University of Dundee

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Women and Paid Work in Industrial Britain, c.1945 - c.1971

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Women and Paid Work in Industrial Britain, c.1945 – c.1971.

In Submission for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Submitted August 2014

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Abbreviations

AJSM	Association of Jute Spinners and Manufacturers
ARMMS	Archives, Records Management, and Museum Services, University of Dundee.
BT	British Telecom
DCA	Dundee City Archives, Dundee
DDUJFW	Dundee and District Union of Jute and Flax Workers
DWCA	Dundee Women Citizens’ Association
FTEs	Full Time Equivalents
IBM	The International Business Machines Corporation
ILP	Independent Labour Party
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
LEA	Local Education Authorities
LHC	Local History Centre, Dundee Central Library
LRO	Lancashire Record Office, Preston
NCR	National Cash Register
NSA	Nursery School Association
NHR	National Housewives Register
NLTEA	North Lancashire Textile Employers’ Association
SCWG	Scottish Co-operative Women’s Guild
SWRI	Scottish Women’s Rural Institutes
TWAM	Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums, Newcastle upon Tyne
UK	United Kingdom
WLM	Women’s Liberation Movement

Oral History Transcription

Quotations are made throughout the text of this thesis. In particular, the words of oral history respondents are quoted extensively in Chapters Four and Five. The author has aimed as far as possible to accurately and fully cite interviewees' own words and phrasing. In cases where hesitation, repetition, and other verbal cues aid understanding and analysis, these have been left in the extract from the transcription. However, for ease of comprehension, for narrative flow, and due to the word limit of the text, it has been necessary to edit interviewees' words. These editorial decisions have been made sensitively to keep the meaning of the respondent's words intact. These editorial decisions are outlined below:

... – ellipsis indicates where a respondent has trailed off, paused, or left an incomplete sentence.

– a dash indicates where a substantial proportion of extraneous text has been removed, while keeping the meaning of the extract.

[words in square brackets] – Square brackets indicate where the author has inserted words to aid understanding and narrative flow.

(words in round brackets) – Parentheses provide information on non-verbal or other information, such as laughter, pantomiming an action.

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of working-class women and their paid employment between the temporal limits c.1945 and c.1971. Centralising women's experiences, three distinct methodologies – statistical analysis, archival research, and oral history – discretely delivered, explore changing patterns of women's employment. Four case studies of northern industrial towns and cities – Glasgow, Dundee, Newcastle, and Preston – are used to test the notion of regional distinctiveness and its survival into the twentieth-century.

Statistical analysis of women's labour market participation demonstrates convergence of regional differences. Women's participation in paid work was augmented across the country, and married women became an increasing part of the labour force. In industrial towns which historically employed large numbers of married women, such as Preston and Dundee, women's experiences converged with those of cities, such as Newcastle and Glasgow, with strong heavy industry traditions. Economic restructuring entailed women's concentration in service and clerical occupations, compared to manufacturing, such as textiles and 'light' engineering. Until 1970 at least, mothers increasingly returned to employment part-time, contrasting with previous generations of female breadwinners who worked full-time.

The provision of childcare sits at the site of a series of arguments about mother's employment, maternal deprivation, and social problems. National policy lines were rarely drawn around encouraging women into work. An archival method, exploring local authority nurseries and nursery schools, and private nurseries illustrates meagre provision. Women's continued use of childminders

and informal care evidences a demand for provision which was not adequately met by the state. Oral history interviews found few women used local authority childcare, partly because of stringent admittance criteria and the stigma attached.

The fundamental argument of this thesis focuses on working-class women and situates their experiences, sense of self, and personal struggles against family and societal expectations at the core of the profound changes in women's working lives, in contrast to government policy and market economies. Oral history is the final methodology. Original oral history research testifies to work as part of the changing nature of the female self. However, it is emphasised that despite momentous transformation in women's lives, gendered expectations were a limiting force on women's ability to break free from a confining domesticity and unsatisfying work.

Chapter One

Introduction

A study of working-class women's work between the temporal limits of c.1945 to c.1970, this thesis will take an innovative multi-methodology approach to changing female employment patterns. Existing research from diverse fields is synthesised, while original research is contributed which challenges and brings new insights to women's work in the third quarter of the twentieth-century. Economic and social history explanations for the momentous changes which occurred in women's working lives are proposed, while the importance of women's agency in enacting these changes is stressed. The distinctiveness of this thesis lies in the use of three discretely delivered methods in tandem, which offer different versions of proof. The interplay between structural factors and individual action as agents of change in women's lives is explored, arguing that working-class women's dynamic expectations for their lives beyond the confines of domesticity were integral to this transformation.

The post-Second World War years, bookended by the war and the onset of 'second wave' feminism and the women's liberation movement, is a period ripe for study:

> The post-1945 era is only just opening up for historians. Although we already have several texts on women covering this period, there has been little time as yet for the generation of historiographical debate compared to earlier years.[1]

Bruley's observation on the limited availability of historiography on post-war women has considerable applicability to women's work, although research on

women in this period continues to develop. The claim to have studied a transformative period of time is often made by historians, but is by no means invalid. Although it is true that less time has passed since 1945, and so the historiography has not accumulated or developed as far as for earlier periods, in conjunction with the relative youth of the field of women's history, there remain rich seams of research on women's work to reach understanding of the period. As recently as 2012, Thane has shown that the history of the post-Second World War period 'remains in its infancy'.[2] Understandings of the recent past embody assumptions, even stereotypes, about the fifties and sixties in popular discourse and history, leading to generalisations about post-war women being absorbed uncritically in general histories. However, these assumptions are being challenged and disentangled. For Thomas, the 1950s 'have been presented in popular and academic texts as well as by politicians in highly contradictory ways'.[3] The 'permissive' sixties are perceived as a watershed moment in social, political, and cultural mores.

In the post-war period, working-class women were subject to numerous social and economic surveys, into family and community life, affluence and living standards. This chapter introduces existing research on the twentieth-century woman worker, commencing with a review of contemporary research and surveys.

Social Surveys

In this section, contemporary British social surveys on women are considered. The post-war period saw a flurry of social surveys and sociological inquiries into the family, the home, and the married woman worker.[4] This review

of research on women's work selects key studies which shaped contemporary and later historical thinking on the working-class woman worker.

Early social studies focussed on working-class women's lack of interest in their paid employment beyond the wages provided. Women's interests, enjoyment, and identity were alleged to be found in the home and with the family. Ferdinand Zweig's *Women's Life and Labour* (1952) held this view and illustrated that the 'poor woman dragged by the hair to factories and mills under the impetus of want and squalor' had become a minority.[5] Nonetheless working-class women were drawn to employment by the appeal of financial freedom and independence.[6] The lack of self-confidence and feelings of inferiority among working-class women was a trope employed by Zweig who cited the words of a female manager:

> A working-class woman gives service all the time. She is a meek domestic drudge, often expected to go out to work as well. She is overburdened, like an ox, with no time for herself. And she accepts her lot with equanimity, thinking she does not deserve anything better. You can see her sense of inferiority in her eyes and bearing.[7]

Zweig conceded there was 'a lot of truth'[8] in this respondent's negative portrayal of the toil suffered by the downtrodden working-class woman, although he ultimately distanced himself from it. Working women have been characterised as having little work solidarity, with employment playing a smaller part in their lives compared to men's; their work a sideline or stopgap until marriage.[9] In consequence working women were thought to prefer monotonous jobs, as it allowed them time to day dream and think about domestic or romantic matters.[10] It is perhaps not surprising that modern readers might consider Zweig's findings to be 'impressionistic, judgemental and condescending'.[11] Despite Zweig's overwhelmingly negative portrayal of working-class women, his observations on

the importance of financial independence and internal self-esteem have value in reconsidering working women. However, his conclusions are not representative of all post-war social inquiries.

Social surveys sought to explain the increasing numbers of working-class wives and mothers who worked, despite apparent increasing post-war affluence. Rowntree and Lavers' *Poverty and the Welfare State* (1951) sought to explain the 'paradox' that the practice of supplementing the family income by married women's employment was more common among better–off working–class families.[12] They believed that this was due to aspirations for consumer goods; 'the working-class is more prosperous than it has ever been which has created a desire in many families for goods that would formerly have been rejected without consideration as being entirely beyond their means'.[13] In their analysis, the perceived growing prosperity of the working-classes had increased aspirations for new consumer goods, prompting the return of married women to work to afford these 'extras'. Myrdal and Klein in *Women's Two Roles* (1956) also sought to explain why working-class women largely no longer *needed* to earn subsidence wages for the family, yet the numbers of skilled women and married women remaining in work had risen. Contributory factors included labour shortages, and the associated government export drive, and rearmament due to the Korean war. Demographic factors such as the rising marriage rate, and younger age at first marriage were influential too.[14] Moreover, Myrdal and Klein considered the availability of suitable jobs within easy reach, good transport links, suitable childcare provision, training facilities, and the possibility to have some household duties, such as laundry, taken over by commercial services, posed a 'standing invitation' to women to work. Increased leisure time as a result of smaller

families, and labour saving devices, and the 'social isolation' of housewives encouraged women to work outside the home.[15] The boredom and isolation of housewives and women with young children were observed to be particularly severe in 'socially chilly' modern, multi-storey housing flats.[16] In Myrdal and Klein's positive and optimistic analysis, married women had been induced back into the workplace by national economic needs, whilst smaller nuclear families, labour-saving devices, younger marriage, isolation at home, and financial incentives to increase standards of living influenced women's decision to return to work.

Women's work outside the home was perceived to have affected the division of labour within the home. Willmott and Young's *The Symmetrical Family* (1973) found that the expansion of married women's employment outside the home, in conjunction with their husbands greater contribution to unpaid labour in the home had resulted in a levelling of the relationship between husband and wife.[17] Despite Willmott and Young's optimism about the extent of change in power relationships, shared labour, and gendered roles within the home and family, they reiterated views of married women's work which marginalised their contribution. They restated the financial motives of married women proposing that 'many working-class wives sought the money principally to support a home centred style of life' and a wish to escape monotony.[18] In this way Willmott and Young stressed the importance of women's wages to the household. Although work took second place to home life, women felt conflicted about it. This was particularly acute among women in full-time managerial posts, such as retail management, teaching, nursing, and social work, which were more demanding

than ‘routine’ jobs.[19] However, Willmott and Young found work held deeper meanings and significance to women:

> Most married women are less committed to their paid work. A job is welcome for the money and the company far more than for the satisfaction intrinsic to it. But a minority of more educated wives do not view their job in that light. They are pledged to it and are liable to be more torn between their two worlds than the women with the misfortune (or fortune) to have jobs without such appeal.[20]

Married women were depicted here as largely apathetic towards their work, deriving limited satisfaction from it. However, educated women were believed to gain greater enjoyment and personal fulfilment from their work, and thus experienced greater conflict between their ‘two roles’ of paid employment and domesticity. This might be interpreted to suggest an uninteresting job would not cause mothers the same tension, hence explaining women’s apparent preference for colourless work. However, Willmott and Young suggested almost any job could provide intrinsic rewards:

> Work does not just provide social relationships but a chance for self-expression, at however modest a level, and, with almost any product or service, the sense of making or doing something that is a contribution to the good of others.[21]

Accordingly Willmott and Young recognised that any work could potentially be satisfying and enjoyable. Beyond workplace friendships the intrinsic rewards of ‘making and doing’ were important to working women. Within post-war social surveys, there was a shift in thinking from the drudgery of the woman driven to work by poverty, towards acknowledgement that women could enjoy work and

gain self-esteem, and a degree of financial freedom. However, women's main interests and focus remained, in these analyses, the home and family.

Feminist scholars progressed understanding further, and brought to light the potentially oppressive and stifling experience of full-time domesticity. Among feminist sociologists and researchers, education levels as well as class differences were explored. In *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) Freidan named 'the problem that has no name'. Middle-class, higher-educated American women who had left interesting careers for a life of domesticity, experienced a 'strange discrepancy between the reality of our lives as women and the image to which we were trying to conform'.[22] Domestic ideals proved stifling and isolating to these educated women. The existence of the National Housewives' Register (NHR), an organisation of members who met in neighbourhood groups, suggests this was not a problem exclusive to America. The NHR originated with Maureen Nicol's letter to *The Guardian* in February 1960, in which she suggested 'housebound wives with liberal interests and a desire to remain individuals could form a national register, so that whenever one moves one can contact like-minded friends'.[23] This organisation appeared to be primarily middle-class.[24] Nevertheless, the confinement of suburban domesticity and motherhood, resulting in flatness and a lack of mental stimulation, affected both middle and working-class women. The issue may be the different ways women of distinct classes overcame these constraints. Rowbotham differentiated that 'work has represented for middle-class women the hope of freedom. There is a strong tradition in feminism which sees a job as an answer to women identifying with their home, children, and husband'.[25] Employment and a career was viewed as a liberating, personally gratifying experience for middle-class and educated women by feminist researchers. Through

her Marxist feminist analysis, Rowbotham understood, however, that for working-class women the situation could be different; 'simply working in commodity production isn't going to free women, because it is still determined by the essential production women are responsible for in the family'.[26] The continued association of women with the home, and anchoring of their work to the home and family has affected firstly, women's access to employment and shaped the type of work they take. Secondly, in studies of women's work, whether contemporary social surveys or secondary literature, understanding of women's work has tended to be framed as marginal to men's employment and to women's work within the home. These introductory themes are examined further in the following section, making reference to existing historical research on women's work.

Historiography

Women's historians of earlier historical periods, namely the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, have illustrated the dominance of domestic ideology on contemporary discussions of working-class women's work. The importance of the financial need for women to work was often emphasised. Women's wages were seen as important both in supplementing the breadwinner income and as the primary income in some households. Female productive labour, especially after marriage, was viewed as an aberration by politicians and philanthropists at the time. Working women, and especially mothers, were strongly criticised for their perceived degraded femininity, threats to morality, and the care of children. Perhaps the most potent illustration of this was John's study of female coal workers in Lancashire in the 1880s. John painted a vivid picture of contemporary

fears about the ‘pit brow lasses’, in a regional, single occupation study, which aided construction of the ideal respectable woman in the nineteenth-century:

> The pit brow debate encapsulates the ambivalence of nineteenth-century attitudes towards working-class female employment and it highlights the dichotomy between the fashionable ideal of womanhood and the necessity and reality of female manual labour. The pit brow woman appeared as a direct contradiction to the deification of the home. Viewed as the example par excellence of degraded womanhood, she was portrayed as the ultimate in defeminisation, an aberration in a masculine domain, cruelly torn from her ‘natural sphere’, the home. The attention paid to her, helped by comparison, to define the perfect lady.[27]

John’s study suggested that vehement condemnation, in conjunction with impassioned metaphors comparing women to animals or describing the defeminised female worker, serves a useful function in illustrating that women were present in the public sphere of work and lambasted for it. This highlights disconnect between ideal feminine behaviour and the reality of working-class women’s financial need. In the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, married woman workers, like John’s pit brow lasses, were constructed as a ‘problem’, a threat to morality, femininity and the family. By the same token Gordon found that in parliamentary and trade union records ‘concerns about the moral and social effects of female factory labour’ and ‘the threat to the spiritual and material wellbeing of the family, and the morals of working women’ were pervasive.[28] By reading these documentary sources ‘against the grain’, working-class working women were not only rediscovered but found to be an aberration and used as ballast to constructions of femininity. This research revealed what contemporaries thought about female working-class workers. However, the views, thoughts, and opinions of working women themselves were notably absent.

Historians, sociologists, and economists have aspired to explain and understand why working-class women worked, and the continuities and changes in women's work. Davidoff and Westover's examination of women's work between 1880 and 1939 argued that married women's work was temporary, and taken when financially necessary.[29] They argued mothers of young children showed little enthusiasm for waged work unless necessary because of the death or absence of the male breadwinner.[30] Married women were under greatest pressure to earn when they had small children and the father's wage was stretched.[31] In Davidoff and Westover's analysis, working-class married women were understood to be driven to work in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries by financial need and to assist the head of the household to provide for the family. Married women's work was considered a temporary phenomenon. By contrast, Gordon's study of women in the labour movement, focussing on Dundee between 1850 and 1914, emphasised that women's paid work was not only supportive and helpful, but that women's wages were integral to the family economy, and that women were heads of households.[32] In Gordon's re-evaluation, women's work was not a peripheral, supplementary activity but a central aspect of household earning strategies. Gordon situated this within the context of gendered roles in the home, arguing that in Dundee, despite women's dominance in the jute industry and breadwinner status, the gendered division of labour in the home remained.[33] Working-class women's breadwinner status did not challenge gender roles. A similar re-evaluation of married women's work in Dundee was provided by Smith who demonstrated the prevalence and importance of female-headed households in the city. Although he perhaps overstated the significance of this by reading contemporary notions of independence in pre-Second World War women, arguing

that ‘not only was the female head of household capable of gender empowerment within the home, but that these households provided confirmation that women did not need to live in a relationship with breadwinning, dominant males’,[34] Smith was nevertheless correct in noting the existence of female heads of households, and evoking the power which some women were able to wield.

The research presented thus far primarily made use of documentary sources, using analytical techniques to ‘read against the grain’ to find and reinterpret working-class women’s working lives. Oral history was also used in some studies. McIvor argued that ‘any evaluation of the meaning of work needs to be grounded in the narratives of workers themselves’[35] while Thom’s study of working women in the First World War, argued that the ‘phenomenology of manual labour means that understanding the experience of war requires more than documentary evidence, rich though that is’.[36] It is clear that to understand the experiences of working women, it is necessary to allow them to speak on their own lives.

A significant authority in oral history of women’s lives and work is Roberts, who illustrated that working-class women’s work was temporary and taken when financially necessary, while emphasising the dominance of domesticity in their identities. Looking beyond married women’s reasons and need to work in the period 1840 to 1940, Roberts sought to investigate the meaning and place of work to women’s identity. Her oral histories demonstrated the strong financial motive behind working-class women’s employment in that period, assessing that while women were financially ‘forced’ to work, it was not an aspect of their lives they were ashamed of, believing their work was supporting and helping their family. Paid work was a means by which women fulfilled their role

as wives, mothers, and homemakers more effectively. Full-time paid work was, however, not expected to be a permanent feature of women's adult lives.[37] Roberts' oft-cited conclusion was that women saw their liberation as being away from full-time work and towards domesticity.[38] Similarly Lewis, who researched women's lives between 1850 and 1950, argued that married women's lives focussed on improving home life:

> married women continued to believe firmly that their primary commitment was to home and family.[39] It is doubtful how far the majority of unskilled women workers have ever moved away from the ideal of working for the family economy and towards a more individualistic notion of working for their own satisfaction.[40]

Thus for Lewis, working-class women continued to work as a contribution to the home and family, and it was not a vital aspect of their identity. Nevertheless, Lewis found that despite the repetitiveness of many female jobs, company at work and self-esteem fostered by a degree of independence have been important to women.[41] In Lewis' and Roberts' analysis, although women derived satisfaction and value from employment, ultimately their identity and focus was the home.

In the post-war period, women's work took on different dimensions. Roberts argued that the rising standards of living in the post-war period should not be allowed to obscure the fact that in some families, the father's wage was 'too small to support the family' and that some women needed to work for subsistence earnings.[42] More commonly, women who gave financial need as their reason to work had a differing perception of need to previous generations, for example, with larger mortgages and the expenses of running a car.[43] Roberts suggested that although working outside the home began to be viewed as an aspect of emancipation, 'the trend for women's wages to pay for 'extras' rather than basic

essentials tended to marginalise women's work in a way that had not happened before'.[44] Furthermore, in exploring the strength and pervasiveness of domestic ideology she described that few female respondents talked about a dilemma, stress, or worry about following an alternative path.[45] In this regard, women could experience conflicting and complex messages about their work. Employment outside the home was potentially liberating, but at the same time, the depiction of women's work as for 'extras' removed some women's economic bargaining power within the home. The sketching by contemporaries (and indeed by historians) of married women's work as peripheral to the earnings of the family removed some women's status within the home as an essential contributor to the household.

In post-war social surveys, researchers sought to understand why increasing numbers of married women remained in or returned to work, despite increased affluence. This has been replicated in some historical accounts, such as by Simonton who argued that:

> In the post-war period, married women increasingly worked to pay for special goals, house or car purchase or longer holidays. Rising prosperity put expensive consumer durables within the aspirations of the working classes, providing a major incentive for married women to seek income. And in the twentieth-century, the mother, not children went out to work.[46]

In Simonton's analysis married women's reasons for working included purchasing 'extras'. Increased prosperity made buying new consumer goods realisable. Women's work was largely no longer taken out of dire economic need but was to improve family living standards. However, the assumptions of 'affluence' underlying these explanations for changing female work patterns have been challenged. 'Affluence' introduced a comparative conception to social relations, as poverty was reconfigured from absolute to relative measures. In this conception,

poverty co-existed with affluence as a 'relatively deprived' grouping.[47] Majima and Savage argued that the closing gap between rich and poor until 1971 was not due to an increasing wealth among the former poor, but decreasing relative wealth of the formerly wealthy, 'partly related to the decline of nobility and the shrinking of the empire'.[48] The post-war period saw the introduction of more effective state welfare, which, combined with high labour demand contributed towards the affluent society. Yet, around 12 percent of working-class people lived in poverty through the fifties and sixties, while far reaching 'vulnerability to poverty continued to characterise post-war working-class life – in suburban streets as well as within the inner cities'.[49] This is an important context to understanding women's work. While assumptions about the affluent society have persisted, it is clear that poverty and fears of poverty continued to exist. Furthermore, women played an integral role in achieving this affluence. As Simonton and others suggested, working-class women worked to afford the markers of affluence. However, the implications of this for the value ascribed to women's work are important. Roberts had suggested that the construction of women's work as for 'extras' marginalised their employment. Smith Wilson expanded this analysis, and demonstrated:

> observers and the women themselves so often described wives' work as providing extras for the family, [that] the value of women's work was debased. This obscured women's role in creating the affluent society and allowed the male breadwinner ideal to continue unaffected despite major social change, as the public still generally viewed men as having primary responsibility for family support.[50]

For Smith Wilson the construction, including by women themselves, of their work as supplementary, protected male breadwinner identities. However, in depicting

this work as for 'extras' rather than integral to the family economy, and important in making affluence realisable, women's work has been devalued. In the post-Second World War period and in the historiography, the continued depiction of women's work as supplementary and temporary has linked women's work to the household and limits understanding of the complexity and the meaning of work to women's lives.

In analyses such as Roberts', Lewis', and Simonton's, women's work was marginal to their domestic identity. Historians have considered the value of working-class women's work to the household and the family, and its importance in providing companionship and as an enjoyable aspect of women's lives. The strength of women's work identity has, however, been explored by historians through oral history. Stephenson and Brown challenged the view that working-class women formed their identity from domesticity and viewed their own work as a negative or peripheral experience.[51] From 80 oral history interviews with women in Stirling, they concluded that most working-class women of the early twentieth-century enjoyed their work. They viewed it as a positive and rewarding experience both through pride in their work and skills and the 'collective culture of working-class women'.[52] A similar conclusion was found by Oakley who suggested the depth and detail women used to describe their work experiences when questioned several years since they left their job indicated its continuing significance.[53] Of particular significance for this present research was Oakley's observation that although most working-class women had low-skilled, mundane jobs 'they picked out certain qualities of these jobs as satisfying by comparison with housework'.[54] This research has suggested that work was an enjoyable and rewarding experience for women, independent of the financial and other benefits to domestic life.

Oral history research has demonstrated the value of work to women's lives. Women have undoubtedly been subordinated in the workplace; concentrated in low-paid, 'unskilled' jobs which are frequently routine, and generally have few opportunities for promotion. However, this inequality is not necessarily reflected in the way women have talked about their work-life. McIvor characterised this as a 'conflict between the material reality of structural and deep-rooted subordination of women at work with an intensely patriarchal capitalist economy and society, and the ways that women actually perceived and narrated their work experience'.[55] Smith interpreted women's continuation to work in the face of hostility as a rejection of the 'notion that waged work should be given up on marriage or in motherhood. In doing so [working-class women] were not only confirming their need to work, but they were also maintaining their position and sense of solidarity as women workers'.[56] By taking employment women rejected prescriptive domestic ideals which sequestered women in the home, and asserted their sense of self as worker. By studying women's workplace resistance, Gordon found evidence of women's unity of experience and identity as workers:

> The confinement of women to well-defined sectors of the economy where they occupied a subordinate position in the labour force in terms of authority, skill, and pay is indisputable, but this did not mean that work was an arid and negative experience which lacked the compensating skills and status of men's work...women's collective struggles in the workplace, even when they were expressions of economic grievances displayed an awareness of their common experience and identity as women and as workers.[57]

For Gordon, while women were subordinated in limited areas of the economy, this did not correlate with a negative experience of that work. By acting collectively in boisterous strikes and protests imbued with a sense of fun, Dundee's female jute

workers subverted male authority using ridicule, embarrassment and sexual impropriety, making their identity as workers known:

> Although men may have perceived and defined women workers in terms of their domestic roles and their association with the private realm, there is little evidence that this is how women jute workers perceived themselves. It has already been indicated that they took pride in their work roles and were disparaging about women who did not work. Usually, their industrial action indicated that they saw themselves as workers with common interests fighting for higher wages or against wage cuts.[58]

The hegemony of domesticity on women's lives in the interwar period has been reconsidered further in recent research, although working-class girl's widespread aspiration to and expectation of domesticity has not been disputed. Todd's research is influential on this thesis in highlighting the necessity of considering youth and juvenile employment as an important stage in women's life-course. For Todd the importance of paid work to young women's lives indicated that the 'construction of femininity was not solely centred on domestic life'.[59] She emphasised the intricacy of women's relationship to the workplace arguing that:

> despite the importance of the workplace in their daily lives, women workers, particularly in communities characterised by a strong sexual division of labour, identified themselves less with the workplace than many male workers did. Many young working-class women continued to aspire to marry and retire from full-time paid work.[60]

While work held an important place in working-class women's lives, young women aspired and expected to marry and cease full-time paid employment. The aspiration to domestic life illustrates marriage was an important 'initiation' into adulthood for women. However, this also 'emphasises the unpleasantness of many paid jobs, which heightened the attraction of marriage for women in their late

teens and twenties'.[61] Accentuating the complexity of women's experiences, this suggests their relationship to work was multi-layered, and even messy. There is certainly no simple story of women's work to be found here.

The historiography shows working women were constructed discursively as threats to femininity and figures of pity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. Women appeared to work primarily for the monetary reward. Their work was depicted as temporary and supplementary to a male wage. Working-class women's identity and aspirations were argued to be centred on women's child-bearing, rearing, and domestic role. So, women's work has been considered by many historians as a stopgap, passing time until marriage, returning temporarily during marriage and times of poverty. However, these interpretations have been modified. By re-evaluating women's work as integral to the household economy, and women's earnings as primary income, the view of women's work as merely supplementary was challenged. Despite the uniformity of most unskilled, low-paid women's work, expressions of enjoyment with this work and pride in skill was prominent in women's narratives. Through their actions and in oral testimony, women asserted their collective and individual identity as workers. Simonton has argued that:

> women became more employment orientated and less inclined to live their lives in separate spheres as the twentieth-century moved on. Women were agents in the conception of their own work experience and in fashioning themselves as workers with an identity based in the workplace, and not as women who happened to be working.[62]

To further disentangle women's work in post-war Britain, the following section examines research into explanations for the vast increase in women's

labour market participation. It focuses on arguments that this was a consequence of economic restructuring, industry and government-led developments.

Managing Women's Work

An integral aspect of this thesis is the synthesis of differing interpretations of working-class women's work. This section explores debate on the extent to which industry and policy-led changes encouraged patterns of women's work to veer from established norms. Structural changes in the economy, namely the decline of extractive and manufacturing industries, and the growth of the service sector and light engineering have resulted in growing numbers of working women, especially married women.[63] Watt explained that 'women form a growing sector of the labour force because of the change in the industrial base...characterised by a need for greater flexibility in production and for an equally flexible labour force'.[64] Attempts to encourage married women into the labour force, particularly in periods of labour shortage, have offered some credence to the notion of the reserve army of labour. The conception of 'women' as a reserve army of labour has held currency amongst Marxists and feminists, and is most popularly expounded by the Marxist scholar Braverman. The idea that women have entered the workforce during times of labour shortage, but withdrawing during economic crisis when the numbers of male workers exceeded demand, appears as an attractive explanation for women's fluctuating labour force participation. Space is taken here to explore its relevance to post-war women.

It may be considered that the notion of a 'reserve army' places women on the periphery of the labour market: expendable, disposable, temporary. However,

Somerville disputed this, arguing that if women could be demonstrated to be a key part of a reserve army, this would situate women at the centre of economic activity.[65] The theory's applicability to women as a group is problematic and has been challenged. For instance, Milkman dispensed with it, arguing that a push-pull model of women's labour market participation as a reflection of economic expansion and contraction is flawed.[66] Integral to the reserve army and the structural changes to the post-war economy is the expansion of the service sector and the low wages offered there. The service sector expanded in the post-war period in part because it recruited from a supposed 'industrial reserve army'. The 'continuous availability' of such workers kept wage rates down. Concomitantly the availability of cheap labour encouraged financial investment in these labour-intensive sectors.[67]

Exploring service sector expansion between 1974 and 1978, Bruegel interpreted the expansion of this sector and women's role in it as a contradiction to the notion of women as a reserve army of labour:

> While it is probably true for all periods that the marginal position of married women in the labour force has made them, individual for individual, more vulnerable to redundancy than male workers, the particular form of capitalist expansion and restructuring over the last thirty years – the expansion of labour intensive public and private services and administrative occupations – greatly extended the employment opportunities of women. The result was women's employment continued to expand even when men's jobs were being cut back fast.[68]

In Bruegel's reckoning, women's relatively precarious position in the labour force increases their vulnerability to being removed. However, the expansion of the service sector and women's employment there meant they were largely protected from the decline of the heavy manufacturing sector. This facet of the British

economy, that employment opportunities for women increased in line with the expansion of the service industry in the post-war period, was an important explanatory factor in the decline of 'male' jobs (such as in heavy engineering and manufacturing) whilst women's employment was relatively protected. For Watt, compared to men, traditional sources of employment remained open to many women in inner cities.[69] The conceptualisation of the female reserve army of labour did not stand up to scrutiny, as it was men, not women, who withdrew from the workplace during the economic circumstances of the post-war period.

