotional practices' and explain why this approach is a particularly fruitful way to explore women's engagement in money management. The feeling of 'self-efficacy' which Bandura argues is an essential element of agency refers to a belief in one's ability to control aspects of one's experiences and environment. Control is also at the core of budgeting practices.

The second part of my discussion focusses on the impact of banking technologies on women's approaches to, and feelings of, financial control. In the final part I identify key emotions which M-OP correspondents express about money management practices – anger, pride and pleasure. I use these emotions as a lens through which to access changes and continuities in women's financial agency in the late twentieth century.

### Managing Money as an Emotional Practice

Opportunities for increased financial agency in the late twentieth century are evident in the response of a part-time adult education tutor in 1993. She began by saying that she took 'responsibility for finances'. The four activities she listed to support this statement included paying bills, a central function of household money management for centuries, and 'checking statements', a core activity as bank accounts spread; and also 'move[ing] money around' and 'opening new accounts', financial practices more specific to the mid-1980s and 1990s when competition between institutions and free banking encouraged multiple account holding.<sup>120</sup> Lewis' 1990s study of two generations of couples found that the 'vast majority of the younger couples operated systems...that often involved a number of different kinds of accounts and moving money around between them.'<sup>121</sup> Bank accounts, and developments in the sector's

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<sup>120</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, C1990.

<sup>121</sup> Lewis, *The End of Marriage?*, 164.

culture and technology, offered women opportunities to develop new financial skills and expertise, and to take responsibility for important financial decisions.

However, although the impact of banking technologies on increasing opportunities for women to exercise financial agency is an important part of my argument, locating women's agency in household money management is more complex than listing the actions they carried out. The feeling of 'self-efficacy' underpins agency, and other emotions contribute to this sense of self-efficacy or its absence. Exploring the emotional landscape of money management enables us to locate women's agency.

The Spring 1987 directive addressed the link between emotion and financial practices, asking the panel whether their 'mood' affected their spending.<sup>122</sup> Many correspondents acknowledged a link. The practice of buying a small 'treat' when feeling 'miserable' or 'down in the dumps' was particularly common.<sup>123</sup> Scheer identifies such behaviour, doing an action in order to encourage or dispel an emotion, as one category of emotional practice.<sup>124</sup> M-OP correspondence confirms that financial practices are emotional in more complex ways and are associated with a range of often strong feelings.

A single parent opened her response to the 1993 directive on managing money with the exclamation 'Oh dear, yet another emotive subject!' Her account associates the lack of emotional support she received from her parents with their withdrawal of financial support when she was still at school. The 'relational work' which Zelizer argues is core to earmarking practices is evident in the correspondent's description of the effort involved in careful budgeting and "'keep[ing] up appearances'" as a 'lot of emotional energy'.<sup>125</sup> The expectation that difficult feelings attend dealing with domestic money is conveyed in a retired social worker's response to the same

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<sup>122</sup> Research into this issue has found that 'tightwads' spend more when they are sad whereas spendthrifts tend to spend less. Anger has been found to encourage subjects to prioritise penalising others above their own best interests when making financial choices. See Bandelj et al., 'Morals and Emotions of Money', in Bandelj, Wherry, and Zelizer, *Money Talks*, 43–44.

<sup>123</sup> MOA Spring 1987, A1783, F1145.

<sup>124</sup> Scheer, 'Are Emotions', 209.

<sup>125</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, B2675.

directive when she suggested that her upbringing was unusual because in her family money was *not* 'made an emotional issue.'<sup>126</sup>

The emotions associated with money management are, of course, culturally and historically contingent. My exploration of M-OP evidence will show that, although 'feelings rules' around money changed significantly in the late twentieth century, continuities remained. In contrast to the strong feelings expressed by the single mother, a striking number of respondents to the 1984 and 1993 directives wrote that their main feeling about questions on banking or managing money was boredom.<sup>127</sup> Without denying the validity of these women's feelings, describing questions about finance as 'boring' should be seen in the context of the longstanding middle-class convention that it was impolite or grubby to discuss money. One correspondent recalled that in her mid-century childhood 'talk about money' was seen as "'ill bred'" and another explained that one reason for her difficulty in answering the 1993 directive was 'the inherited idea that it is "not nice" to discuss money'.<sup>128</sup>

The mid-century, middle-class 'feeling rules' to which these women's boredom conformed were the target of Stones' insistence in her 'Your Money' columns in *Good Housekeeping* from 1980 to 1987 that women inform and interest themselves in finance. However, its legacy, and gendered nature, is evident in a *Good Housekeeping* article in 1994 which suggested that the belief that 'there is something hard and unfeminine about making and managing money – that nice girls don't', still had currency.<sup>129</sup> The resilience of a feeling of discomfort around money talk is further evidenced by an M-OP correspondent in her early forties who wrote in 1984, 'Banking is rarely discussed within our social circle...it is more taboo than religion or politics which are spoken of quite frequently!'<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., P2546.

<sup>127</sup> MOA Summer 1984, B004, T538; Ibid., F1560, T2543, T2003.

<sup>128</sup> MOA Spring 1987, L1789; MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, G2340.

<sup>129</sup> 'Are you trapped by a mean man?', *Good Housekeeping*, March 1994, 111-3.

<sup>130</sup> MOA Summer 1984, G1088.

However, the partial-poolers I introduced in Chapter 2, who reported their friends' and acquaintances' views on their approach to money either didn't experience or breached this taboo. Many other M-OP correspondents wrote at length about their money management practices, suggesting both an interest in the subject and a willingness to share details of their financial lives with their readers. Barbara Rosenwein might conceptualise these correspondents as belonging to different 'emotional communities'; Scheer prefers the more flexible 'emotional styles', but both emphasise that a culture's feeling rules are far from uniform and that frictions between emotional communities or styles can generate cultural change.<sup>131</sup>

In my methodology discussion I suggested that a unique feature of M-OP evidence is that correspondents are 'co-researchers'. A number of correspondents adopted this role by interrogating their lack of interest in money: they recognised its class specificity, acknowledging that boredom was a response only available to them because they had never 'experienced financial insecurity' or 'real money worries.'<sup>132</sup> One correspondent, who wrote that 'in the comfortable old-fashioned circumstances' of her 'upbringing before and during the war money wasn't talked about', suggested that this taboo served a gendered purpose: 'I also think now that silence about money was a convention which operated against women, kept in ignorance of something they therefore couldn't influence about the way in which it was spent.'<sup>133</sup> Her analysis is indicative of the degree of cultural change around money-talk in her lifetime and speaks to the diffuse influence of feminist ideas on women's understanding of money and household power in the late twentieth century.

So far in my discussion I have tended to separate practices (doings) from emotions (feelings). In this section I want to bring them together as 'emotional practices' and move from the everyday meaning of practices to a more sociological understanding of the term. In this sense, a practices orientation foregrounds the active, embodied,

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<sup>131</sup> Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Anger: The Conflicted History of an Emotion* (London: Yale University Press, 2020), 3; Scheer, 'Are Emotions', 216.

<sup>132</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, T2003; See also MOA Summer 1984, V747, T2543.

<sup>133</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, J1407.

material, temporal and spatial.<sup>134</sup> As I will discuss, money management has all these features, and new banking technologies required bodies as well as minds to adapt to new actions, objects, places and timeframes. Practice also has connotations of repetition or habit; these meanings fit well with financial practices which are often routine behaviours to which change can feel particularly disruptive.<sup>135</sup> I indicated in my thesis introduction that the experience of paying bills changed significantly from the 1950s to the 1990s. A practices orientation allows us to drill down into those changes: they were material – from cash to chequebooks, to electronic direct debits; spatial – the electricity board, a bank, the home, a post-box in the street; temporal – quarterly, monthly; and embodied – speaking to a clerk, writing a cheque.

As Scheer has argued, a practices approach is particularly valuable for emotions history because emotions are embodied and situated in place and time. She suggests that emotions *are* a form of practice and that, 'Emotions change over time...because the practices in which they are embodied, and bodies themselves, undergo transformation.'<sup>136</sup> As the practice of bill-paying changed, so did the emotions associated with it. Paying a clerk in a bank might involve impatience and frustration at having at 'to waste short and valuable lunch hours in hot overcrowded Banking halls in long queues'.<sup>137</sup> The idea of paying a bill by direct debit made one correspondent in 1984 'feel very suspicious' because it 'just doesn't seem right that someone else can say what is taken out of your bank account.'<sup>138</sup> As new practices become established and familiar, emotions change. Nine years later another correspondent wrote that monthly direct debits allowed her to 'keep warm without worrying about large bills'.<sup>139</sup>

Scheer suggests that understanding emotions as practices 'entails thinking harder about what people are *doing* and ...working out the specific situatedness of these

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<sup>134</sup> D. Morgan, *Rethinking Family Practices*, 2011 edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

<sup>135</sup> David H. G. Morgan, 'Locating "Family Practices"', *Sociological Research Online* 16, no. 4 (2011): 25–28', DOI: 10.5153/sro.2535

<sup>136</sup> Scheer, 'Are Emotions', 220.

<sup>137</sup> MOA Summer 1984, I1720.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., L1227.

<sup>139</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, A1733.

doings.’<sup>140</sup> Feelings of confusion and worry about cashpoint machines, expressed by two M-OP correspondents in 1984, were specific to the materiality and embodied nature of using this relatively new technology. One correspondent in her early sixties didn’t use cashpoint machines because she had ‘never been able to decipher’ her ‘number received in a mysterious little sealed envelope’ and another confessed her fear of divulging her ‘special number’ because she ‘tend[ed] to speak aloud when operating machinery!’<sup>141</sup>

In 1993 a correspondent explored the significance and complexity of the relationship between her feelings and her financial behaviour. She explained that ‘managing money is not cut and dried/black and white but a state of mind.’ She illustrates this with two examples: her supermarket spend is dependent on whether she ‘feel[s] she ‘ought to be careful’ rather than the actual balance of her account and, despite working out more expensive, paying back a loan to buy a major item is preferable to using cash because it ‘doesn’t feel so costly’.<sup>142</sup> Taking out a loan is an emotional practice for her which avoids the negative feelings associated with parting with a large sum of money. The historical, socio-economic and cultural specificity of her emotions are evident because these particular feelings are only possible if bank loans are available, and only for those with a high enough income to be offered a loan; shifts in ‘feeling rules’ are apparent because, unlike some older correspondents, she doesn’t associate borrowing with negative emotions like guilt or shame.

Understanding money management as an emotional practice involves an emphasis on the material, spatial, temporal and embodied nature of the activities. This approach enables us to understand how change over time in what women did around money involved change in their feelings and, therefore, their agency. Locating women’s financial agency has implications, as Roberts argues, for women’s power in the household and feelings of self-esteem.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Scheer, ‘Are Emotions’, 217, 220.

<sup>141</sup> MOA Summer 1984, L1245, V1289.

<sup>142</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, N2208.

<sup>143</sup> Roberts, *Women and Families*, 92-3.

## Control and lack of Control

Managing money is bound up with managing feelings. Having one's finances under control involves exercising self-control around spending and saving. The middle-class trope of the spendthrift wife used in mid-century bank advertising and *Good Housekeeping* articles in the 1970s suggested that women were less able to control themselves with money. One M-OP correspondent expressed this assumption and made the association between financial and emotional incontinence explicit when she wrote disparagingly, 'I rather feel that...women in particular cannot "control" credit cards...then have a "good cry" when the statement is received'.<sup>144</sup> As this quote also suggests, exercising self-control became more important and more difficult in the late twentieth century as credit became more easily accessible and electronic money less tangible. One young woman expressed the difficulty faced by many others when she wrote that she found it 'very, very difficult to realise that it is REAL money I'm spending & not just plastic.'<sup>145</sup> In contrast, being 'paid weekly in cash' was associated with 'feeling in complete control' of one's finances.<sup>146</sup> These feelings were not uncommon: research has shown that people spend more using cards than cash.<sup>147</sup>

In the following section I explore the concept of control through women's budgeting practices and the impact which the spread of banking and new banking technologies had on these. I am interested in budgeting behaviours as emotional practices. I will argue that changes in the spatial, temporal and material nature of financial practices impacted on women's feelings of control around household money. Credit cards were perceived as a uniquely dangerous threat to women's self-control. However, M-OP correspondents also wrote about taking control of their credit card spending and criticised the banks' role in encouraging credit card debt.

M-OP correspondents used the concept of having control over household money to mean different things. It could be used, as it was by Pahl and other contemporary

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<sup>144</sup> MOA Summer 1984, D733.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., M385. See A1249 and MOA Spring 1987, F1849.

<sup>146</sup> MOA Summer 1984, H722.

<sup>147</sup> Alya Guseva and Akos Tona-Tas, 'Money Talks, Plastic Money Tattles' in Bandelj, Wherry, and Zelizer, *Money Talks*, 203-204.

sociologists, to indicate comparative power over financial decisions or access to money. A correspondent used the term in this sense when she wrote that her husband 'takes direct control' of their 'finances'.<sup>148</sup> Control in this sense was a focus of Chapter 2. In this section, though, I am interested in another meaning of financial control: the feeling achieved by regulating spending and saving in line with one's income and intentions. A correspondent who wrote in 1984 'I feel I have greater control over my finances using both [a chequebook and a credit card]' had this implication in mind.<sup>149</sup>

As Zeitzer has emphasised, earmarking is an essential element of money management and is a practice which is shaped by, and shapes, the earmarker's emotions and social relationships. A challenge faced by many, especially working-class, women in the late twentieth century was the replacement of physical earmarking of cash wages into various 'pots' by conceptual earmarking of intangible money in bank accounts. M-OP correspondents recalled 'jam jars in the kitchen cupboard labelled – milkman, gas, electricity, chemist, clothes etc', or similar systems used by their mothers or by themselves in early marriage.<sup>150</sup> Using kitchen items to earmark funds rendered the practice domestic and familial in contrast to the public and official space of banks. The popularity of this practice is reflected in NatWest's decision in the 1970s to produce an advert showing food tins labelled with different household expenses.

Physical earmarking made practical as well as emotional sense. The testimony of an unusual correspondent who was still using this system in 1984 describes how being able to move cash between 'boxes' – playing 'a little game' of "'robbing Peter to pay Paul'" – enabled her to meet both planned and unexpected expenses. If she had to buy a 'present' she could use, 'say, the gas money' and then move the cash 'from one box to another' as bills became due, allowing her to delay withdrawing extra money from the Post Office.<sup>151</sup> By the late twentieth century putting cash into physical pots was no longer common, but this correspondent's testimony, and that of two others who ran

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<sup>148</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, L1290.

<sup>149</sup> MOA Summer 1984, I1348.

<sup>150</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, W2244, S1664; See also MOA Summer 1984, M865.

<sup>151</sup> MOA Summer 1984, Z583.



what one termed ‘a “brown envelope economy”’, suggest that some women were reluctant to relinquish physical earmarking.<sup>152</sup>

Many others adapted earmarking to the new conditions by using different bank or building society accounts as conceptual ‘pots’. One described a particularly complex system of multiple accounts, including one for personal spending, another for bills and housekeeping and a third for furniture and clothes. She had at least two more savings accounts and her husband had ‘similar arrangements but for different purposes, e.g. car, holidays etc.’<sup>153</sup> Another correspondent explained the emotional appeal of her approach: ‘Several accounts means, you feel, as though you are saving for a bit of pleaser, [*sic*] as well as bills.’ However, just as money in jars or boxes could be repurposed, this correspondent acknowledged that ‘if the nescecity arises [*sic*], of course. It all gets used.’<sup>154</sup>

Earmarking through multiple accounts was potentially expensive. Although savings accounts paid interest, in building societies this was taxed at source and, until 1985, most current accounts incurred charges unless a minimum balance was maintained. One correspondent wrote in 1984, ‘My initial intentions were to keep different accounts for different purposes – but it is rather difficult when one is unemployed and only in receipt of a meagre housekeeping allowance and family allowance’. Although the desire to distinguish different monies according to their purpose remained common, as did the occasional necessity to “rob” or borrow from one fund to ‘build up another’ or make oneself ‘solvent cash wise’, the popularisation of banking made it more difficult for women to earmark household money to the level of detail and flexibility that traditional systems allowed.<sup>155</sup>

The move away from cash wages usually involved a change from weekly to monthly pay. The significance of this temporal change on budgeting practices was emphasised by a woman born in 1917 who wrote, ‘we in this country, have always been paid by the

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<sup>152</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, J2631; MOA Spring 1987, B1254.

<sup>153</sup> MOA Summer 1984, B663, see also R447, W932, F1143.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, L333.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, F1146.

week so live by the week.’<sup>156</sup> Others, though less strident in their tone, shared her disquiet. A local authority employee wrote in 1984 that a plan to pay all staff four weekly by bank transfer had ‘caused considerable apprehension, certainly among the cleaning staff’.<sup>157</sup> Payment systems where ‘months’ could be either 4 or 5 weeks were particularly difficult to budget around. A woman whose money came into the household in this way wrote, ‘we hate it – longing for the days of the weekly wage where you only have to survive for days instead of weeks with no funds.’<sup>158</sup>

As this testimony suggests, the transition to monthly pay was particularly felt in working-class households. Most middle-class salaries were already paid monthly and going ‘haywire with all the money’, as had happened to one correspondent’s friend, was a more serious problem if funds were tight.<sup>159</sup> Budget accounts, which were heavily marketed in the 1970s and 1980s, show that banks were aware of, and hoped to profit from, the difficulties caused by the decline of cash wages and rise of monthly pay. In return for a fee, customers paid a fixed monthly sum into these accounts which would cover major bills as they arose.

Child Benefit, which as I argued in Chapter 2 was an important income for many women, also changed from weekly to monthly. The 1984 and 1993 directives capture this transition. In 1984, some correspondents still collected Child Benefit weekly in cash from the Post Office; by 1993 it was routinely listed as part of the household’s monthly income.<sup>160</sup> In 1981 *Woman’s Own* recommended readers to change all their bills to monthly rather than quarterly or half-yearly payments.<sup>161</sup> By 1993 many M-OP correspondents reported paying most of their bills by monthly direct debit.<sup>162</sup> The popularity of credit cards and store cards, which were billed monthly, contributed further to the temporal change in women’s money management.

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., W563.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., W559, see also, B035.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., W1171; See also MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, C2737.

<sup>159</sup> MOA Summer 1984, W563.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., T1309; MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, H1820, M2617, M2668, M2681.

<sup>161</sup> ‘Your Money and Your Life’, *Woman’s Own*, 3 January, 1981, 22-23, 29.

<sup>162</sup> For example, MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, A1223.