Feminist theorists such as Gardiner as well as Bruegel have also critiqued the women as reserve army thesis, arguing that the reserve army is not a specific group created by relations of production, but women are formulated as a reserve army by relations of reproduction.[70] In such an analysis, it is women's childbearing capacity, and unpaid childrearing which renders them as a reserve army.[71] Somerville and Bruegel were not convinced by the concept of women as a reserve army of labour. They highlighted the constraint of reconciling women's experiences into a broad theory. This abbreviated discussion of the reserve army illustrates the different interpretive models which theorists and researchers have taken to prospectively explain the growth in women's workplace participation in the post-war period, and suggests that the reserve army thesis does not adequately explain women's return to work. Not least, such concepts strip women of their *agency* in their decision to work or not, when they return to work, and what jobs they take. While the concept of a reserve army of labour has fallen into general disfavour among researchers, the notion that women's return to work may be a product of economic impulses and policy shifts continues to hold sway.

Mono-causal models became significant in the post-war period as economists in particular have struggled to explain the changes in women's labour market behaviour. Neo-classical economics applied a theory of preferences to labour, marriage, childbearing, and the family. Under this broad interpretation wives seek husbands as breadwinners, and husbands seek wives as child-bearers, minders, and housekeepers.[72] Through this interpretation, women had reasons to 'choose' the jobs they took – namely part-time, low-status work – which fitted around husbands' work and unpaid domestic labour.[73] This interpretation has been questioned for its failure to take into account normative and institutional constraints on women's activities in and out of the home.[74]

The theory of preferences exists most acutely in Hakim's work. Hakim argued that 'a large proportion of women actively choose part-time work, despite the fact that...part-time jobs are concentrated towards the bottom end of the occupational hierarchy'.[75] Furthermore, she generalises that women can be divided into two groups; the first prioritises marriage, and child-bearing and the second prioritises work and career as their 'central life activity'.[76] In sum, Hakim's argument is that women have taken (and take) part-time, low-skilled work, that are features of a largely gender-segregated labour market, because these are the jobs they prefer, enabling them to concentrate time and energy on child-rearing. Hakim's argument has rightly been critiqued by a group of 10 sociologists, and others.[77] Pahl *et al* contested Hakim's approach, suggesting work commitment is not constant, and work orientations fluctuate.[78] They argued that workplace orientation or preferences must be considered in line with the material constraints on women's lives:

> Where women state a preference for part-time work, this must be understood in the context of demands on their time and childcare costs, which limit their employment options more than men's.[79]

Women's apparent work preference thus must be understood within the context of domestic demands and childcare considerations. Yet, these criticisms do not discount the notion of preferences outright. Women may, at different stages in their life prefer different work patterns, and this is influenced heavily by personal circumstances as well as factors such as access to and cost of childcare and accessible employment options.

In economic histories as well as contemporary studies explored earlier in this Introduction, state planning, and economic restructuring were usually pinpointed to be in large part responsible for the post-war increase in women's employment. The current thesis does not seek to argue that these were not important and influential factors on increased female labour force participation. In the immediate post-war period an increase in production was necessary to correct the balance of payments problem. This required an increase in labour market participation, particularly in the textile industries. Attlee's Labour government faced the challenge of marrying together centralised planning with individual freedoms to manage these shortages.[80] To encourage skilled female workers back into the textile labour force, the government opted for a national propaganda campaign, targeted at women aged 35 to 50. The government concentrated this *Women in Industry* scheme in cotton and wool industries in 1948 and 1949.[81] Manufacturers attempted to make employment in textiles more attractive to women by improving the working conditions and welfare facilities in the factories, introducing part-time work, nurseries, and making textiles appear more glamorous (such as with fashion shows). Crofts noted that these local initiatives were

'probably more effective' than propaganda produced by the government.[82] In addition to changing the reputation of the industry and creating inducements to women to return to work, social planners recognised the practical assistance which women who had children needed. The government hoped that by expanding day nursery provision, over 5,000 skilled cotton workers could return to industry.[83] Crofts' research focussed on a limited period under specific economic conditions, however, centralised planning as a means to increase the female labour force was not limited to this period c.1945 to c.1950. With another labour shortage in the late 1960s Audrey Hunt produced a thorough and detailed report for the government on how to induce mothers to return to the workplace. *A Survey of Women's Employment* (1968) explored the reasons given by women for returning to work.[84] Hunt called for an improvement and expansion of affordable state nurseries to facilitate the return of mothers to work. In this way, a literature exists wherein state planning, propaganda, part-time work, nurseries, and other welfare features were perceived to be influential on the movement of married women into and out of the labour market.

There has been dissatisfaction with the 'engineered' model of women's rising role in the labour market. Riley disagreed with the argument, for example, expounded by Beddoe in *Back to Home and Duty*, that women's return to the home after the Second World War was engineered by the government in collusion with the construction and redoubling of discourses of domesticity and motherhood:

> Feminist writings, looking back, have often assumed that the return of women to their homes after the last war was intimately linked with, if not positively engineered by, Bowlby's psychology, whose anti-nursery tenets were in harmony with the government's desire to get shot of its wartime female labour force, and reassert its 'normal' male one. Not unreasonably, given all the orchestrated appearances, feminism tends to hold a vision of post-war collusion between the government and psychology to get working women back to their kitchens, and pin them there under the weight of Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation in an endless dream of maternity throughout the 1950s ... The connections between government plans, the movements of women on and off the labour market, and the development of psychological beliefs were far more fragile than this version allows.[85]

Riley summarised a feminist argument that the removal of women from wartime work was a consequence of the government's wish to return servicemen's jobs, in collusion with theories of maternal deprivation and child psychology, which re-constructed femininity as domestic. She disagreed with this narrative, exposing the tenuous links between these factors. For Riley, the vision of a concerted attack on working women after the Second World War did not stand up to closer interrogation.

These issues are scrutinised and developed throughout this thesis to explore the extent to which the unprecedented numbers of women who returned to work in the post-war period were persuaded and encouraged into the workplace by changes initiated by industry and by national policy. In addition to the propaganda considered by Crofts to encourage skilled working women back into industry to combat the labour deficit, welfare inducements are considered in particular, such as childcare and the availability of part-time work. But in-depth analysis of oral history testimony explores this on another level, by identifying women's agency as a key factor – arguably *the* key factor – in the changes to women's employment patterns.

Class and Social Status

Working-class women are the main social group discussed in this thesis. As a prelude, an examination is made in this section into issues of class as an underlying context throughout the thesis. Social class is a useful analytical category since class continues to be a means of forming an identity.[86] Class or social status is simple neither to define nor characterise. Where occupation is one means by which class and social status can be indicated for men, for women this is less clear. Women's class can be defined using their father's or their husband's occupation, as well as their own.

There is no homogenous 'working-class' and so it may be more apt to speak of 'working-classes'. Alexander exemplified the fractured nature of class:

> 'Experience' of class, even if shared and fully recognised, does not...produce a shared and even consciousness. Class is not only a diverse (geographically, from industry to industry, etc.) and divisive (skilled/unskilled; male/female labour, etc.) 'experience' but that experience itself is given different meaning.[87]

Accordingly, Alexander highlighted the diversity and fragmented notion of class and class consciousness. Location, industry, level of skill, as well as gender contributed to this diversity of experience. The complexity of this issue was considered by Bourke who noted that the application of factors such as occupation or income as indicators of 'class' are 'unsatisfactory' when gender and ethnicity are discussed. Bourke argued that 'adding gender and ethnicity to a description of class awareness makes the process of attaining group identification a more complex negotiation among unequal partners'.[88] The intersection of multiple identities such as gender and ethnicity, within class muddies the waters. For the

purposes of this thesis, this poses a challenge to the claim to speak of 'working-class women'. Specifically this thesis studies white British women, living and working in industrial and urban centres.

Thinking about class introduces an additional context; occupational and social mobility. Characterised as embourgeoisement, Willmott and Young, in *Symmetrical Family*, discussed the Principle of Stratified Diffusion, whereby distances between classes remain the same, with each striving forward to gain parity with those immediately above them.[89] Willmott and Young considered this in working-class families' attempts to replicate the small nuclear family of the middle-classes (for example, by using contraception), and in the ownership of new consumer goods (such as televisions or washing machines).[90] The embourgeoisement thesis was found to be applicable in many post-war social surveys of the family.[91]

An important context for discussion of working-class women's lives is post-war affluence and the move towards a 'middle-class' society in which 'the old working-class had been 'aspirational' and joined 'Middle Britain'...leaving behind a feckless, problematic rump'.[92] The deprivations of the Second World War and 'the age of austerity' in the early fifties gave way to the 'golden years' of post-war economic growth in the late fifties and the sixties. Incomes and the standard of living rose, and, until the 'rediscovery of poverty' in the 1960s, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's July 1957 claim that 'most of our people have never had it so good', despite his caution that this would not last, seemed to ring true.[93] Affluence has, however, since been contested within the historiography of post-war Britain.[94] It is apparent the picture is much more complex and contradictory than this vision of the consumer society would suggest. Todd argued that in the

fifties prosperity and affluence was elusive to many wage-earners.[95] This appeared to be changing by the end of the decade; however, until then around 7 percent of British households lived in poverty.[96] Todd also stated that ‘emphasis on affluence as an economic trend in the existing literature has neglected the importance of hard work in securing these achievements’.[97] The use of credit to acquire the household goods and other markers of affluence, combined with vulnerability to poverty ‘continued to shape working-class life in the suburbs as well as the inner cities’.[98] Integral to these raised living standards was the increasing proportions of married women who remained in the workplace and returned to employment after having children. In addition, women were able to earn more than previous generations.[99] Thus, while working-class living standards appeared to improve in the post-war period, it would be incorrect to characterise the working-classes as affluent on the whole. Rather a more complex picture of living standards, where a susceptible affluence co-existed with poverty, emerges through close scrutiny of lived experiences.

Within the context of ‘affluence’, historians have explored its effects on class identity. The post-war period held new opportunities for working-class women to achieve occupational and social mobility. A raised school leaving age and availability of places at grammar schools for girls who passed the eleven-plus or Leavers Certificate increased the time young people spent in education and gave opportunities to working-class girls. The 1936 Education Act raised the school leaving age to 15, but this was not brought in until the late 1940s when the eleven-plus was introduced. In 1973, the school leaving age was raised to 16.[100] In tandem with declining levels of absolute poverty, and the ‘relative flourishing of consumerism’ in working-class homes, new education and work opportunities

were, at least in principle, available to working-class girls.[101] For women, the shift from domestic service and the factory, to shop or office work, and into professions, through universities and colleges, particularly teacher-training colleges has been depicted in a positive light by historians. However, the enthusiasm of working-class families to seek out these opportunities was questioned by Bourke who suggested that 'educational policy failed to convince working-class parents that education was the key to upward social mobility'.[102] This hints at a more complex relationship between opportunity and social mobility, and indeed, affluence.

The effects of raised aspirations, expectations and improved material circumstances on class identities have been explored. Brooke summarised that 'this progress and prosperity may have worn away the singularity and coherence of working-class identity'.[103] However, the effects of material improvements to living standards on class identity are contested. Offer found that into the late sixties, occupational measures suggested that most British households remained 'proletarian'.[104] Even into the twenty-first-century, Jones found that over half the population continue to self-identify as working-class, a figure which has remained relatively constant since the 1960s.[105] For Bourke, 'what we see in the twentieth-century is that 'working-class' individuals retained their self-defined identity as 'working-class' despite impressive movements in their material wellbeing'.[106] Upward mobility did not necessarily mean into the middle-classes.[107] Todd found that 'everyday experience gave working-class people a unique and valuable identity, one that didn't simply disappear if they earned more money or gained a degree'.[108] In this regard, class identity has a different meaning than occupation or level of affluence. As Bourke argued, class is located in the body, the home, and

locality.[109] In this context Carolyn Steedman spoke of her working-class mother's ambitions in the 1950s:

> From a traditional labour background, my mother rejected the politics of solidarity and communality, always voted Conservative, for the left could not embody her desire for things to be *really* fair; for a full skirt that took 20 yards of cloth, for a half-timbered cottage in the country, for the prince who did not come.[110]

Liz Heron's *Truth, Dare or Promise; Girls Growing Up in the Fifties* (1985), reveals women's sense of confusion and discomfort as they stepped away from the class and status of their parents into a new world of different opportunities. Heron used a collection of women's autobiography to explore the early lives of women who were born between 1943 and 1951, including her own. The experiences of the women writers differed and, despite coming from a range of different backgrounds, common experiences could be discerned; a 'post-war vision of prosperity and limitless possibilities deeply underlay our everyday view of how things would be'.[111] In a potent metaphor, Heron described that 'along with the orange juice and the cod-liver oil, the malt supplement and the free school milk, we may also have absorbed a sense of our own worth and the sense of a future that would get better and better'.[112] The nuanced yet complex imagery of the working-class is revealed by Walkerdine's autobiographical essay as she described *her* working-class:

> My version of a working-class childhood simply did not fit the illusion of the proletariat as a steaming cauldron of revolutionary fervour. The suburban semi could hardly be described as a backstreet slum from which I could have claimed a romantic poverty. No, I came from among the serried ranks of what my mother was fond of describing as 'ordinary working people'.[113]

The overcrowded tenement or terraced house with the begrudging, put-upon working-class wife working in loud, dusty factories may have been declining, but an affluent office worker with a twin-tub on credit, a small family and the relative security of the welfare state could no less be described as working-class. Suggesting the longevity of conventional notions of working-class identity, Bourke argued that even in the current period, 'men and women identifying themselves as 'working-class...draw their imagery from the first sixty years of the twentieth-century'.[114]

It is this complex and changing vision of the post-war working-class which this thesis draws on. The post war period has seen much change in the centrality of social class in British politics and society generally. Social mobility, and fluidity in the conception of class, means that self identification of social position is very important in research on this period – the more so in using oral testimony where the female respondent may articulate a sense of changing status and class independent of parental or partner's occupations.[115]

Regional Case Studies

A case study methodology is used to explore women's work in northern industrial Britain; the heartland of Britain's manufacturing prosperity in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth-centuries. The urban industrial locations selected as case studies – Dundee and Glasgow, Preston and Newcastle upon Tyne – coalesce with the industrial character of mainland Britain. In the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries each location was industrially distinctive, and reflected Britain's diverse base in manufacturing. Considering locations in Scotland and

England avoids claims of either country having an entirely distinct experience, and extends this research into British rather than solely Scottish or English twentieth-century history.

Nevertheless, national differences have existed and must be recognised. In a short space of time Scotland changed from a producer of capital goods to a provider of services. The collapse of the industrial economy occurred faster than in England, and according to Knox, the social trauma resulting from it was greater.[116] Scottish incomes have generally been below the UK average, resulting from the growth of part-time work, particularly for women, and higher levels of unemployment. Through the boom years of the fifties and sixties Scotland experienced an unemployment rate twice that of the average UK rate as a whole.[117] Scottish women have historically formed a smaller proportion of the labour force than women in England and Wales.[118] On average, women in Scotland have received lower pay than in the rest of Britain.[119] For McIvor, the 'distinctively patriarchal culture' in Scotland and Wales was reflected in lower rates of married women in paid employment compared to the UK after the Second World War.[120] Breitenbach argued that it was in regard to part-time employment that the greatest difference between Scotland and the rest of Britain existed. In 1981 the proportion of women who worked part-time was significantly lower at 35.7 percent compared to 40 percent in Britain as a whole.[121] While there were differences between England and Scotland in wages and in the distribution of part-time work, these variations exist within a context of growing convergence and integration between Scottish and British economic patterns.

The extent and pervasiveness of regional differences have been discussed by researchers. Alexander, Davin, and Hostettler summarised the diverse

experiences of working women in different localities, and that there was ‘great diversity of patterns of employment over place and time’.[122] Even within larger geographical regions, great diversity existed. For instance, in north-west England the ‘working and political life of married women varied considerably from town to town, depending on the state of the local economy’.[123] Thus in Barrow in Lancashire between 1890 and 1914, it was ‘unusual’ for married women to work in this heavy industry town whilst it was more common in Preston. In textile towns, significant proportions of married women worked in nineteenth-century mills, with this likelihood increasing in weaving, rather than spinning, towns.[124] Similarly, Hall’s study of Northumberland, in north-east England, demonstrated the divergent working experiences of working-class women ‘shaped by the dominant industries in their particular areas’.[125] Hunt found in 1968 that economic activity rates varied widely between regions.[126] This was echoed by Lewis who found ‘substantial variation’ in the labour participation rates of mothers, a result of ‘historical practice rather than current industrial composition’.[127] Todd argued that ‘although the distinctiveness of regional labour markets diminished between the 1920s and the 1940s, they remained important’.[128] Historically, regional divergence within Britain has thus been acute. In post-war Britain, regional and industrial/economic distinctions continued to exist, although these had lessened from the diversity of the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries.

What was the immediate industrial and employment background to the period of this study? The 1920s and 1930s were desperate decades for Britain’s industrial staples, but 'new industries' were developing fast with important gender implications. What McCloskey termed the ‘Second Industrial Revolution’ – the motor industry, glass, plastics, oil, and electrical appliances – increased work

available to women, particularly in the Midlands and around London.[129] Northern industrial areas did not attract investment from new engineering firms as swiftly as southern England, leaving them more susceptible to the worst effects of depression in the 1920s and 1930s. The depression in the thirties affected the already 'miserable' staple industries of steel, coal, shipbuilding and textiles. The depression affected the regions to different degrees. Northern England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland were affected worse than the relatively prosperous south of England and the Midlands.[130] Although causing pockets of unemployment across Britain, the depression affected northern areas more acutely. The growing new industries protected the South of England from the worst effects.

The twentieth-century British economy underwent significant transformation from a manufacturing based to a service based economy. These structural changes have largely benefited women, and have resulted in significant growth in the numbers of working women, especially married women.[131] At the beginning of the twentieth-century women were employed in three major sectors: agriculture, domestic services, clothing and textiles. By 1981 over 75 percent of females were employed in the service sector, particularly in local government, teaching, nursing and shop work.[132] This national picture of the changing British economy and employment structure is reflected in the case studies.

The case study towns were economically different. In the twentieth-century, Dundee and Preston were both textile weaving and spinning towns, while Newcastle and Glasgow were dominated by coal mining, shipbuilding, and heavy engineering. Dundee's men could find work in supervisory positions in the jute industry and in shipbuilding. In Preston both men and women worked in textiles, the former as spinners, the latter as weavers. The large proportion of women

working in textiles earned these towns the nomenclature of ‘woman’s town’, particularly in Dundee which had an unequal ratio of women to men.[133] By contrast, heavy industry communities such as Tyneside and Clydeside developed reputations for a particularly masculinised, aggressive, ‘hard man’ culture, reflected in, amongst other things, hard drinking and gang warfare.[134] The ‘hard man’ has been an archetypical construction of masculinity in industrial Britain, and is often associated with Glasgow, for instance in Long and McArthur's influential novel *No Mean City*, first published in 1935.[135] Young outlined the characteristics of this form of working-class masculinity:

> Manual labour, physical and emotional strength, the ability to provide financially for and protect one’s dependants and involvement in a hard drinking culture have all popularly defined working-class manhood in Scotland.[136]

Working-class masculinity was intimately tied to men’s wage-earning capacity. In this discourse, the non-working wife indicated a man’s breadwinning abilities and was a marker of respectability, demonstrating the interconnectedness of gendered roles and responsibilities.

The post-1921 decline of shipbuilding was particularly devastating for the economy of the west of Scotland. In addition to metals and engineering, shipbuilding accounted for 57 percent of total employment there.[137] Despite attempts to introduce new industries and bolster shipbuilding through substantial state subsidies, Glasgow’s structural defects were not quickly overcome.[138] A re-emergence of ‘traditional’ working patterns in Glasgow saw a 50 percent increase in the number of female domestic servants in Glasgow between 1921 and 1931.

Almost 14 percent of working Glasgow women were employed in this sector by the latter date.[139]

Preston's economy had begun to develop beyond cotton in the 1920s, but its prosperity was still strongly reliant on the textiles industry; 'where almost every street had a cotton mill'. The post-First World War boom was over by 1921. The contraction of the industry heavily affected inter-war Preston, with high levels of unemployment which slowed social improvements.[140] Mills which produced coarse fabrics were worst hit by competition, particularly from Japan, whereas those which produced elegant goods fared better. With a relatively high proportion of firms, such as Horrockses mill, producing finer goods and using Egyptian cotton, Preston was not hit by competition and unemployment as much as other Lancashire towns. Unemployment in Blackburn, for example, approached 50 percent at one stage.[141] However, during the interwar period, Preston's economy diversified beyond its textile heritage, and became an important administrative centre for many organisations, including the County Council.[142]

Dundee was also heavily affected by a declining share in the textile market in the interwar period. The main competition for Dundee jute products came from India, and especially the Calcutta jute industry, which Dundee expertise had helped to develop. By 1900, the Calcutta industry 'dwarfed' Dundee's.[143] Although demand for jute products during the First World War benefited Dundee's jute industry, the interwar depression saw a reduction in demand until, according to Stewart, the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 briefly changed jute's fortunes.[144] The contraction of the industry and unemployment affected women in Dundee substantially. By the late 1930s, 8,000 women had left the industry. Working women were displaced by men, not least because of the

introduction of the double-shift system, and an evening/night shift, which women were prohibited from working because of protective legislation.[145]

Northumberland has been little studied by historians.[146] Newcastle was a typical industrial city. Primary and heavy manufacturing industries were integral to the economy. Although Newcastle and Tyneside shared common industries, especially with the expansion of the city's boundaries to include areas such as Walker and Benwell, there was interdependence as Newcastle developed as a service and commercial centre for the surrounding industrial areas.[147] However, extractive industries, mechanical engineering and shipbuilding continued to be important employers of male labour, not least in the production of products for service and commercial interests. Newcastle was heavily hit by unemployment in the interwar years. By the twentieth-century, coal played a less important role in shaping Newcastle's economy than it had during the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, and the last pit closed in Newcastle in 1956.[148] During the 1930s flows of cheap Polish and German coal caused 'irrevocable damage' to Tyneside's export trade.[149] Furthermore, other industries declined until they no longer existed in the city. For example, the alkali industry, which had peaked in 1880 after producing nearly half the national output of alkali in the 1860s, had almost disappeared by the turn of the century.[150] Into the twentieth-century, attempts were made to establish new industries, such as consumer electrical goods and motor cars, which were not as successful as longer established industries.[151]

Contributing to the poverty of the area, in addition to unemployment, miners in Northumberland and Durham were among the worst-paid in Britain.[152] However, working-class wage levels were often high on Tyneside by national standards which, combined with its reputation as the centre of the world's coal

trade, resulted in the creation of a large lower-middle class.[153] Transport and retailing were important to Newcastle's economy, servicing the growing population. The city's population quadrupled between 1841 and 1911, resulting in the development of a considerable retail sector which was important to the local economy.[154] For instance, one of the first department stores in England was Bainbridge's which began as a Newcastle drapery in 1838, and this was followed by Fenwick's which opened in 1882, which served the large lower-middle and upper-working class in the city. Despite the establishment of a large service and retailing sector, there has been scant examination of the local gender composition of the staff. However, it may reasonably be speculated that the availability of work in the service sector in Newcastle, combined with the move towards a feminised workforce in retail, may have benefitted women who wanted to work.

This introduction to Newcastle, Glasgow, Preston and Dundee turns now to consider the social and political conditions in these areas to invoke the general character of the locations. Each city had a strong Labour Party presence, although this varied between constituencies. In Glasgow, the Labour party, the ILP (Independent Labour Party), and the Labour/Co-operative Party had a secure presence in predominantly working-class constituencies such as Shettleston, Springburn, Camlachie, Tradeston, Bridgeton, Gorbals, and Maryhill. However, there were several constituencies which were fairly safe Conservative seats, such as Cathcart and Hillhead. Kelvingrove, Central Glasgow, and Pollock had been Conservative constituencies earlier in the twentieth-century but began to vote Labour from 1945, 1950, and 1964 respectively. Preston had been a Labour and Liberal borough until the thirties when the Conservatives gained a foothold. In the post-war period, Preston North was dominated by the Conservatives, and while

Preston South elected Labour more often, the Conservatives were popular. In Newcastle three of the four constituencies were led by Labour or a Labour/Co-operative Party joint candidate. Newcastle North overwhelmingly was a Conservative or National Liberal and Conservative constituency. Dundee had a prevailing Labour party tradition, with some electoral success by the Liberal party, and the Conservative Party, with Dundee's first woman MP Florence Horsbrugh, before the Second World War. Dundee was peculiar in returning a Scottish Prohibition Party MP, Edwin Scrymgeour between 1922 and 1929.[155]

In terms of living standards and housing conditions, all four locations experienced harsh deprivations and high rates of poverty. Poor housing standards were rife in these locations in the interwar period and beyond, with overcrowded tenements predominant in Glasgow and Dundee, and terraced properties in Newcastle and Preston. Analysing housing density measured by persons per room, Cage found that Glasgow's was the worst in Britain. This varied between working-class areas such as Gorbals and wealthier areas such as Cathcart:

> the fact that room densities in Glasgow remained much higher than elsewhere for a longer period of time indicates that the working-classes in Glasgow experienced a slower rate of improvement in their standard of living relative to other British cities.[156]

Glasgow had greater overcrowding which persisted for a longer time period than other major urban centres. This suggested the living standards of Glasgow's working-class improved at a slower rate. Yet, smaller towns could have just as intense problems. According to Tomlinson, Dundee's poor housing was 'notorious' before the First World War. The Dundee Social Union produced a report in 1905 which demonstrated the appalling conditions Dundee's working-

classes were living in.[157] After the introduction of the Addison Act in 1919, the local authority built 8,177 houses and small subsidies were given to private housing. The building was mostly good quality, but rents were beyond many working-class people's earnings. Nevertheless, slum clearance benefited many.[158] In 1861 Newcastle was the most overcrowded place in England, and this had not changed by the start of the twentieth-century.[159] In interwar Newcastle 'housing was wretched',[160] with a severe housing shortage and overcrowding. In the 1963 Development Plan Review, it was established that under a comprehensive redevelopment of inner housing areas, 24,600 dwellings or 20 percent of the housing stock needed to be cleared, and 12,000 dwellings needed revitalised.[161] Yet, for a large industrial centre Newcastle had 'remarkably few slums'.[162] In Preston investment and improvement in housing had fallen behind that of industry, and at the end of the First World War housing was an important political issue. Although there was a boom in house building in the interwar years, in 1920 the majority of Preston's 120,000 inhabitants lived in considerably overcrowded districts.[163] In the post-war period slum clearance was accompanied by the creation of new towns, such as East Kilbride, new housing estates such as Ardler, St. Mary's and Whitfield in Dundee, Byker, Walker, and Felling (Gateshead) in Newcastle, Middleforth Green and Kingsfold (Penwortham), Brookfield, and Larches (Ashton) in Preston, and Easterhouse, Castlemilk, Drumchapel, and Pollock in Glasgow, in addition to high rise, multi-storey flats.

In presenting this summary of the industrial, social, and political character of each of Glasgow, Preston, Dundee and Newcastle, it is suggested that they reflect the employment and industrial diversity of northern industrial Britain, and provide a good representation of communities across Britain which were

dominated by one or other of the staple industries – textiles or heavy and extractive industries. Although industrially distinct in the early twentieth-century, they converged with the broader, national picture of industrial diversification beyond traditional heavy industry and manufacturing into light engineering, along with the expansion of the service sector.

Using Dundee, Glasgow, Newcastle, and Preston as case studies, this thesis explores the effects of location on working-class women's employment between 1945 and 1971. Availability of and access to work is investigated, while consideration is made of the extent to which the existing cultures of work in these locations impacted on women's ability to work, attitudes to women's work, and women's own sense of the role of work in their lives. To achieve this, three discrete methodologies are utilised.

Three Methodologies and Chapter Structure

At the heart of this thesis are three different methodologies which are used to explore working-class women's working lives. The structure of the thesis is designed to allow sufficient space to each methodology and their results which, it is expected, will be at various points complimentary and contradictory. The links between methods will be signposted throughout to ease comprehension, and aid understanding of the progression of the thesis as each method adds a layer of insight to the issue of women's work. Focus is brought back to questions of individual agency and the effect of the regional on women's experiences of work as the key themes of the thesis.

Chapter Two introduces the first methodology. Statistics are used to chart changes to women's labour market participation in Britain across the mid twentieth-century. It explores the overarching modifications which occurred in women's employment between the interwar period until the 1970s. A national and local approach to these statistics illustrates the extent to which regional differences in female employment prevailed into the 1970s, and how this related to national trends. Chapter Three uses an archival approach to dig into the provision of different forms of childcare. The extent to which childcare stock differed in each of the case studies is considered, alongside an investigation into whether the existing visibility of married women's work in each location affected attitudes to and the availability of childcare. This chapter is concerned with whether the limited availability of childcare enabled (or otherwise) women to return to work having children. Chapters Four and Five focus on women's narratives of their working life using oral history. Chapter Four focuses on women's working life after marriage and having children. While creating an artificial, if practical, division in women's lives, this separation of aspects of women's lives highlights that women's relationship to their work and their reasons for working changed through their personal life-course, as well as over the historical period 1945 to 1971 and beyond. This chapter focuses further still on women's awareness of and construction of their changing sense of self through the life-course.[164] Chapter Five explores how women talked about their working life as a whole. By focussing on a period of change in women's lives, as they entered the workplace for the first time, their hopes and aspirations were manifest. Women's views on their various jobs and careers are examined, through discussion of their enjoyment of or dissatisfaction with work, and pride in the skills and abilities they developed

as workers. As two chapters are devoted to oral history, and because I conducted original oral history interviews, space is taken in this Introduction to explain the methodology as it relates to the thesis as a whole.

Oral History

As a methodology, oral history stands apart and is rarely combined with other methods in the same study. Oral history is a people-orientated research method. While the researcher's own subjectivity is brought to bear on the analysis and interpretation of documentary sources, creating new sources with a specific historical question in mind presents exciting opportunities to consider both the context and the process of source creation. This section reflects on the process and experience to capitalise on this opportunity.

A significant proportion of the research involved designing an oral history questionnaire, sourcing and recruiting suitable interviewees, conducting the interviews, and transcribing the audio into written form. Ethical guidelines from the Oral History Society of Great Britain were followed,[165] and ethical approval was granted by the University of Dundee ethics committee before potential interviewees were approached. Each respondent was given an information sheet in advance of the interview, and signed a form to indicate their agreement to be interviewed. After each interview, respondents signed a copyright release to indicate their willingness to allow their interview to be used, and any stipulations on usage, such as anonymity. These wishes have been adhered to throughout the text. Each woman was written to after the interview, thanking them for their assistance.

At the commencement of the project the aim was to interview 10 women from each case study who self-identified as working-class and who were born between 1920 and 1950. In total, 48 women were interviewed, with 9 in Dundee, 11 in Newcastle, 13 in Preston, and 15 in Glasgow. These women were born between 1923 and 1956, reaching school leaving age and starting employment between 1937 and 1971. Among the women interviewed the majority were born in the 1940s (20 women in total), followed by the 1930s (17 women), the 1920s (6 women) and finally 5 women who were born in the 1950s. Biographical details on respondents are provided in Appendix One.

A variety of forums were used to source and recruit potential interviewees. Each method had varying degrees of success, but nevertheless working-class women of appropriate ages and social status were interviewed. With few links to Newcastle, Glasgow, and Preston sourcing respondents was more challenging in these towns than in Dundee. After a simple internet and map search, churches whose addresses indicated a central location were written to on University of Dundee headed paper with a flyer enclosed containing information about the women sought for interview. This was successful to an extent, with some church staff and volunteers being enthusiastic about the project and advertising the flyer to appropriate groups in the church community. Other responses were placing a bulletin in a newsletter or on a notice board, which elicited a response from 1 or 2 women. The priest at St. Aloysius' Church, Glasgow, and the caretaker at the Unitarian Church in Newcastle were extremely helpful.[166] From other churches there was no response. Although this method of recruitment encouraged a substantial number of women to volunteer, the assumption that a simple flyer would explain which interviewees were sought was flawed. For example, un-

aware of the demographic make-up of those who attended St. Aloysius', who were in the main middle-class professionals and had been born into middle-class households, meant that in hindsight these interviews were less useful to the study of working-class women. Nevertheless, they have helped understand comparative experiences.

The specific recruitment techniques used in each case study varied. In Dundee a personal contact resulted in introductions to the women of the Tayside Friendship Circle, a social group. This resulted in 8 completed interviews which were supplemented by an interview with a woman recommended by another contact. Newcastle women responded to a flyer in their church newsletter, and were primarily interviewed at the Unitarian Church. To compensate for the initial middle-class weighting of Glasgow interviews, respondents were found in the Castlemilk district on the south side of Glasgow. Staff at the Castlemilk Timebank, located at the Castlemilk Community Centre, were enthusiastic about the research, and introduced 8 additional women who were interviewed at the Centre or in their homes. These women more closely fitted the criteria of working-class women who were sought. In Preston the first attempt to source women through churches resulted in women from a craft group and lunch club with the Salvation Army volunteering to be interviewed. However, a 'Letter to the Editor' in the *Lancashire Evening Post*, resulted in a delightful flurry of e-mails and letters from women across Preston and nearby who wanted to be interviewed. It is important to describe these recruitment methods in order to add a sense of context to the interviews, of how these women came to know the interviewer and the research, the terms on which introductions were made, and the locations and setting in which the interview took place. Despite different recruitment methods,

women from the same class and of the correct age group in each town were interviewed.

Before embarking on new oral history interviews, Elizabeth Roberts and Lucinda Beier's large-scale oral history project in 3 Lancashire towns was influential. Roberts' interview questionnaire was referenced when designing the interviews. However, reflecting on the types of questions Roberts asked her respondents flagged up the inherent biases and assumptions in some questions posed about gender roles in and out of the home. Within Roberts' questionnaire there appeared to be a pervasive presumption about male and female work. While questions were asked about women's work within and outwith the home, as well as men's work in the home, the structure of these questions appeared to make assumptions that fathers fulfilled the breadwinner role. Different questions were asked of the respondents' mother and father. For example, the questionnaire prompts included 'did your mother work outside the home? Who looked after the children while she was working? Why did she work?'. These are valid questions and the answers they provided elicit important details. With different questions being asked of men and women's experiences, however, the underlying assumptions that men's work requires no explanation, that their work is for obvious reasons, is contrasted with women's work which requires a valid reason. This discrepancy was also identified by Oakley who stated that women's employment has been studied as a 'deviation from the norm...married women are asked 'why do you work?', a question whose equivalent in the study of men's work attitudes is 'why aren't you working?'[167] Of course this is not to deny that women's and men's working lives were perhaps different. What must be

acknowledged are the points at which these biases and assumptions crept into the research and analysis.

The interviews were structured around a questionnaire which is reproduced in Appendix Two. The annotations provide some indication of how the interview questions altered and adapted with experience. As my confidence as interviewer increased, the interviews became more semi-structured. In each interview there was flexibility to enable women to speak on what was important to them. The interviews were digitally recorded. Immediately or shortly after each interview, a research diary was written, containing initial thoughts, observations on non-verbal communications, and any notes felt to be helpful to future analysis. For instance, the topics of any potentially relevant conversations or 'chit-chat' before or after the interview were noted. The majority of the interviews were transcribed by professional audio-typists, checked, and edited by the interviewer. The remainder were transcribed by the researcher or left in audio form if they were not felt to be useful for this project.

A range of analysis methods were used. With the number of interviews, the transcript was felt to be the most manageable format for analysis. Audio was listened to in conjunction with the transcript on first reading. Each transcript was read in full initially, and useful extracts were identified. These extracts were isolated and brought together with other quotations on similar themes to establish connections. Promising themes and lines of inquiry were then followed up with further close study. In addition transcripts were scoured using key-word searches to find references to specific terms, events, or words, such as 'boredom' or 'nursery'. Where frequent references were made to a particular women's testimony in the analysis and interpretation, the transcript was re-read and an

attempt made to reconstruct her whole-life narrative. The selection of interviews to focus on was also instinctive, using personal memory and the research diary as a guide to interviews which had potential to be pursued in greater depth. Through the combination of methodical analysis, intuitiveness, and key-word searches, different avenues and themes were thoroughly explored.

Feminist History

At this point it is appropriate to introduce consideration of the feminist lens which is integral to this thesis. It is important to be self-reflective about one's own perspective and assumptions. This research aims towards the production of feminist research both through the interpretation of the material from a feminist stance, and in attempts to provide the women interviewed with a means and an opportunity to put their life story, their views, and feelings about their lives into the public domain in some capacity.

The recovery agenda converges with that of women's history, to centralise the life experiences of women who have been rendered invisible in written sources and some traditional historiography. This recovery agenda remains important in women's and social history. Klein's argument is influential: 'the claim that research on women is conducted with a feminist perspective can be made only when the methods applied take women's experiences into account'.[168] For Klein, it is not sufficient to make women the subject or object of study; their voices must be present. In producing history from a feminist perspective, women's experiences, views, and voices are obscured in primary sources on account of women's sex and, for working-class women, on account of their class. In addition,

ethnicity, sexuality, and (dis)ability pose additional barriers to finding women's experiences in written, official sources. As Gordon noted:

> the problem of invisibility however, is compounded by the problem of bias. Labour and social historians have long confronted the bias of class, which imbues so many of the sources of information on the working-class and the poor. However, the study of women is often distorted by the filters of both class and gender which often has the consequence of reinforcing women's invisibility.[169]

For women's historians researching working-class women, the problem of invisibility is compounded by sex and class. The working-class women discussed in this thesis are doubly obscured in sources on account of their sex and their class. Research such as that by Breitenbach, Gordon, John, Roberts, Todd, Davidoff and Westover and others have helped to recover the history of women's work in the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries but much work remains to be done. There is an extensive literature of women's history, thus the recovery agenda is not a new departure. However, the biases of class and gender identified by Gordon continue to be relevant. Oral history has been vital in delving into women's experiences between 1945 and 1971, and therefore the challenges of the archival method are overcome to some extent.

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[158] Ibid, pp. 12 – 13.
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[163] Hunt, *History of Preston*, p. 272.
[164] This term pertains to the conceptualisation outlined by Barclay *et al*. The life-course emerged due to the difficulty of understanding life as operating in stages; 'There can be considerable overlap and messiness as people progress through the life-cycle stages'. K. Barclay *et al*, 'Gender and Generations: Women and Life-Cycles', *Women's History Review*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2011), p. 176.
[165] http://www.ohs.org.uk/ethics.php
[166] The caretaker offered an office in the church to do interviews, as well as bringing refreshments from his wife. This was both helpful and welcoming, and saved the complications of public transport and finding respondents' houses in a strange city. It is also possible that the familiarity of a central, reasonably well-known location helped respondents feel more comfortable.
[167] Oakley, *Sociology of Housework*, p. 19.
[168] R. D. Klein, 'How to do what we want to do: Thoughts about Feminist Methodology' in G. Bowles and R. Duelli Klein (eds.), *Theories of Women's Studies* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1983), p. 91.
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Chapter Two

Statistical Analysis of Women's Changing Employment

Statistical data analysis in this chapter is concerned with women's changing employment in the period c.1945 to c.1971. Questioning how far locality affected women's experiences of paid work, national trends in women's employment between 1931 and 1971 are described before illustrating how far the case studies of Dundee, Preston, Glasgow, and Newcastle upon Tyne deviated from or emulated national trends. Discussion and debates over the extent of and reasons for increased female labour market participation rates are explored. Analysis commences with consideration of existing research on women's post-Second World War work, noting the limitations of the sources and methodology used, and the implications of this for research.

National Narratives

This section considers existing literature which illustrates key arguments and debates surrounding women's work in the twentieth-century. In keeping with the focus of this chapter, the emphasis here is data analysis which describes continuity and change in women's labour market participation, and the explanations proffered for these events.

A central aspect of debate into women's increasing labour market participation rates has considered the limitations of the sources used, namely the Census. Census data, government and official publications are the main sources

used in this chapter. Historians, economists, sociologists, and others have recognised the limits of these sources. Martens stated that statistics are not facts but social constructs,[1] a product of the priorities and concerns of the time they were created. Hakim proposed that supportive documents, particularly Census commentaries, aid understanding of the agendas and focus of Census makers:

> If the Census is a snapshot of the nation at a particular point in time, the commentaries reveal how and why the camera was angled, how and why the picture was framed in a certain way...Census commentaries reveal the subjectivity, historical relativity, and cultural relativity that often lie behind the statistical facts presented in the published Census reports.[2]

Complementary sources can reveal the interests of those who designed Census reports, and why certain questions and issues were highlighted. The fallibility of the Census, and indeed of all sources, has significant implications for the study of women's work in the post-war period. A number of historians[3] have noted that women's paid employment was undercounted or invisible in official sources in the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, resulting in an exaggeration of the increase of post-war female participation rates.[4] Women in part-time or casual jobs, such as domestic cleaning, charring, street-selling, women employed in home work by manufacturers, or by kin in small businesses such as shops, and women who took in lodgers, sewing and washing have tended to be undercounted.[5] As Simonton observed in a long-view of the history of women's work:

> The workplace was increasingly constructed in a male idiom and work constructed by male definitions, which derived from increasing waged labour and emerging from debate about a 'family wage'. These not only subordinated women's work, but contributed to identifying women as not workers, and specifically female tasks, including activities at home, as not

> work. Redefinitions tended to make women's work even more invisible, while the visible woman worker had to be controlled, categorised and constructed as a temporary worker or not a worker.[6]

In an extended process the space of the workplace itself was redefined and reconstituted as a male activity, as something men did to provide for a dependent wife and family. Women's work was subordinated and defined, in and out of the home, as not work. It was thus obscured, and where visible, was restricted and characterised as not work, or as temporary. Gordon and Breitenbach assessed that '[w]hen other sources are used to supplement official Census figures, it becomes clear that work was a common, if intermittent experience for married women'.[7] The Census, while useful, may not be the most effective source to find women's and married women's work. Hakim observed that economic activity rates for both men and women were not a regular feature of the Census until the twentieth-century.[8] This was echoed by Joshi and Owen who stated it has 'long been recognised' that the Census is not the best means to track marginal members of the labour force, such as people whose main occupation is not 'economic', but who have occasional part-time or informal employment.[9] While noting that the Censuses from 1951 to 1981 are an 'apparently consistent' source, they cautioned against straightforward comparison of the data. Definitions of economic activity altered between Censuses, reflecting social and economic developments.[10]

The dominant narrative of post-war women's work in Britain is of increasing female labour market participation rates. The increased proportions of married women who worked and the growth of part-time work have been particularly important. However, the extent of and explanations for these increases have been debated.

Historians, sociologists, and economists have been embroiled in debate about whether women in the post-war period worked in the formal economy in proportionately greater numbers than before. Historians such as Bruley illustrated that the greatest change that occurred in the post-war period was the increase in married women's formal employment,[11] while others such as McCloskey have gone as far as to state that '[t]he story of women in paid work in the twentieth-century is that until the 1950s and especially the 1970s they mainly didn't have it',[12] asserting the fifties and sixties as a turning point in women's working lives. McIvor found continuity in female participation rates in the formal economy between 1901 and 1951, whereas between 1951 and 1981 the proportion of adult women in employment rose sharply, from 32.6 percent to 42.2 percent.[13] Pahl developed this further, noting the decline of the female labour force in the late 1940s as single women married and started their families after the upheaval of the Second World War. He dated the beginning of an 'unprecedented' rise in the proportion of married women in employment to the mid-sixties.[14] For Pahl the trend of increasing female participation rates peaked at around 50 percent between 1977 and 1981, in contrast to rapid increase in the preceding years.[15] Joshi and Owen argued there is 'no doubt' that women's participation in the paid labour force has risen dramatically, but it is less clear how steadily this increase occurred and how influential demand has been on these participation rates.[16] They concluded that the increase was steadier than previous research suggested.[17] Hatton and Bailey's research introduced doubt into this discussion. Comparing Census data with surveys of working-class living standards, they posited that the Census actually overstated labour force participation rates in the early twentieth-century. However, the ramification for post-war women's work is the rise of

women's labour market participation in the second half of the twentieth-century may be understated.[18] In sum, while there is a degree of disagreement over the steadiness and momentousness of the increase, the increase itself is *generally* not disputed.

An especially heated debate on this issue occurred between Hakim and a group of sociologists. Hakim reported remarkable continuity in women's employment over the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries. She found economic activity rates for women were as high in 1861 as in 1971 at 43 percent, while the rate for married women was as high in 1851 as it was in 1951. From this she concluded 'it is somewhat misleading to refer to the 'rise' of women's activity rates in the twentieth-century'.[19] Hakim developed her continuity thesis by arguing that female full-time work rates from 1841 until 1993 remained at one third of women of working age. She argued there was no increase in female employment measured in full-time equivalents (FTEs) from the Second World War until 1987 in Britain.[20] Hakim's research has been extensively criticised. Responding to her argument that despite the dramatic rise in the number of women employed, the total hours of female employment in FTEs had increased little, sociologists responded that the proportions of women either employed full-time or part-time are more relevant measures of women's employment than FTEs.[21] They illustrated the significance of part-time employment in terms of women's control of their own earnings, their sense of identity, changing family roles, and poverty distribution, demonstrating that 'even if two part-time jobs are comparable with one full-time job for statisticians, this is not so for those who hold the jobs nor for their employers'.[22] The strength of the evidence and argument presented by Pahl *et al* appears more convincing than Hakim's, not least because, as the oral history

testimony to be discussed in Chapters Four and Five will explore, the types of work (full-time or part-time) which women did mattered to them in practical and personal terms.

Having established one element of a national narrative of increasing female labour market participation, an additional question is over the form this increase took, with reference to women's marital status, age and generation, and the age of any children they had. There was a rise in married women's employment in the formal economy in the post-war period. The increase of an 'M-shaped' or bimodal pattern of work meant women largely worked until their first pregnancy, retiring from paid work for a spell, before returning at some point between pregnancies or after completing their family. In part this was aided by the removal of marriage bars in teaching in 1944 and in the Civil Service in 1946.[23] However, it must be noted that maternity leave did not become a legal precedent until the 1975 Employment Protection Act. The effect of this change on working-class women's work is questionable. For example, Joshi and Hinde found that 'the increase in the levels of married women's work has been much greater among the wives of the middle-classes than amongst the wives of the working-classes',[24] suggesting there was a class dimension in the changes to the labour force. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries, having children had a negative effect on women's participation in the labour market. However, having a child less than 2 years of age increased the probability of a mother having paid work. Women worked while they had a young family, a time of financial pressure, but withdrew from the labour market when children had reached an age to be able to work and contribute to the household income.[25] Evidently, this work pattern had changed by the mid to late twentieth-century. Joshi and Hinde demonstrated through their generational

study of women's return to work after having children that 'overall, the incidence and speed of returning to work had increased greatly. In the earlier generation [women who gave birth in 1946] only around 1 in 20 had taken paid work before the first child was a year old; in the later generation [women born in 1946] the proportion was around 1 in 5.[26] This presents a brief snapshot into generational differences in married women and mothers paid employment. Two patterns emerge. Until the Second World War it seems women were more likely to work when they had young children and during periods of economic constraint, withdrawing when fortunes improved. In the early post-war period, women born in the interwar period were less likely to work when their children were babies. However, women born in 1946 (thus potentially having children from 1964 onwards, assuming they could have started their families from 18 years of age), were more likely than their mother's generation to work when their children were babies. Indeed, before the 1970s, women tended to return to work part-time at first after having children. After the 1970s, women had come to expect that their career would not finish if they had children, and increasingly returned to their job full-time after taking maternity leave.

An important factor enabling women, especially mothers, to work outside the home in formal employment is the availability of part-time work. Part-time work for women was facilitated in part by the loosening of restrictive legislation on women's evening work. The 1950 Factories (Evening Employment) Order permitted women to work nightshift before 10 p.m. Dubbed 'twilight' or 'housewife' shifts these were popular among working-class women.[27] Part-time work was not expressly codified until the 1951 Census, when it was defined as fewer than 30 hours a week. Part-time work has been gendered female. A

comparison of Census data suggests the proportion of women's jobs that were part-time rose steadily between 1951 and 1971, before levelling off.[28] The proportion of women working part-time increased from less than 5 percent in 1951 to 41 percent in 1981. By 1981, only 7 percent of male workers in Scotland worked part-time.[29] Examining the same data from another perspective, 90 percent of part-time workers were women in 1981. In that Census year, close to 75 percent of female part-time workers were aged between 25 and 55, and 80 percent of female part-time workers were married. This indicates that women's employment patterns are linked to home and childcare responsibilities, and other work.[30] Hatton and Bailey, who compared Census data to living standard surveys, suggested that the Census figure of 11.4 percent of all women workers employed part-time was an underestimate. Thus, post-war growth in part-time work among women was slower than Census figures connote.[31] Nevertheless, analysis of the data suggests there was an increase in the proportions of part-time workers in the formal economy. The fact of a specific question about part-time work in the Census from 1951 indicates it was an issue of interest; something that needed to be enumerated.

Having considered the increase of women's labour market participation in the post-war period, and changing patterns of women's employment, debate explaining the reasons for these modifications is now explored. A range of explanations have been posited, including neoclassical economic theory, structural explanations, demographic changes, and combinations of these diverse elements. Neoclassical economic theory proposes that the decision whether to work or not is the product of a rational judgement, made on the basis of full information. The goal for individuals is to maximise their time use.[32] A strident proponent of this

theory with regards to women's work is Hakim. She seeks to explain the paradox that women are concentrated in low-skilled, low-paid jobs with poor benefits and prospects, yet report higher levels of satisfaction compared to men in higher status and better paid jobs.[33] To explain this paradox, Hakim suggested men and women have different life-goals:

> The majority of women aim for a homemaker career in which paid work is of secondary or peripheral importance, with strong support from their husbands for this strategy. A minority of women are committed to work as a central life goal, achieving jobs at higher levels of status and earnings.[34]

Dividing women into two distinct categories – home-centred women whose focus is on the home and family, or work-centred women whose work and career is most important – Hakim developed a preference theory, which introduced an additional category; 'adaptive'.[35] For Hakim five changes produced new options and opportunities for women; increasing use of legalised contraception from 1965 onwards, equal opportunities, the expansion of white-collar occupations, the creation of jobs for secondary earners, and the 'increasing importance of attitudes, values, and personal preferences in the lifestyle choices of affluent modern societies'.[36] Although Hakim's Preference Theory applies to twenty-first-century Britain, it is controversial. Hakim prioritises women's choices and agency in their decision making arguing '[w]e must stop presenting women as 'victims', or as an undifferentiated mass of mindless zombies whose every move is determined by other actors and social forces'.[37] This is valid stance to take, and it is important that women are not silenced and constructed as victims of the vagaries of the market, or of patriarchy. However, by depicting women's choices as free choices, Hakim ignores the real effects of ideology, constructs of proper feminine

behaviour, and material limitations on the work choices women make. A more useful amended understanding of preferences would consider women's agency and the choices they make within the context of palpable curbs on their work-life. As Leahy and Doughney explored in their critique of Hakim's Preference Theory, preference formation might be a more adequate explanatory model, since Hakim 'fails to pay attention to the complex, cognitive process of preference formation',[38] that is, the factors which shape and influence the preferences made.

Another contributory factor to the increasing participation rates of women are structural changes. A structural explanation postulates that the diversification of the British economy, which accelerated in the post-war period, has benefited women as workers. As traditional manufacturing declined, new industries, light engineering, and the growing service sector became principal employers of women. A proponent of this is Braverman. He argued that larger post-war businesses required greater numbers of administrative and clerical staff.[39] Dex developed this, arguing that women have not only been beneficiaries of this process of restructuring, but have been integral to it; by purchasing new consumer goods, by seeking to lessen their dependence on 'housekeeping' money, and by preferring part-time jobs to 'satisfy their list of desires...alongside shouldering domestic responsibilities'.[40] Thus, in Braverman and Dex's analysis, women have both contributed to and benefited from the diversification of the economy. Lewis reflected these arguments, demonstrating that the increasing importance of the service sector and employment in and for the welfare state was a powerful pull factor.[41] Employment in service and welfare has particularly attracted women employees 'because of profoundly gendered ideas as to what kind of work is appropriate for women'.[42] Arguments which stress the effects of economic

reorganisation on women's employment must also consider the deeply gender-segregated workplace and its implications for the types of work women can do. Pahl stated that 'it is not always recognised that women are more likely to be employed as factory workers in the mid-1980s than at any time in the past',[43] a consequence of new light-engineering, electronics, and electrical engineering firms. Alongside factory work, women's activity rates are related to the growth of services in the economy. In 1981 service industries accounted for 60 percent of all employment, but 54 percent of all service employees were women.[44] From another perspective, 75 percent of women were employed in the service sector, particularly in local government, teaching, nursing and shop work.[45] The restructuring of the economy has particularly attracted female labour, and married women especially.

Further explanations for increased proportions of married women in the labour market have emphasised demographic factors. The increasing popularity of marriage and younger age of first marriage have increased the 'pool' of married women workers. Brown has demonstrated that in Scotland, England and Wales, the marriage rate rose between the 1910s and 1972, with a surge in the marriage rate in the sixties. He also demonstrated that the age of first marriage fell sharply through the late 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s. The mean age of marriage among single women was lowest between 1960 and 1974 at 22.5 to 22.7 years. From 1975 the mean age of first marriage began to rise sharply.[46] Smaller nuclear families, partly a consequence of increased legal contraceptive use,[47] meant women could plan their families and spent a smaller period of time pregnant and rearing young children. For McCloskey demographic and ideological changes have been more important to married women's work in the post-war period than

the Second World War or the changing structure of industry.[48] McIvor encapsulated some factors that had an impact on women's work:

> A pincer movement has been operating here. Since World War Two the pool of single women in the labour market has shrunk because of earlier marriage, rising school leaving age and longer periods spent in full-time education. On the other hand, and most significantly, the enhanced labour market participation by married women has been facilitated by smaller family size.[49]

Knox argued that in addition to the increasing ownership of labour saving devices, married women have found it easier to combine paid employment outside the home, and 'faced less impediments to entering the labour market in large numbers and soon outnumbered single females'.[50] Further reflection on this point is provided below.

Within structural and demographic arguments, the increasing availability and use of labour-saving appliances has been integral – freeing women's time and labour to enable them to work, while the manufacture of such goods created jobs for women in factories. In some general histories, this has been accepted uncritically. The effect of household appliances on housework has been debated. Bowden and Offer illustrated that the mass dispersal of household appliances began in the 1950s in Britain. The circulation of time-using appliances, such as televisions and radios, occurred quicker than time-saving appliances, such as washing-machines and vacuum cleaners.[51] For Bowden and Offer this meant consumers prioritised the quality of their free time compared to attempting to increase the amount of time.[52] In addition, they found that labour-saving appliances had a limited effect on the amount of time spent on housework:

> For British middle-class women, the household workloads almost doubled during these years [1937 to 1961], from about 250 to 450 minutes a day. For working-class women, after rising from less than 500 minutes in 1937 to more than 500 in 1952, time spent in housework declined to about 450 minutes in 1961, the same level as middle-class women. Since then time in housework in Britain has declined consistently for both classes at about the same pace, down to 350 – 375 minutes in 1974/75, but rising somewhat to 1984.[53]

The explanation for this lay in the continued gendered division of labour in the home, cultural and social norms which have continued to identify women with housework, and rising housework standards.[54] This casts doubt on the proliferation of household appliances as a significant contributory factor in married women's return to work, in light of continued high housework standards and construction of the home and housework as woman's domain.

This discussion has demonstrated that the post-war period was transformative for women's working lives. Debate remains over the extent of the increase of married women's employment, especially when informal labour is considered. Part-time work was gendered and a viable option for mothers, enabling them to combine paid work with childcare. There was a class distinction, with some researchers arguing the increase of married women's employment was more acute among the middle-classes. Economic restructuring changed the type of work working-class women did, moving from textiles and domestic service into new manufacturing firms and the expanding service sector. The interplay of economic restructuring and demographic factors, in combination with women's choices and the exercise of their agency, made these changes possible. Within this context of change however, there is also a narrative of continuity. There was no dramatic upheaval of the gendered divison of labour within the home, meaning women continued to be responsible for the bulk of housework and childcare. The

formal economy remained stratified, and women continued to be concentrated in low-paid work, classified as low-skilled.

National Narratives – Statistics

The discussion in the previous section is now developed using statistical data. Original data analysis complements existing statistics to support findings demonstrating the increase in married women's employment and women's changing work-life patterns. Focussing on national statistics of post-war women's work, distinctions are drawn between Scotland and England where appropriate. Discussion begins with data which illustrates changes in the working population in Britain over the twentieth-century.

Table 2.1: Men and women at work as a percentage of working age population, Britain, 1901 – 1991

Year	Men Aged 15 – 64	Women Aged 15 – 59	Married Women Aged 15 – 59
1901	96	38	10
1911	96	38	10
1921	94	38	10
1931	96	38	11
1951	96	43	26
1961	95	47	35
1971	92	55	49
1981	90	61	57
1991	87	68	66

Sources: T. Hatton cited in C. G. Brown and W. Hamish Fraser, *Britain since 1707* (Pearson, Harlow, 2010), p. 609. C. Hakim, 'Census Reports as Documentary Evidence: The Census Commentaries 1801 – 1951', *Sociological Review*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1980), Table 2, p. 559.

Table 2.1 illustrates an increasing proportion of working-age women in employment across the twentieth-century. Between 1901 and 1931 the figures for all women and married women at work remained consistent, but this began to change between 1931 and 1951. From 1931 the percentage of all women aged 15 to 59 in employment steadily rose, but the proportion of married women workers was even greater between 1931 and 1991. The increase each Census year for all women was less than 10 percent, whereas for married women there were two peak increases of 15 percent between 1931 and 1951 and 14 percent between 1961 and 1971. There was a vast difference between 1901 and 1931 in the percentage of all women and of married women employed, at 28 percent. Between 1951 and 1991, the percentage difference between married and all women in work gradually decreased from around 17 percent in 1951 to 2 percent in 1991. Thus by 1991 the percentages of married women in employment was broadly similar to that of all women. Data from Table 2.1 therefore strongly suggests a move towards convergence in labour market participation rates between all women and married women. Married women became as likely to be employed as all women of working age. This is considered further in Table 2.2 below, which examines women's work from a different perspective.

Table 2.2: Women in the labour force, Britain, 1951 – 1981

	1951	1961	1971	1981
Women in labour force (% of total labour force)	31	33	37	40
Women in labour force (% of women aged 20 – 64)	36	42	52	61
Women employed part-time (% of total labour force)	12	26	35	42
Married women in labour force (% of all married women aged 15 – 59)	26	35	49	62

Source: J. Lewis, *Women in Britain* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1992), p. 65.

Table 2.2 supports the view that women's labour force participation increased between 1951 and 1971, though it lacks contextual data from the early twentieth-century. The female proportion of the labour force increased between 1951 and 1981. Within the same time period an increasing proportion of working age women were engaged in paid work.[55] Table 2.2 focusses further still on female part-time and married women workers. The proportion of women employed part-time increased, with the greatest increase between 1951 and 1961 of 14 percent, supporting the argument that the upturn of women's labour force participation was partly due to women's employment in part-time jobs. An expanding percentage of married women were active in the labour force. In 1951 slightly over a quarter of all married women worked, almost doubling by 1971. By 1981, just fewer than two-thirds of married women worked. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 have illustrated an increase in the proportions of women and married women in the British labour force. Table 2.3 develops this by exploring the extent to which Scotland echoed this wider British picture.