In 1987 a correspondent in her early forties captured the continuity and change in women's budgeting which had taken place in her lifetime by comparing her mother's money management practices with her own: 'I do remember the week's budget being worked out to the ha'penny each Friday and that habit has stayed with me except that it's now a monthly calculation and, of course, the figures I play with would have driven my mother wild with delight.'<sup>163</sup>

The materiality of household money was important to many women's sense of having control over it. As I discussed in the first part of this chapter on banks' advertising, by 1970 the most important symbol and practice associated with having a bank account was paying by cheque. A few M-OP correspondents reported finding it easy to overspend with a chequebook because 'it doesn't seem like real money' and doesn't involve 'actually hand[ing] pounds and pence over.'<sup>164</sup> For many more though, chequebooks were an essential tool for keeping track of spending. One correspondent explained that she 'like[ed] having a book full of cheque stubbs [*sic*] for immediate record and for checking against bank statements'.<sup>165</sup> Many shared the fear of another correspondent that they would not have 'the same control over cash flow' if they didn't have 'the cheque stubs'.<sup>166</sup>

The weight and substance of chequebooks were compared favourably with credit cards: a woman in her late fifties commented, 'I am not keen on credit cards, they can get lost, a chequebook is bigger, I would feel safer with that.'<sup>167</sup> The texture of credit cards, 'made of slippery plastic', was felt by another to exacerbate this problem. Her choice of language suggests that credit cards are inauthentic and untrustworthy, echoing the idea that they were not 'real money'.<sup>168</sup> Another correspondent's description of credit card receipts as 'bits of tissue paper' which would 'fly out' when

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<sup>163</sup> MOA Spring 1987, Q1834.

<sup>164</sup> MOA Summer 1984, G1041; MOA Spring 1987, F1849.

<sup>165</sup> MOA Summer 1984, M388, see also A008, C143, M1197, O1184, P1165, T1186, W580, W581, W632.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, W632, see also C143, P1262.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, L316.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, R585.

her husband opened his wallet vividly conveys the lack of control she felt over this new technology, and was her main reason for preferring her chequebook.<sup>169</sup>

For most M-OP correspondents writing in the 1980s and 1990s, bank accounts and chequebooks were established and familiar tools for managing household money. For a few they remained daunting. Although Barclaycard was launched in 1966, credit cards did not become popular until the 1970s when Barclays and the other major banks sent unsolicited credit cards to their customers. Although a few women wrote that chequebooks encouraged them to overspend, this was outweighed by those for whom chequebooks were an important tool for controlling the household budget. Credit cards, on the other hand, were equated by many with loss of control. This was not universal and, as I will discuss subsequently, many women took pride in the control they exercised over credit cards. In this section, though, I will explore the apparent 'moral panic' around credit cards which developed in the mid-1980s.

As I have established, in the late 1980s and early 1990s coverage of problem debt in *Woman's Own* and 'Femail' changed from a serious and sympathetic analysis, highlighting structural causes of the problem, to an individualised, psychological and more sensationalist tone. *Good Housekeeping*, on the other hand, presented credit cards as a useful budgeting tool, a stance which *Woman's Own* had also adopted by the 1990s. M-OP responses to the 1984 and 1987 directives offer a snapshot of a crucial stage in the escalation and recognition of credit card debt.

Respondents to both directives used particularly strong and emotive language, such as 'horror', 'abhor', 'terrifying' or 'frightening', when writing about credit cards.<sup>170</sup> Credit card spending was associated by some with heightened emotions and loss of rational control. One correspondent described the emotional state they induced as 'a kind of euphoria of spending'.<sup>171</sup> Another wrote, 'It's an anasthetic [*sic*] process handing over a card for £60 odd worth of clothes, its much rawer handing it over in £5 notes!', and

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., S519, see also, C143, M88.

<sup>170</sup> MOA Summer 1984, K1090, M340, T538; MOA Spring 1987, R1096, E1789. M340

<sup>171</sup> MOA Summer 1984, A003; MOA Spring 1987, K1176.

imagery of both sinful pleasure and anaesthesia are invoked in a third woman's confession, 'I usually feel rather "wicked" when I use my credit card because it is all so painless at the time.'<sup>172</sup>

Concern about credit card debt in the mid-1980s appears to have many of the characteristics of a 'moral panic': the 'credit card wife' as folk devil; sensationalist and distorted media coverage; and a discourse of heightened emotions.<sup>173</sup> Matt Cook has used M-OP to enrich our understanding of the emotional landscape of the AIDS epidemic in the UK, a crisis which has also been examined through the lens of moral panic. Although anxiety levels in the archive were high and homophobic bigotry was expressed by some correspondents, Cook found that the nuanced and measured responses of others offered a corrective to assumptions of a generalised public hostility towards AIDS victims.<sup>174</sup> Similarly, M-OP correspondents' responses to the issue of credit card debt show a depth of understanding of the problem and a recognition that the solution required institutional change by banks, not just better self-control on the part of customers.

One of the most contested elements of moral panic theory has been the concept of disproportionality.<sup>175</sup> M-OP testimony suggests that public concern was not only generated by exaggerated newspaper and television coverage of credit card debt; correspondents made it clear that credit card debt was having a real impact on the lives of people around them. In 1987 they wrote about family, friends and colleagues who had taken out second mortgages, declared themselves bankrupt, been forced to sell their house, or destroyed their marriage because of credit card debt.<sup>176</sup> A correspondent whose 'late husband was a terror with credit cards' had been left with significant debts to pay off when he died.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> MOA Summer 1984, W729, D1038.

<sup>173</sup> Chas Critcher, 'Moral Panic Analysis: Past, Present and Future', *Sociology Compass* 2, no. 4 (2008): 1127–44, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2008.00122.x>.

<sup>174</sup> Cook, "'Archives of Feeling'", 69–70.

<sup>175</sup> Stanley Cohen, 'Moral Panics and Folk Concepts', *Paedagogica Historica* 35, no. 3 (1 January 1999): 587–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0030923990350302>.

<sup>176</sup> MOA Spring 1987, K315, A1783, F1373, K1176.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, E953.

In contrast to the emotive language focusing on individuals' loss of self-control around credit card spending, another significant strand in M-OP commentary on the topic blamed the banks for encouraging problem debt. One correspondent's experience that the 'punishment' for exceeding her credit limit was a 'nice letter' raising it from £200 to £500 was common; a correspondent who 'fell victim to the credit card' blamed this practice for making her problem debt worse.<sup>178</sup> Others complained that they had received applications for new cards when they were already in debt.<sup>179</sup> In 1987 correspondents criticised TV advertising for misleading customers that 'you can spend to your heart's desire' and for implying that 'all this stuff was free'.<sup>180</sup> Others took an overtly principled stance, shifting the moral censure from the spender to the banks by describing the encouragement to overspend as 'morally wrong' and characterising Access and Barclaycard as 'greedy'.<sup>181</sup>

A particularly powerful response from two correspondents who had experienced problem debt was to educate themselves about credit cards and to share this knowledge with M-OP. One correspondent reported that she had recently 'sat down with the past years statements and a calculator' to discover that, although she had 'paid some £800 off during the year' she was in 'exactly the same position...owing over £1600'. She described this 'exercise' as 'terrifying'.<sup>182</sup> Another wrote about the 'dangers' of credit cards and how she, in common with 'the majority of people...didn't initially, appreciate the amount of interest...and the intricacies regarding payment.'<sup>183</sup> Knowledge about credit cards could increase feelings of terror or danger, but may have diminished any sense of shame. Others felt strongly enough to challenge the banks. One correspondent reported in 1987 that a resolution was being put forward at the

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<sup>178</sup> MOA Summer 1984, D1038, T546. 84% of credit card increases were carried out automatically and not at the request of the customer, Berthoud and Kempson, *Credit and Debt*, 81.

<sup>179</sup> MOA Summer 1984, D1038, T546, M385, S489; MOA Spring 1987, R1528.

<sup>180</sup> MOA Spring 1987, A1412, B45.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., M353, K798.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., R1096.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., R1822.

Women's Institute AGM 'that something should be done about this credit card and easy finance for it can cause great distress'.<sup>184</sup>

Although the spread of banking and new technologies created challenges for women's budgeting and earmarking practices, many adapted by opening more than one account and moving to monthly budgeting, including the gradual adoption of direct debits. Chequebooks had, by the 1980s, become an important budgeting tool. Credit cards could undermine women's feelings of financial control, but educating themselves about the cards' conditions enabled some to regain a feeling of 'self-efficacy', and therefore financial agency.

Banks' advertising associated financial practices and technologies with emotions: in the 1950s a chequebook gave a woman 'poise'; a savings account in the 1980s led to pride in a son's career or tears at a daughter's wedding; and in the late 1990s using a Barclaycard served as psychological therapy after an emotional upset. My discussion of women's efforts to feel in control of household money has shown that, for many women, strong feelings were associated with money management practices. Some of these would have satisfied the banks' marketing departments: M-OP correspondents reported feeling that chequebooks were 'safer,' and saving in different accounts was a 'pleasure'. On the other hand, the feelings that credit cards were 'frightening' and cashpoints 'mysterious' would not have been welcomed.

In the following section I explore in greater depth three emotions M-OP correspondents associated with money management practices, anger, pride and pleasure. A complex web of change and continuity in practices and emotions emerges. I argue that these emotions contributed to women's increasing financial agency in the late twentieth century.

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., L1625.

## Anger

In her study of philosophical approaches to anger Rosenwein has established that one of the few consistencies across time has been the view that women's anger is particularly problematic. In revolutionary America for example, elite men's anger could be classed as 'indignation', which was honourable and righteous, whereas women's anger, like the anger of non-whites and the lower classes, was wanton and out of control. Rosenwein suggests that one of the impacts of feminism has been to liberate, and even celebrate, women's anger.<sup>185</sup> As I have shown, some women were angry about credit cards; this anger encouraged agency such as learning about credit cards' terms, changing credit card use or supporting Women's Institute resolutions. M-OP correspondents also expressed feelings of anger about bank charges and the use of chequebooks at the supermarket checkout. This anger encouraged women to take actions which forced banks and supermarkets to change.

Bank charges provoked an angry response from many M-OP correspondents writing in 1984. The extent and degree of this anger is remarkable because charges were not highlighted by the directive, which only referred to the less loaded issue of 'cost' as one of many potential factors influencing the choice of financial institution. One correspondent made a point of raising the issue of 'charges' which she felt did not 'appear to be covered by the questionnaire'.<sup>186</sup> Lack of transparency was a particular source of 'annoyance' to one correspondent who described bank charges as 'truly amazing' and 'a lottery'.<sup>187</sup> Another objected to having to 'keep £100 in credit in order to avoid very high bank charges', adding 'this infuriates me', and was especially angry when she was charged £22 in one quarter because the balance had fallen to £99.68.<sup>188</sup> A correspondent who was 'annoyed' by a similar injustice had vented her anger over charges by having 'a few sharp words' with her bank manager.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Rosenwein, *Anger*, 125, 187–88.

<sup>186</sup> MOA Summer 1984, A015.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, T842.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, A015.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, S511, M1013.



As this correspondent's actions suggest, women's anger about bank charges was not impotent rage but a spur to agency. All the correspondents I cited above complained and had the charges refunded. More significantly, two were considering moving their accounts to institutions which offered free banking and a third had already done so. M-OP evidence includes numerous examples of women moving accounts to avoid charges. Many had moved to the Giro Bank, including one correspondent who had banked at Barclays for 43 years, and others had switched to the Co-Operative Bank.<sup>190</sup>

Giro Bank, based in post offices, was established by the Labour government in 1968 specifically to encourage working-class customers to open bank accounts. The Co-Operative Bank was also a relative newcomer, applying to join the clearing house in 1972, a move initially resisted by the 6 established members, in part because they feared its inclusion would damage the institution's prestige.<sup>191</sup> The broader co-operative movement, though, had a longer history of supplying credit to its members through mutuality clubs, which issued credit vouchers similar to Provident checks, and in 1961 matched the latter's turnover of £40 million.<sup>192</sup> M-OP evidence shows that by the 1980s these banks were not just attracting previously unbanked working-class customers but were also taking existing customers from the Big Four, as Lloyds, Barclays, Midland and NatWest were collectively known from c.1970 following a series of mergers.<sup>193</sup>

Midland's 1974 decision to remove charges for customers who maintained a £50 credit was a radical marketing move which was also a decisive step away from the gentlemen's club culture of the banking cartel towards one of free-market competition. The losses incurred by Midland, and the other banks which were forced to follow Midland's lead, were recouped by increasing charges for those who failed to maintain a minimum balance. Lascelles writes that '[w]ithin two years "free" banking was replaced by a plethora of charging options so confusing that no one could tell

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., I1348, V551, E593, R1251, H1318, W573.

<sup>191</sup> Lascelles, *Other People's Money*, 128.

<sup>192</sup> O'Connell, *Credit and Community*, 209–22.

<sup>193</sup> Lascelles, *Other People's Money*, 116.

which bank was offering the best deal anymore.’<sup>194</sup> M-OP evidence shows the increasing customer anger this provoked. Until the 1970s, high street banks’ culture of professionalism and service earned them a degree of respect, similar to the status in which doctors were held. The anger in M-OP testimony suggests that competition encouraged customers to demand value as they would from any other commercial enterprise, and that banks could no longer rely on feelings of personal loyalty if they failed.

This change in attitudes was reinforced by articles in *Woman’s Own* and *Good Housekeeping* in the late 1970s and early 1980s which compared the balance demanded by different banks to avoid charges in much the same way that ‘At Your Service’ compared the meat content in different brands of canned stew and pie-filling.<sup>195</sup> The 1984 directive captured a decisive moment in the impact of customer anger as in the same year Midland dropped the minimum balance requirement for free banking and within a few months the rest of the Big Four had followed suit.<sup>196</sup> Women’s actions in switching banks to avoid charges, and the encouragement they received from women’s magazines to do so, must have contributed to the pressure on banks to make this change.

Charges could also encourage women to adopt new banking technologies. Some correspondents made withdrawals from cashpoint machines because it was cheaper than cashing a cheque and others cited writing fewer cheques as a reason for using a credit card.<sup>197</sup> M-OP reveals that women also used unofficial practices to reduce bank charges, such as writing one big cheque for the butcher and getting the change in cash.<sup>198</sup> One correspondent reported that people would buy ‘several items’ at Marks

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<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>195</sup> ‘At Your Service’ *Woman’s Own*, 16 July, 1977, 57; ‘At Your Service’, *Woman’s Own*, 1 October, 1977, 65; ‘Money: Make a Few New Year’s Resolutions’, *Good Housekeeping*, January 1978, 11-12; ‘At Your Service’, *Woman’s Own*, 14 March, 1979, 87; ‘Your Money’, *Good Housekeeping*, January 1985, 131.

<sup>196</sup> Lascelles, *Other People’s Money*, 198.

<sup>197</sup> MOA Summer 1984, B070, B078, F1146, R1312, G848.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 1287.

and Spencer which they would then return 'for refunds as and when they require cash.'<sup>199</sup>

As market research for NatWest in 1988 confirmed, women were also angry about banks' sexist culture and advertising. An M-OP correspondent wrote in 1984 that she resented being treated as 'Mrs Also Ran' by her bank and was angry when a credit card arrived in her husband's name even though their bank account was joint. She writes that her 'indignation at being excluded' was 'even greater' than her 'indignation at all these unsolicited Access cards plopping through letter boxes the length and breadth of the country!' She applied for an Access card in her name.<sup>200</sup> Of course the irony in this instance is that her anger fuelled an action which benefitted the bank.

A subject which aroused even stronger feelings amongst many correspondents than bank charges or institutional sexism was 'having to wait behind someone while they fiddle about with a cheque', or a credit card, in the supermarket queue.<sup>201</sup> Women described feeling 'most frustrated' and 'fuming at the waste of time.'<sup>202</sup> As well as the 'public at large' being 'very vocal on this point', one woman suggested that people paying by cheque were 'very unpopular' with supermarket staff, '[j]udging by the reactions of the persons on the tills'.<sup>203</sup>

A correspondent who found the use of cheques in supermarkets 'bad enough', 'deplore[d] the increasing use of credit cards.' Her impatience is palpable in her painstaking description of the process involved in paying with 'those wretched cards!'

The assistant has to burrow beneath the counter for the machine, interleave several sheets of flimsy paper, fill in the details, check, operate the machine, get the customer's signature, file the appropriate flimsy, give the customer the receipt, and with luck the deal is transacted.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., L1227.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., N1228.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., D1194, see also G1041, C139, W752, C1256.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., A009, O405, see also M1197.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., P1244, see also E1196.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., P421.

According to contemporary research, in 1985 a typical cheque or credit card payment took 60 to 90 seconds to complete, whereas a cash transaction took 15 to 30 seconds.<sup>205</sup> One minute's additional waiting time doesn't appear excessive, however, getting through the checkout was a slow process at this time as the price of each item had to be keyed into the till.

This widespread criticism of cheque- or card-payers was focused on the specific space of the supermarket and therefore almost entirely at other women. The paradox of many women's satisfaction with using their own chequebook but hostility towards others using theirs, was explored by one correspondent:

Perhaps unreasonably, I get annoyed when people buy groceries with a cheque...At the same time I'm quite happy to hold up the queue in Marks and Spencers while I write a cheque...Somehow it seems to me that the basic necessities of life should be paid for with cash, but I know that is illogical.<sup>206</sup>

This correspondent suggests that the checkout conflict was not just about time, but also involved moral distinctions between necessities and luxuries, and between cash, and cheques or cards. I would argue that food-shopping's status as a chore, in contrast to clothes-shopping which was increasingly positioned as a leisure activity, is also relevant in explaining women's annoyance at the time spent on the former being unnecessarily extended.

At least one reader was moved to write to *Woman's Own* about 'people with trolley-loads of shopping...keep[ing] everyone waiting...while they write out a cheque.' Judith Gubbay, the consumer editor, advised cheque-payers to fill out as much of the cheque as possible in advance.<sup>207</sup> An M-OP correspondent who did this was 'angry' in return about the 'sighs and groans' of the people in the queue behind her because completing the cheque took her only 'a matter of seconds.'<sup>208</sup> However, another correspondent who wrote that she was faster with her chequebook than 'those

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<sup>205</sup> Patrick Frazer, *Plastic and Electronic Money*, 75.

<sup>206</sup> MOA Summer 1984, R1025.

<sup>207</sup> 'Your Money and Your Life', *Woman's Own*, 3 January, 1981, 22-23, 29.