Table 2.3: Women employed as a percentage of females of employable age in Scotland, 1901 – 1981[56]

Year	Participation rate (percent) of females of employable age
1901	33.0
1921	32.5
1931	34.9
1951	32.6
1961	35.9
1971	39.7
1981	42.2

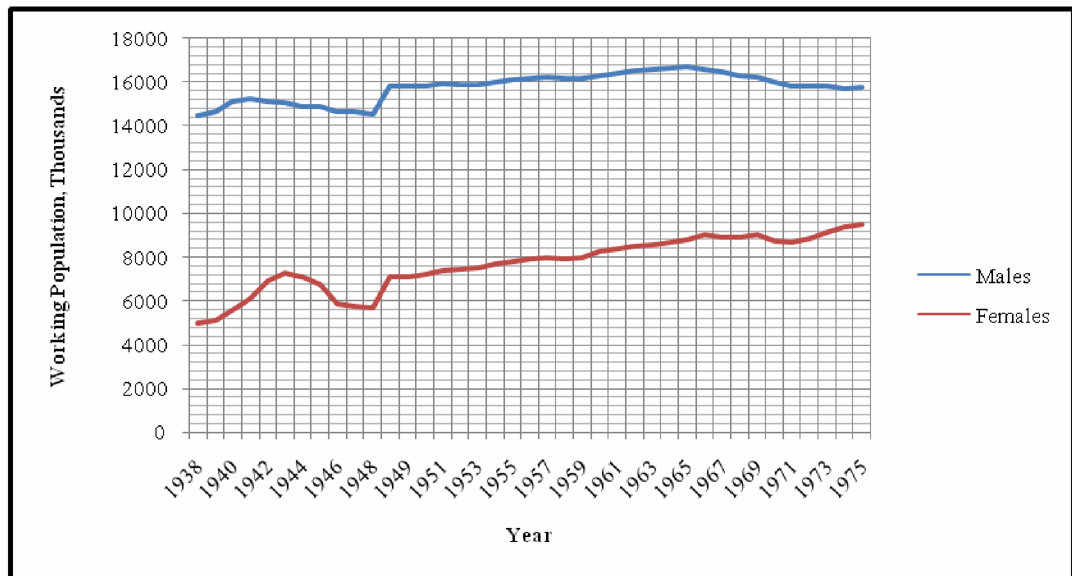
Sources: A. J. McIvor, 'Women and Work in Twentieth-Century Scotland', in A. Dickson and J. H. Treble (eds.), *People and Society in Scotland Vol. III 1914 – 1990* (John Donald Publishers, Edinburgh, 1992), Table 1, p. 139, supplemented with data from the Census of Scotland 1961.

Table 2.3 demonstrates that the proportion of working age women who were employed in twentieth-century Scotland increased overall. There was a slight decline in the proportion of working women in Scotland between 1901 and 1921, before rising in 1931. The percentage declined overall through the thirties, the Second World War and into the early post-war period reflecting the interwar economic depression, increased marriage and fertility rates following the Second World War, and women's departure from wartime employment. The proportion of working women then increased between 1951 and 1981. This trend of increase in the proportion of employed women from the 1950s in Scotland reflects the British experience.

The statistics presented so far show increasing participation rates of women in the labour force. The growth of part-time work and married women's augmented role in the labour market were significant features of post-war employment. These findings are now developed further, using data from the Annual Abstract of Statistics and the Censuses of Scotland, England and Wales.

The limitations with statistical sources discussed earlier in this chapter are recognised, while the decennial Census and other statistical sources are proceeded with as a source of information about women's paid work. They remain valuable sources and provide vital data on women's work, among other measurable factors, in this period. There are differences between the Census and the Annual Abstract of Statistics, hereafter the Abstract. The Abstract is composed of figures from government agencies, namely the Ministry of Labour and National Insurance, and the Department of Employment. Data appearing in the Abstract are contained in the Monthly Digest of Statistics. Until 1971, employment statistics were derived from National Insurance cards (after which point a census of employment was taken annually in June). The use of National Insurance cards to count workers had issues. The Abstract explained the decision to turn away from National Insurance cards, stating that this method had included employees who worked for only part of the year, and not in employment during the week in June when its census was taken.[57] The Census is taken every 10 years, and is composed by asking each individual in a household to describe their job. No Census was taken in 1941 because of the upheaval of the Second World War. In 1966 a 10 percent sample Census was taken and this is used where possible throughout, acknowledging that it is not entirely comparable with the 1931, 1951, 1961, and 1971 Censuses.

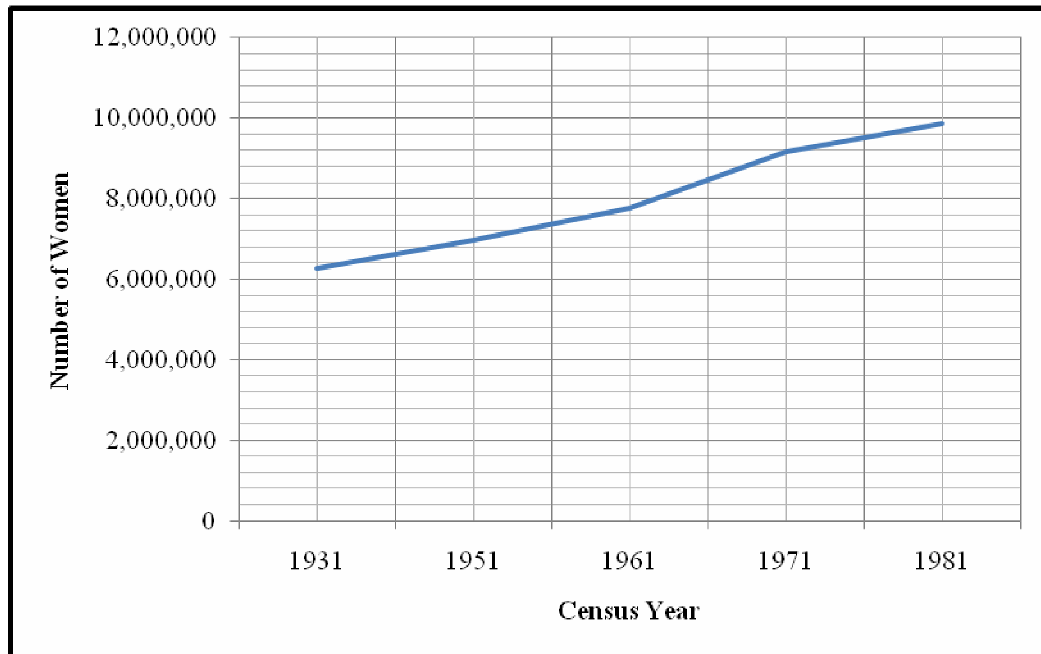
Figure 2.1: Total Working Population (Thousands) by Sex, Britain 1938 – 1970



Sources: Annual Abstract of Statistics Volume 84, 1935 – 1946, p. 106 ; Volume 89, 1952, p. 101 ; Volume 90, 1953, p. 99 ; Volume 91, 1954, p. 97 ; Volume 92, 1955, p. 102 ; Volume 98, 1961, p. 104 ; Volume 103, 1966, p. 108 ; Volume 107, 1970, p. 118 ; Volume 112, 1975, p. 143 and Volume 113, 1976, p. 149.

Ministry of Labour data in the Annual Abstract of Statistics evidences the changing numbers of women and men in employment. Figure 2.1 illustrates the male and female working populations in Great Britain each year between 1938 and 1975. From around 5 million working women in 1938, there was an increase to over 7 million in 1943, the mid-point of the Second World War. This figure declined to less than 6 million by 1947. There are two figures for 1948 with a disparity of nearly 3 million, as measurement of the labour force changed.[58] In the new series, there was a small decline in the number of working women from 1948 to 1949, followed by an upward trajectory with dips in 1958, 1967 and in the early 1970s. Despite the disruption of the Second World War and the immediate post-war years, the increasing numbers of working women was fairly consistent from 1950. The pattern of increasing female labour market participation is now explored using decennial Census data.

Figure 2.2: Number of economically active women; England, Wales and Scotland, 1931 – 1981



Sources: Census of England and Wales 1931 to 1981, Census of Scotland 1931 to 1981.

Census data in Figure 2.2 shows increasing numbers of women in work in England, Wales and Scotland. A gradual increase between 1931 and 1961 was followed by a sharper, steeper increase from 1961 until 1971, and a shallower increase from 1971 to 1981. The Census suggests the sixties were a turning point in this period, with a jump in women's participation, although this was part of a longer trend. Census and Abstract figures are broadly similar. The Census does not detail yearly fluctuations, particularly during and after the Second World War, which the Abstract suggests were significant. The Census suggests a more consistent, steady increase, whereas the Abstract elucidates the yearly fluctuations. The Abstract suggests more clearly the effects of the Second World War on women's work, and a significant dip in the early seventies.

Having demonstrated the increase in women's labour market participation across the middle decades of the twentieth-century in Britain, this chapter now turns to local circumstances. The following section inquires into ways female employment in the four case studies echoed or differed from this national picture. Glasgow and Newcastle are expected to mirror this national narrative, whereas Preston and Dundee may differ, given the longer trends of women and married women working in textiles in these towns.

Local Narratives

This section takes each case study in turn to illustrate the extent of deviation, if any, from national patterns. The case studies have attracted varying degrees of academic attention. Dundee and Preston have drawn attention from historians, with focus on the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, while there is a relative paucity of late twentieth-century economic history on Glasgow and Newcastle. The dominance of heavy industry has apparently overshadowed other industries, resulting in women's paid work being obscured to contemporaries and to historians.

Dundee

Dundee has interested historians owing to the large numbers of women, employed in the jute industry over the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries. Its sobriquet 'Juteopolis' prevailed into 1945 and beyond, despite the terminal decline of the industry, its replacement by polypropylene and new industries. The

importance of textiles and women workers to the city is reflected in a rich seam of research which has been undertaken.[59] Dundee's nomenclature as a woman's town appears to have been first articulated in 1905.[60] In that year the Dundee Social Union's survey of over 5,000 households deduced that approximately half of Dundee's married women were working.[61] By 1965 the high proportion of women in Dundee's labour force at 41 percent, compared to 37 percent in Scotland as a whole and 36 percent for Great Britain suggested Dundee's difference.[62]

Dundee's history is closely linked to the jute industry. In 1901 31 percent of Dundee's female population were employed in jute. Around 69.5 percent of all Dundee textile workers were female.[63] High demand for jute products continued after the Second World War. Jute control continued until 1969, although in a changing form.[64] In addition to competition from new industries in the city, this resulted in a labour shortage in the industry.[65] Managers within the jute industry introduced welfare facilities, such as nurseries, rather than competitive wages or part-time work which arguably women workers preferred.[66] Training was introduced to make jute more attractive, aiming to increase the credibility or respectability of spinning particularly. However, these training programmes were largely targeted at juveniles and males in particular.[67] A registration system was introduced to find interwar jute workers and prevent them moving to other industries.[68] The labour shortage was also overcome by the recruitment of several hundred workers from Pakistan.[69] Between 1960 and 1977 the number of women working in jute fell by 68 percent, but the industry remained Dundee's largest employer until 1966.[70] This was partly due to the creation of new jute works, such as Taybank Works which opened in 1949. By the 1960s men outnumbered women in the industry.

One cause of the labour shortage in jute was competition from new industries in the city.[71] Dundee was given Development Area Status from 1945, with 'cheap' female labour one selling point of the city to foreign investors. Industrial estates were created, such as Wester Gourdie in the east of Dundee. Multinational corporations employed significant proportions of Dundee's workers, such as Veedor-Root, Dayco Rubber, Michelin Tyres, and Holo Krome. Corporations such as UK Time Co. Ltd. (Timex) and National Cash Register (NCR) employed large numbers of women workers, who voted with their feet and chose to work in cleaner factories which offered better wages and hours than jute. Demonstrating the quick expansion of multinationals in Dundee, Morphy Richards employed 40 workers in 1947, and 1,000 by 1959.[72] In 1966, 12 percent of the occupied workforce was employed in these multinational corporations.[73]

With textile's dominance in Dundee, women had less need to work in other occupations. The percentage of married women employed in domestic service, the primary employer of women before the First World War in Britain, was unusually low in Dundee. In 1911, 21 percent of married women in Scotland were employed in domestic service whereas the comparative figure for Dundee was only 3.4 percent.[74] Shop work was popular among 'respectable' working-class girls in the early twentieth-century, offering better wages and cleaner conditions than the mill and factory, despite long hours. By 1941 46 percent of Britain's clerks were female, primarily in commerce and the civil service. By contrast, in the first half of the twentieth-century there were few opportunities for this work in Dundee as a result of the small professional and white-collar sectors.[75] However, by 1971 the service sector in Dundee had overtaken manufacturing as an employer of women.[76] The public sector, hospitals, and educational services were important

sources of female employment. The growth of Dundee City Council throughout the twentieth-century and the range of services offered increased the numbers of clerical and other jobs for women. By 1961 the council was the city's largest employer, of 7,800 workers, of whom 38 percent were women.[77]

In this way, Dundee's diversifying economy reflected national trends and, more importantly, brought about the city's convergence with the general character of women's employment patterns. Women's poor chances in non-manual work early on in Dundee belied its status as a 'woman's town'. This was a town, in fact, with probably the poorest opportunities in Britain for women's economic advancement prior to the 1940s. This was no 'liberated town' for women who, as cheap labour, were as economically constrained here as elsewhere.

Preston

Similarly to Dundee, there is a literature about industrialisation and 'deindustrialisation' in the cotton industry in Lancashire generally and Preston in particular. Preston has perhaps not been as extensively researched as Dundee. While the epithet of 'women's town' has been applied to Preston, it is not as ingrained in its history and collective culture as in Dundee.

Research on Preston has explained the 'rise and fall' of the cotton industry.[78] Following the Second World War the cotton industry experienced a labour shortage during a brief boom.[79] Until 1951 the industry's 'modest recovery' was due to exports while Japanese and German competitors re-established.[80] This boom did not halt the decline of the industry.[81] Industrial concentration during the war resulted in a loss of 40 percent of cotton employees. Low wages and poor

working conditions in cotton made it difficult to overcome the labour deficit.[82] Working in cotton was not an attractive prospect for many women partly because of the better wages and conditions they experienced in wartime factories.[83] Parents tried to dissuade children from entering such an insecure trade as cotton.[84] The numbers expected to return to newly re-opened mills after the war was unknown but 'unlikely to be very numerous'.[85] Some cotton firms attempted to appeal to women and juveniles, such as Horrockses' which created first aid rooms, rest rooms, and nurseries.[86] The introduction of part-time evening shifts was another expedient.[87] The shortage of labour in the cotton industry was partly solved by attracting migrant workers particularly from the Indian sub-continent[88] and European Voluntary Workers.[89] During the fifties and sixties more workers left the industry as output contracted.[90]

The decline of cotton can be viewed as part of post-war economic diversification. Following the war, Preston became a major centre for the design and manufacture of advanced aircraft.[91] Engineering became an important part of the town's economy, while the arrival of light industries presented new work opportunities for women.[92] Alternative employment was attractive, with factories offering higher wages at Euxton Ordinance Factory, English Electric, Leyland Motors, and Courtaulds.[93] As part of longer term trends, the service sector became an important employer of labour.[94] Preston's long standing role as an administrative, communications, and market centre continued into the twentieth-century.[95] The absence of in-depth exploration of new industries and alternative employment in Preston, compared to the wealth of research on the decline of the cotton industry in the twentieth-century, suggests scope for further work in this area.

Newcastle upon Tyne

There is limited research on the extent of female labour force participation in twentieth-century Newcastle. Heavy industry, coal mining, and shipbuilding dominated Newcastle and the wider Tyneside region into the 1950s.[96] Within this context, women's work, particularly married women's work, is less visible compared to Preston and Dundee. Vall convincingly argued:

> Comparisons with the nineteenth-century often treat the experience of the twentieth-century – particularly the growth of the service sector – as a diversion from the industrial norm. But it is clear that the changes over the last 100 years need to be viewed against the reality of a *longstanding* service sector development. Whilst Newcastle's commercial and retail economy was well advanced by the end of the nineteenth-century, the development of the city's service sector occurred in conjunction with its dislocation from the regional industrial base in the twentieth-century. Therefore, an assessment of Newcastle's economy since 1914 needs to contend with the previous century, whilst at the same time recognising that twentieth-century developments had a dynamic of their own.[97]

Vall explains here that the emergence of the service sector was part of a longer term trend. Furthermore, she hints that the dominance of industry and narratives of decline in the historiography have obscured the complex and longer term diversity of Newcastle's economy. The twentieth-century service sector built on strong nineteenth-century foundations. Newcastle reflected national trends of economic restructuring but held its own pattern.

Industrial employment available for women in twentieth-century Newcastle was limited to a small range of factories. Tobacco, clothing, and confectionary were industries which employed women. Women worked in factories such as Ross's Pickles, Thomas Owen saddlers, British Electrical and Manufacturing Company (Bemco), Ward Philipson printers, F. H. Thompson and

Sons timber merchants, and Stephenson Clark shipping line.[98] The Imperial Group opened Wills cigarette factory in 1950, and the Rowntree Mackintosh factory opened in 1956.[99] Also in the 1950s, the Winthrop Laboratories were opened in Fawdon, where women manufactured toothpaste and liver salts.[100] These three companies benefited from Development Area grants. During the Second World War a number of clothing manufacturers based in London and the South East relocated to the North East to make use of female labour and capitalise on existing clothing manufacturing in the city. By 1946, 10,500 women were employed in clothing.[101]

Newcastle had a strong service sector, particularly in retail. Department stores in Newcastle such as Fenwick's, Bainbridge's (which became the world's first department store in 1849), the Newcastle Co-operative Society's 'impressive department store', C&A Modes, and Marks and Spencer's were opened in the nineteenth-century and interwar period. In 1965, the City Council proposed redevelopment of Eldon Square and the construction of a large indoor shopping centre,[102] continuing Newcastle's service traditions.

Newcastle benefited from public sector expansion in the post-war period. Between 1961 and 1971, there was a 70 percent increase in public administration occupations in Newcastle, followed by a further 25 percent increase between 1971 and 1978.[103] The Ministry of Social Security's site at Longbenton had around 8,000 employees, many of them women, during the 1980s.[104] The North Eastern Electricity Board (NEEB) was one of Tyneside's major employers. At its peak in 1965 it employed more than 9,000 men and women, after being nationalised under the 1947 Electricity Act.[105] There is a comparative paucity of research specifically on women workers in twentieth-century Newcastle.

Glasgow

Glasgow was similar to Newcastle in that the dominance of heavy industry in the city's economy and history has resulted in the invisibility of lesser known, smaller industries and firms. *The Third Statistical Account of Scotland* in 1958 stated, '[t]o men the world over, Glasgow means shipbuilding'.[106] Such a brief phrase sums up the dominance of shipbuilding and heavy industry in the city's reputation and legacy. However, Glasgow transcended textiles and heavy engineering. From the 1970s the city moved away from its manufacturing base. The economy became service based, and culture and tourism became components of Glasgow's 'post-industrial' image.[107]

Glasgow was Scotland's largest city, economic capital, and an industrial metropolis in 1961. Iron and boiler-making, steam-tube making, locomotive building and general engineering, carpet manufacturing and textiles, paper making, china and glass, sawmilling, and furniture making were significant industries.[108] Special areas legislation in the 1930s attracted investment. As a result, the Hillington Industrial Estate near Glasgow opened, along with similar estates at Shieldhall and Dalmuir,[109] and at Queenslie.[110] Based at Hillington, automobile manufacturer Rolls Royce was a key employer in Glasgow.[111] Hillington was a pioneering venture with a factory and workshop for light industries, underpinned by government grants and incentives.[112] Light engineering firms were established in interwar and post-war Glasgow. They provided employment for around 8,000 people, mostly in firms on industrial estates.[113] Electrical goods, clothes and consumables were produced, including biscuit manufacturer, William MacDonald and Sons. Glasgow's light engineering

produced a ‘motley collection of products’ ranging from Olivetti’s typewriters to razor blades.[114] Well-known firms include EMI (who produced record players), Hoover at Cambuslang (vacuum cleaners), and Sunbeam (irons, shavers, and other domestic appliances).[115]

Retail and distributive trades have been important in Glasgow’s post-war service economy. In 1950, the retail sector employed 50,000 full-time workers and 9,000 part-time workers; 57 percent of these full-time workers were women. Gaskin noted the employment of married women in Glasgow department stores.[116] Glasgow Corporation was an important employer of women in the city, in clerical and secretarial work and in professions as teachers and nurses.[117] As in Newcastle, further research is needed on women’s employment in post-war Glasgow.

These overviews of the local economy in each case study have suggested regional distinctions between the industrial centres. The job opportunities available for women in 1931 varied for women; textiles dominated Dundee and Preston, with a correspondingly small service sector, whereas in Newcastle and Glasgow heavy industry dominated, and women were more established in service. In this context, the growth of light engineering, and the development of the service sector takes on new importance. It suggests a greater change in the types of work women did in Dundee and Preston, from factory to service. However, in Newcastle and Glasgow, women’s factory work, and the different form of service (from domestic to public) was an equally significant change. Vall raised a pivotal point, that the dominance of heavy industry in Newcastle (and, to extend her argument, Glasgow) in the economy and the historiography has meant other industries and employers of women are relatively lesser known.

Analysis now investigates changes in the proportions of women and married women employed in each case study using Census data. The types of work women were engaged in will then be considered using employment sector data to test the notion of regional distinctiveness, and how far it survived.

Case Studies – Statistical Data

In this section the national narrative of women's increasing labour market participation is scrutinised in Dundee, Glasgow, Newcastle, and Preston. The extent to which a regional experience of female employment existed is assessed. Mindful of the limitations of Census data, as reviewed earlier in this chapter, this analysis takes into consideration retired women, and students. Part-time work and married women workers are studied where possible; however, this aspect flags up the limits of the Census. Some tentative explanations for women's labour market participation in the post-war period are posited, with reference to demographic and population factors.

Economically active women in the case studies

Table 2.4: Economically active women as a percentage of the working age female population, Dundee, Glasgow, Newcastle, Preston, 1931 – 1971[118]

Year	Dundee	Glasgow	Newcastle	Preston
1931	55.1	38.6	33.4	52.7
1951	45.2	38.9	35.0	47.4
1961	46.7	40.8	38.0	46.9
1966	52.1	45.1	42.0	47.8
1971	51.3	44.8	42.1	46.8

Sources: Census of Scotland 1931 Vol. III Occupations and Industries, Table 2 p. 42.

Census of Scotland 1951 Vol. IV Occupations and Industries, Table 6 p. 186.

Census of Scotland 1961 Occupation and Industry County Tables Dundee, Clackmannan and Fife, Table 1 p. 2 and Glasgow and Lanark, Table 1 p. 2.

Sample Census of Scotland 1966, Economic Activity County Tables Dundee Angus and Perth, Table 1 p. 5 and Glasgow and Lanark, Table 1 p. 5.

Census of Scotland 1971 Economic Activity County Tables Part II Dundee, Table 1 p. 17 and Part III Glasgow, Table 1 p. 1.

Census of England and Wales 1931 Occupation Tables, Table 16 p. 235 and p. 314.

Census of England and Wales 1951 Occupation Tables, Table 20 p. 272.

Census of England and Wales 1961 Occupation, Industry, Socio-Economic Groups Northumberland, Table 1 p. 1 and Lancashire, Table 1 p. 3.

Sample Census of England and Wales 1966 Economic Activity County Leaflet Northumberland, Table 1 p. 1 and Lancashire, Table 1 p. 13.

Census of England and Wales 1971 Economic Activity County Leaflet Northumberland, Table 1 p. 1 and Lancashire, Table 1 p. 13.

Table 2.4 illustrates the proportion of working age women who were enumerated as gainfully employed or economically active in Preston, Glasgow, Newcastle, and Dundee between 1931 and 1971 inclusive. The differences between the four case studies had significantly lessened by 1971. In 1931 the distinction between Dundee, with the highest female participation rate and Newcastle, with the lowest participation rate, was 21.7 percent. By 1971 this distinction was 9.2 percent. This convergence of regional differences meant in 1971 a range of between 42.1 and 51.3 percent of working age women were economically active compared to a range of 33.4 to 55.1 percent in 1931 in the case studies. This reflected an increasing proportion of working women in Newcastle and Glasgow, and an apparent declining proportion overall in Dundee and Preston.

Glasgow and Newcastle appeared to conform to the national trend of increasing female labour market participation rates. Both experienced a slow but steady increase of women in work between 1931 and 1966 with a small decline in 1971 in Glasgow. Dundee and Preston differ from this pattern with greater

fluctuation. They saw an overall decline in the proportion of working women. Yet, Preston and Dundee consistently had the highest proportions of working age women in work. In these textile towns in this period, the percentages of working women were highest in 1931. In 1951 and 1961 the proportion had decreased. In Preston, the proportion then increased in 1966 before falling in 1971. In Dundee the proportion of working women rose until 1966, before falling in 1971. Preston experienced a greater overall decline than Dundee.

There was an ageing female working population in the post-war period. Women over 60 have been included in the figures above, as it is unclear from Census data alone how far women over 60 withdrew from the labour force entirely. Retired women were enumerated as economically inactive during the sixties and early seventies. It is probable that the low percentage of women who had formally retired from the labour market had minimal impact on the number of women enumerated as economically active which formed the basis of the data in Table 2.4.

Table 2.5: Retired women as a percentage of working age women, Dundee, Glasgow, Newcastle and Preston, 1961 – 1971

Year	Dundee	Glasgow	Newcastle	Preston
1931	1.6	0.6	0.4	1.8
1951	2.7	1.3	1.0	2.6
1961	7.7	6.7	1.9	5.4
1966	3.4	2.2	2.2	1.8
1971	14.0	10.9	5.2	21.9

Sources: Census of Scotland 1931 Vol. I Part III City of Dundee, Table 16 p. 103 and Part II City of Glasgow, Table 16 p. 69.

Census of Scotland 1931 Vol. III Occupations and Industries, Table 2 pp. 42 – 127.

Census of Scotland 1951 Vol. IV Occupations and Industries, Table 6 p. 306.

Census of Scotland 1961 Occupation and Industry County Tables Dundee, Clackmannan and Fife, Table 1 p. 2 and Glasgow and Lanark, Table 1 p. 2.

Sample Census of Scotland 1966 Economic Activity County Tables Dundee Angus and Perth, Table 1 p. 5 and Glasgow and Lanark, Table 1 p. 1.

Census of Scotland 1971 Economic Activity County Tables Part II Tayside Planning Sub-Region, Table 1 p. 17 and Part III Glasgow Planning Sub-Region, Table 1 p. 1.

Census of England and Wales 1931 Occupation Tables, Table 16 p. 249 and p. 328.

Census of England and Wales 1951 Occupation Tables, Table 20 p. 225 and p. 278.

Census of England and Wales 1961 Occupation, Industry and Socio-Economic Groups Northumberland, Table 1 p. 1 and Lancashire, Table 1 p. 3.

Sample Census of England and Wales 1966 Economic Activity County Leaflet, Northumberland, Table 1 p. 1 and Lancashire, Table 1 p. 13.

Census of England and Wales 1971 Economic Activity County Leaflet Northumberland, Table 1 p. 1 and Lancashire, Table 1 p. 1.

Table 2.5 shows retired women as a percentage of working age women in the case studies. The data available shows an overall increase of retired females with a large jump between 1966 and 1971. Excluding 1971, the proportion of retired women was largest in Dundee, Glasgow, and Preston in 1961. Large numbers of women were not in the labour force but not enumerated as retired, such as housewives, or women who 'officially' retired but took temporary, casual, or part-time work during periods of necessity.

Retirement is a problematic category where women are concerned. This may aid understanding of the stark differences in the proportions of retired women, particularly in 1971. Retirement may be taken to mean no longer working in any capacity and not seeking work. The 1951 Census questionnaire clarified this, stating that 'a retired person who has taken up regular work again should give

the present occupation, and should not be described as ‘Retired’.’ However, in 1931 the Census for Scotland reveals that in considering retired women, it is practicable to also consider ‘no gainful occupation stated’. To illuminate this further, in 1931 women enumerated as retired numbered 2,440 in Glasgow, and 1,172 in Dundee. In the category ‘no gainful occupation stated’ these figures were 256,549 for Glasgow, and 32,462 for Dundee. The Census commentary explained further; ‘these numbers do not possess the same significance as in the case of males, as they consist largely of married women and of females engaged in home duties’. The 1951 Census commentary explained the large disparity between female and male retired figures was ‘due to the fact that most females marry and relinquish their former occupations in favour of household duties’. However, the census found that when calculated as a percentage of occupied females, the proportion was parallel with that of men. Thus, this chapter uses retirement figures, rather than no gainful occupation, as the latter case does not solely count housewives. Furthermore, this brief discussion reveals that in the second half of the twentieth-century, the thorough and consistent enumeration of women workers had not been achieved.

Other factors affecting the labour force, such as women in full-time education, can be considered. By 1970, all four case studies had at least one university and/or a polytechnic. These included the University of Glasgow, founded in 1451; University of Strathclyde, which gained university status in 1964 based on a 1796 foundation; University of Central Lancashire, which became a university in 1992 based on a 1828 foundation; University of Newcastle, established in 1963 from a 1834 foundation; University of Northumbria at Newcastle, founded 1992 on a 1880 college; the University of Dundee which

became a university in 1967 based on a 1881 foundation; and the University of Abertay, Dundee which gained university status in 1994 from an 1888 foundation. Students were enumerated as economically inactive, which lessens their importance when calculating the proportion of women who were economically active (as in Table 2.4). The percentage of women students in each of the locations was small overall, as Table 2.6 shows. A full and complete picture of the female student population in each place would consider women who migrated out of and into each location to study, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Table 2.6: Number of female students as a percentage of working age women, Dundee, Glasgow, Newcastle, Preston, 1961 – 1971

Year	Dundee	Glasgow	Newcastle	Preston
1931	0.3	0.5	1.5	0.9
1951	1.7	1.2	1.1	0.9
1961	2.8	2.5	1.9	1.6
1966	2.6	2.4	2.5	5.2
1971	4.3	3.9	3.9	2.9

Sources: as for Table 2.5.

Table 2.6 shows the proportion of working age women who were students was small at around 2 percent in 1961 and fewer than 5 percent by 1971. A further limitation of the Census on this issue is that it does not reveal who these women in further education were – for example, if the slight increase in the proportion of women students represents an increase of students from working-class backgrounds.

This section has demonstrated that the national narrative of increasing female labour market participation does not accurately reflect regional differences. Most notably Dundee and Preston, two towns which historically employed large proportions of women, actually saw an overall decline in the proportion of

working women. This is an important finding which nuances the existing picture of women's work in post-war Britain. There was a real distinction between Dundee and Preston, Newcastle and Glasgow in the first half of the twentieth-century. Women in the textile towns worked full-time in the 1930s. With the decline of the jute and cotton industries, women lost an important source of employment, explaining the apparent decline over the middle decades of the twentieth-century. The period from 1950 to 1971 witnessed convergence across all four case studies, but the directions of change differed according to the economic starting point for each place. This suggests that the historian needs to be responsive to the complex picture of women's changing lives in this period. The following develops these findings, by exploring married women's employment patterns.

Economically active married women in the case studies

A key narrative of women's work in post-war Britain is the increasing proportions of employed married women. Married women's work in the case studies is surveyed. It is investigated whether the slight decline of working women witnessed in Dundee and Preston was reflected in the proportions of married women workers.

Table 2.7: Economically active married women as a percentage of all married women, Dundee, Glasgow, Newcastle, Preston, 1931 – 1971

Year	Dundee	Glasgow	Newcastle	Preston
1931	33.2	7.4	*	*
1951	30.6	18.6	20.1	39.6
1961	40.3	28.0	29.4	55.1
1966	50.4	37.2	36.3	47.0
1971	55.1	41.6	57.8	49.6

* Data not available.

Sources: As for Table 2.5, including;

Census of Scotland 1931 Vol. III Occupations and Industries, Table 4 p. 158.

Census of Scotland 1951 Vol. IV Occupations and Industries, Table 8 pp. 376 – 393.

Census of Scotland 1961 County Report Vol. I Part IV City of Dundee, Table 6 p. 22 and Part II City of Glasgow, Table 6 p. 27.

Sample Census of Scotland 1966 Economic Activity County Leaflet Dundee, Angus and Perth, Table 1 p. 5 and Glasgow and Lanark, Table 1 p. 5.

Census of Scotland 1971 Economic Activity County Leaflets Part II Tayside Planning Sub-Region, Table 1 p. 17 and Part III Glasgow Planning Sub-Region, Table 1 p. 1.

Census of England and Wales 1951 Occupation Tables, Table 20 pp. 217 – 223.

Census of England and Wales 1951 County Report Northumberland, Table 21 p. 61 and Lancashire, Table 21 p. 192.

Census of England and Wales 1961 County Report Northumberland, Table 6 p. 16 and Lancashire, Table 6 p. 26.

Sample Census of England and Wales 1966 Economic Activity County Leaflet Northumberland, Table 1 pp. 1 – 3 and Lancashire, Table 1 pp. 13 – 15.

Census of England and Wales 1971 Economic Activity County Leaflet Northumberland, Table 1 p. 1 and Lancashire, Table 1 p. 13.

Table 2.7 illustrates an overall growth from 1951 of married women workers as a proportion of all married women in Dundee, Glasgow, Newcastle, and Preston. Dundee employed a larger proportion of married women in 1931

compared to Glasgow, due to the jute industry which employed many married women. It is likely Preston in 1931 would have demonstrated a similar large percentage. In Dundee, the percentage of working married women declined between 1931 and 1951, likely due to a decline in married women's work in the jute industry. Thereafter the proportion increased towards 1971. A growing proportion of all married women were employed in Preston in 1951 and 1961. However, by 1966 and 1971 more married women were employed in Dundee. This trend was likely caused by the deliberate locating of new light-component assembly industries in Dundee to benefit from the tradition of women's employment. The greatest increase between 1951 and 1971 occurred in Newcastle with 37.7 percent, followed by 24.5 percent in Dundee, 23.0 percent in Glasgow, and the lowest was 10.0 percent in Preston.[119] Including the Scottish figures for 1931 dramatically alters the rate of change to 34.2 percent in Glasgow and 21.9 percent in Dundee. However, the most dramatic increase was in Newcastle.

Table 2.8: Economically active married women as a proportion of all economically active women, Dundee, Glasgow, Newcastle, Preston, 1931 – 1971

Year	Dundee	Glasgow	Newcastle	Preston
1931	26.4	9.1	*	*
1951	36.3	26.2	34.2	50.6
1961	51.1	39.4	46.8	55.0
1966	57.2	47.1	50.3	59.7
1971	65.0	52.1	41.6	62.5

* Data not available.

Source: as for Table 2.7.

Table 2.8 shows the number of economically active married women as a percentage of all economically active women. The data in Table 2.8 largely

follows the pattern in Table 2.7, showing upward trajectory in the proportions of working women who were married. While Preston began with a larger proportion of married women workers in 1951, by 1971 Dundee had surpassed Preston in this regard. Glasgow consistently had a smaller proportion of married women in its female labour force with the exception of 1971. Although neither Glasgow nor Newcastle reached the same levels as Dundee and Preston, by 1966 in Newcastle and 1971 in Glasgow married women composed over half of all economically active women. In 1931 there was a notable difference in the married workforce between Glasgow and Dundee. Across the four case studies in 1951 there was a difference of 24.4 percent in the proportion of the female working population who were married. By 1971 this had reduced to a slight difference of 23.4 percent.

Historians and economists have debated how far married women workers have been undercounted (or over counted) in the Census. In Dundee and Preston, married women workers were visible and easily enumerated as textile workers – present on the payroll of the company they worked for, paying national insurance, as well as their visibility in the public sphere. In Newcastle and Glasgow although the 'official' number of married women in work was small, and composed only 9.1 percent of the female workforce in Glasgow in 1931, the proportion at work may have been greater, for instance, with married women taking in washing or ironing, going out to clean closes, and taking other casual, temporary remunerative employment. It is apparent that there are particular problems to be encountered in studying part-time workers using the Census. This is considered below as we now turn to explore part-time work.

Part-time Work

Before presenting data on female part-time workers, a discussion of the enumeration of part-time workers in the Census is given. Doing so highlights some issues with the Census as a source. The question remains of whether women classed themselves as 'working' or whether this was the interpretation of those taking the Census. Enumerators were tightly briefed on what questions they should ask. For instance, the Censuses of 1931 to 1971 did not consider housewifery or unpaid domestic duties as work; meaning work was classed as remunerative employment. The questionnaires and instructions for completing the Census provide some insights. In 1951, part-time work was first specifically codified and was defined as fewer than 30 hours. By 1961, this specific definition appeared to have been replaced. Part-time work was that which was for less than a full working week in the week preceding the Census. Part-time workers had to state the number of hours in a week they worked. Interestingly, male part-time workers were asked to give details of their last full-time employment; something not asked of female part-time workers. In 1966, the Census of Scotland stated 'there is no objective definition of a full-time worker' and by 1971, categorisation of part-time work was altered once more to ask part-time workers to record their work 'even if only for a few hours, such as jobbing gardening or paid domestic work'.[120] The Census counts workers on one particular day, and thus does not reveal the move into and out of the workforce throughout the life-course, and with the changing needs of the family. The statistics used to analyse women's part-time work in this chapter are based on Census figures, and thus these issues are integral

to the figures used. Despite these problems, the Census remains an important and valuable source for counting working women.

Table 2.9: Trends in part-time and full-time employment, Britain, 1951 – 1971

	1951	1961	1971
Percentage of full-time workers who were female	31.4	28.9	29.6
Percentage of part-time workers who were female	93.6	92.5	82.5
Ratio of all full-time to part-time workers	23:1	10:1	6:1
Ratio of female full-time to part-time workers	8:1	3:1	2:1

Source: Adapted from E. Roberts, *Women and Families: An Oral History, 1940 – 1970* (Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1995), Table 7.7, p. 122.

Table 2.9 illustrates a number of important changes in part-time work across a twenty year period. This table demonstrates the percentage of the full-time labour force that was female declined from 1951 to 1961, before increasing by less than 1 percent in 1971. Overall, despite a small decline, the proportion of the full-time workforce that was female was consistently around 30 percent. Of part-time workers the far largest proportion was female, although 17.5 percent of part-time workers were men by 1971. Table 2.9 also demonstrates ratios of full-time to part-time work. It shows that part-time work became an increasingly statistically significant element of the labour force. By 1971, there were 6 full-time workers for every part-time worker. Among women in 1951, there were 8 full-time workers for every part-time working woman, and the ratio declined rapidly by the 1961 Census. In 1971 there were only two full-time female workers for each part-time female worker – in other words, by 1971 around a half of female workers were part-time. Nationally, part-time work grew in importance to the labour force, while remaining a predominantly female experience. In Table 2.10, part-time work in Dundee, Glasgow, Newcastle, and Preston is explored.

Table 2.10: Percentage of occupied married women working part-time, Dundee, Glasgow, Newcastle, Preston, 1951 – 1966

Year	Dundee	Glasgow	Newcastle	Preston
1951	*19.4	*22.7	22.1	15.3
1961	28.1	31.3	36.5	26.7
1966	36.5	22.0	25.7	31.0

* Percentage of all occupied women working part-time.

Sources: Census of Scotland 1951 Vol. IV Occupations and Industries, Table 6 pp. 186 – 311.

Census of Scotland 1961 Occupation and Industry County Tables Dundee, Clackmannan and Fife, Table 1 p. 2 and Glasgow and Lanark, Table 1 p. 2.

Sample Census of Scotland 1966 Economic Activity County Leaflet Dundee, Table 1 p. 5 and Glasgow, Table 1 p. 5.

Census of England and Wales 1951, Occupation Tables, Table 20 pp. 217 – 223, pp. 272 – 278.

Census of England and Wales 1961 Occupation, Industry, Socio-Economic Groups Northumberland, Table 1 pp. 1 – 4 and Lancashire, Table 1 pp. 3 – 9.

Sample Census of England and Wales 1966 Economic Activity County Leaflet Northumberland, Table 1 pp. 1 – 3 and Lancashire, Table 1 pp. 13 – 15.

Table 2.10 illustrates the proportions of married working women who were employed part-time in the case studies, using available data. Across this 16 year period, there is some consistency in the proportions of married women working part-time in Newcastle and Glasgow at around 22 to 25 percent, despite a prominent increase in 1961 which was not apparently sustained. The figures suggest a more stark increase in married part-time women workers in the textile towns between 1951 and 1966. Indeed, in Preston the proportion doubled.

From another point of view, this exploration of part-time work has thrown a spotlight on the limitations and problems with the Census as source. The

difficulty in procuring a consistent and comparable series of data on part-time workers makes this clear.

The statistical analysis presented in this section has drilled into the national narrative of increasing female labour market participation rates. The case study methodology has added texture to this national picture. There were differences in the way the female labour force changed in Dundee, Glasgow, Newcastle, and Preston. However, by 1971 there was a movement towards converging experiences in all four case studies. The high percentage of women employed in Dundee and Preston partly explains the appearance of overall decline between 1931 and 1971. This obscures the subsequent trend of increase and consistency from 1951, in line with Newcastle and Glasgow. Thus by 1971, the very real distinctions between these four locations had lessened considerably.

Across the country, opportunities for part-time work for women grew. Further supporting the narrative of convergence, in Dundee and Preston the regional peculiarity of large numbers of female full-time workers fell, as married women re-entered the workplace as part-time workers. To reiterate, full-time work fell in Dundee and Preston as part-time work grew in line with national trends and congruent with the experiences of women in Glasgow and Newcastle. Newcastle saw a dramatic increase in the proportion of married women who were in employment, suggesting the scale of the shift in the make-up of the workforce there.

To explore this further, focus now shifts to the work women did, by exploring available employment opportunities. Employment sector data illustrates the differences and similarities between the case studies in the types of jobs women did and how this changed over time.

Employment Sectors by Place

In the following tables, occupations are labelled by the 1971 Census occupation orders, with percentages for earlier Census years formed by selecting the occupation(s) that most closely resemble the 1971 description. The descriptions and categorisation of most occupations changed in the Census, reflecting the changing employment of Britain. This imperfect method increases potential for error in categorising occupations, as they have not remained consistent. However, with the data and skills set available, this was the best means to compare women's occupations over time.

Women's work is frequently considered unskilled, raising issues about the classification of women's work in the Census. As an illustration of the changing categorisation of jobs, until 1961 entertainment and sport was a separate category, after which point it was combined with personal service. The meaning of 'service' changed over the twentieth-century: from domestic service, to a broader definition encompassing retail, catering, and serving in a public, rather than a private capacity. There are noteworthy 'gaps' in the data which challenge the aim to chart change over time. In 1966 'professional, technical workers, artists' were absent, while in 1951 'electrical and electronic workers' were not enumerated as a separate occupation order. In addition, it must be considered that the availability of electrical and electronic manufacturing factories, particularly American firms belies the probability that women working on these premises would frequently be engaged in conveyor belt and assembly tasks. The category 'unskilled workers and labourers' changed meaning over time. Women enumerated as unskilled in 1931 were counted under different categories in subsequent years. With these issues in

mind, this section takes each case study by turn, exploring changes in the work women did between 1931 and 1971.

Dundee

Table 2.11: Women employed in a range of employment sectors as a percentage of all working age women, Dundee, 1931 – 1971

Occupation	**1931**	**1951**	**1961**	**1966**	**1971**
Textile workers	29.1	11.6	8.9	8.4	4.1
Clerical workers	3.6	6.6	9.0	9.2	9.4
Warehousemen, storekeepers, packers, bottlers	8.5	1.2	1.7	1.4	1.2
Service, sport and recreation workers/ personal service	7.2	7.5	8.6	10.5	10.7
Sales workers/commercial, finance	5.3	5.4	6.5	6.9	6.1
Professional, technical workers, artists	2.1	3.0	3.8		6.4
Unskilled workers/labourers	7.7	3.0	0.3	0.4	0.8
Engineering and allied trades workers	0.1	1.1	2.6	3.9	5.9
Clothing workers	1.9	2.5	1.9	1.4	1.1
Electrical and electronic workers	0.0		0.1	0.0	0.2
Food, drink and tobacco workers	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.8
Entertainments and sport (from 1961 service, sport and recreation)	0.1	0.1			

Sources: Census of Scotland 1931 Vol. III Occupations and Industries, Table 2 pp. 42 – 127.

Census of Scotland 1951 Vol. IV Occupations and Industries, Table 6 pp. 186 – 311.

Census of Scotland 1961 Occupation and Industry, County Tables Dundee, Clackmannan and Fife, Table 1 pp. 2 – 9.

Sample Census of Scotland 1966 Economic Activity County Tables Dundee Angus and Perth, Table 1 p. 5.

Census of Scotland 1971 Economic Activity County Tables Dundee City, Table 1 pp. 17 – 20.

Table 2.12: Women employed in a range of employment sectors as a percentage of all economically active women, Dundee, 1931 – 1971

Occupation	**1931**	**1951**	**1961**	**1966**	**1971**
Textile workers	52.8	25.8	19.0	16.0	8.1
Clerical workers	6.4	14.7	19.3	17.7	18.4
Warehousemen, storekeepers, packers, bottlers	1.4	2.6	3.7	2.7	2.3
Service, sport and recreation workers/ personal service	13.1	16.5	18.4	20.2	20.8
Sales workers/commercial, finance	9.6	12.0	13.9	13.3	11.9
Professional, technical workers, artists	3.8	6.7	8.1		12.4
Unskilled workers/labourers	5.7	6.6	0.6	0.8	1.6
Engineering and allied trades workers	0.1	2.3	5.6	7.6	11.4
Clothing workers	3.4	5.6	4.1	2.7	2.1
Electrical and electronic workers	0.0		0.1	0.1	0.5
Food, drink and tobacco workers	1.4	1.7	1.9	1.7	1.6

Sources: As for Table 2.11.

As Tables 2.11 and 2.12 demonstrate, Dundee underwent change, as there was a move towards female employees being spread in smaller proportions over a broader range of occupations. In 1931, the occupations in Table 2.11 employed around 66 percent of working age women in Dundee, while the same occupations employed 46.7 percent of working age women in 1971. In Table 2.12, the selected occupations employed 97.7 percent of economically active women in Dundee in 1931, which had fallen to 91.1 percent in 1971. However, the distribution of women workers across these occupations had changed dramatically. For instance service, in 1971 the largest occupational category for women, employed a third of the proportion of working age women employed in textiles in 1931, then the top employer of women in Dundee. This reflects the slight overall decline in Dundee's full-time female workforce demonstrated previously.

Jute was an important employer of women in Dundee through the twentieth-century, until the mid-1960s when the industry attracted more male

workers. Tables 2.11 and 2.12 demonstrate that the greatest proportions of women were employed in textiles in 1931. As with the decline of Dundee's jute industry, the proportion of textile workers declined until 1971. The largest drop was between 1931 and 1951, followed by smaller declines in 1961 and 1966 respectively. By 1971, the proportion of working age women in textiles had roughly halved since 1966, with women withdrawing from the industry as it collapsed in the city. This is confirmed by Table 2.12 which shows a dramatic decline in the percentage of working women employed in textiles. In 1931, over half of Dundee's working women worked in textiles, compared to less than one-tenth by 1971.

The proportion of Dundee women employed as clerical workers steadily increased across the period 1931 and 1971. Table 2.11 shows a 3 percent increase of female clerical workers every decade between 1931 and 1961 while Table 2.12 suggests the proportion of working women employed as clerical workers in Dundee more than doubled between 1931 and 1951. Both tables demonstrate a three-fold increase in female clerical workers between 1931 and 1971. A similar trend occurred in the service industry, at slightly higher figures, and sales/commerce workers.[121] In particular, Table 2.12 bears out the small middle-class in Dundee, reflected in the absence of large proportions of women employed as domestic servants in 1931 (to serve middle-class households), and in jobs such as clerical and sales work which had, by the interwar years, become respectable careers for single middle-class women.[122] Dundee did not experience a retail boom as early as Newcastle and Glasgow had, with their developed shopping areas and numerous department stores. Coming late to this development, Dundee's shopping centre at the Overgate was opened in the 1960s, and at the Wellgate in 1978.

In occupations such as engineering/allied trades and professional/technical work there was a similar increase in the proportion of women workers. The greatest increase was in engineering, where the proportion of working age women in this industry rose by nearly 6 percent. Dundee's economy benefitted from Development Area status and American investment in the city. This included new electrical engineering factories. The growth in the proportion of women employed in engineering compared to those employed as electrical and electronic workers would seem to suggest that women working in these factories were enumerated as engineers rather than electrical/electronic workers. Table 2.11 suggests this latter sector employed only 0.2 percent of Dundee women by 1971.

The proportion of working age women employed in professional occupations had increased greatly by 1961, and then almost doubled by 1971. This is to be expected considering increased opportunities for further education and careers for women, particularly in the 1960s. For instance, concerns about a shortage of primary school teachers for the 'baby boom' generation resulted in a recruitment drive, which presented opportunities for women to return to education to train.[123]

By 1961, the proportion of working women employed in textiles, as clerks, and in service was remarkably similar, suggesting this was a turning point. These employment sector data illustrate the changes which occurred in women's employment in Dundee. Dundee's economy underwent a shift from an industrial, manufacturing economy to a service based one. Women moved from being concentrated in large numbers in the jute industry, to working in small, but substantial, numbers in a more numerous range of occupations. Along with light

engineering, women in Dundee worked in the service sector, sales and commerce, and as clerical workers.

Preston

Table 2.13: Women employed in a range of employment sectors as a percentage of all working age women, Preston, 1931 – 1971

Occupation	**1931**	**1951**	**1961**	**1966**	**1971**
Textile workers	28.6	13.3	8.6	5.3	3.0
Clerical workers	1.9	5.9	8.0	9.7	12.6
Warehousemen, storekeepers, packers, bottlers	1.1	1.4	2.1	1.7	2.2
Service, sport and recreation workers/personal service	7.1	8.3	9.4	11.6	10.4
Sales workers/commercial, finance	4.2	5.2	6.5	7.2	4.7
Professional, technical workers, artists	1.9	2.6	3.0	3.1	3.3
Unskilled workers/labourers	2.1	2.7	0.8	0.6	1.1
Engineering and allied trades workers	0.1	1.6	1.0	1.3	1.4
Clothing workers	2.6	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.1
Electrical and electronic workers	0.4		0.1	0.3	0.5
Food, drink and tobacco workers	1.3	1.2	0.6	0.4	0.5
Transport and communications	0.2	0.6	0.8	1.0	0.1
Paper, card, printers, photo	0.6	0.7	1.0	1.0	0.1
Wood	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0
Entertainments and sport (from 1961 service, sport and recreation)	0.1	0.1			
Administrators and managers		0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0
Leather workers	0.0	1.3	1.3	1.0	0.0
Gas, coke and chemicals		0.2	0.4	0.4	0.0
Ceramics, glass, cement		0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0

Sources: Census of England and Wales 1931 Occupation Tables, Table 16 pp. 235 – 249.

Census of England and Wales 1951 Occupation Tables, Table 20 pp. 217 – 223.

Census of England and Wales 1961 Occupation, Industry, Socio-Economic Groups Lancashire, Table 1 pp. 3 – 9.

Sample Census of England and Wales 1966 Economic Activity County Leaflet Lancashire, Table 1 pp. 13 – 15.

Census of England and Wales 1971 Economic Activity County Report Lancashire, Table 1 pp. 13 – 16.

Census of England and Wales 1971 County Report Lancashire, Table 18 p. 215.

Table 2.14: Women employed in a range of employment sectors as a percentage of all economically active women, Preston, 1931 – 1971

Occupation	**1931**	**1951**	**1961**	**1966**	**1971**
Textile workers	54.2	28.1	18.4	11.1	6.2
Clerical workers	3.5	12.4	17.0	20.3	26.3
Warehousemen, storekeepers, packers, bottlers	2.1	3.0	4.6	3.6	4.5
Service, sport and recreation workers/ personal service	13.5	17.5	19.9	24.2	21.6
Sales workers/commercial, finance	7.9	11.1	13.9	15.0	9.8
Professional, technical workers, artists	3.6	5.5	6.5	6.6	6.9
Unskilled workers/labourers	3.9	5.8	1.6	1.2	2.3
Engineering and allied trades workers	0.2	3.4	2.2	2.7	2.9
Clothing workers	4.9	2.9	2.6	2.6	2.4
Electrical and electronic workers	0.8		0.2	0.7	1.0
Food, drink and tobacco workers	2.5	2.4	1.2	0.8	1.2
Transport and communications	0.4	1.3	1.7	1.0	1.1
Paper, card, printers, photo	1.2	1.5	2.1	1.0	2.1
Wood	0.1	0.5	0.0	0.1	0.1
Entertainments and sport (from 1961 service, sport and recreation)	0.2	0.2			
Administrators and managers		0.2	0.1	0.1	0.3
Leather workers	0.0	2.7	2.8	1.0	0.8
Gas, coke and chemicals		0.5	0.8	0.4	0.4
Ceramics, glass, cement		0.3	0.0	0.0	

Sources: As for Table 2.13

A similar situation to Dundee can be observed in Preston. In particular, there was a dramatic shift from women being concentrated in large numbers in a small number of occupations, to smaller proportions being employed in a broader range of occupations. In 1931 the selected employment sectors in Table 2.13 occupied 52.3 percent of women, dropping to 41.0 percent in 1971. In Table 2.14

the selected occupations employed 99 percent of women workers in 1931, falling to 89.9 percent in 1971.

In 1931 the largest proportions of women in Preston were employed in textiles, namely cotton. Table 2.13 shows this fell to a low of 3.0 percent in 1971. Table 2.14 reveals that 54.2 percent of economically active women were employed in textiles in 1931. This figure echoes the 52.8 percent employed in textiles/jute in Dundee. As well as the weaving and spinning of cotton, companies such as Horrockses' in Preston were also known for the design and production of clothing.[124] The proportions of women employed in clothing were small at 2.6 percent in 1931 and declined until 1971, broadly in line with cotton's decline.

By 1971, the two largest employers of women in Preston were clerical work and service, sport and recreation. Both of these employment sectors experienced a steady increase in the proportion of working age women employed over time. The proportions employed in service were very similar to Dundee's throughout the period, with the exception of a small decline between 1966 and 1971 in Preston. As in Dundee, around only 13 percent of working women were employed in service in 1931. Table 2.14 shows the proportion of women workers employed as clerical workers had quadrupled between 1931 and 1961, and continued increasing so that by 1971 over a quarter of working women in Preston were employed as clerical workers. The percentages of working women employed in sales and commerce was also broadly similar in Preston and Dundee.

Preston and Dundee had similar changing employment patterns. In both places, women were most likely to be employed in textiles in 1931. However, by 1971 a definite shift had occurred, with women workers employed as clerical workers, in the service sector, and in sales.

Glasgow

Table 2.15: Women employed in a range of employment sectors as a percentage of all working age women, Glasgow, 1931 – 1971

Occupation	**1931**	**1951**	**1961**	**1966**	**1971**
Textile workers	2.1	1.4	1.0	0.8	0.5
Clerical workers	5.8	8.7	10.8	11.4	11.9
Warehousemen, storekeepers, packers, bottlers	1.5	1.5	2.1	2.1	1.7
Service, sport and recreation workers/ personal service	9.1	6.9	8.3	10.2	9.7
Sales workers/commercial, finance	6.8	5.8	6.4	7.2	5.7
Professional, technical workers, artists	2.4	3.0	3.5		4.8
Unskilled workers/labourers	1.4	2.0	0.3	0.7	1.0
Engineering and allied trades workers	0.3	0.7	1.2	0.9	0.8
Clothing workers	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.9	3.0
Electrical and electronic workers	0.0		0.1	0.2	0.1
Food, drink and tobacco workers	1.3	1.1	0.9	1.0	1.0
Transport and communications	1.1	1.3	1.1	1.0	0.8
Paper, card, printers, photo	0.8	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.0
Entertainments and sport (from 1961 service, sport and recreation)	0.1	0.1			

Sources: Census of Scotland 1931 Vol. III Occupations and Industries, Table 2 pp. 42 – 127.

Census of Scotland 1951 Vol. IV Occupations and Industries, Table 6 pp. 186 – 311.

Census of Scotland 1961 Occupation and Industry County Tables Glasgow and Lanark, Table 1 pp. 2 – 9.

Sample Census of Scotland 1966 Economic Activity County Tables Glasgow and Lanark, Table 1 p. 5.

Census of Scotland 1971 Economic Activity County Tables Glasgow City, Table 1 pp. 17 – 20.

Table 2.16: Women employed in a range of employment sectors as a percentage of all economically active women, Glasgow, 1931 – 1971

Occupation	**1931**	**1951**	**1961**	**1966**	**1971**
Textile workers	5.6	3.7	2.4	1.7	1.1
Clerical workers	15.1	22.4	26.4	25.2	26.5
Warehousemen, storekeepers, packers, bottlers	3.9	3.8	5.1	4.7	3.8
Service, sport and recreation workers/ personal service	23.6	17.8	20.3	22.7	21.7
Sales workers/commercial, finance	17.5	14.8	15.6	16.0	12.8
Professional, technical workers, artists	6.3	7.7	8.6		10.8
Unskilled workers/labourers	3.5	5.2	0.8	1.5	2.2
Engineering and allied trades workers	0.9	1.7	3.0	2.0	1.7
Clothing workers	10.3	10.3	7.3	6.4	6.7
Electrical and electronic workers	0.1		0.2	0.4	0.2
Food, drink and tobacco workers	3.3	2.8	2.2	2.3	2.2
Transport and communications	2.8	3.3	2.7	2.3	1.9
Paper, card, printers, photo	2.1	0.0	2.6	2.6	2.2

Sources: As for Table 2.15.

In Glasgow some similarities and differences with Dundee and Preston can be observed. In Table 2.16, the occupations presented employed 95 percent of economically active women in 1931, however, this figure fell to 93.8 percent in 1971. Across the forty year period clerical work, service, and sales became key employers of women. In contrast to Dundee and Preston, textiles were a significantly less important employer of women, and no single occupation employed a proportion as large as textiles did in Preston and Dundee.

In 1931 Glasgow employed more women in service than Preston or Dundee. From a base of 23.6 percent, the proportion of working women employed in service declined in 1951, before increasing until 1971, despite a slight decline between 1966 and 1971. This can be compared to Dundee and Preston where the proportion of women employed in service increased fairly steadily. Where Dundee and Preston had a smaller proportion of domestic servants due to a smaller middle-

class and the work options provided by the jute industry, opportunities for working-class women in Glasgow more closely mirrored national patterns, with women working in personal service in larger numbers than occupations early in the century. This perhaps explains fluctuations in the proportions of Glasgow women employed in service. Domestic service declined as an employer of working-class women, while the subsequent rise in the proportions employed in service reflects the new growing public service sector which was a key employer of post-war women.

The percentage of working age women employed as clerical workers in 1931 was greater in Glasgow compared to Dundee and Preston. It increased until 1971 when clerical work was the greatest employer of working age women in Glasgow. This could be attributed partly to Glasgow Corporation's employment of large numbers of women, and to numerous factories, firms, and shops in the city which also employed women in offices.

The proportions of women in sales in Glasgow followed a similar pattern to service, decreasing between 1931 and 1951, and increasing in 1961 and 1966, before declining again. It is reasonable to suggest the reduced percentages of women employed in sales and service in the early fifties reflects a slightly higher proportion of women employed during the interwar years, a period of high male unemployment in Glasgow. Women may have worked in higher numbers in 1931 during financial difficulty. Following the Second World War there was an increased marriage rate, and many women returned to the home. This may help explain these fluctuations in Glasgow, before post-war changes in women's patterns of work took hold.