<sup>208</sup> MOA Summer 1984, B1341.

fumbling around with coins and notes' acknowledged that there was still a delay if her shopping came to over £50 because a supervisor had to be 'summoned'.<sup>209</sup>

Popular antipathy towards cheque- or credit card-payers impacted on women's financial practices. One gave her main reason for returning unsolicited credit cards to the bank as not wanting to be 'cursed by all' in the supermarket queue.<sup>210</sup>

Correspondents wrote that they chose not to use cheques in supermarkets because they were 'aware of the queue behind ... sighing and tutting at being kept waiting' or conscious of 'trying other people's patience'.<sup>211</sup> The checkout war was also detrimental to banks: Gubbay suggested that people being 'anti-cheques' also made them feel 'anti-bank'.<sup>212</sup>

By 1984 it appears that cheque-payers were winning as M-OP correspondents noted that 'more and more people' were 'paying by cheque in supermarkets' and suggested that 'the presence of "cash only" checkouts in big supermarkets' indicated that paying by cash was becoming 'less common than paying by cheque'.<sup>213</sup> Supermarkets were reported to have taken other measures to reduce tension over the issue such as introducing 'cheque clearance points' at the entrance, which saved time at the tills.<sup>214</sup> The conflict rumbled on, though. In July 1989 *Good Housekeeping's* 'Money Lines' reassured readers who 'sigh with resentment' when someone paying by cheque at the supermarket checkout spends over £50, that the major banks were considering issuing cheque guarantee cards of up to £250.<sup>215</sup>

The highly charged commentary on this issue in M-OP correspondence demonstrates how important women's feelings were in shaping their financial practices. With magazines as mediator, banks and supermarkets were forced to alter their business practices in response. However, fear of public opprobrium could also have the

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., W632

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., M633.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., M342, G1284, see also E1196.

<sup>212</sup> 'Your Money and Your Life', *Woman's Own*, 3 January, 1981, 22-23, 29.

<sup>213</sup> MOA Summer 1984, W752, G1332.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., O405, see also N1228, B1156.

<sup>215</sup> 'Money Lines', *Good Housekeeping*, July 1989, 159.

opposite effect, encouraging the use of cheques in supermarkets. One correspondent wrote that her only regular use of cheques was for her 'main monthly shop', a practice she adopted because she had once been 'acutely embarrassed' when she didn't have sufficient cash to cover the bill, and another used cheques to 'prevent' similar 'embarrassment'.<sup>216</sup> It seems that the shame of being without funds, a long-standing emotion associated with money, still outweighed the discomfort of courting criticism for keeping others waiting.

## Pride

As Roberts has shown, household budget management could be a source of pride and self-esteem for mid-century working-class women.<sup>217</sup> This is clear in the M-OP testimony of a retired teacher who wrote in 1984 'I have always handled all the finances...my husband always says that if he had had the management of our money we wouldn't be as solvent as we are.'<sup>218</sup> Saving was an important part of earmarking and budgetary control, and a long-established emotional practice. A 'sense of pride and joy' about saving up to buy a desired item was expressed by many correspondents.<sup>219</sup> An element of self-sacrifice was part of this pride. One correspondent 'love[d]' the 'feeling of satisfaction' she got from being able to 'eventually afford something...after "saving" for a bit' and 'depriving' herself.<sup>220</sup>

In the 1980s, as buying on credit was becoming more accepted, the feeling rules around saving were shifting. One correspondent's husband was initially 'shocked' by her rejection of the virtue of saving but had been persuaded to her point of view.<sup>221</sup> Another correspondent's criticism of a scheme she had paid into for her children since the 1950s for its 'ridiculous' pay-out when they came of age, suggests that a rejection of financial institutions' authority and women's growing self-confidence around finance may have contributed to this shift.<sup>222</sup> The broader economic context of the

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<sup>216</sup> MOA Summer 1984, N880, E743.

<sup>217</sup> Roberts, *Women and Families*, 89-90.

<sup>218</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, W569.

<sup>219</sup> For example, MOA Summer 1984, F1146.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, E743.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, W563.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, B086.

1970s and early 1980s was also significant: women argued that high inflation made saving up for an item pointless.<sup>223</sup>

I have suggested that the media response to problem credit card debt in the 1980s had features of a moral panic and that credit cards provoked fear and anger. However, responses to the 1984 and 1987 directives demonstrate that credit cards also provided a new source of pride for women. Correspondents distanced their credit card practices from the compulsive and irrational credit-card-wife folk devil by elaborating on their well-considered advantages. These included the additional legal protection offered, reducing bank charges by writing fewer cheques, and beating inflation.<sup>224</sup> Women who paid the balance off in full each month, as close to the deadline as possible, took particular pride in this 'philosophy', as their money could be earning interest in a savings account while the bank behind the card gave them 'an interest-free loan for up to 6 weeks.'<sup>225</sup> These correspondents are essentially performing the approach to credit cards which Margaret Stone promoted in *Good Housekeeping*.

With a note of irony, a correspondent highlighted the change in discourse around credit from moral censure to practical benefits, writing that her friend had taught her 'the wise and virtuous way to utilise credit card facilities', by which she meant timing purchases to get the maximum period of free credit.<sup>226</sup> Another, who always tried to pay her card off in full every month, pointed out that this practice made her 'not what the credit card companies would regard as a good customer' because she paid no interest.<sup>227</sup>

These women were taking pride in having beaten the banks or the finance companies at their own game, a feeling which may have been heightened by the anger generated by bank charges and media criticism in the 1980s of credit card companies' business practices. This is not quite the same as pride in having secured advantageous terms on

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid., W563, T1320.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., C999, C101, G848, M865.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., T842, T550, W573.

<sup>226</sup> MOA Spring 1987, R2001.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., B70.

a loan or H.P. agreement. I would argue that this particular pride is unique to the business model of credit cards and, therefore, new in the late twentieth century. It was also, though, limited to those women who could afford to pay their credit card bill in full every month.

The contradictions in many women's feelings about credit cards in the late twentieth century are nicely summed up in a correspondent's comment: 'I've had an access card for years... And I love it but strongly disapprove of them for anyone else.'<sup>228</sup> The ironic tone notwithstanding, as this testimony suggests, moral censure of credit buying remained stronger in the 1980s than the four-fold increase in credit card holding across the decade implies.<sup>229</sup> One of the most uncompromisingly hostile views was expressed by a woman in her late sixties: 'Buying on credit is wholly bad. I have never ever [underlined in red] bought anything that way'.<sup>230</sup> Such views were not limited to the elderly. A correspondent in her early forties fleshed out her disapproval of credit with a mixture of economic and moral arguments: 'Failure to pay causes prices to rise for the people who are prepared to wait for what they can afford. Credit makes people greedy and dissatisfied which can lead to crime.'<sup>231</sup>

Paradoxically, this residual mid-century shame around credit buying provided further opportunities for women to take pride in their money management by distinguishing their practices from those of which they disapproved. In his study of the working-class economy before the Second World War, Johnson found that credit used for basic necessities was considered more shameful than borrowing to buy luxury items, which could in themselves be markers of enhanced social rank.<sup>232</sup> This attitude is also evident in the views expressed by two M-OP correspondents who were in their forties in 1984 that 'normal weekly household expenses' or 'the basic necessities of life' should be bought with cash, not credit.<sup>233</sup> Although increasing numbers of women in the 1980s

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid., E174.

<sup>229</sup> Rowlingson and Kempson, *Paying with Plastic*, 1.

<sup>230</sup> MOA Summer 1984, P1077.

<sup>231</sup> MOA Summer 1984, I1344.

<sup>232</sup> Johnson, *Saving and Spending*, 161–62.

<sup>233</sup> MOA Summer 1984, R447, R1025; See also MOA Spring 1987, L1798.



used credit cards to buy groceries, the pace of change was relatively slow. In 1989, 19% of credit card users had purchased food with their cards in the last twelve months compared with over 50% who had used them for clothes and motoring costs.<sup>234</sup> In the late 1990s more than half of Pahl's interviewees still bought groceries with cash.<sup>235</sup> Other factors contributed to this pattern, including unequal use of credit cards by husbands and wives, and, as I have established, the impatience of other women at the supermarket checkout. However, a lingering reluctance to use credit for necessities continued to guide some women's credit buying decisions in the late twentieth century.

Some correspondents protected their pride by denying that their borrowing practices should be defined as credit. One woman's reflexive dialogue with her imagined reader is particularly illuminating. Having stated about credit buying 'I almost invariably never do it', she went on 'But, you will say, I have said that I use the credit card where possible. True but I am always careful to have the cash to pay the amount every month which is owing.'<sup>236</sup> The view that 'credit' was only 'obtained' if the balance owed on a card was paid off over several months was shared by others.<sup>237</sup> Credit from the electricity board, a popular way to purchase large appliances, was also 'felt' to be 'not the same as HP' because payments were 'added to the quarterly bill'.<sup>238</sup>

Although weekly instalments signalled that catalogues were aimed at working-class women, they had a more respectable image than other forms of working-class credit, and this was, in part, because the cost of credit was hidden in the price of the goods. In his interviews with working-class Belfast women, O'Connell found that many 'did not comprehend the weekly arrangements offered by... mail order companies as involving them in debt of any kind'.<sup>239</sup> My reading of M-OP correspondence revealed the same slippage of definitions. One correspondent wrote emphatically, 'About credit-buying,

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<sup>234</sup> Rowlingson and Kempson, *Paying with Plastic*, 11.

<sup>235</sup> Pahl, *Invisible Money*, 17.

<sup>236</sup> MOA Summer 1984, W573.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, T842.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, T1277, see also T542, K798.

<sup>239</sup> O'Connell, *Credit and Community*, 20

we never do it at all' but added 'I do have a catalogue mind' which she paid back 'strictly at a pound a week.'<sup>240</sup> Another expressed the same apparent contradiction and also emphasised the modest nature of her catalogue purchases: 'My husband and I are very "anti" credit buying...The only things I occasionally DO buy this way are small items of clothing from a mail order catalogue.'<sup>241</sup>

At the other extreme, mortgages were not classed as credit. A correspondent in her early twenties explored her apparently contradictory attitudes. Writing that she did not feel 'comfortable' about using even interest free credit for 'large capital expenditure', she added, 'I've just realised how daft that is. We have quite a large mortgage, which after all is credit'. Her explanation, 'I suppose the reason that doesn't worry me is because...it's a well established, acceptable form of credit,' suggests that gradations of respectability in credit types continued to play a role in borrowing behaviours throughout the century.<sup>242</sup> A woman who stated that she hadn't used the 'never-never' for thirty years, felt that not only their mortgage, but also their car loan 'might be put into a different category' and another whose husband had taken out a bank loan to buy her sewing machine commented 'somehow it didn't seem as immoral as credit!'<sup>243</sup> In the mid-century, mortgages and bank loans were forms of borrowing associated with middle-class masculinity. In the 1980s, when the rise in home ownership and popularisation of bank accounts made these forms of borrowing more widely available, they evidently retained some of this lustre.

Another theme in M-OP correspondents' performance of pride around financial expertise was the outwitting of a financial professional. A correspondent who described herself as 'familiar with P.E.P.s, Tesses, Income Bonds, AVCs etc.' and 'dabble[d] a little on the stock market' narrated at some length, and with evident pride, how she had resisted a financial advisor's sales tactics by displaying her extensive knowledge, to the reader as well as the advisor. She enhanced her

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<sup>240</sup> MOA Summer 1984, M1313.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., B035, see also A009, A1323.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., W863.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., N402, L1227.

performance of financial insight by challenging the government's optimism about recovery with her reading of consumer spending figures.<sup>244</sup>

This lack of trust in financial professionals is indicative of the culture change in high street banking which also encouraged women's anger about charges. Beginning in the 1970s, and escalating in the 1980s, the reliable, cautious and autonomous branch manager of mid-century advertising was replaced with a target-setting centralised management structure and an emphasis on sales.<sup>245</sup> Some of the last correspondent's opportunities to gain financial expertise and confidence were also emblematic of the 1980s: she and her husband bought their council house in 1983, owned a few stocks and shares and discussed the markets with their son who worked in the City. Also in keeping with the political culture of the 1980s was that she felt unable to spend her savings on enjoying life in case she or her husband needed to pay for treatment in the future due to long NHS waiting lists.<sup>246</sup>

## Pleasure

Since Maud Pember Reeves' pre-First World War survey, published as *Round About A Pound A Week*, feminist researchers have cast light on the burden experienced by working-class women faced with managing a household budget on an income barely adequate for their families' needs. Wilson's 1983 study reported that women managing the budget of low-income families felt they bore 'an unfair burden.'<sup>247</sup> Some M-OP correspondents found this burden unbearable. Debt, sometimes unavoidable despite her 'horror' of it, rendered a correspondent in 1987 full of 'anxiety' and another wrote in response to the 1993 directive, 'money (or the lack of it) scares me'.<sup>248</sup> This correspondent, and another who was 'always panicking thinking we hadn't

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<sup>244</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, F1373, see also A1223, T1411.

<sup>245</sup> Lascelles, *Other People's Money*, 164–77.

<sup>246</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, F1373.

<sup>247</sup> Wilson, *Money in the Family*, 227.

<sup>248</sup> MOA Spring 1987, A12; MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, W729.

got enough to live on' had handed over the responsibility of managing the household money to their partners.<sup>249</sup>

My intention is not to underestimate the stress experienced by these and many other women in their efforts to make ends meet under the challenging economic circumstances of the 1980s and 1990s. However, I would also like to explore the potential of household financial management to be a source of satisfaction and enjoyment for women. M-OP correspondents who expressed their relish for managing money were generally those with money to spare. One correspondent who enjoyed keeping her household accounts acknowledged that she was lucky to have an income 'adequate to my needs and some over'.<sup>250</sup> However, as Pember Reeves found when she encountered 'Mrs. B' who 'loved keeping accounts', it was not just the wealthy who took pleasure in money management.<sup>251</sup> In 1993 a shop assistant living in a council house whose husband was retired wrote that she had always been responsible for the household finances 'because I am interested in managing money even though we've never had a lot.'<sup>252</sup>

Given the strength of the taboo around discussing money, the testimony of correspondents who expressed a keen interest in dealing with household money is compelling.<sup>253</sup> The materiality of banking could contribute to this enjoyment. A correspondent wrote in 1993 that she kept 'all the bank statements and also the bills for about five years' because 'they are interesting to look back on.' The increasing complexity of household finance offered new practices for some women to enjoy. This correspondent had bought utilities shares in the Conservative government's privatisation programme and, although she 'only' had '100 East Electricity ones', was interested enough in the stock market to 'keep an eye on the shares daily'.<sup>254</sup> As I have suggested, the rise in borrowing also presented new opportunities for expertise,

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<sup>249</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, H1703.

<sup>250</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, G224.

<sup>251</sup> Maud Pember Reeves, *Round About A Pound A Week*, (London: Virago, 1979), 90.

<sup>252</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, J1890.

<sup>253</sup> See also MOA Summer 1984, L333.

<sup>254</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, A1223.

pleasure and pride. An M-OP correspondent in her late sixties stated in 1984, 'I am the financial person in our household and I enjoy working out the most advantageous credit system'.<sup>255</sup>

An element of these women's enjoyment came from saving money on interest free credit deals or seeing that the value of shares had 'more than doubled'.<sup>256</sup> However, it is also apparent that the practices associated with money management could be satisfying in the absence of any immediate pecuniary reward. This is expressed particularly vividly by a widow writing in 1993 who had been responsible for finances and budgeting in her 19-year marriage: 'Being a person who enjoys keeping accounts, records etc. it has been a constant pleasure watching the way everything dovetails into place.' She is describing the pleasure of achieving control over money, which, as I have argued is a clear example of the self-efficacy essential to agency.<sup>257</sup>

Pleasure in financial practices could be enhanced by the materiality of objects used. A widow in her mid-sixties wrote, 'I enjoy writing my cheques and keeping an account of what I am spending.'<sup>258</sup> Banks hoped to tap into women's pleasure in the material by offering picture chequebooks, and one correspondent wrote that this was her reason for choosing to bank at NatWest.<sup>259</sup> In contrast, a correspondent expressed her disgust about 'heavy, germey cash' weighing down her handbag.<sup>260</sup> Materiality influenced cashpoint use. A correspondent who used cashpoint machines regularly did so because it was 'nice...to get clean, new notes!' and another in her early 1970s said she would 'adore to have a cash point card' for the same reason.<sup>261</sup>

Two correspondents took their enthusiasm for managing money so far that it had many of the characteristics of a hobby. A fifty-one-year-old correspondent who lived in Australia wrote in 1993 'I am very interested in budgeting and have been for many

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<sup>255</sup> MOA Summer 1984, I1348.

<sup>256</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, A1223.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., G224, see also H266.

<sup>258</sup> MOA Summer 1984, G1158.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., E184.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., B1098; See also MOA Spring 1987, A1641.

<sup>261</sup> MOA Summer 1984, B077, A22.

years.’ She discussed household money management with people she met and by letter with ‘friends and pen friends in the UK’ and channelled her enthusiasm into researching the topic, particularly enjoying books or articles about ‘how housewives...have managed their money’.<sup>262</sup> For another correspondent new banking technologies and practices were a particular source of interest. Banking and credit cards were topics she wrote about ‘quite a lot’ in her diary. She had acquired an American Express card and used it to buy petrol in a spirit of experimentation: ‘this was an on the spur of the moment decision as I happened to catch sight of the A.E. sign...I could have used my Access.’ Her curiosity about financial products had led her a few years previously to ‘float a small bank loan...to buy the second cottage’, a transaction which was ‘partly done just to see how easy it was to get a bank loan’.<sup>263</sup> This correspondent’s apparent wealth and level of interest in finance were not typical, but nonetheless her testimony speaks to the potential of banking technologies to provide opportunities for satisfaction and agency.

Although credit cards were grabbing the headlines and came to symbolise the credit society of the 1980s, throughout the decade the most widely used form of consumer credit was mail order catalogues.<sup>264</sup> The Summer 1984 directive does not explicitly ask about catalogue credit, an omission which may have reflected Professor Pocock’s class and gender. Nonetheless, many correspondents wrote about catalogues in their responses, which is indicative of their importance in women’s household budgeting practices. In 1981 there were 4.8 million catalogue agents and the vast majority of these were women.<sup>265</sup> Catalogue customers were the most predominantly female of any mainstream credit sources: the PSI survey found that in 1989 66% of mail-order catalogue credit was solely in the wife’s name and only 3% in the husband’s.<sup>266</sup> One correspondent who devoted half her response to the topic of ‘Mail Order’ commented

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<sup>262</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, M1996.

<sup>263</sup> MOA Summer 1984, R446.

<sup>264</sup> Berthoud and Kempson, *Credit and Debt*, 53 and 82.

<sup>265</sup> O’Connell, *Credit and Community*, 89.

<sup>266</sup> Berthoud and Kempson, *Credit and Debt*, 18.

that it was 'a working class practice', but added wryly, 'perhaps middle class people just don't talk about it!'.<sup>267</sup>

The appeal of catalogues did not rest solely on their repayment terms: catalogue buying was also associated with leisure and pleasure. A study in 1966 estimated that 82% of spare-time catalogue agents were primarily socially motivated.<sup>268</sup> As O'Connell has explored, catalogues could enhance customers' as well as agents' social lives by providing a focal point for neighbourhood interaction.<sup>269</sup> M-OP testimony highlights the importance of the workplace as an arena for women's catalogue buying. The correspondent cited above refers to a 'girl' in her 'office' who 'ran a catalogue', apparently with great success as 'most of the women ordered goods from her' and 'she got 10%...on all money collected.'<sup>270</sup>

A fifty-five-year-old woman explained the popularity of catalogue buying in her workplace in terms of emotional rather than economic benefits. She writes that 'all' her female colleagues use the catalogues, and elaborates, 'when someone is fed up they will open the "Wishing Book" and send for something and it seems to cheer them up.'<sup>271</sup> This testimony underlines how the practices associated with female sociability and emotional support networks in the domestic sphere could be transplanted to the work environment. By 1997 the number of catalogue agents in paid work had risen since the 1970s from 40% to almost 60% and employment figures among agents were higher than the national average for women's employment. Coopey, O'Connell and Porter explore how this shift contributed to the decline of catalogue agency, including that the sociable benefits women had derived from running a catalogue could now be gained through friendships made at work.<sup>272</sup> M-OP evidence complicates this by

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<sup>267</sup> MOA Summer 1984, D1226.

<sup>268</sup> Richard Coopey, Sean O'Connell, and Dilwyn Porter, *Mail Order Retailing in Britain: A Business and Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 121.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 119-132; O'Connell, *Credit and Community*, 101-24.

<sup>270</sup> MOA Summer 1984, D1226.

<sup>271</sup> MOA Summer 1984, S474.

<sup>272</sup> Coopey, O'Connell, and Porter, *Mail Order*, 134.

suggesting that catalogues had a role in forging and cementing women's workplace relationships.

However, in the 1980s and 1990s the catalogue agency system was in decline. Even the correspondent who wrote about them in such detail was no longer running an agency and only placed orders for her own household. A decades-long tradition of female sociability around household money management was coming to an end and women's practices around saving and borrowing became increasingly private.

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I have argued that bank accounts and other financial technologies offered women opportunities to feel control over household money, exercise agency and experience pleasure and pride. However, these opportunities were not available to all women. As I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, women's freedom to manage the household's money, or a portion of it, could be limited by a controlling partner or a lack of personal income. Socio-economic circumstances also constrained women's financial agency. In 1984 an elderly correspondent who had no bank account responded to Pocock's supposition that society was becoming divided between those who don't need to use cash and those who have no access to anything else: 'in time I am sure that the better off people will use banks and we [working class people like me] will use cash as you said.'<sup>273</sup>

I have already indicated that credit card customers were divided into the better off who could afford to pay the balance in full every month and those who used their card for long-term borrowing and paid high interest rates. The frank admission of an unemployed single-mother who regarded her Visa as 'an extra source of income' and would sometimes 'draw money off the Visa to make the payment on the Visa', a practice which could rapidly lead to escalating debt, underlines the point that in the late twentieth century many women did not have the luxury of avoiding interest

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<sup>273</sup> MOA Summer 1984, S496.



charges.<sup>274</sup> In the 1990s concern was growing about the exclusion of households and individuals from 'the mainstream credit-based society': the PSI report highlighted the 'dual market' in credit.<sup>275</sup> A single-mother on supplementary benefit described for M-OP her exclusion from the bank loans or store-credit options which proliferated in the 1980s. If she needed something like a 'carpet or washing machine' her only option was to ask a relative to buy it for her and pay them back 'on a weekly basis.'<sup>276</sup> For these women new banking technologies were not an opportunity for empowerment.

## Conclusion

An M-OP correspondent in her forties opened her response to the 1984 directive with, 'Up to the last 10 years I never dreamed I should ever require a chequebook or credit card, but I find now that it has become a "way of life."'<sup>277</sup>

The late twentieth century was a period of dramatic change in banking culture and technologies, and household money management practices. The temporal, spatial and material implications of the replacement of weekly cash wages with bank accounts, and the shift to monthly income and outgoings, made some women's budgeting task more difficult, particularly if funds were tight. However, M-OP testimony demonstrates that for others, comparing accounts or credit offers, balancing the chequebook stubs with the statement, timing purchases and payments to maximise the free credit period on a credit card, using a cashpoint machine, and other new practices, were a source of satisfaction and pride.

From the 1970s feminist ideals of women's empowerment and autonomy influenced banks' marketing departments and mainstream magazines' coverage of money. Magazines' financial advice in the 1980s and 1990s encouraged readers to take responsibility for household money and to try new technologies and investment opportunities. Financial journalists empowered women to do this with advice on

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid., S1012.

<sup>275</sup> Berthoud and Kempson, *Credit and Debt*, 66; Janet Ford, *Consuming Credit : Debt and Poverty in the U.K.* (London: CPAG, 1991), 38–45.

<sup>276</sup> MOA Summer 1984, E1196.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., W571.

products and guidance on financial skills. Banks' advertising increasingly represented women as financially autonomous and confident. M-OP evidence suggests that acquiring and implementing new financial skills was a source of self-esteem for women and an opportunity to exercise agency. However, women's pleasure was associated by the media with lack of control, personified by the 'credit card wife'. In Chapter 2 I argued that ideals of feminine self-sacrifice informed correspondents' reluctance to describe self-indulgent spending unless balanced by a display of altruism or thrift. Women's pleasure in the sociability of catalogues, the materiality of chequebooks and the financial benefits of credit cards disrupts the assumed dichotomy between women's pleasure and financial control.

I have argued that agency is a feeling: to have agency is to feel some control over one's life and circumstances. Some banking technologies and practices encouraged a feeling of control, such as the materiality of chequebook stubs or the weekly payment system for catalogues. Credit cards were the most divisive new technology. For some, they were associated with a loss of control, and consequent financial anxiety. For others, paying their credit card bill in full each month gave them a feeling of control not only over their finances, but also over the banks, by denying them interest. These examples underline that financial practices are emotional practices and they are situated in time and place. The anxiety of mounting credit card debt is specific to the late twentieth century and is embedded in the material, temporal and spatial experience of a monthly statement landing on the doormat.

Banks tried to shape women's practices through their emotions. In the 1970s banks addressed the perceived anxiety of new customers by offering familiar looking products to working-class customers and reassuring leaflets to women; Barclays employed women as Personal Bankers because customers would find them more approachable. However, the anger M-OP correspondents voiced about bank charges, not just to M-OP but to their bank managers, shows that many women's feelings about banks were far from anxious. This anger fuelled agency as women wrote letters of complaint, moved their accounts and, collectively, brought a change in banks' policies as they were forced to offer free banking.

Women's pride in avoiding credit card interest is part of this more general anti-bank mood reported by market research and women's magazines in the late twentieth century. Barclays sexualised advertising, intended to amuse male customers, contributed to women's damning judgement of Barclays as for 'the lads.'<sup>278</sup> In the 1980s banks again attempted to ease customer anxiety, this time about problem debt. M-OP testimony is indicative of yet more anger towards the banks for their business practices and advertising which were blamed for encouraging credit card customers to overspend, prompting further individual and collective action.

The most evident change in feeling rules about money in the late twentieth century was the increased acceptance of credit. M-OP testimony demonstrates that in the 1980s and 1990s many women had adopted credit cards as an everyday element of household money management, a practice which was encouraged by financial advice in women's magazines. In 1987 a correspondent mused over her change of heart about credit:

My husband and I stuck out against credit cards for quite a long time, feeling sure that there was something slightly sinful about buying things "on credit". However we have had ACCESS for many years now and feel irritated that certain shops do not take it.<sup>279</sup>

As is also clear from this testimony, this shift in feeling rules was gradual. Although correspondents wrote about the shame attached to credit buying in the post-war decades, M-OP evidence also emphasises the variety and complexity of mid-century attitudes to borrowing. Many had used H.P. to set up their marital homes; the childhood memories of others underline that use of credit was a necessity in poorer households.<sup>280</sup> Conversely, the legacy of mid-century shame is evident in M-OP correspondents' denial that some borrowing practices incur debt and their adherence

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<sup>278</sup> RBSA, NWB/872/3/2: 'NatWest: Quality of Service in Banking for Women', 7 June, 1988.

<sup>279</sup> MOA Spring 1987, L1830.

<sup>280</sup> See for example, MOA Summer 1984, J293, B45, A1190, R10254.

to a hierarchy of credit sources, with bank loans or mortgages the most respectable. A lingering disapproval of buying necessities on credit also accounts for some of the anger directed at cheque or credit card payers in supermarkets. Shame around money retained the power to influence women's financial practices, paradoxically encouraging some to use cheques or cards to avoid the shame of having insufficient cash.

My analysis of M-OP testimony qualifies Roberts' finding that the decline of cash wages reduced women's financial agency and power in the home as adopting banking technologies gave women opportunities to exercise new skills and autonomy, to build self-esteem and experience self-efficacy through financial control. However, it is important to acknowledge the weighting of the M-OP panel in favour of the middle-class, educated and, therefore, relatively confident. The voices of the financially excluded and anxious are present in M-OP but are less amplified than in O'Connell and Taylor's research. My findings are an addition, not a correction, to contemporary and subsequent research on credit and financial exclusion.

My study ends in the mid-1990s when personal computers were beginning to be used for budgeting and internet banking was about to be launched. In 1993 a thirty-one-year-old wrote, 'I have begun to keep all our financial details on a spreadsheet and can now see how the expenditure of even a few pounds effects our position for the month.' She was enthusiastic about this new practice: 'I sound like an advertisement but it works'.<sup>281</sup> However, another response suggests that a potential impact of this technological change was that women's role as financial managers would be diminished, as men were more likely to dominate the home computer.<sup>282</sup> A correspondent whose husband took responsibility for their finances felt 'rather cut off now that it's all computerized'.<sup>283</sup> The effects of home computing and internet banking are outside the scope of this thesis but these women's experiences speak to the

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<sup>281</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, M1201.

<sup>282</sup> See Pahl, *Invisible Money*, 58.

<sup>283</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, B2197, see W2244.

complex relationship between banking technologies and women's agency and emotions which I have explored in this chapter.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> For a recent discussion of home-computing and Mass-Observation see, James Baker and David Geiringer, 'Space, Text and Selfhood: Encounters with the Personal Computer in the Mass Observation Project Archive, 1991–2004', *Contemporary British History* 33, no. 3 (3 July 2019): 293–312, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2018.1539828>.

## Chapter 4: The Financial-Self

In this thesis I have gradually narrowed my focus from feminist analysis of household money, through money in women's relationship with their partners, to women's individual agency and emotions around money. In this chapter I narrow the focus further by exploring the importance of money in women's relationship with themselves. The feeling of self-efficacy which is fundamental to agency is underpinned by self-knowledge. In Bandura's formulation of agency, self-knowledge is required for 'intention' and reinforced by 'self-reflection'.<sup>1</sup> Women's financial agency emerges from a sense of their financial selfhood.

As I have established, the late twentieth century was a period of dramatic change in women's relationship with household money. Married women's increasing participation in paid work contributed to this, but as important were developments in financial technology and banking culture. The spread of personal banking and the growth in home ownership from the 1970s meant that many more women interacted with financial institutions. The expansion of credit, privatisation of public utilities and deregulation of the financial sector ensured that households' money management practices were less distinct from the world of 'high-finance'. More women compared interest rates, tried new banking technologies and followed the stock-market. Women's magazines played a crucial role in communicating information about these developments and helped to create and perpetuate increased expectations of ordinary women's financial literacy.

At the same time values and feeling rules around money were shifting. Mid-century middle-class moral certainties, disapproval of credit and distain for money talk, were disrupted. The companionate marriage ideal, which was associated with sharing funds and financial decisions, was challenged by the feminist demand for women's financial independence and autonomy. In the previous chapter I showed that some of these changes can be mapped through female financial archetypes created by advertisers and women's magazines: the thrifty working-class housewife, the anxious divorcee,

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<sup>1</sup> Bandura, 'Social Cognitive Theory'.

the confident and competent 'new woman' and the 'shopaholic' 'credit card wife'. This chapter will use M-OP testimony to explore how women responded to social and technological changes, and to the contradictions in cultural expectations of women's relationship with money, to construct and perform a financial-self.

In Anthony Giddens' formulation the defining feature of late-modern selfhood is that 'the self becomes a *reflexive project*'.<sup>2</sup> (Original emphasis.) M-OP provides correspondents with an opportunity to further this project. M-OP is a 'technology of the self' in which the correspondents put *themselves* down on paper. As Hinton points out, writing for M-O is 'a performance' to both 'the imagined audience at Mass-Observation' and to 'the self'.<sup>3</sup> Most directives invite a reflexive response, but this is particularly explicit in the 1987 directive on 'Waste, Thrift and Consumerism' which opens with, 'First explore *yourself*, your upbringing and the rules about wasting and saving in your childhood home.' (My emphasis.)

Central to historians' engagement with the concept of modern selfhood is the understanding that the self is 'constantly constructed' from the historically specific cultural tools available.<sup>4</sup> Penny Summerfield has pointed out that discourses on femininity or womanhood from which women attempt to constitute a coherent self are always contradictory.<sup>5</sup> I will argue in this chapter that cultural models of women's relationship with household money were, in the late twentieth century, particularly complex. Traditional ideologies around women's domestic and familial role survived alongside newer ideals of women as independent financial agents, earning and spending in their own right. Archetypes of thrifty wartime housewives or indulged spendthrift wives were challenged by the folk devil of the credit-card-addicted young-mum before 'shopaholic' emerged as something more aspirational, even offering self-actualisation through 'retail therapy'.

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<sup>2</sup> Giddens, *Modernity*, 3–5, 32.

<sup>3</sup> Hinton, *Nine Wartime Lives*, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Baker and Geiringer, 'Space, Text and Selfhood', 295.

<sup>5</sup> Summerfield, 'Culture and Composure', 70.

Nikolas Rose has emphasised the importance of ‘psychology and its affiliates’ in ‘shaping the ways in which we think of ourselves and act upon ourselves.’<sup>6</sup> He argues that the language of ‘psy’ has done more than offer new ways to classify and communicate individual subjectivity, it ‘presuppose[s] and open[s] out a “psy-shaped space” within each of us.’<sup>7</sup> Matthew Thomson has developed this idea by demonstrating that a wide range of psychological and psychoanalytical ideas were influential on popular culture in the first decades of the twentieth century which furthered an ‘interiorization of identity’ and contributed to the ‘self-reflexivity that has been regarded as such a central feature of modernity.’<sup>8</sup>

Psychoanalysis has a long history of engagement with financial selfhood. In the two classic propositions, Freud’s anal theory linked a strong disposition towards saving with retention of faeces in childhood, and Klein related adult behaviours around money to the infant experience of breast feeding.<sup>9</sup> Valerie Wilson attests to the cultural influence of these ideas as she found that psychoanalytical theories frequently ‘emerged unbidden’ from her interviewees.<sup>10</sup> Although M-OP correspondents didn’t refer directly to Freud, their understanding that behaviours around money reveal something fundamental about their personality, that being either a spender or a saver is deeply embedded and that childhood experiences impact on adult orientations to money, reflect popular conceptions of ‘psy’. Many correspondents also demonstrate a belief in a ‘multidimensional and potentially irrational self’, which Thomson identifies as indicative of the subtle influence of ‘psy’ on twentieth century selfhood.<sup>11</sup>

Thomson locates the crucial moment for the popularisation of psychoanalytical and psychological ideas as the first decades of the century.<sup>12</sup> In her exploration of romantic

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<sup>6</sup> Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*, second edition. (London: Free Association, 1999), vii.

<sup>7</sup> Nikolas Rose, ‘Assembling the Modern Self’, in Roy Porter, *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1997), 238.

<sup>8</sup> Mathew Thomson, ‘Psychology and the “Consciousness of Modernity” in Early Twentieth-century Britain’, in Martin Daunt and Bernhard Rieger, *Meanings of Modernity: Britain from the Late-Victorian Era to World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 104.

<sup>9</sup> Wilson, *The Secret Life of Money*, 64-67, 76, 109-114.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>11</sup> Thomson, ‘Psychology’, in Daunt and Rieger, *Meanings of Modernity*, 100.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.



love, Claire Langhamer has shown that ‘modern psychological self-hood continued to evolve into the post-war period’.<sup>13</sup> I suggested in Chapter 2 that the closing decades of the twentieth century were characterised by another flowering of the psychological in women’s magazines, and that this influenced discourse on money and relationships. The evolution of life-style types in marketing, which I discussed in Chapter 3, involved the identification of psychological characteristics, such as anxiety about money. Representations of women and understanding of their financial behaviour was further psychologised in the concepts of ‘shopaholics’ and ‘retail therapy’.

My focus in this chapter is on M-OP, though I refer to cultural sources from previous chapters. In the following section I argue that changes in the impact of financial technologies on women’s selfhood contribute to our broader understanding of the late- twentieth-century self. I then explore how women used M-OP to construct and perform a financial-self and the cultural scripts they deployed to achieve this. I argue that there were continuities: childhood was identified as a significant if contested locus for deep seated values, practices, and emotions about money; spendthrift was a treacherous identity to adopt even in the age of ‘retail therapy’. However, new identities around workplace skills, financial expertise and ecological thrift became available for women in the 1980s and 1990s.

Finally, I look at three examples of ‘financial autobiographies’ written in response to the 1993 directive. I apply Dawson and Summerfield’s concept of composure to illuminate how changes and continuities in discourses around women and money enabled and limited women’s achievement and expression of financial selfhood.

## Financial Technologies and Identity: From Status Symbol to ‘Big Brother’

M-OP correspondents’ discussion of how cultural and technological change around money and banking impacted on their selfhood can develop our understanding of

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<sup>13</sup> Claire Langhamer, ‘Love, Selfhood and Authenticity in Post-War Britain’, *Cultural and Social History* 9, no. 2 (1 June 2012): 278, <https://doi.org/10.2752/147800412X13270753068966>.

broader change in the second half of the twentieth century, from a society with clear gender and class roles and expectations, to one in which the social rules are uncertain, slippery and opaque. The financial-self in this section reveals something more fundamental about a late-twentieth-century selfhood. Porter identifies a late-twentieth-century concern, distilled and articulated by Foucault, that individualism, identity and selfhood were not, as liberal thought had suggested, 'an emancipation from social constraint but the very means by which the state locked subjects into bureaucratic and administrative systems.'<sup>14</sup> M-OP testimony demonstrates a shift from the mid-century understanding of banking technology as a symbol of class status to fears that 'Big Brother' could use this technology for social control.