In Glasgow women workers were spread over a greater range of occupations throughout the twentieth-century than in Dundee or Preston. Service was a consistently large employer of Glasgow's working women. Women in Glasgow were more likely in the early twentieth-century to turn to domestic service as employment, than textiles as in Dundee and Preston. However, by 1971 clerical work had surpassed service, employing around a quarter of all women workers in Glasgow.

Newcastle upon Tyne

Table 2.17: Women employed in a range of employment sectors as a percentage of all working age women, Newcastle, 1931 – 1971

Occupation	**1931**	**1951**	**1961**	**1966**	**1971**
Textile workers	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Clerical workers	4.4	8.8	11.0	11.7	11.4
Warehousemen, storekeepers, packers, bottlers	1.4	1.3	0.2	1.5	1.4
Service, sport and recreation workers/ personal service	12.4	9.1	9.6	12.2	11.9
Sales workers/commercial, finance	5.9	5.3	6.0	6.4	5.6
Professional, technical workers, artists	2.3	3.0	4.0	4.4	4.5
Unskilled workers/labourers	1.3	1.8	0.5	0.6	0.9
Engineering and allied trades workers	0.5	0.6	0.1	0.5	0.3
Clothing workers	2.0	1.7	1.2	1.2	1.2
Electrical and electronic workers	0.0		0.0	0.0	0.1
Food, drink and tobacco workers	0.8	0.9	0.5	0.7	0.6
Transport and communications	0.7	0.7	0.8	1.0	0.8
Paper, card, printers, photo	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.4
Wood and furniture	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Entertainments and sport (from 1961 service, sport and recreation)	0.2	0.1			
Administrators and managers		0.2	0.1	0.2	0.4
Leather workers		0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0

Sources: Census of England and Wales 1931 Occupation Tables, Table 16 pp. 314 – 328.

Census of England and Wales 1951 Occupation Tables, Table 20 pp. 272 – 278.

Census of England and Wales 1961 Occupation, Industry, Socio-Economic Groups Northumberland, Table 1 pp. 1 – 4.

Sample Census of England and Wales 1966 Economic Activity County Leaflet Northumberland, Table 1 pp. 1 – 3.

Census of England and Wales 1971 Economic Activity County Report Northumberland, Table 1 pp. 1 – 4.

Census of England and Wales 1971 County Report Northumberland, Table 18 p. 56.

Table 2.18: Women employed in a range of employment sectors as a percentage of all economically active women, Newcastle, 1931 – 1971

Occupation	**1931**	**1951**	**1961**	**1966**	**1971**
Textile workers	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.1
Clerical workers	13.2	25.1	29.0	27.9	27.0
Warehousemen, storekeepers, packers, bottlers	4.1	3.8	4.5	3.7	3.4
Service, sport and recreation workers/personal service	37.2	26.1	25.2	29.2	28.4
Sales workers/commercial, finance	17.6	15.0	15.8	15.3	13.3
Professional, technical workers, artists	7.0	8.7	10.5	10.5	10.7
Unskilled workers/labourers	3.9	5.2	1.4	1.5	2.2
Engineering and allied trades workers	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.3	0.7
Clothing workers	6.0	4.8	3.0	2.8	3.0
Electrical and electronic workers	0.1		0.0	0.1	0.2
Food, drink and tobacco workers	2.4	2.5	1.4	1.6	1.4
Transport and communications	2.2	2.0	2.0	2.3	1.9
Paper, card, printers, photo	1.8	1.4	1.6	1.2	0.9
Wood and furniture	0.7	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Entertainments and sport (from 1961 service, sport and recreation)	0.5	0.4			
Administrators and managers		0.7	0.2	0.5	0.9
Leather workers		0.6	0.2	0.3	0.0

Sources: As for Table 2.17

Newcastle followed similar trends to Glasgow, but with some differences. Women workers were employed across a broad range of employment sectors in

1931. The occupations presented in Table 2.17 employed 32.8 percent of working age women in 1931, and close to 40 percent in 1971. The same occupations in Table 2.18 provided jobs for 98.4 percent of employed women in 1931, falling to 94.2 percent in 1971.

Service stands out as an important employer of women in Newcastle. In this regard, Newcastle echoes the pattern of working-class women's primary employment in domestic service in the early twentieth-century. In 1931, 37.2 percent of working women were in domestic service here, a much higher proportion than Dundee and Preston which employed fewer than 15 percent of women workers, and Glasgow with 23 percent of working women. The proportions of service workers in Newcastle experienced a drop between 1931 and 1951, as domestic service declined as an employer of girls and women. However, from 1951 the new services encouraged the proportions of women employed in service to increase in Newcastle. Despite a slight decline following 1966 service remained the largest employer of women in Newcastle in 1971.

One of the most significant changes which occurred in Newcastle was in the increase in clerical workers. Clerical grew as an employer of women until 1971, when it was second to service. Table 2.17 suggests the difference in the proportions of working age women employed in service and as clerical workers was less than 1 percent. In 1931, sales and commerce work employed slightly larger proportions of women than clerical work. Surprisingly, given the importance of retail to Newcastle's economy as outlined earlier in this chapter, the proportions employed in sales declined. Table 2.17 reveals the proportion of working age women in sales increased to around 6 percent in the early sixties, but by 1971 sales employed around half of the women employed as either clerical

workers or in service. Nevertheless, this does not contrast with the narrative of convergence, as the figure of 13.3 percent of economically active women employed in sales in Newcastle in 1971 is broadly concurrent with 12.8 percent in Glasgow, 9.8 percent in Preston, and 11.9 percent in Dundee.

Newcastle was home to tobacco and clothing manufacturing in the post-war period. This was not reflected in particularly large proportions of women employed in these sectors. Among all women of working age the percentage employed in food, drink, and tobacco never exceeded 0.9 percent or 2.5 percent of working women. As for clothing, the proportion peaked in 1931 at 2.0 percent of working age women or 6.0 percent of working women, and declined thereafter. In fact, Glasgow employed a greater proportion of women in food, drink and tobacco, and clothing than Newcastle. A greater proportion of working women were professionals than worked in clothing or tobacco.

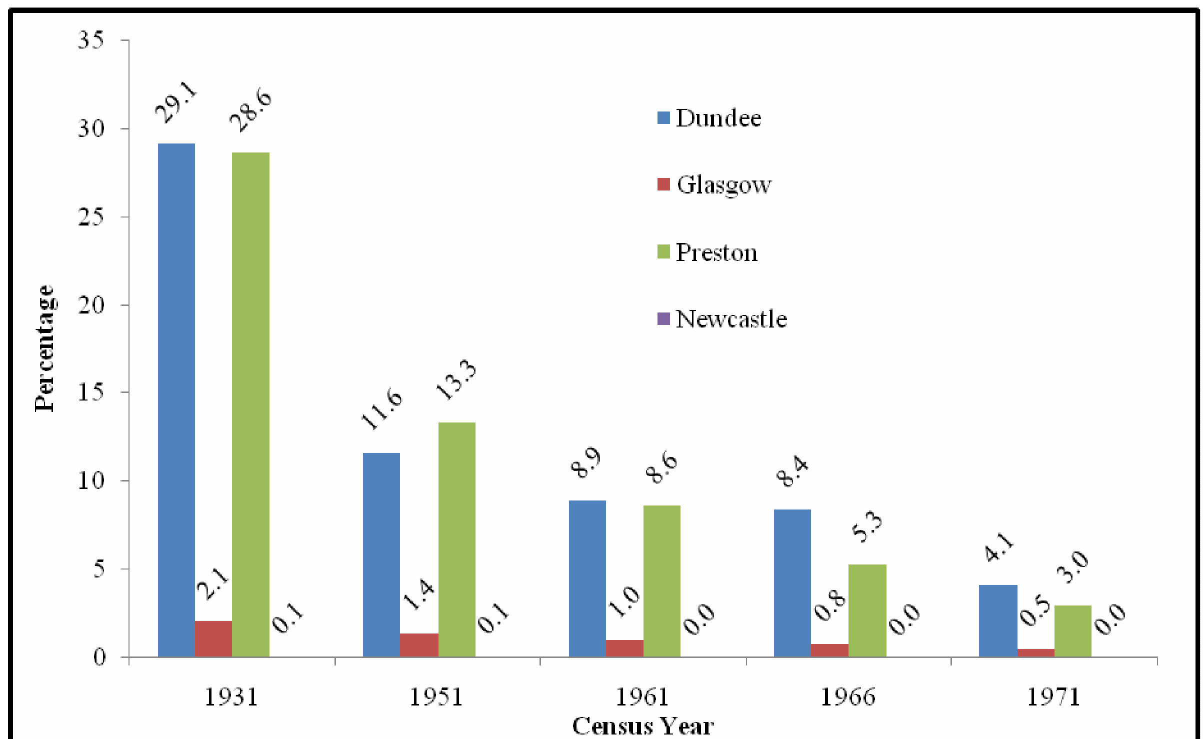
In the national narrative, working-class women's employment opportunities both expanded and changed in the post-war period. Textiles and domestic service declined as employers of women, while service and clerical jobs became important areas of women's work. This exploration of the four case studies has complicated this narrative further, suggesting that the way in which economic restructuring occurred in these locations was different. With the decline of textiles, Dundee and Preston's women workers lost an important source of employment and had to adapt to relatively new types of work which were not as well-established. Newcastle and Glasgow were able to build upon developed sectors. That the meaning of service changed is important, as domestic service declined in favour of more public forms of service. Nevertheless, there are strong indications that the regional differences between the case studies declined, with

each location's employment structure moving towards convergence. These issues are explored further in the following section, which throws a spotlight on single employment sectors.

Employment Sectors by Occupation

Data from the previous section is now reconfigured. The previous section used tables to illustrate change in women's occupations in Dundee, Glasgow, Newcastle and Preston. Four individual occupational sectors are now compared with each location side by side.

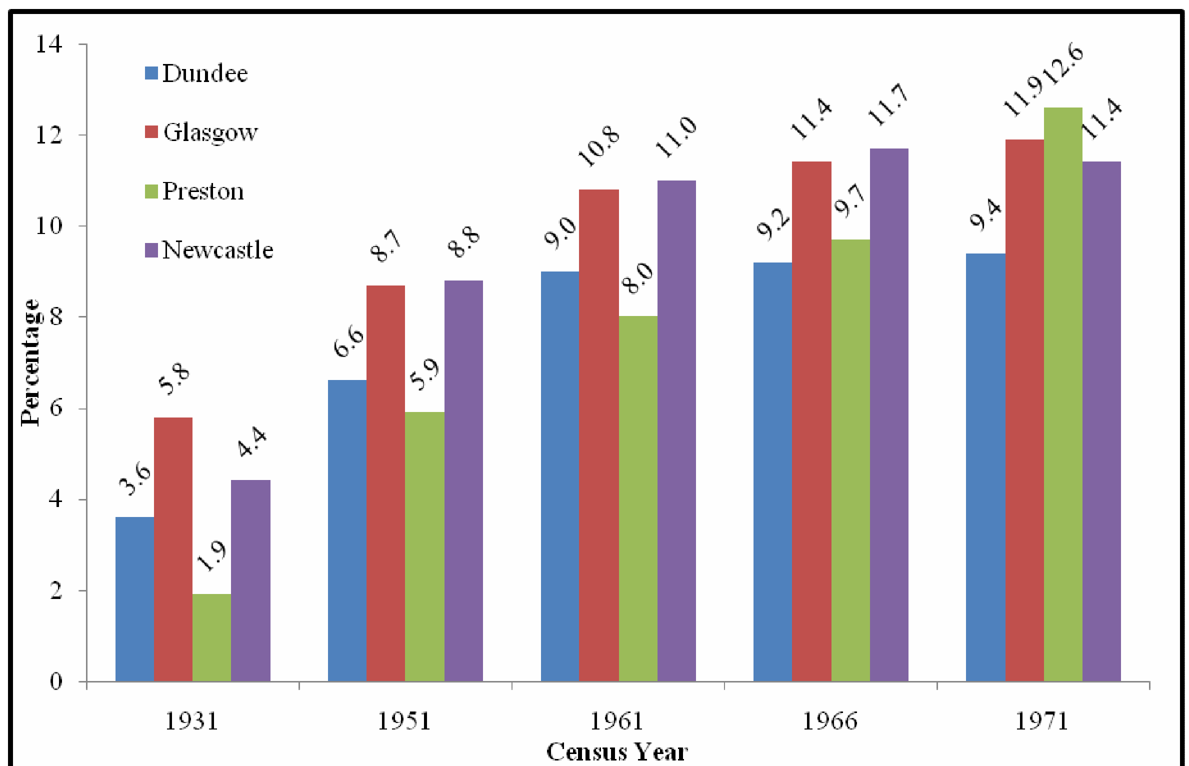
Figure 2.3: Percentage of working age women employed in textiles, Dundee, Glasgow, Preston, Newcastle, 1931 – 1971



Sources: As for Tables 2.11, 2.13, 2.15, and 2.17

Figure 2.3 illustrates women employed in textiles as a percentage of all working age women. It clearly indicates the scale of women's employment in textiles in Dundee and Preston in comparison to Glasgow and Newcastle. This graph shows the dramatic decline in the proportions of women employed in textiles in Dundee and Preston, particularly between 1931 and 1951 after which the decline was more gradual. By the post-war years, textiles became a less significant employer of working age women, employing fewer than five percent of women in each case study.

Figure 2.4: Percentage of working age women employed as clerical workers, Dundee, Glasgow, Preston, Newcastle, 1931 – 1971

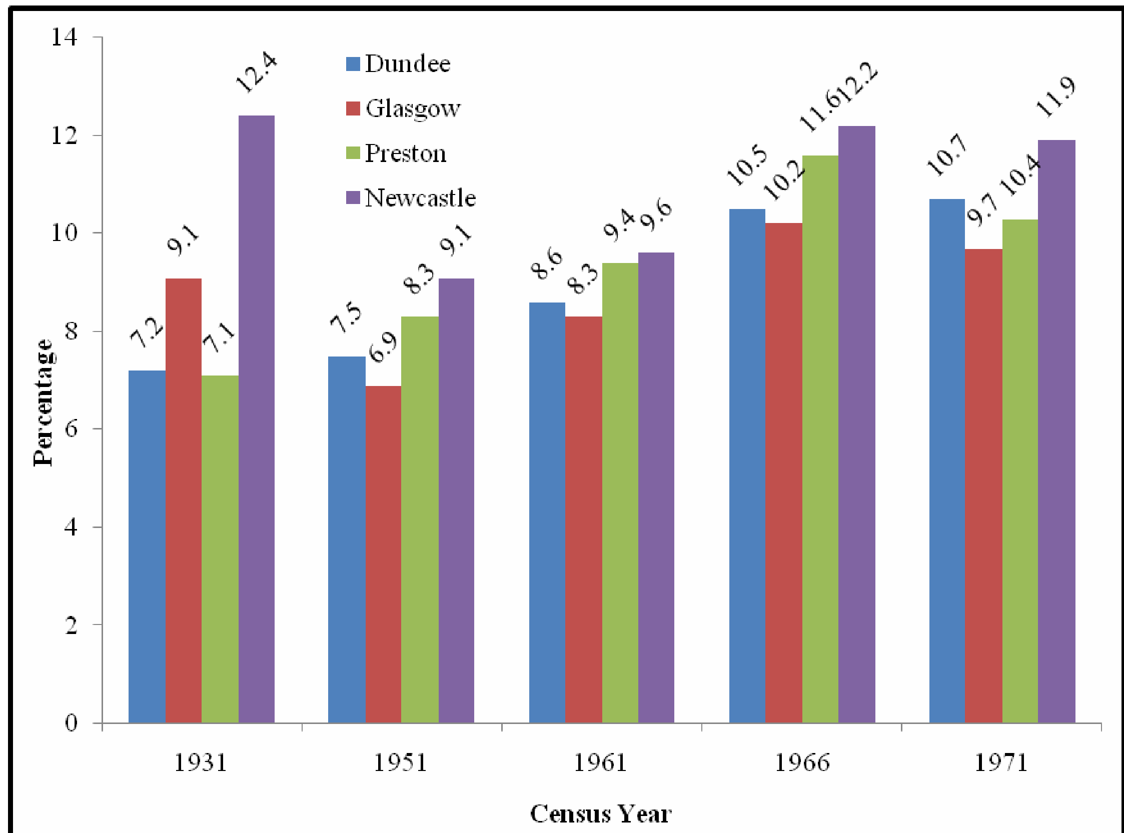


Sources: As for Tables 2.11, 2.13, 2.15, and 2.17

Figure 2.4 focuses on female clerical workers and provides a different perspective of post-war women's work, evoking increase overall. With the

exception of a slight decline in Newcastle between 1966 and 1971 the percentages employed as clerical workers increased in each place every Census year presented here. Until 1971, Newcastle and Glasgow had greater proportions of women clerical workers than Preston and Dundee, but by 1971 Preston surpassed the other three case studies. There is a strong sense of convergence in the proportions of women employed as clerical workers in each location by 1971, where Glasgow, Preston and Newcastle were broadly similar, compared to 1931 where there was significant divergence between the four places. Dundee appears to differ slightly from this pattern. While the proportion employed in clerical occupations also increased in Dundee, this increase was smaller overall than Preston's, which witnessed a significant jump in the percentages employed as clerical workers between 1966 and 1971.

<u>Figure 2.5: Percentage of working age women employed in service, Dundee, Glasgow, Preston, Newcastle, 1931 – 1971</u>

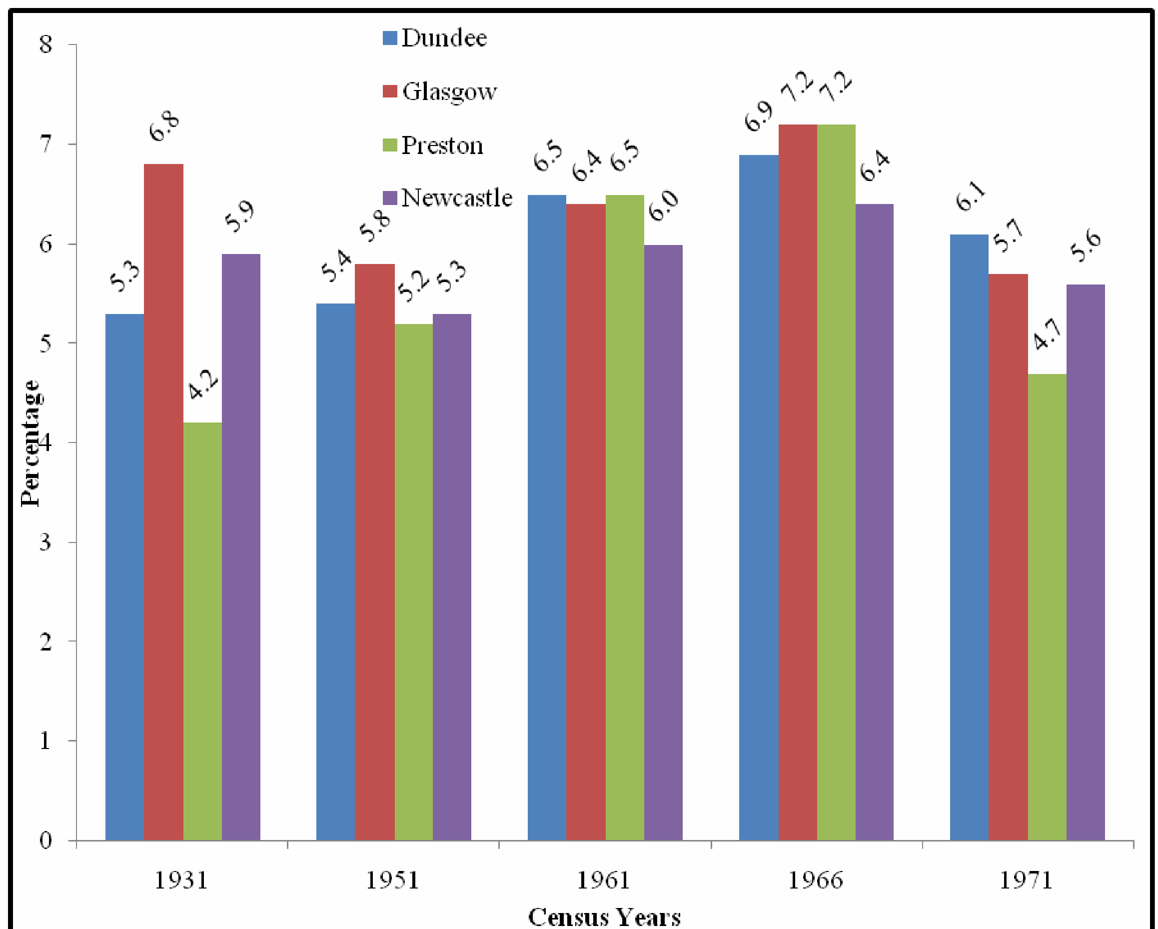


Sources: As for Tables 2.11, 2.13, 2.15, and 2.17

Figure 2.5 suggests the pattern for service was similar to clerical work, albeit with some differences. The overall trend of increasing female participation in this sector over the middle decades of twentieth-century, was tempered by a decrease between 1931 and 1951, and between 1966 and 1971, but did not largely inhibit the overall rise. The proportion of women employed in service between 1931 and 1951 declined sharply in Newcastle and Glasgow. Attention must be drawn to the high proportion of women working in service in Newcastle in 1931. This was almost certainly women employed as domestic servants, emphasising there were few alternatives available to women. The initial sharp decline in Newcastle reflects the decline of domestic service nationally during the war and

after. From 1951 Newcastle became similar to other case studies, reflecting the changing meaning of service from domestic service, to new service jobs in education, the health service, hospitality, and much more. In 1931 there was considerable divergence in women employed in service in the case studies. By 1971 the differences between the case studies had shrunk to around 2 percent. As with clerical and textile workers, there was a move towards convergence in the proportions of women employed in service occupations in each of the case studies.

Figure 2.6: Percentage of working age women employed in commerce/sales, Dundee, Glasgow, Preston, Newcastle, 1931 – 1971



Sources: As for Tables 2.11, 2.13, 2.15, and 2.17

Finally, the situation for sales and commerce was similar to service, although at lower percentages overall (between 4 and 7 percent) from Figure 2.5. In 1931 and 1971 there was a large disparity in the proportions between the case studies, which lessened between 1951 and 1966. Between 1966 and 1971 the proportion of female commerce workers across all four locations declined. Glasgow in 1931 had the greatest proportion of women of working age employed in sales/commerce. The proportions employed in commercial and sales in Newcastle and Glasgow between 1931 and 1951 declined, increasing to 1966 followed by decline to 1971. Preston and Dundee's sales and commerce sector increased between 1931 and 1966 and declined in 1971. The fluctuations in Preston were more salient. In 1931, in comparison to the other three locations, Preston employed the smallest proportion of women in sales, but by 1966, Preston and Glasgow employed equal percentages of women in sales ahead of Dundee and Newcastle.

Earlier in this chapter, it was discussed that the dominant national narrative of increasing female labour market participation between 1931 and 1971 was not entirely applicable to four case studies. While Newcastle and Glasgow witnessed an overall increase in the proportion of women who were economically active, Preston and Dundee's economically active full-time female workforce declined over the same period, despite increasing or remaining consistent in the post-war period. Using employment sector data some possible explanations for these differences are proposed.

The declining labour market participation of women in Dundee and Preston can be explained by a number of factors. The importance of textile industries to Dundee and Preston's local economy and as an employer of women

is well established in existing literature. Women's employment was subject to the ebbs and flows of the industry. The decline of the textile industry alone does not adequately explain the trends in Dundee and Preston. The proportion of women employed in textiles was not then matched by other occupations filling this void. The rising importance of new jobs in, for instance, service, sales, and clerical did not offset the decline of textiles overall, resulting in an overall decline in women's full-time employment rates. Nonetheless, female employment in Dundee and Preston increased in the 1960s. It is possible that despite the declining textile industry the proportions employed in these sectors remained high, while other occupations became important in these places. At this point of overlap, and in conjunction with the growth of part-time work, the proportion of female employment in Dundee and Preston appeared to be on the rise, before falling again in 1971.

Newcastle and Glasgow both experienced increase in female labour market participation rates over the twentieth-century. Women's changing employment patterns were similar in both cities. The proportions of working women employed in clerical jobs increased fairly steadily over the period 1931 to 1971. Among service workers in Glasgow and Newcastle there was a decline between 1931 and 1951 as women moved away from domestic service. However the proportion then increased as new service occupations grew in importance. In Newcastle particularly, the proportions of women employed as clerical workers increased significantly.

Employment Sectors by Place – Married Women

Earlier in this chapter it was demonstrated that the proportion of married women in work increased in the case studies between 1931 and 1971. Employment sector data highlights occupations in which married women were concentrated. This section explores married women's occupations comparing four key employment sectors.

Table 2.19: Married women employed in selected employment sectors as a percentage of occupied married women, Dundee, 1931 – 1971

Employment Sector	1931	1951	1966	1971
Textiles	78.3	37.5	19.3	8.5
Service	7.8	18.5	23.1	22.8
Sales	7.6	10.7	15.1	13.3
Clerical	0.3	2.3	12.5	15.6

Sources: Census of 1931 Vol. III Occupations and Industries, Table 4 Occupations of Married Females.

Census of Scotland 1951 Vol. IV Occupations and Industries, Table 8 pp. 376 – 393.

Sample Census of Scotland 1966 Economic Activity County Tables Dundee, Table 1 p. 5.

Census of Scotland 1971 Economic Activity County Tables Part II Dundee City, Table 1 pp. 17 – 20.

Table 2.20: Married women employed in selected employment sectors as a percentage of occupied married women, Glasgow, 1931 – 1971

Employment Sector	1931	1951	1966	1971
Textiles	1.1	4.5	0.7	0.6
Service	38.3	27.3	42.9	26.8
Sales	14.2	16.5	24.0	15.4
Clerical	2.7	12.5	12.5	20.2

Sources: As for Table 2.19, including:

Sample Census of Scotland 1966 Economic Activity County Tables Glasgow, Table 1 p. 5.

Census of Scotland 1971 Economic Activity County Tables Part III Glasgow City, Table 1 pp. 17 – 20.

Table 2.21: Married women employed in selected employment sectors as a percentage of occupied married women, Newcastle, 1966 – 1971

Employment Sector	**1966**	**1971**
Textiles	0.0	0.1
Service	39.5	36.2
Sales	17.8	15.2
Clerical	19.5	22.5

Sources: Sample Census of England and Wales 1966 Economic Activity County Leaflet Northumberland, Table 1 pp. 1 – 3.

Census of England and Wales 1971 Economic Activity County Report Northumberland, Table 1 pp. 1 – 4.

Census of England and Wales 1971 County Report Northumberland, Table 18 p. 56.

Table 2.22: Married women employed in selected employment sectors as a percentage of occupied married women, Preston, 1966 – 1971

Employment Sector	**1966**	**1971**
Textiles	11.0	6.6
Service	29.0	24.3
Sales	16.6	10.5
Clerical	16.9	22.8

Sources: Sample Census of England and Wales 1966 Economic Activity County Leaflet Lancashire, Table 1 pp. 13 – 15.

Census of England and Wales 1971 Economic Activity County Report, Lancashire, Table 1 pp. 13 – 16.

Census of England and Wales 1971 County Report Lancashire, Table 18 p. 215.

Tables 2.19 to 2.22 illustrate married women employed in a range of occupations as a percentage of all married women in the four case studies.[125] The data for married women's occupations were broadly comparable to those for all working women. There were considerable proportions of married women in the sixties and early seventies employed in service and clerical occupations. Across all locations between 1966 and 1971, the proportions of married women employed in textiles, service and sales declined which correlates with the decline noted in other occupation sectors throughout this chapter. However, the percentages of married women employed as clerical workers increased.

In Dundee the continued importance of textiles as an employer of married women into the fifties can be seen. In 1931 78.3 percent of economically active married women in Dundee were employed in textiles. Compared to the second largest employer of married women, personal service at 7.8 percent, this proportion is starker. Over time the proportion of married women employed in textiles declined. By contrast, the numbers of married women employed in service rose before declining slightly in 1971. Commercial and sales work followed the same pattern. Similarly the proportion of married women employed in clerical work rose between 1931 and 1971, with the greatest increase among married women clerical workers between 1951 and 1966. While data for married women workers in England is limited to the years 1966 and 1971, comparisons can be drawn between Dundee and Preston. Between 1966 and 1971 the percentage of married women employed in textiles in Preston declined. Over the same period, the proportion of clerical workers increased. The figures for service and sales show decline between 1966 and 1971 in Preston. In Dundee by 1971, new service occupations and clerical work were the largest employers of married women. This

is broadly congruent with all women, although married women were employed in greater proportions in these sectors.

Consideration can be made of the heavy industry cities. In Glasgow the trend for married women employed in service and sales followed a similar pattern to all women in work, namely increase to 1966 followed by decline in 1971. Among clerical workers there was a considerable increase between 1931 and 1971. In Newcastle data for 1966 and 1971 shows a decline in the proportion of married women employed in service and sales, but with an increase in married clerical workers. Newcastle in 1971 employed a greater proportion of married women in service than the other three places, with a larger proportion of clerical workers than Dundee and Glasgow. This may suggest the huge increase in economically active women in Newcastle by 1971 was in large part attributable to the increase in clerical and service workers. The findings of the previous sections are now brought together to propose some tentative conclusions.

Conclusions

This chapter began by outlining the dominant narrative in historical literature of increasing female labour market participation in post-war Britain, and introduced debates regarding the importance of part-time work and married women's employment to this expansion. Regional deviation from this narrative was shown.

Married women's employment in the case studies concurred strongly with the national narrative of increasing female participation, rising across all four case studies. Married women were concentrated in larger numbers in a smaller range of

occupations, namely service and clerical work. Evidence for married women in Dundee and Preston further complicates this picture, as while the proportion of women workers decreased overall in these towns, the proportion of married women workers increased.