In the post-war decades the use of banking technologies could signal financial and social standing. In banks' advertising the chequebook was presented as a badge of middle-class maturity. Taboos around money talk and middle-class disapproval of the 'vulgarity of ostentation and conspicuous consumption' may have enhanced the symbolic potency of chequebooks: a focus on *how* rather than *what* one bought could communicate wealth and status but do so with perceived discretion and good taste.<sup>15</sup> Older correspondents answering the 1984 directive's questions on chequebooks and credit cards were frank about the importance of chequebooks to them as a marker of class status, and about their disquiet that the popularisation of banking was disrupting this. One such correspondent opened her piece by writing,

If this question is really asking how I feel about the shift from cash payments to cheques to credit cards, the answer is a composite of insulted/depressed/bewildered. Chiefly insulted, because I can remember when having a cheque book was a sign of enormous social/financial status, it proved the owner was a member of the professional class as distinct from the cash-paid working class.<sup>16</sup>

She goes on to illustrate her point: 'When one paid in cash, tradesmen were respectful; when one produced a cheque, they were very respectful, almost awed.' The

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<sup>14</sup> Porter, *Rewriting*, 11.

<sup>15</sup> Cohen, *The Eclipse of 'Elegant Economy'*, 211.

<sup>16</sup> MOA Summer 1984, M361.

impact of the erosion of this class deference on her sense of self is underlined when she contrasts this lost world with a graphic image of the mid-1980s when ‘a cheque is turned over, sniffed at on both sides, and has to be accompanied by a bankers’ card, as if I/we/everybody are all thieves!’<sup>17</sup>

The correspondent’s focus on cheque guarantee cards as a symbol of insult is telling. As bank accounts became more popular in the 1960s bounced cheques became more common making retailers reluctant to accept them. The cards were introduced to guarantee that cheques of up to £30, raised to £50 in 1977, would be honoured by the bank. Patrick Frazer acknowledges that it is unclear whether the ‘new class of customer’ was more likely to write cheques without the funds to honour them, or whether banks were less likely to grant these customers overdrafts, but either way it was an indication that having a bank account, symbolised by a chequebook, was no longer a mark of financial integrity. However, as cheque card fraud became a growing problem, costing £25.2 million in 1984, the cards themselves, and by implication their owners, were treated with suspicion.<sup>18</sup>

The testimony of a correspondent who concurred with the previous one, that in 1984 chequebooks were no longer ‘looked at in awe’, also implies that there was a class dimension to the supermarket-checkout wars I discussed in Chapter 3. She writes that ‘nowadays everyone waves cheque books around like flags of “distinction” – holding up queues in supermarket check outs with the somewhat dubious power a cheque book produces.’<sup>19</sup> This suggests that associations with ‘distinction’ have been lost now that ‘everyone’ has a chequebook and their ‘power’ has therefore become ‘dubious.’ Her reference to ‘waving around’ seems to imply that the class of women who now have chequebooks lack the manners to use them discreetly.

In the 1980s credit cards were, to some extent, replacing chequebooks as a status symbol. One correspondent wrote, ‘In 1944-5, we started paying grocery bills by

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Frazer, *Plastic and Electronic Money*, 38–39, 148–49.

<sup>19</sup> MOA Summer 1984, M1329.

cheque, because we noticed that funnily enough, cheque-paying customers were treated with more respect than those paying in cash.’ She explains that they now use Access when buying goods because ‘again, funnily enough, we seem to get more respect’.<sup>20</sup> In the mid-1990s a male interviewee for Pahl’s *Invisible Money* described how the role of credit cards as status symbols had been enhanced with the introduction of gold and platinum cards for selected customers. At a business meal he would ‘whack’ his ‘gold card’ on the table because ‘it gives some kind of credibility.’<sup>21</sup>

However, as the context and language in this example suggest, credit cards’ status-signalling in this period was associated with masculinity. This was, as I indicated in Chapter 3, a message hammered home by advertising in the 1970s which presented Barclaycard as a badge of male virility. The damning criticism of an M-OP correspondent in her early twenties demonstrates that credit cards’ symbolic role was both recognised and contested in the 1980s. She writes, ‘The idea of the credit card is repulsive to me...because of what it stands for’, and elaborates,

Take a look at that little plastic oblong whose name and colour means status and prosperity. What kind of world would judge its inhabitants on the basis of which credit card you have (only visa? Poor thing) not like A.E. or Diners Club.<sup>22</sup>

The popularisation of banking and spread of new banking technologies in the 1980s impacted on women’s creation and presentation of a financial selfhood. A chequebook’s potency to signal the owner’s middle-class standing and financial probity was diminished and the power of credit cards in this regard disputed and less available to women. At the same time a new and more fundamental relationship between banking technologies and identity was emerging.

In the 1984 directive Professor Pocock encouraged respondents to consider the concept of financial selfhood when he reported being told that ‘in some parts of the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., J299.

<sup>21</sup> Pahl, *Invisible Money*, 44.

<sup>22</sup> MOA Summer 1984, B1181.

USA you are a non-person if you don't have a credit card!' The twenty-two-year-old cited above suggested that this was becoming the case in the UK, describing credit cards as 'your identity' which you must remember to put 'back in your pocket before someone's steals it.'<sup>23</sup>

Two correspondents developed the theme of banking technologies and identity by exploring the government surveillance of individuals which they enabled. One conjured the spectre of 'Big Brother', who she had thought would never 'catch' her as she had 'neither credit card nor account card; driving licence nor mortgage; overdraft nor loan.' After her narrative of gradually adopting more financial products she concludes, 'And so I have moved a long way from the scarcely traceable person at the beginning of this report'.<sup>24</sup> For another correspondent state surveillance by means of her bank account was already an unwelcome experience rather than a literary allusion. She wrote that, when she had been unemployed, she was 'sent for by the D.H.S.S., locked in a room and questioned about [her] bank A/C', which officials had 'been through' without her knowledge. She added, 'If I could find a way of hiding money (that's if I had any) I would.'<sup>25</sup>

These correspondents, writing, significantly, in 1984, point to the paper trail left by bank and credit card statements and suggest that it could expose more of an individual's personal information to scrutiny than they might choose. In the mid-1980s, the paper-based credit card system, where a carbon copy of the card and signature were taken and processed, described by an impatient shopper in Chapter 3, was beginning to be replaced. New electronic systems used a magnetic strip or chip card to communicate the card number and other information, and a PIN instead of a signature for authentication.<sup>26</sup> Electronic payment enabled the gathering of far more information about individuals' financial lives. Alya Guseva and Akos Rona-Tas have argued that 'if money talks, plastic money tattles': digital money not only preserves the 'details of economic transactions' but can also 'capture geographic movements, and ...infer our

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.+

<sup>24</sup> MOA Summer, S513.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., S1012.

<sup>26</sup> Frazer, *Plastic and Electronic Money*, 63–73.

tastes and routines'.<sup>27</sup> They point out that data created by electronic money transactions are routinely used as evidence in civil and criminal cases and in China the government-issued payment card is used overtly to control and correct citizens' behaviour.<sup>28</sup> By the 1980s a data-driven computer-generated credit score was being added to individuals' financial identity. Credit scoring, which replaced bank managers' role in deciding who was eligible for a loan, underlines the paradox that as banking became less rooted in personal relationships in the 1970s and 1980s it acquired and used far more personal information about individual customers.<sup>29</sup>

These changes in the information that banking technologies could communicate about a person impacted on women's emotions and identity. A correspondent mused in 1984, 'why is it, that whenever I pay by cheque or by Access, I feel guilty when they examine the card and my signatures, and expect to be hauled off to the Police Station?'<sup>30</sup> These material objects no longer signalled her financial security and individual integrity and instead could incriminate her in the eyes of state authorities. M-OP evidence suggests that in the late twentieth century developments in banking technology were beginning to contribute to an experience and understanding of selfhood as vulnerable, insecure, and subject to computerised information-gathering forces beyond the individual's control.<sup>31</sup>

## Constructing a Financial-Self Through M-OP

Although the selves women constructed and presented through M-OP can be understood as performance, this did not necessarily mean that women presented their ideal self. A woman responding to the 1993 directive described herself at the top of the page as 'Female, sort of nurse, 55, fat and plain, married 1 son.'<sup>32</sup> In this brief self-portrait she positions herself in relation to the expectation presented in women's

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<sup>27</sup> Guseva and Rona-Tas, 'If Money Talks', in Bandelj, Wherry, and Zelizer, *Money Talks*, 204.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 203-207.

<sup>29</sup> Lascelles, *Other People's Money*, 93, 171, 207.

<sup>30</sup> MOA Summer 1984, M342.

<sup>31</sup> Porter, *Rewriting*, 12-13.

<sup>32</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, P425.

magazines in the late 1980s and 1990s that women should be slim and have a career.<sup>33</sup> The self she presents is not 'comfortable', but it has coherence, and the code she uses would be understood by her reader in 1993. It seems significant that the reader being addressed was Dorothy Sheridan who would have been in her mid-forties and likely to recognise these pressures. The self the correspondent performs is not, though, entirely negative: she has portrayed herself as honest and self-deprecating.

M-OP testimony suggests that, for many women, the financial-self was an important and fundamental part of their identity. One correspondent wrote, 'That heading [Managing Money] sinks easily into my being'.<sup>34</sup> Though more prosaic, the use of quotation marks by a correspondent who wrote 'In our household I am the "the money manager"' implies a degree of reflexivity or self-consciousness about the process of taking on this identity.<sup>35</sup>

Being attributed with the wrong financial identity could cause significant hurt. A seventy-year-old writing in 1993 described how 'in a moment of annoyance...over a trivial matter' her 'dear mother' had said that she was "'no good with money.'" She writes that her husband used this to justify his 'meanness' and that she 'seem[s] to have spent the rest of...[her] life proving her [mother] to be wrong.' The impact of her mother's remark, and her husband's exploitation of it, is underlined by the correspondent's apparent need to call other witnesses to testify to her sound money sense. She asserts, 'I am admired by my friends as an example of how to live well on a small income'.<sup>36</sup>

M-OP correspondents depicted their financial identity as bound up with deeply held beliefs and values. A Roman Catholic correspondent in her early sixties explained her aversion to saving in religious terms: 'saving for a rainy day', was to her, 'inherently

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<sup>33</sup> From November 1983 to November 1987 *Good Housekeeping* ran a biannual special section for working mothers called 'Two Worlds'. In the late 1980s weight loss became a prominent feature in *Woman's Own*, see logo 'Woman's Own – First for Fun Diets', *Woman's Own*, 30 January, 1988, 38.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., H2161.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., M1381.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., H266.

Protestant'.<sup>37</sup> The concept of Puritan thrift she references was centuries old, indeed Hulme identifies the Puritan era as the time when 'thrift' lost its original meaning of thriving and took on the notion of frugality.<sup>38</sup> A younger correspondent addressed modern, secular, but equally fundamental values when she described her and her husband's 'careful' approach to money as fitting in with their 'political views'. She explains that they would 'never have a second home' and they 'don't go in for private education or healthcare.'<sup>39</sup> The examples she chooses are the presumed middle-class aspirations of the 1980s and 1990s and indicate the influence of Thatcherism's property ownership and privatisation agenda on the cultural script used by individuals to construct their financial selfhood in this period.

The process of fashioning a financial-self through M-OP is at its most evident when correspondents point to the self-discovery which answering the directive has facilitated. One particularly reflexive correspondent, who took on the role of co-analyst by commenting that it 'must be significant' that she had to ask her husband many of the directive's questions, also wrote, 'Filling in your questionnaire – my idiosyncrasies about money are showing up'. These included that she is 'very careful with it' and doesn't 'want anything to do with the handling of money.'<sup>40</sup> Another offered new insights into her childhood sensitivity about her parents' financial difficulties having read her testimony in 'the cold light of dawn'.<sup>41</sup> The most striking example of this reflexivity was by a woman who positioned her 'success' and 'natural ability' at managing money in opposition to the way her husband and his first wife had 'carried on', leading them to fall into 'dire financial straits'. Returning to the directive two months later in the light of 'various thoughts' the correspondent acknowledged that she had 'never been very good on bargains' and suggested that she often paid more than necessary 'through sheer laziness!' The time M-OP allows to revisit and reconsider a directive response enabled this correspondent to reflect deeply on her

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<sup>37</sup> MOA Summer 1984, M349.

<sup>38</sup> Hulme, *Thrift*, 17.

<sup>39</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, L1691.

<sup>40</sup> MOA Summer 1984, F202.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, H272. See also MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, R860.



financial-self and construct an identity which is 'multidimensional' and 'potentially irrational.'<sup>42</sup>

The practice of writing for M-OP can be understood as a process of self-archiving. Correspondents who kept financial records to look back on were also engaged in creating an archive of the financial-self. A woman in her early fifties kept detailed account books which she 'jokingly' told her children would be 'of interest' to 'future family historians', the same purpose suggested in the directive, which asked correspondents to imagine a historian working in 2043.<sup>43</sup> In Chapter 3 I discussed correspondents who used M-OP to perform and share their newfound understanding of credit card interest. Another correspondent presents writing for M-OP as an opportunity to acquire financial knowledge and insight. She writes, 'I think your questionnaire the whole thing you are doing is very interesting...You have helped me think more about things.' She adds 'I pass on your things to my children, it may help them too.' The 1984 directive was particularly informative as it included a sheet explaining new banking technologies. The correspondent demonstrates that financial knowledge is a source of confidence and power as it enables her to resist her father-in-law, who she identifies as the source of her 'troubles'. He has been trying to persuade the correspondent's husband to volunteer for redundancy because 'the social' will pay 'the mortgage etc.' The correspondent asserts a knowledgeable financial-selfhood when she states, 'It is fortunate I know his advice is wrong.'<sup>44</sup>

In the next section I will explore the psychological, cultural, and material sources women used to construct their financial identity. I will argue that the belief was widely held, and reflexively examined, that adult financial behaviour and attitudes had its roots in childhood experience. Change was taking place in the late twentieth century, though, as gendered ideas of financial skill as an element of housewifery lost ground to women's presentation of their money management abilities as an extension of their working selves. In Chapter 3 I explored some of the archetypes banks and advertisers

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<sup>42</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, R446; Thomson, 'Psychology' in Daunt and Rieger, *Meanings of Modernity*, 100.

<sup>43</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, M1996. See also A1223.

<sup>44</sup> MOA Summer 1984, L333.

used to market financial products to women in the late twentieth century, including the anxious divorcee, the budget-conscious working-class housewife and the independent 'new woman'. I demonstrated increasing expectations of women's financial skills in women's magazines, which were, however, in tension with media imagery of women as compulsive shoppers running up credit card debt. I used M-OP evidence to argue that, despite the challenges of technological change, many women felt in control of household budgeting and took pride and pleasure in money management practices. In this section I examine some of the archetypes women used to describe their financial identity and explore how far the traditional binary identities of spendthrift and thrifty were used and adapted by women to create and perform a financial-self.

### Childhood and Employment

An essential element of the psychologisation of culture in the twentieth century was a focus on childhood memories in the belief that a 'preconscious childhood within the adult personality' was central to identity.<sup>45</sup> Many M-OP correspondents explored childhood influences to construct and understand their financial-selves. One who suggested that disapproval of credit was the result of being 'brought up in an environment where it was 'inconceivable to consider the "never-never" system' emphasised that 'the ideas fixed in childhood remain intact'.<sup>46</sup> The direct role of nurture was questioned by another correspondent when she suggested that her father's opposition to the 'Never Never' may have made her sister 'very saving conscious' but that the same upbringing 'certainly didn't affect' her in the same way because she was 'never a good saver'. She goes on to delve deeper into her psyche for an explanation, speculating that this may have been 'something to do with being ill so much and missing out on all the things other kids could do.'<sup>47</sup> Another correspondent explored her reluctance to spend in similar psychological depth. She wonders whether it 'goes back to childhood memories' of her mother, who was 'a great one for status symbols', waking her in the night to ask if 'she had done right in buying something',

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<sup>45</sup> Thomson, 'Psychology' in Dauntton and Rieger, *Meanings of Modernity*, 106.

<sup>46</sup> MOA Summer 1984, M1329.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., N399.

and the inner conflict the correspondent experienced at her inability to tell her mother that she had done wrong.<sup>48</sup>

The trauma of childhood poverty was cited by many M-OP correspondents as a damaging influence on their financial attitudes and practices. A woman born in Hungary who had experienced food shortages during both World Wars reported feeling 'literally hurt' by 'other people's easy, wasteful habits.'<sup>49</sup> Women who grew up in the twenties and thirties regretted a 'too cautious' approach which was the result of being 'frightened about poverty'.<sup>50</sup> This trauma could pass down generations. A woman who was forty-four in 1993 wrote that her thrift was 'inherited' from her mother 'in whom it was naturally ingrained, having suffered poverty as a child.' She suggests that this influence was psychologically problematic as spending large sums 'worries' her and she needs to be 'reassured' by her husband.<sup>51</sup>

M-OP evidence includes examples of women passing money management skills on to their daughters and many correspondents assumed that managing the household money was part of woman's domestic role.<sup>52</sup> However, by the late twentieth century the skills required of the household money-manager were more technical and less overtly gendered. Rapidly changing banking technology made it very difficult for these skills be passed down from mothers to daughters. Instead, many M-OP correspondents reported that they acquired their financial skills and attitudes through paid work. As McCarthy has demonstrated, as the number of women in paid work rose, so did its importance as a source of women's identity and self-esteem.<sup>53</sup>

I indicated in Chapter 3 that, from the 1970s, the number of women working in front-line jobs in banking increased as opportunities as advisors and cashiers and, by the 1990s, in call-centres, grew.<sup>54</sup> In 1996 two-thirds of NatWest's staff were women.<sup>55</sup> The

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., A22.

<sup>49</sup> MOA Spring 1987, K1176.

<sup>50</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, W1457, F1560.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., T2003.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., M1201, B2552.

<sup>53</sup> McCarthy, *Double Lives*, 385–86.

<sup>54</sup> Lascelles, *Other People's Money*, 107.

<sup>55</sup> McCarthy, *Double Lives*, 361.

knowledge which these women took from their jobs impacted on their domestic financial practices and their self-esteem. Two such correspondents underlined the financial confidence they had acquired through their jobs in banking. One stated that she did not share the 'fear of cheques or credit cards...prevalent among a large part of the population' and another wrote that she paid her electricity bill by direct debit, which was not 'the generally accepted way of payment' amongst her friends.<sup>56</sup> Women employed in other fields attributed their abilities at managing household money to similar skills they had learned through work. Paying all the household bills and keeping accounts was 'second nature' to one correspondent because she 'used to be a bookkeeper'.<sup>57</sup> Another wrote, 'in my job as a school secretary I enjoyed bookkeeping and so I handle our finances.'<sup>58</sup>

Women working in the burgeoning field of credit also gained knowledge from their jobs, but testimony from two correspondents suggests that this work did not have a positive impact on identity and self-esteem. One described her role in 'Accounts Recovery' in the credit department of a large store as 'the seamy side of credit' and added that this had made her 'reluctant to take credit just for the sake of it'. Another, who had worked for a company offering small unsecured loans at a 40% interest rate, to which people turned 'in desperation', had resigned when asked to collect a £1.50 debt from the 'bereaved relatives' of a pensioner who had died. She vividly expresses the potential impact of this job on her selfhood: 'I felt you cannot work in a place like that for any length of time without it scratching your soul somehow.'<sup>59</sup>

### The Cultural Script: Financial Archetypes

In popular discourse financial identities were often presented as binaries. Valerie Wilson found in her Australian research that interviewees identified themselves as either spenders or savers.<sup>60</sup> An M-OP correspondent writing in 1984 characterised her adult children as her 'provident daughter' and her 'improvident daughter',

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<sup>56</sup> MOA Summer 1984, M1246, B1156.

<sup>57</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, R1025.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., N1484.

<sup>59</sup> MOA Summer 1984, T1309, B1181.

<sup>60</sup> Wilson, *The Secret Life of Money*, 65–76.

demonstrating both the appeal of these polarities and the continuing influence of traditional ideas around money and morality. However, her testimony also shows that developments in banking technologies were disrupting this binary view. She cites using the cashpoint once a month to draw housekeeping money as indicative of providence, whereas improvidence is identified as paying 'everything – even the milkman – by cheque.'<sup>61</sup> The many women I cited in Chapter 3 for whom chequebook stubs were an essential budgeting tool might dispute this characterisation. As my discussion of M-OP correspondents' complex and contradictory attitudes to credit cards has shown, in the late twentieth century clear distinctions between responsible and irresponsible financial practices were increasingly difficult to draw.

This uncertainty was at the heart of the cultural and political context of the 1980s and 1990s as both thrift and extravagance were symbolic of the era. Thatcher justified cuts to public spending by calling on the virtue of domestic thrift, likening 'a nation living above its income' to 'a family' that 'gets into a mess', and arguing that, like a family, the nation must 'postpone cherished ambitions' until it has 'the means to satisfy them'.<sup>62</sup> However, the huge growth in consumer spending in general, and credit card spending in particular, led Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock to accuse Thatcher and her Chancellor Nigel Lawson of creating a 'Loadsamoney economy', demonstrating the extent to which Harry Enfield's comic character had come to symbolise the culture of late 1980s.<sup>63</sup> This duality of frugality and extravagance as representative of the Zeitgeist was captured in 1987 by an M-OP correspondent. She wrote of her 'fear' that her partner, who took 'pleasure in planning and economising' was showing 'shades of Thatcherism', but she was also critical of the conspicuous consumption personified by the 'the stereotypical yuppie', who 'yearns to waste things'.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> MOA Summer 1984, F1143.

<sup>62</sup> Margaret Thatcher, speech to the Conservative Party Conference, 12 October 1979, quoted in Nicky Marsh, *Money, Speculation and Finance in Contemporary British Fiction*, (London: Continuum, 2007), 42.

<sup>63</sup> Neil Kinnock, speech to the Labour Party in Wales, 20 May 1988, quoted Anita Biressi and Heather Nunn, *Class and Contemporary British Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 36, Proquest Ebook Central; Rowlinson and Kempson, '*Paying with Plastic*', 2

<sup>64</sup> MOA Spring 1987, R2001.

In the post-war decades banks' advertising reflected and reinforced binary ideas of financial identity based on class and gender. These stereotypes continued to influence their marketing as they attempted to attract new working-class customers in the 1970s. The middle-class spendthrift wife and her necessary corollary, the financially successful and responsible middle-class husband, contrasted with the competent and thrifty working-class housewife and her financially irresponsible husband who is more interested in sport than bank accounts. As I will discuss subsequently, many M-OP correspondents performed their financial-self in relation to these types.

Identifying and personifying different behaviours and personality traits was a popular device in women's magazines, its quintessence being the 'Cosmo Quiz'. Two examples of the use of such 'types' in *Good Housekeeping* demonstrate changing expectations of women's relationship with household money. 'Money Lines' in 1988 described four imaginary employed women at different stages of their lives in order to advise on each character's best response to government changes in pensions. 'Mary Mobile' is young and ambitious but working mum 'Stella Stayput' can't move away from the locality where she is unlikely to be offered a better job. Women are expected to have a career, but it will take second place to their husband's, and they will prioritise their children above their career ambitions.<sup>65</sup> The first part of *Good Housekeeping's* money management course grouped women as either Competents, Triers, Copers or Casuals. Financial expertise and autonomy are the qualities used to categorise and to which women should, in the 1990s, aspire.<sup>66</sup>

In the 1980s and 1990s there was a broader media trend in identifying financial types. I have mentioned the 'Yuppie', the young upwardly mobile professionals, renowned for their conspicuous consumption. In 1993 a M-OP correspondent identified her and her husband as 'Dinkies', double-income no kids, and another wrote that she didn't like to be 'considered a 'WOOPY' (well-off old person)'.<sup>67</sup> These types speak to the perceived importance of money to selfhood in the late 1980s and early 1990s and also to the

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<sup>65</sup> 'Money Lines', *Good Housekeeping*, April 1988, 33.

<sup>66</sup> 'Money Management Course', *Good Housekeeping*, June 1992, 111.

<sup>67</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, B2675, H267.

widening gap between those who had gained from Conservative economic policies and others – workers in manufacturing, families with young children – who had lost.

A media generated financial type which M-OP correspondents explicitly adopted was their star sign. As I discussed in Chapter 3, horoscopes were ubiquitous in women's magazines and many newspapers in the late twentieth century. Predictions on financial fortunes were a key feature of these, and magazines also published fuller articles about star signs and money. Some M-OP correspondents explicitly engaged with the idea that their financial behaviour was influenced by their star sign. In 1987 a correspondent in her mid-forties explained why she was 'economical': 'partly because of my upbringing, partly because I'm a Virgo, and partly because I think it's morally wrong to discard things...that are still usable.'<sup>68</sup> The similarity between *Good Housekeeping's* description of Virgos as having 'a deep-rooted sense of economy' and *Woman's Own's* suggestion that they are 'the sign that has to work hardest at learning how to enjoy money' is significant, not because I want to comment on the veracity of astrology, but because the consistency suggests that the correspondent's identification of herself as a financial Virgo is based on a shared cultural understanding of what Virgos are like.<sup>69</sup> A woman in her early thirties in 1984 emphasised the importance of her star sign to her financial identity even more strongly, writing, 'I must begin by saying that I am a true Piscean indeed in so much as I am hopeless with money.'<sup>70</sup> *Good Housekeeping* described Pisceans' approach to budgeting as 'chaotic' and *Woman's Own* concurred that it was easy for them to 'stay poor'.<sup>71</sup> Again, the correspondent's identification of her financial-self as shaped by her star sign would seem to be grounded in a knowledge which she expects her reader to share. In this instance, appealing to her star sign also allowed the correspondent to limit her personal responsibility for her financial difficulties.

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<sup>68</sup> MOA Spring 1987, A1706.

<sup>69</sup> 'You, your stars and money, money, money!', *Woman's Own*, 28 March 1987, 22-23; 'Follow this sign-by-sign guide to you and your money,' *Good Housekeeping*, January 1996, 110.

<sup>70</sup> MOA Summer 1984, J1160.

<sup>71</sup> 'You, your stars and money, money, money!', *Woman's Own*, 28 March 1987, 22-23; 'Follow this sign-by-sign guide to you and your money,' *Good Housekeeping*, January 1996, 110.

In the following section I explore the two dominant financial identities with which M-OP correspondents identified, spendthrift and thrifty. I explore how these binary identities evolved in the late twentieth century and how M-OP correspondents used them to construct a financial-self. There is considerable continuity with the post-war decades: although the spendthrift was given a new lease of life as the 'shopaholic' indulging in 'retail therapy', this remained an identity only available to a narrow group of women. However, M-OP evidence also suggests significant change: as thrift lost some its power to signal competent household money management, positive identities based on new financial skills and banking technologies emerged, as did a new morality of thrift from which women could construct a positive financial-self.

As I have established, the archetypes available from which to create a financial selfhood were class-based and highly gendered. Banks' marketing in the 1950s and 1960s, and some of *Good Housekeeping's* money advice in the early 1970s, deployed the stereotype of the spendthrift middle-class wife which reinforced masculine ideals of the successful financial provider. In the 1980s and 1990s this was complicated by the emergence of the 'spendaholic' who I discussed in Chapter 3 as the folk devil 'credit card wife'. In this section I explore how the 'shopaholic', as she became more commonly known, was given a positive make-over and became associated with benign 'retail therapy'. However, M-OP correspondents' testimony demonstrates that, despite these developments, spendthrift remained an acceptable identity for women only within narrow confines determined by class, marital status and motherhood, as well as gender.

Comparing 'Femail' articles on 'shopaholics' from the 1970s and the 1990s reveals a significant shift in the nature of the shopping behaviour the term was used to convey. As early as 1977 journalist Shirley Lowe described herself as an 'Incurable Shopaholic!'. The behaviours she cites include 'buying a new brand of breakfast cereal' and feeling a 'pressing need for Half Price Cotton and Polyester Pillow Slips'. The cartoon image is of a woman with a supermarket trolley desperate for a 'special offer' and the text acknowledges that shopping for bargains in this way could be framed as being a 'good,



old-fashioned mum doing right by her family'.<sup>72</sup> In an article published in 1991 the 'shopaholics' purchases include a '£500 scarf', '96 pairs of shoes' and 'very beautiful leather suitcases'. The thrifty housewife is entirely absent and shopping is presented as being about self-indulgence and luxury.<sup>73</sup>

In 1992 and 1994, light-hearted interviews were published in 'Femail' in which actresses described their clothes shopping and most expensive purchases. Both described themselves as 'shopaholics' but the label was absolved of any associations with addiction and problem debt.<sup>74</sup> It is only a small step from here to Sophie Kinsella's 'Shopaholic' series of humorous novels, launched in 2000. The first opens with overdraft warning letters and a visa bill four times what the heroine anticipated, immediately followed by her decision to spend £120 on a scarf.<sup>75</sup> Problem debt has been normalised and shopping now ranks with romance as an essential element of women's 'dreamworld'. The book's blurb asks whether Becky will ever 'find true love and regain the use of her credit card.'<sup>76</sup>

M-OP testimony confirms that for a single woman the spendthrift identity could be positive. In 1984 a single correspondent in her early thirties performed an identity which is generous, sociable and fun-loving: 'I am hopeless with money...basically I have no respect or admiration for the stuff. When I have a lot, I spend it (usually by keeping a full fridge and cocktail cabinet and entertaining regularly!)' Like Kinsella's heroine, this correspondent has an irreverent relationship with her bank manager.<sup>77</sup> She goes on, 'My bank manager offered me a credit card when my account was in fact in debit.... The following day I went to see him and asked him if he didn't think that I was

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<sup>72</sup> 'Incurable Shopaholic!' 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 19 July, 1977, 12.

<sup>73</sup> 'Hooked on shopping' 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 11 April, 1991, 23-15.

<sup>74</sup> 'I was a hopeless shopaholic..', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 29 October 1992, 38; 'I'm a shopaholic' 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 9 April, 1994, 50.

<sup>75</sup> Sophie Kinsella, *The Secret Dreamworld Of A Shopaholic*: (London: Black Swan, 2012), 13-35.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, back cover.

<sup>77</sup> For example, *ibid.*, 212.

sufficiently irresponsible with a cheque card without providing me with a further licence to spend!’<sup>78</sup>

For a married woman, financial irresponsibility was only a permissible identity if it was shown not to impact on a husband or children. A correspondent in her early sixties wrote in 1987, ‘I must confess that I’m not thrifty by nature, only when it is an absolute necessity (i.e. when the bank manager suggests I do something about my overdraft!!)’. However, she makes this spendthrift identity acceptable with the assurance that her spending does not cause ‘problems’ because ‘the family have all flown the nest.’ Her reference to going into Marks and Spencer ‘for a pair of tights and com[ing] out laden with stuff’ also signals middle-class status. The correspondent’s age and class protect her from the potential judgement attached to a mother’s self-indulgent spending.<sup>79</sup>

Class or income also impacted on how the spendthrift identity was created and performed. The working-class wives featured in *Woman’s Own* articles about debt may have engendered sympathy, but they were far from aspirational figures. A forty-nine-year-old ‘factory hand’ opened her response to the 1993 directive with, ‘The first thing I have to say is that I am the worlds [sic] worst person at managing money. I hate saving, but love spending.’ She goes on to write that many people they know have lost their jobs and every week’s wages could be their last, adding, ‘But neither of us worry about it, but enjoy each day as it comes.’ The precariousness of income as a rationale for spending contrasts with the middle-class justification of middle-aged financial security. In contrast to the mid-century stereotype of the spendthrift wife who, in 1974, was spending her husband’s ‘hard earned cash’ the correspondent emphasises that she is spending her own earnings.<sup>80</sup> However, a common thread linking most performances of extravagance in M-OP, whatever their marital status or class, is an emphasis on generosity. This correspondent writes, ‘I go a bit crazy on buying presents for our relations’ and adds that at Christmas she spent ‘about £500 on each of’ their

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<sup>78</sup> MOA Summer 1984, J1160.

<sup>79</sup> MOA Spring 1987, F1694

<sup>80</sup> ‘Money: A joint account for better or worse’, *Good Housekeeping*, March 1974, 10, 12.

'closest relations'. Significantly, 'each of' has been inserted later to ensure that the reader does not think she had only spent £500 in total!'<sup>81</sup>

A correspondent who described herself as 'a secretive spendthrift' and her husband 'an open meanie' moderates the negative connotations of spending as self-indulgence by emphasising that she does much of it in charity shops. She writes that she 'cannot save' because she 'NEVER' has any 'spare cash' but counters any irresponsibility this might imply by adding that if she did she 'would find a moral purpose for it, e.g. donation to famine relief.' For this correspondent the complexity of containing and performing apparently contradictory financial-selves seems to have been amplified by her experience as a single mother for fifteen years. The tension between her previous and current selves, and the different rules around appropriate financial behaviour associated with each, is summed up in this juxtaposition: 'I have streaks of meanness in my extravagant personality – I can cook mince in 1001 different tasty ways'. Just the extravagant personality might imply irresponsibility, just the skills to cook mince would sound mundane, so she positions herself somewhere between the two.<sup>82</sup>

Being a spendthrift, which for a young single woman could signal a generous free spirit or for a married older woman could signal affluence was, as I have shown, more problematic for a less wealthy married woman: the factory hand who loved spending emphasised that she spent her own earnings, on other people, kept within her means and had savings. Crucially, she had no children. The spendthrift identity was far more treacherous for a mother. Both the extravagant mothers cited above stressed that their children had grown up. These women's presentation of a financial-self speaks to the complexity of the cultural rules around acceptable financial identities for women in the late twentieth century and the effort required to negotiate them. The 'shopaholic' had been detoxified by the 1990s, but the identity was only available to women in a limited set of circumstances. M-OP evidence suggests that the popularisation of 'retail

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<sup>81</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, C2579.

<sup>82</sup> MOA Summer 1984, B1887.

therapy' did not free women who were mothers or working class from the fear of societal disapproval of self-indulgent spending.

A younger mother who described herself as a 'hopeless budgeter' was unusual in her frankness, using M-OP more as a confessional than a performance. She gives the impression that she is frightened by her lack of self-control around money. She regards 'chequebooks and credit cards with horror' because she would be 'tempted into debt' and 'can't save' because 'money "burns a hole in [her] pocket"'. Her only access to money is the cash her husband gives her for housekeeping, and she is adamant that she would 'not welcome' having 'money or income' in her 'own right'. The correspondent clearly finds her 'hopeless budgeter' identity humiliating, writing that she is 'reduced to' giving her parents or husband cash in return for a cheque if she needs to pay a bill.<sup>83</sup> For a young mother on a moderate income the spendthrift is not a glamorous identity. The spectre of the credit card junkie squandering the family's money haunts her testimony.

In Chapter 3 I demonstrated that, despite women's traditional budgeting skills becoming devalued, an alternative source of self-esteem emerged in skilled use of new banking technologies. Here I examine the devaluing of thrift more closely and suggest that it was 're-valued' in the late twentieth century. I show, through M-OP testimony, thrift's continuing potential to contribute to a modern and positive financial identity.

In *A Brief History of Thrift*, Hulme explores how the concept and practice of thrift has changed over time and how 'the thrift-seeking/thrift-avoiding individual subject has been celebrated and chastised accordingly'.<sup>84</sup> Being thrifty was regarded by many M-OP correspondents' as an essential element of their financial selfhood. For two correspondents writing for M-OP was an opportunity to perform thrift through their practice as well as their words. One opened her response to the 1987 directive on 'Waste, Thrift and Consumerism' with 'This is being written on "waste" paper discarded by others as rubbish' and another wrote that she had had 'a slight struggle'

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., P1248.

<sup>84</sup> Hulme, *Thrift*, 1.

with herself because she preferred to write on both sides of the paper but felt this would be harder for her reader.<sup>85</sup>

However, in the late twentieth century, thrift was a problematic and contested concept. One correspondent's 1987 testimony conveys this particularly vividly:

I do feel it almost impossible to waste... I do not know if this is good or bad, I could be called thrifty; or just very mean – but I am very certain deep inside the waste is wrong though I cannot put forward a good case for this feeling.<sup>86</sup>

In late-twentieth-century culture, thrift was a highly gendered trait. Hulme argues that moralising about thrift moved from the pulpit to the kitchen in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as numerous treatises were published on both sides of the Atlantic which 'solidly linked thrift to household economia, and to the role of woman'.<sup>87</sup> The gendering of thrift underpins the tensions around the concept evident in M-OP testimony.