The site of women's employment changed over the twentieth-century. Women workers moved into clerical work, sales and new service industries, away from manufacturing. In the 1930s, there were real distinctions in women's employment between the textile towns and heavy engineering cities. Full-time female employment was more common in the former. The change was most dramatic in Dundee and Preston with a shift from a high concentration of female workers in textiles, to smaller proportions of women in a wider range of occupations. This does not devalue the changes which occurred in Newcastle and Glasgow, where women were employed in smaller proportions, in a range of occupations across the twentieth-century. The types of jobs women did within these sectors also changed.

Across all four case studies, there was a significant move towards convergence in the proportions of working women and the types of jobs which women took. The statistical evidence presented here suggests that location was beginning to have reduced impact on the numbers and distribution of women at work. Despite the data which show the proportion of women at work never regained their 1931 levels in Dundee and Preston, across all four case studies from 1951 onwards, the percentages of women in work increased. What occurred then, was not a decline in full-time work in the textile towns. Rather, married women re-entering the workplace in the post-war period did so in part-time work. All four case studies saw a dramatic increase in the proportion of married women in work.

The post-war period witnessed an increase in the number of people in Britain taking part-time work, most notably an increase in the numbers of women working part-time. The ratio of full to part-time workers reduced. Despite a reduction in the percentage of all part-time workers who were female, it remained an overwhelmingly female experience. In Dundee and Preston, with the decline of textiles, women's full-time employment fell but their part-time employment rose. A new pattern of female employment was established in these textile towns which mirrored that occurring across the country.

In existing literature it is suggested that industrial restructuring benefited women by making jobs available in the service sector and in light engineering. Certainly the local data does not contradict this, as the site of women's work shifted from the home (domestic service), mill and factory to offices, shops, and other service providers. It may even be argued that the service based economy disadvantaged women workers in textile towns, as an important source of employment was removed. Data for married women's employment strongly suggests this process particularly benefited married women who were concentrated in larger numbers in service, clerical, and sales. The way restructuring affected and occurred in the case studies differed. By 1971 there was a clear move towards converging experience in Dundee, Preston, Newcastle, and Glasgow – but how this convergence came about differed in each location.

This chapter has demonstrated the types of jobs available to women in the post-war period, and increasing female labour market participation rates in Glasgow, Newcastle, Preston and Dundee. Restructuring of the economy provided different work opportunities for women, and married women in particular. These explanations for changing female employment in the post-war period are now

explored further in relation to the key group – married women – using an archival methodology to discuss a 'social engineering' explanation for this change: the availability of childcare to working-class women. In Chapter Three which follows, we will explore whether changing patterns of women's paid work were a result of evolving policies and practices.

Notes

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[5] Ibid, p. 122, McIvor, 'Women and Work', p. 143.
[6] Simonton, *History of European Women's Work*, p. 261.
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[56] Employable age increased from 10 years and over from 1901, to 12 years and over from 1921, 14 years and over from 1931, 15 years and over in 1951, and 16 years and over from 1971.
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[58] Of significance for this study, the changes in the new series from 1948 onwards included the counting of all persons aged 15 and over who 'work for pay or gain or register themselves as available for such work', whereas the old series included men aged 65 and under, and women 60 and other. 'Private domestic servants' who were excluded from previous Abstracts were included from 1948 onwards. Furthermore, under the old series, two part-time workers were counted as equivalent to 1 full-time worker. The new

series counted each part-time worker as a full unit. Annual Abstract of Statistics, Vol. 89, 1952, pp. 100 – 101.
[59] For example, J. Tomlinson and C. A. Whatley (eds.), *Jute No More: Transforming Dundee* (Dundee University Press, Dundee, 2011), Gordon and Breitenbach, *The World is Ill-Divided*, Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*, G. R. Smith, The Making of a Woman's Town: Household and Gender in Dundee, 1890 – 1940 (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Stirling, June 1996), E. M. Wainwright, Gender, Space and Power: Discourses on Working Women in Dundee's Jute Industry, c.1870 – 1930 (unpublished PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, August 2002), J. Tomlinson, C. Morelli, V. Wright, *The Decline of Jute: Managing Industrial Change* (Pickering and Chatto, London, 2011), C. A. Whatley (ed.), *The Remaking of Juteopolis: Dundee circa 1891 – 1991* (Abertay Historical Society, Dundee, 1992).
[60] 'Dundee is a woman's town and most of its productive labour is in her hands' Lennox cited in Wainwright, *Gender, Space and Power*, p. 12.
[61] Ibid, p. 203 and pp. 14 – 15.
[62] A. D. Campbell, 'The Economic Structure of the Tayside Region' in S. J. Jones (ed.), *Dundee and District* (British Association for the Advancement of Science, Dundee, 1968), p. 339. A. D. Carstairs, 'The Nature and Diversification of Employment in Dundee in the Twentieth-Century' in Jones, *Dundee and District*, p. 325.
[63] Wainwright, Gender, Space and Power, p. 203 and pp. 14 – 15.
[64] J. Doherty, 'Dundee: A Post-Industrial City' in C. A. Whatley (ed.), *The Remaking of Juteopolis: Dundee circa 1891 – 1991* (Abertay Historical Society, Dundee, 1992), p. 29.
[65] V. Wright, 'Juteopolis and After: Women and Work in Twentieth-Century Dundee' in Tomlinson and Whatley, *Jute No More*, p. 145.
[66] Ibid, pp. 146 – 147.
[67] Tomlinson *et al*, *Decline of Jute*, p. 3 and pp. 40 – 41.
[68] Wright, 'Juteopolis and After', p. 145.
[69] A. M. Scott, *Modern Dundee: Life in the City since World War Two* (The Breedon Books Publishing Company, Derby, 2002), pp. 37 – 40.
[70] Wright, 'Juteopolis and After', pp. 147 – 148.
[71] Scott provides extensive details of the companies which were established or expanded in post-war Dundee. Scott, *Modern Dundee*, pp. 37 – 41.
[72] Ibid, pp. 40 – 41.
[73] Doherty, 'Dundee', p. 30.
[74] Comparative figures for married women working in domestic service in other Scottish cities were; Glasgow – 25.8 percent, Aberdeen – 28.2 percent, Edinburgh – 46.8 percent. Wright, 'Juteopolis and After', p. 133 and p. 157.
[75] Ibid, p. 151.
[76] Ibid, p. 153.
[77] Ibid, p. 153.
[78] G. Timmins, *Made in Lancashire: A History of Regional Industrialisation* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1998), G. Timmins, *Four Centuries of Lancashire Cotton* (Lancashire County Books, Preston, 1996), J. Singleton, *Lancashire on the Scrapheap: The Cotton Industry, 1945 – 1970* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991), R. Freethy, *Memories of the Lancashire Cotton Mills* (Countryside Books, Newbury, 2008), D. Hunt, *A History of Preston* (Carnegie Publishing, Lancaster, 2009), F. Harrison, *The Death of Preston's King Cotton: Natural Causes or Suicide?* (Harris Library, 1992), J. Singleton, 'Lancashire's Last Stand: Declining Employment in the British Cotton Industry, 1950 – 70', *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Feb., 1986), pp. 92 – 107, J. Singleton, 'Planning for Cotton, 1945 – 1951', *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Feb., 1990), pp. 62 – 78, J. Tomlinson, 'Planning for Cotton, 1945 – 1951', *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Aug., 1991), pp. 523 – 526.
[79] Roberts, W*omen and Families*, p. 3.

[80] Timmins, *Made in Lancashire*, p. 276. Singleton emphasised the temporary nature of this boom 'Despite the industry's good intentions, very little was accomplished between 1945 and the recovery of Lancashire's competitors in the early fifties'. Singleton, 'Lancashire's Last Stand', p. 94.
[81] For Roberts, this decline was 'inevitable' since the 1920s, whereas for Timmins the decline was 'unrelenting' from the early 1950s. Roberts, *Women and Families*, p. 3 and Timmins, *Made in Lancashire*, p. 277.
[82] Freethy, *Memories*, p. 132.
[83] Board of Trade, *Working Party Reports Cotton* (HMSO, London, 1946), p. 57.
[84] Singleton, 'Lancashire's Last Stand', pp. 94 – 95.
[85] *Working Party Reports Cotton*, p. 58.
[86] Freethy, *Memories*, p. 134.
[87] Timmins, *Four Centuries*, p. 85.
[88] Freethy, *Memories*, p. 133.
[89] Timmins, *Four Centuries*, p. 85.
[90] Ibid, p. 85.
[91] Hunt, *History of Preston*, p. 285.
[92] Roberts, *Women and Families*, pp. 3 – 4.
[93] Harrison, *Death of Preston's King Cotton*, p. 17.
[94] Timmins, *Made in Lancashire*, p. 273.
[95] Hunt, *History of Preston*, p. 312.
[96] Census of England and Wales 1951 County Report Northumberland, pp. xxvii – xxx.
[97] N. Vall, 'The Emergence of the Post-Industrial Economy in Newcastle 1914 – 2000' in R. Colls and B. Lancaster (eds.), *Newcastle upon Tyne, A Modern History* (Phillimore and Co., Chichester, 2001), p. 48.
[98] A. Moffat and G. Rosie, *Tyneside: A History of Newcastle and Gateshead from Earliest Times* (Mainstream Publishing Company, Edinburgh, 2006), p. 347.
[99] It may be suggested that the opening of Rowntree Mackintosh in Newcastle built upon existing confectionary companies of early twentieth-century Newcastle such as College Sweets – in which 'nimble fingered girls' could be found wrapping sweets. Vall, 'The Emergence of the Post-Industrial Economy', p. 56.
[100] Ibid, p. 56.
[101] Ibid, pp. 55 – 56 and Moffat and Rosie, *Tyneside*, p. 347.
[102] Vall, 'The Emergence of the Post-Industrial Economy', pp. 62 – 63 and p. 65.
[103] Ibid, p. 66.
[104] Ibid, p. 66.
[105] Moffat and Rosie, *Tyneside*, p. 347.
[106] C. E. V. Leser 'Industries – Preliminary Survey The Industrial Pattern' in J. Cunnison and J. B. S. Gilfillan (eds.), *The Third Statistical Account of Scotland*, Glasgow (Collins, Glasgow, 1958), p. 133.
[107] I. Maver, *Glasgow* (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000), p. 203.
[108] Census of Scotland 1961 Vol. 1 Part 2 County Report City of Glasgow, p. 11.
[109] Maver, *Glasgow*, p. 209.
[110] M. Meighan, *Glasgow: A History* (Amberley Publishing, Stroud, 2013), p. 71.
[111] Ibid, p. 55.
[112] Maver, *Glasgow*, p. 209.
[113] C. Sarah and J. Orr, 'Other Engineering' in Cunnison and Gilfillan, *Third Statistical Account of Scotland*, Glasgow, p. 236.
[114] Maver, *Glasgow*, p. 209.
[115] Meighan, *Glasgow*, p. 71.
[116] Gaskin, 'Commerce' in Cunnison and Gilfillan, *Third Statistical Account of Scotland*, Glasgow, p. 367.
[117] Maver, *Glasgow*, p. 209.

[118] For all statistics in this chapter, working age population in 1931 was 14 and over. From 1951 to 1971, working age population was 15 and over. No upper age limit has been imposed on the female working age population, as this does not necessarily correlate with an exit from the workplace. In addition, ‘economically active’ includes the 1931 designation ‘gainfully employed’.
[119] 1951 and 1971 have been focussed on here as data for these years allow comparison across all four case studies.
[120] http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/how-our-census-works/about-censuses/census-history/200-years-of-the-census/census-1911-2001/index.html. Accessed 8/7/2014.
[121] Until 1961 this category was known as ‘commercial, finance and insurance occupations’. This category was then subsumed within other categories, and sales work became a distinct category. The overall increase in women employed in commercial and sales is broadly consistent with the increase in opportunities for women to work in shops as sales assistants, as a result of the consumer society and increasing affluence in post-war Britain.
[122] The small proportion of women employed in clerical work is echoed by McCall, whose study of nineteenth-century women demonstrated that in 1881 there were only 9 female clerks in Dundee, compared to 170 in Govan which was of comparable size. A. McCall, The Lass o’ Pairts; Social Mobility for Women through Education in Scotland, 1850 – 1901 (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Dundee, March 2014), pp. 56 – 57.
[123] These opportunities were taken up by a number of respondents as part of the oral history project.
[124] C. Boydell, *Horrockses Fashions: Off-the-peg Style in the Forties and Fifties* (V&A Publishing, London, 2010).
[125] There are gaps in the data. In Scotland figures on married women at work are absent for the 1961 Census. In England and Wales the data are sparser, with figures for married women’s employment only available for 1966 and 1971. The tables have selected occupations employing significant numbers of married women, mirroring the occupational sectors in the previous sections.

Chapter Three

'[T]he mother who thinks she would like to take a job and find a cheap parking place for her children has little chance of success' – Childcare Provision

The issue of childcare is important when considering mothers' return to the workplace after giving birth. Study of childcare in industrial areas in Britain reveals the attitudes of central government, local authorities, the press, philanthropic bodies, industry management, and women's organisations towards child welfare and working mothers. Using an archival research method supported by statistics, this chapter investigates the provision of day nurseries, nursery schools, childminding, and industrial day nurseries in the post-war period. These are grouped together as childcare to simplify references to all four together in the text; however, there were clear distinctions between them.

In the post-war period conflicting discourses surrounded the issue of married women's paid work and childcare. There were tensions between government departments, between the exigencies of the economy to expand the workforce, the needs and wishes of women to work, concerns about child welfare and deprivation, and a desire to see the family and home maintained as a stable foundation for post-war reconstruction.

National policy is examined, followed by an exploration of local policy and the interpretation of national policy in the creation of day nurseries and nursery schools in Dundee, Preston, Glasgow, and Newcastle. The 'priorities' system is integral to this discussion and demonstrates that in practice day nurseries were intended to serve a health and welfare function, and not to encourage married

women/mothers into the workplace. Nursery schools provided by local education authorities (LEAs) are considered. Pre-school education in nursery schools was viewed as desirable for all children but was not without controversy. There continued to be a sense that children under 5 years of age (and especially under 2 years of age) ought to be cared for in the home by their mother.

Private forms of childcare are considered through industrial day nurseries and childminders. Registered under the 1948 Registration of Childminders and Nurseries Act (hereafter the 1948 Act), industrial nurseries were provided to encourage mothers into specific mills and factories. Study of childminder registrations under the 1948 Act indicates, to some extent, women's own responses to their childcare needs. Informal childcare provided by childminders was not a new departure for the post-war period; however, the registration and regulation of childminders was. Women's continued preference for childminders and informal care suggests existing childcare did not adequately serve the needs of working mothers. The responses of women's organisations to the issue of childcare will be highlighted. Analysis begins with a consideration of existing and recent research on childcare in post-war Britain.

Historiography

In the later years of the Second World War, plans were made to reconstruct social services. Large-scale nursery school provision had wide support, but was articulated as a social service.[1] Framed in physical and material terms; emotional deprivation was regarded as equally important. Child psychologists recognised this could occur in any social class.[2] Emotional and maternal deprivation was not a

new 'social problem' in the post-war period. Indeed, the effects of working mothers on child welfare had long been expounded by philanthropists, newspapers, clergy, and 'moral guardians'. In Dundee mothers at work had long been perceived as a threat to children's health and wellbeing.[3] However, in the post-war period, theories of the effects of maternal deprivation on the psychological and emotional wellbeing of children was feared as a cause of delinquency and poorly adjusted adult citizens. Influential in this process were interpretations of the works of child psychologists such as Anna Freud, whose reports on the Hampstead wartime nursery suggested the negative effects of maternal separation on children.[4] Another key figure was British child psychologist John Bowlby. Author of *Maternal Care and Mental Health* (1951) which was a product of a World Health Organisation report on the mental health of homeless children in post-war Europe, he expounded a theory of child separation and maternal deprivation. In addition, David Winnicott's idea of the 'good enough' mother was a 'powerful trope' in the second half of the twentieth-century.[5]

The extent to which theories of maternal deprivation from psychologists such as Bowlby, Freud, and Susan Isaacs determined the provision of childcare facilities in the post-war years has been a source of debate. Maydall and Petrie argued:

> [t]he influence of John Bowlby became important in public utterances in the early 1950s. Policy makers accepted his view that a child should not be parted from his mother at all until he was three, and after this only for short periods of the day.[6]

They indicated that Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation was influential. Riley argued that the notion of an organised challenge to women's workplace participation did not hold up to scrutiny:

> Not unreasonably, given all the orchestrated appearances, feminism tends to hold a vision of post-war collusion between the government and psychology to get working women back to their kitchens and pin them down there under the weight of Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation in an endless dream of maternity throughout the 1950s....The connections between government plans, the movements of women on and off the labour markets, and the development of psychological beliefs were far more fragile than this version allows. There was, in fact, no concerted attack.[7]

Riley's argument about the fragility of the relationship between psychologies, social planning, and women's work is convincing. For Riley, the appearance of collusion between popular psychology and government policy to close nurseries was weak. She did not dispute the fact of nursery closure following the war, or that provision was limited in the longer post-war period. However, she does not make clear which researchers made these claims. The absence of a 'concerted attack' is not the final word on study of childcare. While pronatalism and 'Bowlbyism' according to Riley did not result in the failure to provide comprehensive childcare provision, the extent of its influence has been found in oral history evidence. Davis used oral history projects, including her own with women in Oxford, to find that Bowlby's theories were known. Simplified versions that only mothers should look after their children to avoid them growing up psychologically damaged were articulated.[8]

Concerns about the birth rate, the virtues of family life, a plea for the education of schoolgirls and women in 'mothercraft', anxiety about the 'problem family', and discourses of 'delinquency' found expression in post-war Britain.[9]

Riley indicated there was intense focus on motherhood, and the needs of working women with children were rendered invisible; the 'possibility of speaking politically about women's *needs* became obscured by a passing rhetoric of their maternal *function*.'[10] Riley explained that while nurseries were closed at the end of the war, they were hailed as socially progressive.[11]

> The very widespread pro-nursery sentiments of the late 1940s were perfectly congruent with familialism, enthusiasm for the family. Nurseries were advocated as key points for educating mothers through influence and precept, and as likely to raise the birth rate by lightening the burden of childrearing. Both conservatives and social democrats held that nurseries were an invaluable means for teaching 'mothercraft' to adolescent girls. The many post-war proposals for conveying first aid to tired mothers shaded into allegations of 'fecklessness' and incompetence, which could be remedied by on-the-spot instruction.[12]

Debate of the effects of pronatalism is one aspect of the study of childcare in post-war Britain. Economic historians have considered nurseries from the perspective of the economy, quantifying how many women were freed for work, and whether nurseries were financially viable. Through national policy, Tomlinson found the closure of wartime nurseries from 1944 onwards was due largely to concerns about the financial viability of that service, rather than discourses about rightful women's place and thus pronatalism was limited in its effects. Factors such as the return of premises to pre-war purposes, and the lack of staff and buildings were more limiting than the reduction of the 100 percent grant to 50 percent in 1946. The inefficiency of nurseries in releasing women for work was another consideration.[13] Tomlinson considered that 'the provision of nursery places was always extremely marginal to the supply of women's labour'.[14] Cheaper alternatives, such as play-centres, childminders and sitter-in schemes were encouraged. However, where closure would significantly impact on the local

labour supply, the national government intervened, as in Lancashire's cotton industry.[15] Tomlinson concurred with Riley that there was no 'hidden agenda' to undermine women's ability to participate in the labour force. Nurseries were not a straightforward indicator of attitudes to working mothers. [16] However, Tomlinson noted 'there was agreement that the best place for women with children under 2 was at home with those children rather than in paid employment' but 'it was accepted that it was an 'ideal' that might not always be adhered to, and that in conditions of labour shortage, if women with very young children wanted to work, they should be allowed to do so.'[17] By the time Labour left office in 1951, their attitude to women's employment had changed little since 1945; it 'was dominated by economic and financial considerations, with little evidence of any major impact from changing views about women's role.'[18]

These narratives are valuable. However, this does not negate the powerful discourses of motherhood which pervaded the post-war period of which Riley made clear. There were diverse reasons for the closure of nurseries and the failure to open new facilities, but discourses of motherhood, and women's role in society undoubtedly influenced the attitudes of policy makers. However, it would also not be appropriate to slip into the interpretation which Riley critiqued of an agenda to utilise child psychology and theories of maternal deprivation to remove mothers from the labour force.

The lack of a comprehensive childcare system in the post-war period has been developed in recent literature. Lewis argued that:

> unlike some of its continental European neighbours, Britain failed to lay down the foundations of a publicly provided childcare system in the 1960s and 1970s, despite the pressure of major structural change in the form of the increasing employment of mothers with young children and strong

> evidence as to the benefits of early years care and education for child development.[19]

Sweden, Denmark, and France developed a comprehensive childcare system by the 1970s, while Britain had not. Lewis flagged up continuity, that provision was 'increasingly confined to children in deprived areas' and that at the end of the seventies demand had outstripped supply leading to reliance on the private sector.[20] For Lewis limited childcare provision was 'a defensive position adopted by both politicians and civil servants'.[21] At the crux of Lewis' argument was the separation of nursery school and day nursery policy which was 'underpinned by a strong desire not to make publicly provided, full-time childcare of any kind available to working women'.[22]

> Part-time nursery education and limited eligibility for day nursery care, which included only mothers 'constrained' to work, effectively thwarted any effort to promote the kind of policies designed to 'reconcile' family and work responsibilities that were felt to be desirable in some other European countries.[23]

Lewis cogently illustrated the effect of underlying attitudes about women's biological role on the provision of childcare. While arguments about the cost effectiveness and correct function of nurseries and nursery schools, about women's childcare preferences and favouring of part-time work explain the limited provision of state funded childcare to some extent, Lewis' argument makes clear there were other factors at play. The limited provision of childcare at national level was not only pragmatic and financially motivated, but was underwritten by ideological views about women's roles in society; 'childcare provision in Britain was always fundamentally dependent on policy-makers' attitudes towards mothers' paid work'.[24] There is thus an established literature on post-war childcare

provision, which debates the effects of child psychology and economic policy on attitudes to and availability of childcare. However, by shifting from the national to the local, and indeed to the individual, the debate is complicated further.

Existing research has demonstrated that national policy lines were almost never drawn around encouraging women into work. Turning now to childcare provision in the case studies demonstrates a dearth of research on childcare at local level. Research on regional childcare provision has tended to concentrate on the textile regions. In Lancashire's cotton industry, Crofts argued that during the drive to increase production in 1948 there was consensus that women were the largest potential source of recruitment. Efforts were made to make employment in cotton attractive to them. It was hoped that increasing the number of day nurseries would induce around 5,000 more workers into the industry. Nurseries in cotton towns were given priority for building materials, the co-operation of local education authorities (LEA's) were sought to care for children after school hours, and during school holidays, and training courses were offered to cotton firms for their day nursery staff.[25] Where working mothers were in the interests of the national economy, the government intervened and relaxed restrictions. Arguably, the same situation cannot be said for Dundee. In Dundee, married women workers were important to the city's labour force. Wright considered 'patriarchal attitudes of local politicians' were opposed to married women working,[26] but Dundee City Council continued to lobby for nursery expansion to enable married women to return to work in jute and new industries.[27] Wright convincingly speculated that women may have preferred informal/casual childminding to resist the 'regulation and social control' of philanthropic provision and that 'some women did not want to use nurseries at all if avoidable'. She suggested that Dundee women preferred to

work part-time.[28] Wright's assertion of women's preference for part-time work to some extent challenges the importance of childcare in facilitating mother's work. However, availability of and preference for part-time work does not negate the need for childcare; care is still required if a mother works part-time. What differs are the number of hours and the period during the day when that care is required. The availability of housewives evening shifts is thus significant, enabling women to work during the evening, while their husband or mother cared for children. Providing evidence of the regional differences between the two textile areas, Lancashire and Dundee, Tomlinson and Morelli highlight that in Lancashire there was an expansion of part-time working, whereas in Dundee, the focus was on full-time work.[29] It may thus be expected there would be greater need for and provision of full-time nursery care in Dundee than in Preston. Roberts' work on Lancashire found local authority nurseries were 'rarely' used. She argued that childcare provision was 'inadequate' but 'even had it been better, it is not certain that many women would have used it. It was assumed children should be cared for within the family'.[30] Davis also found that private arrangements were the most popular childcare method among the women she interviewed, and that few women recalled using state nurseries.[31] In this regard, nurseries were a failure as they were not used by women – the question remains why women did not use them.

In addition to research which explained the decline of childcare following the war and the limits of provision, other studies considered the developing aims of nurseries and nursery schools. For Whitbread, demand for childcare followed an increase in women's participation in the workplace, suggesting childcare was a response to, and not a facilitating factor in women's re-entry to the labour market. From the 1950s consensus emerged among nursery teachers, playgroup

supervisors, and parents who distinguished between the social need for care in nurseries for children under 3 and the desirability of nursery education for all children over 3 or 4.[32] In practice, Whitbread found a child's opportunity for pre-school education depended on location and social class:

> Several surveys demonstrated that a higher proportion of middle-class than working-class children held a place at nursery schools, and playgroups were predominantly middle-class. The effect was *de facto* discrimination in favour of middle-class children whose home environment was anyway likely to be more favourable to early learning experiences.[33]

This indicates that there was a class, and to some degree, a regional dimension to nursery school availability, with working-class women disadvantaged by lack of suitable provision. Blackstone explored the discrepancy between growing demand for nursery education and local authority supply.[34] She found the failure of local authorities to increase provision to meet demand was compensated for by private sector expansion, such as independent nurseries and pre-school playgroups.[35] However, Blackstone considered that demand largely came from growing middle-class pressure to extend nursery provision.[36] She argued the principle underlying education provision, that it should be based on the needs of the area was an 'important factor in the patchy development of nursery schools, in that it allow[ed] those in power at the local level wide powers of interpretation as to what the needs of the area involve...[t]hroughout the history of nursery schools, arrangements have not been made in any area for the majority of children'.[37] What emerges is a picture where local authority nurseries were provided for the working-class, 'problem' families, and those compelled to work. Where this provision fell short, the private sector filled this absence. However, this was largely a result of middle-class pressure, and fulfilled social/educational needs. For instance, playgroups

only provided play opportunities for children for a few hours at a time, with a rota for parent-leaders. Thus playgroups' usefulness at enabling women to work was limited.

Understanding childcare provision is complicated further still by scrutiny of women's attitudes to childcare. Oral history and interview techniques provide different perspectives. O'Connor argued that intergenerational transmission of mothering practices between female family members (grandmother, mother, and daughter) is vital in understanding women's childcare strategies. However, 'this pattern can be understood fully only by reflecting on the impact of both the temporal context and the current life-course stage of the mothers and grandmothers'[38] and made clear the importance of historical context for women's opportunities for employment and for childcare. She considered that the role of grandmothers has been vital in providing childcare and that there is much evidence to suggest working mothers have 'a strong preference' for childcare provided by members of their own family.[39] This can also be supported by Davis' oral history research with women in Oxfordshire. In Davis' study, she found change over time in the involvement of grandmothers in the care of children:

> [w]hile several women recalled their grandmothers providing childcare so that their mothers could work when they were growing up in the 1940s (the war was of course significant here), they said their mothers did not provide this service for them.[40]

Davis explained, this was partly a consequence of demographic factors. The younger age of first marriage and having children in the sixties and seventies meant the grandmother generation continued to work. Davis suggested that as a consequence of being workers themselves, or a preference not to care for young

children again, grandmothers were reluctant to mind children while mothers went out to work.[41] Davis argued that the 'association of day nurseries with single working mothers meant that they carried a stigma'.[42] By contrast, childminders were a popular form of childcare.[43]

There is a range of research using different approaches to childcare provision in Britain. There remains an evidential absence of knowledge of childcare provision at local level beyond the textile towns, in addition to ongoing debate surrounding the rationale for limited provision of childcare for the children of working women. This chapter now turns to analysis of documentary sources by exploring day nurseries and considering policy at national and local level.

Day Nurseries

Local authority day nurseries were under the remit of the Ministry of Health and local health departments, before being combined with nursery schools under Social Services in the 1960s. National and local policy is considered to explore the functions of nurseries and the reasons underlying their supply. Provision in the case studies is investigated. A fine line is trodden between two positions. On the one hand, the functions and uses of day nurseries provide important insights into attitudes towards mothers as workers. On the other hand, there has to be recognition that the availability of nurseries was not a straightforward indication of attitudes towards mothers as paid workers. This may appear contradictory and so space is taken here to elaborate.

Underwriting the availability of childcare were discourses about the role of mothers in particular. Fears about maternal deprivation causing problems when

children grew to adulthood were very real. The official intention of day nurseries was to safeguard children's health and welfare, and not to facilitate the employment of women. Childcare was limited to families whom the local health authority determined would benefit from women's paid employment; in terms of health and welfare, the strength of the family unit, preventing poverty, and lifting 'problem' families. Following the Second World War, in 1946 the 100 percent Ministry of Health grant for nurseries was revoked.[44] A Ministry of Health circular to local authorities made clear the policy which was to be followed:

> Under normal peace-time conditions, the right policy to pursue would be positively to discourage mothers of children under 2 from going out to work; to make provision for children between 2 and 5 by way of nursery schools and nursery classes; and to regard day nurseries and daily guardians [childminders] as supplements to meet the special needs...of children whose mothers are constrained by individual circumstances to go out to work, or whose home conditions are in themselves unsatisfactory from the health point of view, or whose mothers are incapable for some good reasons of undertaking the full care of their children.[45]

This circular made clear that mothers with young children were to be discouraged from paid employment outside the home and that nursery school provision for children aged 2 to 5 was an important provision. Day nurseries and childminders were regarded as supplementary to assist mothers whose financial needs required them to work. In 1965, the Ministry of Health reiterated these views, illustrating that attitudes towards nurseries had not altered extensively:

> day nurseries...have been provided by local health authorities since 1945 primarily to meet the needs of certain children for day care on health and welfare grounds. The service is not intended to meet a demand from working women generally for subsidised day care facilities. The number of places provided is therefore considerably less than the demand.[46]

Day nurseries were not designed to be used by working women as a form of day care, but were for children with specific health or social needs. The focus of care remained the financial need of mothers and a social welfare agenda, rather than women's wish to work.