Many correspondents who identified themselves as thrifty also commented that money didn't 'bother' them, was 'a "switch off" topic' or 'boring'.<sup>88</sup> Performance of thrift tapped into the same discourse as the mid-century middle-class taboo around 'money talk'. One correspondent remembered that in her middle-class childhood in the 1930s 'both waste and extravagance were considered "ill bred" – by my mother anyway'.<sup>89</sup> However, too much thrift was also problematic. This tension was explored by a younger correspondent who wrote that in her mother's 'respectable petit bourgeois family' 'family financing' was 'careful', but 'it was important to appear not to be scrimping'.<sup>90</sup> Thrift must be presented as a moral choice, not a habit imposed by poverty. Cohen's characterisation of the mid-century middle-class ideal as '*elegant economy*' encapsulates this tension. (My emphasis)

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<sup>85</sup> MOA Spring 1987, R1953, L1768.

<sup>86</sup> MOA Spring 1987, L1884.

<sup>87</sup> Hulme, *Thrift*, 40–41.

<sup>88</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, R1452, R2144, T2003, T2543.

<sup>89</sup> MOA Spring 1987, L1789, see also F210.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, R2001.

The ideal of 'elegant economy' continued to influence older women's performance of financial selfhood in the 1990s. A retired library assistant emphasised how few of the 'modern so-called "Necessities" of life', such as a stereo or microwave oven, they owned. Conscious that her description of their holidays might sound 'like quite a luxurious life-style' she asserts that their spending is 'minimal' in comparison with 'everyone' they know. However, this correspondent only wrote about her financial prudence after she had established that they were 'in the fortunate position of not having to worry about budgeting', suggesting that it was still important to distinguish voluntary thrift from the frugality imposed by limited means.<sup>91</sup>

In contrast, another correspondent recalled how in 'a working class family before the Second World War', thrift was a 'habit of necessity'. Thrift in this context was not about eschewing consumer goods, it was about making essential household purchases last, for example, by leaving soap to harden before use so it would dissolve more slowly.<sup>92</sup> Female thrift could, though, signal male failure to provide. A correspondent who described her younger self as 'very prudent and economical, buying the cheapest cuts of meat', and had made children's clothes from 'adult dresses bought for pennies at jumble sales', was concerned to substantiate her resentment at her husband's failure to contribute sufficiently to their household finances, which was a factor in their eventual separation.<sup>93</sup> Gendered financial identities continued to resonate in the late twentieth century. It is telling that a correspondent on supplementary benefit who wrote frankly about shopping at jumble sales and accepting 'clothes parcels' from friends was a single-mother who did not have to take male-breadwinner pride into account.<sup>94</sup>

Many correspondents located the origin of their thrifty habits in the experience of wartime shortages and rationing.<sup>95</sup> Alluding to wartime experience, even if only in the form of childhood memories of "waste not want not", "make do and mend" could

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<sup>91</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, T2543.

<sup>92</sup> MOA Spring 1987, L1919, see also, B36; MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, N399.

<sup>93</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, W2679

<sup>94</sup> MOA Spring 1987, L1768.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., A1615, A1646, A1783, E174, F1614, L1619, L1699, L1830; MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, R1452.

give the frugal 'traits ingrained' a positive glow of selflessness and 'collectivity', and distance them from meanness.<sup>96</sup> For the correspondent quoted, this imagery contributed to her presentation of thrift as a moral position and essential to her Christian identity. Thrift enabled her and her clergyman husband to donate a proportion of their income to charity.<sup>97</sup> Another correspondent took a moral position which was not overtly religious, citing her family's belief in 'great thrift and respect for things as well as people'.<sup>98</sup>

However, M-OP evidence suggests that by the 1980s frugal 'make-do-and-mend' thrift was the target of mockery. A woman in her mid-seventies wrote that her family 'get a giggle' because she won't buy 'dusters, dish cloths or floor cloths' and another who described her thrifty habits past and present in detail commented, 'Friends laugh at my thrift.'<sup>99</sup> She writes with fond regret about a time when her money-saving skills were better valued. In part, this was nostalgia for a life-stage when she was the mother of young children who expressed their 'delight...on Christmas morning' with a renovated second-hand dolls' house. But her memories of the 1960s, when she used to knit the family's socks and make children's clothes from her cast-offs, supports Roberts' finding that the marginalisation of women's 'traditional management skills' was a profound, and for some women detrimental, by-product of rising prosperity and consumerism in the post-war decades.<sup>100</sup>

The impression that thrifty wartime habits were no longer seen as relevant in the 1980s is further underlined by correspondents who reported being chastised for their thrift because it was damaging to the economy. One wrote in 1987, 'My husband who is a great "consumer" says that more like me would bring the economy (if not the western world!) to a rapid halt,' and another was presented with the same argument by her son who opined that 'if people were not wasteful there would be more people

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<sup>96</sup> Hulme, *Thrift*, 73.

<sup>97</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, R2144.

<sup>98</sup> MOA Spring 1987, R1953.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, A22, A1412.

<sup>100</sup> Roberts, *Women and Families*, 92–93.

out of work'.<sup>101</sup> Hulme locates these arguments in the New Deal and Keynesian economics which created the 'duty to spend' that she suggests 'marked the true beginning of consumer society as we know it.'<sup>102</sup> In this formulation 'thrift' is both a threat to workers' livelihoods and a threat to capitalism, allowing consumerism to be embraced by the left and the right. In the economic climate of the 1980s these arguments against thrift were particularly powerful. One symbol of the era, indoor shopping centres, could be presented as a solution to another, mass-unemployment, rather than as a sign of growing inequality. These insights into family conversations also suggest that male denigration of women's traditional housekeeping skills based on hard, masculine, economic arguments may have been a factor in the loss of self-esteem described by Roberts.

However, as Hulme identifies, in the 1980s a new discourse of thrift was emerging which focussed on the environmental impact of waste.<sup>103</sup> This gave thrifty women a fresh opportunity for pride. The correspondent who was laughed at by her friends explained that she was sparing with cleaning products, 'not simply for reasons of thrift' but also because of 'the pollution they are putting into our rivers and seas.'<sup>104</sup> Other correspondents made similar arguments, a stance which was perhaps encouraged by the directive's reference to 'bottle-banks', one of the few opportunities for recycling beyond the individual household in 1980s Britain. One correspondent showed a reflexive awareness of the impact this shift in discourse was having on her when she wrote, 'To some extent I have retained these habits of thrift though I like to think it is because of ecological reasons rather than meanness as this seems more acceptable.'<sup>105</sup>

In this and the previous chapter I have explored change and continuity in media representations of women's relationship with household money, and used M-OP to show how women used, adapted and subverted this cultural script to feel pride and pleasure in money management, to channel their emotions into financial agency, and

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<sup>101</sup> MOA Spring 1987, L1884, R1468.

<sup>102</sup> Hulme, *Thrift*, 87.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 92–108.

<sup>104</sup> MOA Spring 1987, A1412.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, L1691.



to create and perform a financial-self. In the following section I draw these ideas together through three examples of M-OP correspondents' financial autobiographies.

## Autobiography of the financial-self

The 1984, 1987 and 1993 directives all encouraged correspondents to think about their pasts. The electronic banking focus of the 1984 directive was very current, and even futuristic, but nonetheless alluded to the past with, 'Anybody over forty is likely to remember a time when cheque books were usually kept at home' and 'Memories that go back still further will remember the phrase 'buying on the nevernever'. Question 4 stated that correspondents' 'recollections of earlier and surviving savings schemes would be very welcome'. Similarly, the 1987 directive asked correspondents to 'explore' their upbringing. Even the 1993 directive, which asked correspondents to imagine a historian working in 2043 researching the economic recession of the early 1990s, required them to think about the significant changes in their financial situation in 'the past, say, 10 years'. Although none of the directives asked directly for a life-story, this prompting of reminiscence encouraged many correspondents to respond with an autobiography of their financial-self.<sup>106</sup>

Women's decision to offer a personal history of their relationship with money to the archive, from childhood or marriage to the present, suggests that they considered this form to have a particular explanatory power for the reader, and/or that the construction of a narrative was an effective tool for the management of their financial selfhood. My exploration of three M-OP correspondents' autobiographies of their financial-self is influenced by Marie-Francois Chanfrault-Duchet's deployment of approaches associated with literary criticism to analyse women's oral 'life-stories'. Chanfrault-Duchet examines features such as the narrative structure, construction of characters and symbolism used by women to tell their life-stories and considers how these literary techniques contribute to their creation and communication of a

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<sup>106</sup> For example, MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, S2407.

gendered self.<sup>107</sup> This approach emphasises the importance of ‘social representations and cultural values’ in shaping individual selfhood and highlights the tension which all autobiographical endeavours seek to resolve between the ‘narrative presentation of a unique self which can be also recognised by society.’<sup>108</sup>

Moreover, my reading of M-OP supports Penny Summerfield’s analysis, in her oral history of the Home Guard, that a coherent selfhood can only be achieved if a cultural script exists on which life-story tellers can draw. Summerfield applies Graham Dawson’s dual use of the term ‘composure’ as both the construction of a narrative and the feeling of personal ‘equanimity’ which the life-story teller achieves through its communication. Composure in both senses is more difficult if the discourses available do not fit the subject’s experience or are contradictory.<sup>109</sup>

The three M-OP financial-life-stories I discuss highlight changes in women’s relationship with money in the late twentieth century through employment and divorce. Central themes in this thesis of financial equality in marriage, women’s financial agency and the emotional resonance of money management are explored. The impact of cultural assumptions, old and new, on the financial identities women could construct and perform are illuminated in these brief autobiographies.

Some correspondents produced life-stories which were highly structured, or ‘narrativised.’ One made this process particularly clear when she wrote, ‘Financially, if you like, my life falls into three fairly distinct sections. Teenage, early married life, then life as a single parent family.’ These three sections function as a classic three act drama forming a clear narrative arc. The first act concerns her parents’ withdrawal of financial and emotional support. This is resolved at the beginning of act two through marriage and a good income. She takes on a specifically late twentieth century financial identity

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<sup>107</sup> Marie-Francois Chanfrault-Duchet, ‘Textualisation of the self and gender identity in the life-story’, in Tess Coslett, Celia Lury, and Penny Summerfield, eds., *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods* (London: Routledge, 2001), 61-75, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/suss/detail.action?docID=168494>.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>109</sup> Penny Summerfield, ‘Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews’, *Cultural and Social History* 1, no. 1 (1 January 2004): 69–70, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478003804cs00050a>.

when she describes herself and her husband as “‘dinkies’” and itemises established indicators of this era’s rising affluence, including modernising the house, holidays, meals out and buying new clothes. However, by the end of this act she finds herself ‘alone, with 2 young children’, as did increasing numbers of women after the Divorce Reform Act came into effect in 1971.<sup>110</sup>

This structure enables the correspondent to challenge contemporary stereotypes of single mothers as ‘scroungers’ because she has established her hard work and financial independence in the previous sections. She closes the circle of her narrative by suggesting that the trauma of her teenage years was not in vain because the budgeting skills she was forced to learn ‘came into good use again’. However, the personal composure which the successful composure of her narrative might achieve remains elusive due to external, political factors: she ends her account with anxiety about how she will be able to afford to support her sons through university in the light of the government’s freezing of student grants.<sup>111</sup> Material realities prevent this correspondent from achieving composure.

In my second example the limitations of the cultural script from which to form financial identities makes it difficult for the correspondent to present a coherent and comfortable financial selfhood. This correspondent was a confident writer who published books on plants and herbs in the 1980s and kept a journal from which she might ‘give readings’ at social gatherings.<sup>112</sup> A practised literary skill and heightened awareness of her audience are evident in the vivid and dramatic vignettes she includes in her response to the 1993 directive. One such image is of her father who ‘used to drunkenly throw handfuls of silver coins in the air’ for her ‘to scabble about the floor picking up’. She thought this was ‘wonderful’ although it made her mother ‘weep.’ She adds more to her father’s financial identity, writing, ‘My father had style; he would turn up very late for lunch with salmon or lobster or asparagus falling out of its paper;

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<sup>110</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, B2675.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> MOA, Spring 2008, M2290.

he once hailed a taxi to get across Kingsway. His drinking friends loved him for his generosity.’<sup>113</sup>

The legend-like quality of her father’s exploits and the reported esteem of his friends are suggestive of O’Connell’s oral history interviews with working-class couples in Belfast. He found that men were unwilling or unable to engage with interviews about money management because it was a feminine discourse but could readily recount stories of local ‘folk heroes’ ducking and diving to avoid both their creditors and their wives who might try to take their drinking money.<sup>114</sup> The correspondent presents her first husband as fitting the same archetype. She writes that he was ‘hopeless...generous with presents and also selfish and self-indulgent; but never mean.’ She depicts their life as precarious, sometimes she had ‘money to buy food, sometimes not’, but never dull. She offers the entertaining image of the bailiffs, who ‘called regularly’, introducing her to their successors with, “‘This is Mrs W. You’ll be seeing a lot of her’” and adds for maximum impact ‘[s]weet they were.’<sup>115</sup>

Until this point the story is carefully composed for literary effect, but when she moves on to her second marriage the vivid imagery and crafted anecdotes are lost. She writes, ‘One of the things I found attractive about my present husband was the fact of him being careful with money’ but this means that he ‘worries all the time about it, and not having enough’ and ‘will walk miles to find something a few pence cheaper’. Her testimony ends with the statement, ‘I think it’s boring to spend so much time thinking about money.’<sup>116</sup> The rest of her testimony is typed, but this sentence is handwritten, suggesting that it was something she felt compelled to add at a later point and is, therefore, particularly heartfelt.

This correspondent’s testimony underlines the gendered nature of financial discourse in popular culture throughout the twentieth century. She draws on the archetype of the irresponsible but open-handed man to paint very colourful and essentially

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<sup>113</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, M2290.

<sup>114</sup> O’Connell, *Credit and Community*, 22–23.

<sup>115</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, M2290.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

masculine representations of her father and first husband. The discourse on thrift and worrying about making ends meet, which she employs for her second husband, was, though, associated with women. The alternative masculine identity, that of the responsible middle-class provider, was only available to men who were successful earners who didn't need to scrimp or worry. The cultural script of the 'mean man' as emasculated contrasted with the strength and virility of both the provider and the loveable rogue. The association of male sexual potency with spending power was common cultural currency, referenced by Barclaycard adverts in the 1970s and by Anna Raeburn in 'Femail' in 1975 when she opined that a 'man who is mean with money is usually mean with sex as well.'<sup>117</sup>

The financial-self which this correspondent constructs in relation to the other characters in her narrative is, as she acknowledges, 'ambivalent.' She presents life with her first husband as stressful, but dismisses the discomfort she felt around utilities being cut off and 'hiding from the Income Tax people and bank manager' as her 'bourgeois feelings.'<sup>(sic)</sup> Now she uses electricity 'only at the cheap rate' and 'look[s] for reduced packets at the supermarket', but this is not a self she is comfortable with: as she puts it very starkly, 'The joy has gone.'<sup>118</sup>

My third narrative relates a correspondent's successful efforts to shift the financial power in her marriage. The plot could be characterised as a variant of *Beauty and the Beast*, in the more specific form of 'taming the feckless husband'. We know more about this correspondent's writing practices as she was interviewed by Bloome for inclusion in *Writing Ourselves: Mass-Observation and Literary Practices*. She generally answered directives by taking notes as ideas occurred to her and then composing her answer from these notes when she had at least an hour to devote to the task. This adds further weight to the impression that the structure of her answer to the 1993 directive was deliberate and considered. She also described keeping her financial account books as her only other regular writing outside her work and as something she

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<sup>117</sup> 'BGA, 493/1: 'One man in 21 has a different kind of spending power', 1970; 'The mean man in every woman's life', 'Femail', *Daily Mail*, 12 November, 1975, 10, Gale.

<sup>118</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, M2290.

enjoys.<sup>119</sup> Her financial-self is clearly an significant aspect of this correspondent's self-image; the story of how she came to exercise this aspect of her selfhood more freely is especially important to her and warrants careful recounting.

This is not a full life-story as it focuses only on her married life. Her narrative revolves around four key turning points, in each of which she changes her husband's behaviour through a combination of her verbal skills and career success. The escalating structure of her story is reinforced by the triumphalist tone of her language.

The narrative starts with a description of their early married life in the 1960s when her husband 'made up' her weekly salary with 'just enough' to pay their way 'and then blew the rest on boozing with his mates' or 'betting on horses', sometimes even 'pinching back the rent' to do this. Although this sounds damning, the correspondent keeps the tone light-hearted. The 'Jack-the-lad' characterisation she offers is a familiar archetype referenced by the previous correspondent to draw her father and first husband. The correspondent reassures the reader that her husband's youthful bad behaviour will be forgiven when she adds 'I often tease him now about it and he admits that it would have served him right if I'd left him.'<sup>120</sup>

The first step in reforming her husband came on a camping holiday when she told him she had 'had enough' of paying for the publican's holiday in Barbados while they 'took a cheap few days' break in 'total discomfort'. As a result, 'He started spending less money in the pub!' She goes on, 'Another time he came back with a few hundred pounds he'd won on the horses and threw it down on the table, flushed with success'. The correspondent vividly describes her dramatic reaction: 'I just swiped it onto the floor and said, "it's only what you paid in over the weeks"'. This time 'He started spending less in the betting shop!'<sup>121</sup> So far the narrative has tapped into recognisable

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<sup>119</sup> Sheridan et al., *Writing Ourselves*, 141, 143–44.

<sup>120</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, W632.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

soap-opera stereotypes of working-class men as lovable rogues and working-class wives as feisty and vocal.

The next two stages of her story employ less familiar imagery. What the correspondent describes as '[a]nother good turn' came when she took on a full-time job. She writes, 'I...demanded to be treated equally in that my husband should have the same amount of free spending money as me.' Finally, 'the best came' when she decided to pursue career advancement. She writes, 'by degrees, my income has risen year by year and my husband's has diminished'. She describes the final victory: 'now if he goes out to the pub he takes me with him and the only free spending he does is to buy breakfast at the café each morning.'<sup>122</sup>

This narrative is revealing in many ways. It testifies to the close relationship between money and power in marriage. More precisely, this correspondent's experience supports Vogler and Pahl's conclusion from the SCEL data that 'greater equality within the household depends, not simply on women's increased participation in the labour market, but more specifically on the full-time employment of women.'<sup>123</sup> Cross-referencing this account with the correspondent's reply to the 1984 directive suggests that the spread of banking played a role in this power shift. The correspondent writes that in 1971 she opened an account in joint names for her salary and that five years later her husband reluctantly agreed to have his wages paid into it.<sup>124</sup> This will have made equal spending money easier to organise, or enforce, than when her husband had cash wages. This qualifies Roberts' finding that the spread of banking diminished wives' financial power by showing that it was possible for an employed and determined wife to turn this development in her favour.

Her narrative charts changing ideologies of money and marriage in the late twentieth century. In the first scenes the ideal of the male-breadwinner is implied in her husband's failure to provide for his family. The second phase is representative of

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Vogler and Pahl, 'Social and Economic Change', 93.

<sup>124</sup> MOA Summer 1984, W632.

support for greater gender equality in marriage as they both work and have the same spending money. By the end, gender roles are reversed as she has taken on the provider role and financial control. This testimony appears to challenge Tichnor's findings that women in 'status reversal couples' will often go to great lengths to disguise their higher earnings and deny any additional power in the relationship which this might confer.<sup>125</sup> However, the correspondent's responses to other directives complicate this impression. We learn that her husband was diabetic and had a stroke in 1987. She makes a telling comment in her response to the Summer 1989 directive on 'Conduct' when she writes of her husband that she could never 'throw in his face nasty remarks about his lower income or his ill-health'. She adds, he 'has not forgotten his mother saying that she was "keeping" his father during a spell of unemployment, and feels this keenly in his own situation.'<sup>126</sup>

Within the correspondent's household and social circle the triumphant tone she adopted for the 1993 directive was proscribed. Writing for M-OP provided this correspondent with a space in which she could celebrate her domestic victories and career success in a way which remained unacceptable in other forums. Nonetheless, this platform appears to afford her a degree of personal composure as it allows her to construct a selfhood built on financial competence and career success and to perform this to an interested audience.

## Conclusion

M-OP is a uniquely fertile resource through which to explore women's creation and performance of selfhoods. The time, thought and creativity which many correspondents devote to shaping and performing their financial-self confirms that the financial was an important element of identity and self-esteem in the late twentieth century. M-OP testimony demonstrates the influence of psychological discourse on

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<sup>125</sup> Veronica Jaris Tichenor, 'Status and Income as Gendered Resources: The Case of Marital Power', *Journal of Marriage and Family* 61, no. 3 (1999): 638–50, <https://doi.org/10.2307/353566>.

<sup>126</sup> MOA Spring 2008, 'Your life line'. Correspondent W632 responses to M-OP directives Summer 1987 Holidays and Summer 1989 Conduct, *Observing the 80s*, accessed 7 August, 2021, <https://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/observingthe80s/>



concepts of selfhood. The financial-self was widely understood to be a fundamental aspect of personality shaped in childhood, but also multi-dimensional with new financial-selves discovered through writing for M-OP and different financial-selves performed to the archive than to family. The range of financial-selves which M-OP correspondents deploy, from Dinkies to Virgos, speaks to the cultural as well as individual importance of the financial to selfhood in the late twentieth century. The connections the correspondents draw between their fundamental political or religious values and their financial selfhood underline this point.

Women's negotiation of their cultural and material context in their endeavour to construct a coherent financial selfhood illuminates broader social changes. In response to directive questions about the popularity of chequebooks, correspondents explored the decline in class-deference and its impact on their status and identity. M-OP testimony deepens our understanding of the impact of paid work on women's self-esteem by establishing that workplace identity could increase women's power in the household through transferable financial skills as well as through contributing to the family income. Although it confirms that traditional housewifely thrift was under pressure from consumerism, M-OP testimony also demonstrates that women adjusted their performance of thrift to incorporate newer ecological concerns.

The cultural script from which women drew to construct and perform a financial-self was shifting. The thrifty housewife ideal was not entirely eclipsed but was losing ground to the financially literate woman, confident in her use of banking technologies to manage household money through multiple accounts and investments. As new skills were required to manage household money, the source of these skills changed from the private domestic sphere to the public, through employment and burgeoning financial advice in the media. These high expectations of financial skills and knowledge made it harder for some women to construct a positive financial selfhood but were an opportunity for others to display their expertise and gain self-esteem.

A fundamental change to the spendthrift identity was that by the 1980s women were increasingly expected to earn the money that they spent on themselves. M-OP

evidence suggests that despite the consumerist reputation of the period, cultural norms that women's spending should be altruistic remained stronger in the 1980s and early 1990s than the first shoots of 'retail therapy'. The taboo around mothers spending on themselves remained especially powerful. Some M-OP correspondents, particularly those offering longer narratives, constructed a financial-identity in relation to their husband. These suggest that gender norms around money and masculinity were slow to change, making it difficult for some correspondents to in compose their own coherent financial-self.

## Conclusion

The testimony of M-OP correspondents has been central to my study and has shaped my analysis of women's relationship with household money. By grounding my Conclusion in one woman's responses to the 1984, 1987 and 1993 directives I hope to underline the unique contribution M-OP has made to this study and its findings. Sheridan, Street, and Bloome's exposition of the 'telling case' has informed the approach of subsequent historians to the M-OP archive, including my own. M-OP panel member B58 is a telling case. She is not typical, and her contribution is more than illustrative. B58's testimony, like that of the many other M-OP correspondents whose writing I have explored, is revelatory, rather than merely representative, of the insights this thesis has achieved.<sup>1</sup>

My thesis has established that household money management provided an important opportunity for women to exercise agency and gain self-esteem in the late twentieth century. The presence of older women on the M-OP panel, who rarely featured in contemporary sociology, has shown that women's desire for a degree of financial independence pre-dated the WLM's fifth demand. My analysis of M-OP testimony has also demonstrated that the fight for women's financial autonomy took place in individual homes and marriages, as well as in WLM meetings, through academic research, and in the money advice columns of women's magazines. My analysis has foregrounded the cultural circuit through which each of these elements both shaped and reflected changes in women's relationship with household money in the late twentieth century.

B58 was born in 1922 and her struggle began when she married in the 1950s and her husband took 'complete control over all expenditure'; she received no 'regular house-keeping allowance with which to plan'. B58 acknowledges that, unlike other women in this situation whose experiences I discussed in Chapter 1, she had 'not...actually suffered a lot' materially because her husband was wealthy and had 'bouts of

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<sup>1</sup> Sheridan et al., *Writing Ourselves*, 13–14; Purbrick, *The Wedding Present*, 15, 223.

generosity'. However, the psychological impact of having to ask her husband for money was something she 'resented' enormously. She writes that this 'came hard to a woman who had run her own life successfully without financial aid from anyone at all'. This underlines the extent to which paid work during and after the war contributed to expectations of financial agency and autonomy in marriage among women of her generation. Like many other women, as I showed in Chapter 2, B58 kept control over some money she could call 'my own' in order to feel 'a little bit independent.' In her case this came for her pre-marriage savings and disability pension, but for many other married women this was the main incentive to take on paid work.

B58 took a keen interest in finance and economics: she 'read up' about it, talked to 'erudite friends' and a tried to 'tell anyone in the family who will listen'. The proliferation of financial advice in women's magazine's that I have charted was part of a more generalised cultural interest in money in the 1980s. B58's testimony speaks to its influence and also shows that some women were tearing down the taboo against money talk. B58 performed her financial expertise to M-OP as well as to family members. She wrote about the complex, and successful, financial practices she had carried out with evident pride. The practices she describes were also of their time. In the early 1970s, when the first housing bubble burst, she organised a loan to pay the deposits and then arranged the mortgages on two houses for her children. When she responded to the 1984 directive she was in the process of moving from a bank to a building society 'cheque-save' account so that she could receive interest and wouldn't need to keep £100 balance. As I established in Chapter 3, this trend, created by many women, forced the high street banks to offer free banking. Her financial acumen is most ostentatiously displayed in her decision to sell shares for seven times as much as she paid for them in February 1987, eight months before the 'Black Monday' stock market crash.

B58's testimony is also valuable on the culture of high street banking, how it disadvantaged women and the pressure banks came under to change. Like many other women of her generation and background she 'didn't know that cheque books existed' until she was thirty when she received a compensation cheque for £3000, a very

significant sum in 1952. Her bank manager was clearly guided by mid-century stereotypes of spendthrift women when he said to her, “‘I suppose you will want to spend it all so I will give you an open cheque book.’” She writes that she had been ‘quivering with indignation ever since’ this encounter with her bank manager over thirty years previously – about his assumption that she would ‘blow the lot’ and because he failed to advise her to put the money in an interest earning account. I have established throughout this study, but especially in Chapter 3, that money management is an emotional practice and, crucially, that feelings underpin financial agency. B58 channelled her indignation into trying to change banking culture towards women. She told a subsequent bank manager the story, ‘just to gee him up re. people like me might look rather ignorant but...’

I have explored how the materiality of banking technologies contributed to emotions associated with financial practices and, therefore, to agency. B58 writes about a Cenotaph shaped money box which encouraged her saving habit as a child. She finds it ‘curious’ that it never crossed her mind to ‘rob it’, but it seems likely that the form, with its symbolic association with honour and sacrifice, contributed to this. Although ‘not resistant’ to cashpoints, she found the logistics of keeping the PIN separate from the card defeated her and complained that they were ‘so public.’ B58’s feelings around credit cards speak to the escalating media concern about problem debt. In 1984 she wasn’t sure whether credit cards were ‘a good thing’ but by 1987 had become ‘very worried’. Despite the emotive language, her concerns are, like those of other M-OP correspondents I cited in Chapter 3, very rational and not indicative of moral panic. Committing future income to goods which may fall in price due to advances in technology ‘horrified’ her. She ‘personally’ never paid interest on her Barclaycard or did any ‘impulse buying’.

B58’s financial-self is an essential element of her identity. She demonstrates her expertise and is ‘angry and frustrated’ by her husband’s financial mistakes. Her money management skills are a source of self-esteem, though also of regret. She writes in 1993, ‘What a pity I never had more of the family money to deal with....’

M-OP correspondent B58's frustration is palpable and she testifies to the difficulties faced by women whose partner controls household money and limits their access to it. However, she also shows the potential for agency and self-esteem offered by money management, even if limited to a small proportion of the household budget. Although this correspondent's financial confidence and wealth were not typical, some of her financial practices were common to many other women who told M-OP that they complained to bank managers about charges, or moved their accounts, or timed purchases on credit cards to get the maximum interest free period. B58 demonstrates the reflexivity that is such a valuable element of M-OP testimony. She questions her motives for saving, speculating that they are 'psychological,' which speaks to both the ubiquity of psycho-analytical discourse around money in the twentieth century and perhaps also to the increasingly emotional and psychological emphasis I noted in women's magazines' coverage of money.

In 1987 B58 wrote, 'I really don't know what good it does all this communication of my opinions and experiences but...I must let others decide about that.' I have decided, and I hope demonstrated, that B58's communication is extremely valuable to a cultural historian of the late twentieth century, as is that of the other M-OP correspondents whose words have driven this study.<sup>2</sup>

In this thesis I have shown that the influence of economic considerations on intimate relationships did not, as Giddens suggested, decline in the late twentieth century, it increased. In the mid-1990s, when my period ends, Singh argued that 'For women, more than men, the central dilemma of modern life in Western countries is to manage committed personal and family relationships on the one hand and financial independence on the other.'<sup>3</sup> My exploration of responses to three M-OP directives has demonstrated that women grappled with this dilemma and its many implications, devising and trialling a variety of potential solutions.

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<sup>2</sup> MOA Summer 1984, MOA Spring 1987, MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, B58.

<sup>3</sup> Singh, *Marriage Money*, 154–55.

Emma Griffin has argued that rapid industrialisation and urbanisation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries disrupted domestic financial arrangements.<sup>4</sup> My study has demonstrated that rapid social, economic and cultural change in the second half of the twentieth century had a similarly disruptive impact. The rise in married women's paid work and their increasing responsibility for providing the 'extras', such as household appliances and holidays, which were considered necessities for many families by the 1980s, challenged the male-breadwinner model. Although women continued to do the bulk of domestic chores and childcare, second wave feminism's critique of the 'housewife' was influential on mainstream media discourse by the 1980s. The WFH movement and, paradoxically, the wider WLM's rejection of it, further underlined that the transactional relationship between female caring and domestic work, and male financial support, was no longer endorsed. This uncertainty around gender roles in relation to household money was exacerbated by inconsistent government policies which made it harder for unemployed women to seek work, but also froze Child Benefit, an essential source of income for non-working mothers. Alongside these policies, which increased married women's dependency on their husband's income, divorce reform was introduced which reduced women's access to maintenance payments on the assumption that women should be financially independent.

At the same time norms in marriage shifted as the companionate model of shared leisure and greater gender equality became the ideal, if not always the reality. However, the sharing ideal generated its own dilemmas: what does a 'fair' system for sharing household income look like; how to balance sharing with a desire for privacy; and how to reconcile equal access to a joint account with the need to keep household spending under control? A feminist inspired emphasis on financial autonomy, which by the 1990s had become the dominant discourse in women's magazines, exacerbated this uncertainty. The earner entitlement which often underpinned more independent financial systems could disadvantage women as their income was usually lower and

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<sup>4</sup> Emma Griffin, *Bread Winner: An Intimate History of the Victorian Economy*, (London: Yale University Press, 2020), 109–34.

gendered division of spending responsibilities often left women with a greater financial burden.

However, M-OP testimony shows that out of these uncertainties women managed to create systems which offered equality, sharing and autonomy. For a few this was achieved through independent management with constant negotiation and adjustments to individual spending responsibilities. Others adopted a partial pool system with a joint and individual accounts and equal personal spending money. It is important to note that M-OP correspondents were writing and talking about these systems in 1984, nearly a decade before sociologists identified the partial pool. The thread linking those women who seemed satisfied with their financial arrangements was a willingness on the part of their husbands and themselves to talk about money. The correspondent who opined that the taboo on money talk 'operated against women' by keeping them 'in ignorance of something they therefore couldn't influence' was most insightful.<sup>5</sup>

The expansion and popularisation of banking, and development of banking technologies, also had a profound impact on household money management. The decline in cash wages ensured that bank accounts were no longer the preserve of the wealthy. Increasing affluence from the 1950s meant that more households had decisions to make around saving and spending. Many took on mortgages, and for some, privatisations in the 1980s encouraged an interest in the stock market. This transformation was more fundamental, though, than opportunities to engage with new financial products. Everyday banking technologies altered the meaning, practical and emotional, of money management. Bank accounts, monthly pay, chequebooks, credit cards, cashpoints and direct debits made the tasks of balancing the household budget and planning future spending or investment fundamentally different in the 1990s compared with the post-war decades.

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<sup>5</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, J1407.



Key to my intervention in the field of household money is an understanding of financial activities as emotional practices. My practices approach has foregrounded the material, spatial and temporal specificity of financial technologies and the embodied nature of their use. This perspective highlights the extent of change in money management. An emphasis on the physical experience of financial practices inevitably draws attention to the feelings involved. These feelings are complex and often contradictory, dependent on how banking technologies were used and in what context. Credit could engender fear and pride; the materiality of chequebooks encouraged a sense of satisfaction when matching the stubs to a statement but intense anger when used by others in a supermarket; direct debits were a source of unease and peace of mind. As new technologies were introduced and became imbedded in women's money management practices the feelings associated with them also shifted.

The emotions associated with managing money could enhance or diminish the feeling of self-efficacy which is an essential precondition for agency. Emotions invoked agency in other ways, the most obvious example being women's anger about banks' charges and lending practices which led them to move accounts or stop using credit cards. I have argued that, as women adapted their money management habits to accommodate bank accounts and new technologies, the dominant experience was of increased control over household money and, therefore, increased agency. It must be acknowledged though that for some women new technologies remained a source of anxiety rather than agency, and most of the new opportunities for financial agency were not available to households on a low income.

As banks' advertising and magazines' advice columns encouraged women's autonomy and agency around managing money, a psychological discourse promised that this was the route to self-esteem. However, a parallel media development refashioned the mid-century middle-class spendthrift wife as the 'shopaholic' in need of 'retail therapy'. This stereotype has the potential to trivialise and negate women's financial skills. My use of M-OP evidence has, though, suggested that the 'shopaholic' held limited appeal before 1995. M-OP testimony speaks to the continuing and powerful social stricture

against women's self-indulgent spending, particularly for mothers. Instead, gift giving and the purchase of tangible and visible products which the family would enjoy were presented as the route to self-esteem through spending.

Changes in the emotional practices associated with managing money took place against a backdrop of further uncertainty in the feeling rules governing financial behaviour. The shifting sands of feeling rules around credit were particularly hard to negotiate; borrowing in the late twentieth century invoked a range of feelings from shame to pride. However, as my exploration of M-OP has established, within this uncertainty women devised and deployed feeling rules to govern their borrowing behaviours. These rules included using catalogue credit because it is sociable and doesn't feel like borrowing or taking out a bank loan because it feels more respectable than H.P. Despite the media discourse of moral panic around credit card debt in the mid-1980s, most M-OP correspondents absorbed credit cards into their everyday money management practices.

Uncertainty also characterises late-twentieth-century selfhood. M-OP testimony offers an insight into the contribution of financial selfhood to this instability. As I demonstrated in Chapter 4, chequebooks were a powerful symbol of class status in the post-war decades, but this was eroded by the popularisation of banking and introduction of cheque guarantee cards. These changes both reflected and contributed to the decline of class deference in the late twentieth century. In the 1980s, financial technologies were becoming associated with the development of surveillance culture which rendered the individual vulnerable and insecure. I have shown that the financial-self was an essential element of many women's identity in the late twentieth century; M-OP testimony illuminates the emotional labour and relational work which women put into creating and maintaining a financial-self.

I have argued that Roberts' and sociologists researching household money in the 1980s and 1990s were too pessimistic in their conclusions. M-OP evidence confirms that many women were responsible for managing household money and that this role could form an important part of their identity. My study has shown that bank accounts

and banking technologies gave women new opportunities to develop financial expertise and exercise financial agency and that expectations of women's financial skills and autonomy rose. An important element of my intervention in the field is the understanding I have achieved of *how* money management could increase women's agency. Emphasising that money management is historically situated and approaching women's behaviours and feelings around money as 'emotional practices' have been essential to developing this understanding. Bennett and Sung have suggested that women might use 'household budget management as compensation for having little, or no, independent income.'<sup>6</sup> My study has confirmed that the practices involved in managing even a small proportion of the household income could provide the feeling of self-efficacy which underpins agency. The M-OP correspondent in my title, who was responsible for managing the housekeeping money and the irregular income from her part-time job, expressed this when she wrote, 'I feel I am in control of my own little area'.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Bennett and Sung, 'Dimensions of Financial Autonomy', 715.

<sup>7</sup> MOA Autumn/Winter 1993, R86.

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