Analysis of the case studies enables understanding of nurseries in local authorities. In practice, nurseries were regulated by a priorities list outlined by local health authorities. Lewis argued the 'designation of tightly specified priority groups (with special social and/or health needs) for day nursery care...were essential to limiting state responsibility for childcare in face of potentially huge demand from working mothers'[47] and were thus used to control how many children were granted a place. It is necessary to discuss the specific understanding of these priorities, and their implications for the health and social agenda.

Figure 3.1: List of Priority Criteria for Admission to Dundee Day Nurseries, 1965 – 1966

1) Confinements
2) Mother in hospital or ill at home
3) Father or mother suffering from tuberculosis
4) Father ill for long periods
5) Father or mother in prison
6) Widow or widower
7) Illegitimate children
8) Cases where the parents are separated
9) Children coming from a lower income group – such as from a large family, with poor income, or high rent
10) Problem families
11) Children of teachers, nurses or medical auxiliaries (when places are available) between 1 and 2 ½ years of age[48]

Source: LHC D42.6 Minutes of Dundee Corporation and its Committees, 1965 – 1966, Meeting of the Health and Welfare Committee, 10 February 1966, p. 1359.

Figure 3.1 provides the priorities list used by Dundee Corporation to allocate day nursery places. Dundee Corporation, stated the 'practice of restricting admission to day nurseries to priority cases has worked extremely well and had provided a fairly equitable social service for parents who are faced with some emergency or social problem'.[49] Nurseries were a service for parents in a period of emergency (such as pregnancy, illness, or other disruption within the family), and to deal with a social 'problem' (such as illegitimacy, poverty, and problem families). The latter grouping – the 'problem family' – was not clearly defined or explained in the official records of the Corporation. However discussions in other local authorities aid understanding.

Preston local authority detailed the 'problem families' under its jurisdiction, aiming to keep families together as far as possible. The problems health officials endeavoured to resolve included unemployment, housing problems including the physical health and cleanliness of the home, illegitimacy, debt, imprisonment, alcoholism, illness, parents with 'an adolescent outlook on life', who were 'intelligent psychopaths', 'mentally retarded', or 'physically incapacitated':

> In too many cases the social standards are poor and the hygiene standards appalling. Their betterment is not always easy and it is not helped by the unhappy housing conditions in which some families exist. Nevertheless the virtues of soap and hot water are not always appreciated.[50]

The sense is that in some instances the health authority was dealing with issues of basic hygiene and cleanliness, a consequence of poor housing conditions on one hand, and lack of knowledge and resources on the other. This extract, for example, proceeded to discuss head lice infestations in girls' hair stating that the 'solution is

comparatively simple and rests in maternal hands'.[51] Housing conditions and cleanliness were not the only factors which indicated a problem family to the authorities:

> The child neglected in its own home has continued to exercise the minds of the staff of the department and considerable effort and time are consumed in trying to rehabilitate and help these relatively few families. A number of these apparently abnormal families have their troubles resolved at one administrative stroke such as providing domestic help or *getting the child into a nursery so that the mother can have time to recuperate and cope*, and the result is that there is no longer a family with a problem. The hard core of the issue of what might be described as real problem families as opposed to families with a problem however is very difficult to solve and even small improvement necessitates hard and long case work.[52] [My emphasis]

This quotation suggests the problem family was one where children were neglected. There was a difference between 'families with a problem' which could be relatively easily resolved with additional help and assistance and a 'problem family' which needed extensive support. The emphasised statement reveals the justification behind nursery places for families with a problem. The allocation of nursery places to children gave the mother time and space, albeit temporary, to convalesce. The need to keep the family together was made clear in a 1955 report on problem families which stated this 'work seems most unrewarding but on reflection must be worthwhile as it is felt that without the buttress of the social workers several of these families would by now have been split up permanently'.[53]

Dundee Corporation made clear that day nurseries were not designed to enable mothers to work. The health department stated it would 'not entertain applications from mothers whose only desire is to obtain employment in order to supplement an apparently adequate family income or whose case does not come under one or more of the priorities mentioned.'[54] A cursory reading might suggest

this was a rejection of women's need or wish to work. However, if a woman worked because of dire financial need or a reason on the priorities list, the use of a nursery was acceptable. Nurseries were not provided directly for the childcare needs of working mothers, but were a solution for children believed to be in need of additional care during a temporary emergency or economic hardship within a family.

Table 3.1: Admissions to Dundee Local Authority Day Nurseries, 1956 – 1957

Priority case	Number of children admitted
Illegitimate children	85
Parents separated or divorced	41
Mothers ill or in hospital	32
Fathers ill or in hospital	17
Fathers in H.M. Forces and mothers working	18
Widows	15
Mothers deserted children	9
Confinements	8
Mothers dead	3
Fathers apprentices and mothers need to work	3
Husband abroad	2
Children: father gives no support	2
Father in prison	1
Father deserted child	1
Total	**237**

Source: Adapted from Appendix, Day Nurseries – Charges, III (a) Priority Cases. LHC D42.6 Minutes of the Dundee Corporation and its Committees, 1956 – 1957, Meeting of the Special Schemes Sub-Committee of the Health Committee, 27 November 1956, p. 1072.

Table 3.1 demonstrates the main admittances criteria for children in Dundee in the late fifties. These are similar but not identical to Figure 3.1, reflecting changed criteria. Out of 237 admittances in 1956 to 1957, around 35 percent were children of single mothers. The report stated the occupations of the single mothers; mill workers (50 percent of single mothers), while the rest were

'domestic servants, clerkesses, waitresses, sack sewers, bus conductresses, fitter, driller, trainee, etc.'[55] Children of separated and divorced parents composed 17 percent of the admittances total. Nurseries were not provided with an affable agenda to allow women to work. The priorities lists reveal huge concerns with illegitimacy as a social problem, and as an issue which required the intervention of health and welfare professionals, through nursery care.

In addition to children admitted from the priorities list, 210 admissions were made from an ordinary waiting list. These were considered according to circumstances, such as large families, and to 'supplement father's earnings'.[56] On this waiting list, the majority of mothers were mill workers, and the others were 'domestic servants, shop assistants, machinists, laundresses, assistants in confectionary works, clerkesses, typists, nurses and in varying capacities in the new industrial firms, etc.'[57] This suggests that, while the priorities list was rigorous, health authorities had some flexibility and discretion as to which women were in need of a nursery place.

The priorities system laid down by the health department remained important throughout the post-war period. In 1969 Dundee Corporation discussed providing a nursery in the Mains of Fintry area; a new housing scheme north of the city. Isolated from the rest of the city, it was feared a nursery in Fintry might become exclusive to that area, resulting in unfilled places. Emphasis was placed on the need to maintain the admittance system across the city, and not to relax the priorities to fill places. Health visitors indicated over 600 children in Fintry could be placed in a nursery or nursery school were places freely available. The Medical Officer of Health summarised that filling the nursery in Fintry 'would require a change of Committee policy as to priorities laid down'.[58] It remained vital that

children higher up the waiting list were accommodated appropriately first. There was little indication of the system being flouted to fill places, or of nurseries being located specifically to serve certain areas.

The strict admittance criteria for local authority day nurseries were not unique to Dundee. Similar lists were found in both Preston and Newcastle. In Newcastle, a 1967 report listed the numbers of children admitted under each criterion.

Table 3.2: Admissions to Newcastle Local Authority Day Nurseries, 1966 – 1967

Reasons for Admission	**From 1.1.67 to 31.12.67**	**From 1.1.66 to 31.12.66**
Mother in Prison	1	-
Father in Prison	8	10
Unmarried Mothers	80	78
Widows	13	19
Separated or Divorced	137	123
Mother ill	30	45
Father ill	2	9
Father unemployed	2	1
Financial	25	39
Confinement	20	31
Difficult Child	1	-
Special Recommendations Health Visitors, G.P.'s Almoners, etc.	145	118
Teachers	5	5
Teachers' Training Course	5	5
Students	31	29
Total Admissions	**505**	**512**

Source: Tyne and Wear Archives MD/NC/98/39 Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Health Committee, Minute Book, 9 Jan 1967 to 9 Dec 1968, Agenda Item, Education Committee 2 July 1968, Care of Pre-School Children, p. 4.

From Table 3.2 a number of points can be drawn. A new admissions category in the sixties, the children of teachers and students highlights that nurseries were, in some instances, utilised specifically to facilitate the employment or training of women in occupations where there were shortages. Taking a similar method used

with Dundee, namely grouping together categories where women were on their own or otherwise had a need to work, accounted for 62 percent of admittances in 1966 and 61 percent in 1967. In 1966 separation and divorce was the largest single admittance category, followed closely by special recommendations, which were largely health grounds. A year later, 'special recommendations' was the largest category followed by children of separated or divorced parents. In cases where mothers were not able to care for their children in the view of the local authority, nurseries partly replaced motherly care. This care was temporary, until the mother came out of prison, recovered from illness, pregnancy, or childbirth. Temporary day care for children in a nursery was less expensive than bringing children into full-time care such as fostering or homes, and also maintained the family. The 'special recommendations' and 'difficult children' categories are perhaps the only categories with evidence of direct intervention into the care of children who were problematic in some way. Other categories emphasised the prevention of neglect and providing children with adequate care during a period where the mother was unable to provide full-time care. It is clear therefore that the unity of the family was paramount, and working women did not receive a nursery place unless they needed to.

Quantitative detail illustrates the extent of nursery provision in the case studies. Table 3.3 presents the number of nurseries in the public and private sector in Britain.

Table 3.3: Number of local authority and voluntary day nurseries, and number of children on nursery registers, Britain, 1944 – 1981 (select years)

Year	Number of day nurseries	Number of places for children
1944[+]	1599	71,806
1948[*]	882	44,070
1965/66[#]	---	21,000
1966[+]	509	23,626
1968[+]	448	21,400
1970/71[#]	---	23,000
1980/81[#]	---	32,000

Sources: [*]Report of the Ministry of Health for the year ended 31 March 1949, (HMSO, London, 1950), p. 172.

[#] Lewis, 'The Failure to Expand Childcare Provision', Table 1, p. 263.

[+] Tomlinson, *Democratic socialism*, p. 194. TWAM MC/NC/98/39 Agenda Item, Education Committee 2 July 1968, *Care of Pre-School Children*, p. 2.

While data in Table 3.3 is incomplete, important observations can be made. The number of nurseries declined considerably between 1944 and 1966. This was largely due to the greater number of wartime nurseries in 1944, many of which were temporary and held in prefabricated structures. By 1948, the decline was a consequence of the peace-time closure of these wartime nurseries, while a considerable proportion remained open. However, by 1966 and 1968, there was a clear trend of decline in the number of nurseries. In the post-war period the number of places roughly halved from around 44,000 in 1948 to 21,000 in 1965/66 or 23,000 in 1966 using a different measure. By 1980/81 there was an increase in the number of places for children, with around 32,000 available.

Quantitative material on local authority day nurseries is scattered and inconsistent, making it difficult to directly compare the national and the local. However, from the information available it is possible to give insights into the extent of day nursery provision in each of the case studies. Certainly it is necessary to consider the places available, not only the number of nurseries.

Glasgow had 15 local authority day nurseries in 1957.[59] Newcastle had 7 in the period 1953/1954; however 3 of these were closed by 1956.[60] By 1962 there were 5 day nurseries in Newcastle. These nurseries combined had spaces for 225 children; however the actual uptake was lower. In 1961 average daily attendances, including half-day attendances, were 158. By 1962 this figure was 152.[61] The same number of places were available in 1968, thus 225 local authority places were available for a child population of 19,247 under-fives.[62] In Dundee the number of nurseries and places fell between 1956 and 1965, from 11 nurseries with 435 available places, to 9 nurseries with 358 places available.[63] Preston kept more extensive numerical information on its day nurseries, from which it is possible to explore change over time.

Table 3.4: Number of children on registers and waiting lists of local authority day nurseries in Preston, 1948 – 1969

Year	Number of local authority day nurseries	Number of children on nursery registers	Number of children on waiting list for day nursery place
1948	5	226	551
1949	6	275	407
1950	6	275	516
1951	6	279	316
1953	6	297	231
1954	6	299	272
1955	6	299	241
1956	6	281	208
1957	6	277	236
1969	3	153	170

Sources: Lancashire Record Office, CBP/10/1 Reports of the Medical Officer of Health, 1947 – 51, 1953 – 57 and Minutes of the Proceedings of the Town Council and the Various Committees 1969 – 1970, Appendix A, Statistical Report for 6 Months ending 30 June 1969, Maternity and Child Welfare.

Table 3.4 shows that during the fifties, there were 6 nurseries in Preston. The halved number of nurseries in 1969 reflects the closure of 2 nurseries in the late 1950s.[64] However, the data obscures the details of changing provision, as older nurseries were closed and new nurseries in larger facilities were opened. The number of nurseries broadly stayed the same through the fifties, but the number of children on the register increased. By the late sixties, the number of nurseries and places for children had declined significantly.

The number of nurseries and nursery places provided by local authorities were limited in the case study cities. Local authorities were not opposed to mothers working. However, the stringent admittance criteria strongly suggest that mothers' work was supported by local authority childcare only when there was perceived to be a legitimate need for her to work, such as being a single parent, an inadequate ‘breadwinner’ wage, or poverty. In the sixties, children of married teachers, nurses, and students were added to the priorities list to enable those women to return to work, and combat labour shortage. However, the same was not true for the majority of married women workers who were in service, clerical, sales, or industry. Provision was not available for women who identified their own need to work for financial or personal reasons.

Industrial Nurseries

An alternative to local health authority day nurseries was the private nursery. One type, industrial nurseries, were established and maintained by employers. These nurseries were primarily for children of the companies’ employees, and served a childcare function to enable mothers to work, although

the welfare of children remained important. Fulfilling industry's need for skilled female labour, their existence suggests the local authority did not provide adequate places to facilitate large-scale employment of mothers. Employers felt it was financially viable to meet that need themselves. In this section regional differences in industrial nursery provision between Preston, Dundee, Glasgow, and Newcastle are examined.

Industrial nurseries were registered under the 1948 Registration of Childminders Act. They are distinct from other private nurseries as they were registered to, and frequently on the premises of, mills and factories. Industrial nurseries were created by firms to provide childcare for the children of workers, and as an inducement to women who had left industry to return to work during a period of labour shortage. In this section focus is on Dundee and Preston, and Lancashire more generally. The number of nurseries discussed here is small. From the sources available, a fairly confident assertion can be made that neither Glasgow nor Newcastle had registered industrial nurseries between 1945 and 1970, although private nurseries did exist in these places. For instance, in the late 1950s *The Glasgow Herald* provided a stern warning that:

> the mother who thinks she would like to take a job and find a cheap parking place for her children has, it seems, little chance of success. Factories in the city do not follow the practice of some other industrial towns in organising day nurseries for their employees.[65]

In addition to these statements, study of the registrations under the 1948 Act in Glasgow and Newcastle do not name any industries or firms, indicating industrial nurseries did not exist in these case studies.

Dundee appeared to have a greater number of industrial day nurseries, with three registered to Jute Industries and one to Low and Bonar. The proposal to establish an industrial day nursery in Dundee first came from Sidlaw Industries (which would later become Jute Industries) in 1947. Inquiries were made by the management board of Jute Industries into the number of their workers who:

(1) have their children in day nurseries
(2) board their children out with relatives
(3) if boarded out, would they wish to transfer them to the works' nursery
(4) being part-time workers, would work full-time if nursery provided
(5) are at present working on the evening shift but would work full-time if nursery available[66]

It was found that 15 evening shift workers and 23 persons would work full-time if a nursery was provided.[67] The nursery was established in a former canteen at Camperdown works in the west of the city. The initial outlay was £740 to transfer the existing canteen to a new site and £1460 to install the new nursery, followed by estimated annual running costs of £2000.[68] The nursery opened with places for 65 children. Spaces were allocated to children according to their age, in three age groups. There were 16 spaces for children under 1 year of age, 12 spaces for children 1 to 2 years of age, and 37 spaces for toddlers 2 to 5 years old.[69] A maximum of 50 percent of places were allocated to children of parents who were already employed at Camperdown.[70] The assumption must be that the remainder were for potential workers, to induce women to return to the firm. Initially only 31 children entered the Jute Industries nursery.[71] To contextualise this, there were 1225 workers at Camperdown works in June 1948.[72] In August 1948, after the nursery had been open for a month, about 10 evening shift workers became full-

time.[73] Management calculated that the opening of the nursery meant an additional 835 hours of work were obtained at Camperdown Works.[74]

Studying the costs to parents reveals that industrial nurseries in Dundee were more expensive compared to subsidised local authority nurseries. Charges ranged from a rate per week, to a cost based on the number of children and days.[75] In 1948 weekly charges for children in Jute Industries nursery was between 4s and 7s 6d.[76] This had increased to 10s 6d for 1 child and 15s 6d for 2 children per week in 1956. By contrast, local authority nursery charges in 1956 were 6s for 1 child and 9s 6d for 2 children.[77] By 1965 charges increased to 9s for 1 child and 14s 3d for 2 children per week. Comparative weekly charges in industrial nurseries were 25s for 1 child and 37s 6d weekly for 2 children.[78] With subsidised places, local authority nurseries were less expensive for parents, but had large waiting lists and rigorous admissions criteria. Industrial nurseries were more expensive and confined women to work in a particular firm, but places were more freely available.

The Jute Industries nursery venture appeared to have been successful. By December 1948, discussions began about extending the nursery service to two other districts. Increased supplies of raw jute were expected at the end of 1949 and labour shortages were expected. The firm said: ‘it would be difficult to recruit our ultimate requirements of labour particularly skilled workers such as male spinners, female rove spinners and winders’.[79] Nurseries were believed to be the most effective means to recruit women workers. Two new nurseries were proposed.[80] Serving workers in different districts, the first served 5 works towards the north-east of the city, and the second, 4 works west of the city centre.[81] The numbers of places and women workers for whom industrial nurseries benefited were small.

However, when it is considered that Dundee local authority had 11 nurseries in 1956, the 4 in the jute industry is not an insignificant number.

Industrial nurseries were created in Dundee to aid the return of women workers to mills and factories during a period of labour shortage. In terms of the number of nursery places, and the extra labour hours accrued, the effects on Dundee women's ability to work was limited. The impetus and drive to create industrial nurseries in Dundee came from local level and from the top down; it was works management which instigated the enterprise. There is little evidence of women asking for nurseries to be created, although they responded fairly positively when introduced.

This section now investigates industrial nurseries in the cotton industry in Preston, and with reference to Lancashire more generally. Cotton was an important industry for the export market. During the Second World War, the industry underwent a concentration scheme. This was designed to free up labour and factory space for war production. The cotton labour force was reduced from 340,000 at mid-1939 to 213,000 at mid-1945.[82] As war manufacturing wound down and premises returned to their pre-war purposes, and as international competitors, such as Germany and Japan, re-established their industries, Lancashire cotton experienced a trade boom and labour shortages. A national propaganda campaign in the early post-war period aimed to encourage skilled women workers back into the industry. Nurseries were part of this campaign.

The annual report of The North Lancashire Textile Employers' Association (NLTEA) in 1946 drew attention to shortages in the labour force. It was estimated that 10,000 additional workers were needed in Preston and district, to double the cotton workforce following an increase in the amount of machinery being engaged

in production, and the reopening of many spinning mills which had closed under concentration in 1941.[83] Questionnaires returned by members of the NLTEA 'expressed a desire for an increase in the provision of nursery facilities backed by a belief that some former cotton operatives would return to the mills if the desire could be met'.[84] Nurseries were to be an important part of the campaign to encourage skilled women who had children back into the cotton labour force.

Horrockses' day nursery was first opened during the Second World War. The management extended the facility in the post-war period. In 1944 28 children were cared for in the nursery. By 1946 there were 50 children cared for by 13 nursing staff in Horrockses' nursery.[85] These figures are similar to the nursery at Camperdown Works where 65 children and babies up to 5 years of age were cared for, by a total of 11 staff.[86] The national government intervened to assist the creation of nurseries. Cotton towns were given priority for building materials for nurseries, local education authorities were requested to provide care after school and during holidays, while training courses were offered to cotton firms for their day nursery staff.[87] Indicating the importance of nursery provision to Lancashire's cotton industry, the Labour Department of the Cotton Board in Manchester prepared and published a booklet providing information to firms on how to operate an effective day nursery.[88] *Day Nurseries in Cotton* was 'designed to assist firms in the cotton industry who are proposing to establish day nurseries, thus enabling mothers to take part in the production effort'.[89] The press release for this document stated:

> [n]ewcomers to the industry have to be trained and this takes up the time of skilled operatives...But increased production is needed at once, and that is why it is so important that the experienced operatives who have left the industry should return, if it is only for the next year or so.[90]

Skilled women's return to industry not only alleviated the labour deficit but saved current workers from training new operatives. The latter point suggests that women's return to work was a temporary solution to the labour deficit, and was not necessarily to be a long-term feature of the industry. The implementation of housewives' evening shifts had apparently shown the 'readiness of these grand workers to come along and give a hand, and many of the evening shift workers have said it is only the lack of accommodation in the day nurseries that prevents them from taking up day work'.[91] For the employers in the cotton industry, there was not only a theoretical pool of female labour from which to draw, but actual mothers willing to return to work full-time in the industry.

By 1947, the labour situation appeared urgent. Despite having priority for building materials, shortages meant that during 1947 and 1948 surplus army huts were sought as a temporary measure to provide additional nursery facilities.[92] The fact Horrockses desired to extend the nurseries suggests they did not view nursery provision itself as temporary. It is possible to infer the firm anticipated married women and mothers in their employment in the longer-term. Horrockses completed an application for the huts stating:

> We have a number of women who are willing to return to our employment if we can arrange for children to attend the Nursery. We have a large quantity of machinery standing idle waiting for operatives and these machines if running would be employed on textile goods for the Export Markets.[93]

The appeal for huts was framed in terms of the export market, making their argument more forceful, and appealing to the national government. By July 1947, Horrockses had purchased 6 huts as temporary nursery accommodation.[94] The waiting list in 1947 was for 110 workers who could work if nursery spaces were

available.[95] Evidence suggests there were waiting lists at most (if not all) of the day nurseries in cotton areas.[96] Thus it appears that Horrockses' claim that they had women waiting to return to work was backed up by their waiting list figures.

In addition to nurseries, other efforts were made to recruit women. In September 1946, a week-long exhibition in Preston Guild Hall included displays of machinery in operation, film screenings, as well as a fashion show by Horrockses. The exhibition had over 30,000 visitors.[97] The aim of the exhibition was to stimulate interest in the textile industry, to encourage former employees to return to the mills, and to secure new recruits from young people. It is unclear how successful these goals were, although newspapers reported 'success in this direction'.[98] An additional aspect of this labour agenda was newspaper coverage of changes to the cotton industry. Newspaper articles in the early post-war period boasted of the improved working conditions in mills and factories, depicting an idealised view of factory life and of working conditions. Horrockses nursery was used to attract mothers back to work. Articles talked of bright and airy nursery buildings, of children well cared for with fun and games, baths, and nutritious meals. The nursery was described as a 'friendly gesture to the workpeople', while the implementation of services for workers, such as canteens, snack trolleys, rest areas and sick bays were not 'soft' measures.[99] *The Lancashire Daily Post* reported on the Labour Minister's visit to Horrockses, during the course of which, he spoke to employees such as Mrs Hall (53 years old), a roving tenter, who had returned to the mill during the war after being retired for 10 years, who stated 'it's not a bad job at all'.[100] The exhibition, visits by the labour minister, and newspaper articles combined to create an image of a much improved industry. Welfare services were advertised to make the industry appealing. Media reports

about the nursery at Horrockses were also a press or propaganda exercise; advertising the availability of nurseries and extolling their benefits to attract mothers back into employment. Nurseries were part of a broader strategy to attract women into the industry during the early post-war years of labour shortage. The question remains how effective such strategies were in attracting women into the industry and whether the offer of nursery facilities convinced women sufficiently to return to work after having children.

Study of nurseries in textile firms in Dundee, Preston, and Lancashire provides insight into childcare which was designed to encourage mothers back into the workplace. These nurseries were formed in the war years or early post-war period, but facilities were extended in the 1950s. Labour shortage was a tangible problem and the response of management and employers included making the work and conditions more appealing to women workers. Nurseries were one part of this campaign. Their numerical effect should not be overstated, as the total number of nurseries were small in Dundee and Preston, with places for fewer than 100 children. Places in these private nurseries were more expensive than local authority nurseries. Furthermore, a drawback for working mothers placing their child in a works nursery, was that it tied her to this workplace, and meant she lost the nursery place if she wanted to change jobs. Alternative childcare options for mothers who wanted to work existed, and these are explored in the following sections.

Nursery Schools

Nursery schools were largely viewed in positive terms by national and local government, depicted as desirable for most families to educate pre-school children. However, the provision of nursery schools and classes was wrought with tension, between medical and educational sectors; nursery school teachers and organisations such as the Nursery School Association; industry and trade unionists regarding the safe age at which children could start nursery school; the role of the home and the needs of the labour market for skilled and educated women workers. Nursery schools' policy emphasised the desirability of pre-school education for children of all backgrounds. However, in the post-war period, focus on rescuing working-class children from materially deprived backgrounds remained a priority of local authorities. Nursery schools visibility in local authority minute books, suggests greater acceptance of the educational role of nursery schools.

Provision of nursery schools was national policy and the responsibility of local authorities. The 1944 Education Act encouraged local education authorities to provide nursery schools and classes for children under 5.[101] The 1943 White Paper stated:

> the self-contained nursery school, which forms the transition from home to school, is the most suitable type of provision for children under 5. Such schools are needed in all districts, as even when children come from good homes they can derive much benefit, both educational and physical, from attendance at a nursery school.[102]

This White Paper outlined that nursery schools were ideally for all children, aiding their transition from the home to school. The contrast between the 'good home' and the 'problem family', as discussed with regard to the day nurseries, further

highlights the sense that nursery education was suitable for all children, not only those coming from materially deprived homes. However, the 1944 Education Act provided no guidance on how universal nursery school provision should be.

Investigation of nursery schools in the case studies lends insights into how national policy was enacted at local level, and the tensions which existed between different agencies. From a quantitative perspective, Newcastle had only 1 nursery school in 1952/53 providing places for 90 children, and with a waiting list of 250 children, and 1 nursery class with 30 places and a waiting list of 82.[103] By 1968 there remained only 1 nursery school for children aged 2 to 5 years old, but Newcastle had 4 nursery classes for children aged 3 to 5 years, which collectively provided 150 places.[104] Glasgow provided 33 nursery schools in 1948, providing 1,300 places for children aged 2 to 5 years old, with waiting lists at each nursery.[105] In 1957 and 1961 Glasgow Corporation continued to make moves to expand nursery school provision in the city.[106] Dundee had 6 nursery schools in 1956, which accommodated 260 children, and a waiting list of 1,500 children.[107] It has not been possible to establish how many nursery schools existed in Preston in the post-war period.

In Newcastle upon Tyne, there was a clear tension between national policy and the local authority. The 'clear obligation' to provide nursery schools under the 1944 Act was constrained by additional national policies and local circumstances. The education authority explained in 1968:

> Unfortunately, the necessity which has been imposed upon successive governments of determining educational priorities has meant that since the war no new nursery schools have been established. Until 1954, there was a ban on the provision of new nursery classes, which was relaxed to make it possible for such classes to be set up to make available places, in the first instance, for the children of married women returning to teaching.[108]

There was conflict between the needs of the local authority to fulfil national policy to provide adequate nursery schools, and the constraints on the authority to build new nursery schools and provide new nursery classes to fulfil those demands. The education committee of Newcastle argued it had 'consistently attempted since 1945 to expand the provision of nursery places in the City, but this expansion has proved impossible owing to the national policy'.[109] This is explored further.

In Newcastle in the early fifties nursery school provision was discussed. The discussion began by drawing attention to the shortage of nursery schools in the city.[110] The nursery school was described as 'a place designed to give every child in its care, from 2 to 5, a healthy open-air life, good food and sleep, and a planned activity and happy occupation under trained people' and provided a 'valuable start in life'.[111] Nursery schools were required because of crowded, insanitary housing, while children with 'physical defects needing special attention, speech difficulties, perhaps problem children' could be assisted in nursery school. However, the needs of working mothers were recognised, including mothers 'forced to work' and women who were the sole earner, with low household income.[112]

Proponents of nursery schools in Newcastle highlighted the immediate needs of the children, the family, and home but also considered the wider benefits which nursery schools accrued to the community:

> The nursery school is not only a place where children are looked after while mothers work, nor even only a place where children get the chance of a good start in life, but it is a real contribution to the social welfare and development of the community where it is placed...Through the daily contact with the mother, through visits and through mothers' and fathers' clubs, the nursery school teacher is a social worker in a very real sense. We talk much about problem parents of problem children and of delinquent

> children, and we are forced as a community to spend a great deal of money in dealing with them.[113]

Nursery schools were depicted as an investment in the community and as a preventive measure against delinquency and problem families. The sense of temporariness which was prominent in discussions over nurseries and industrial nurseries is largely absent from this discussion on the importance of nursery schools. Nursery schools satisfied the immediate needs of the city, but were anticipated to serve a valuable long-term function. However, there was no consensus within Newcastle Council about the desirability of increasing nursery school provision, or the benefits of nursery school education. One female councillor made a bold statement: 'I believe there is a widespread unwillingness to regard the needs of children under 5, who are now included in our education system' and referred to a statement by the chairman of the education committee, who had apparently stated 'he did not believe in nursery schools'. Defending himself, the chairman responded; 'What I said was that the best nursery school was the home, and I maintain that'.[114] The report of this conversation highlights tensions between personalities but also suggests ideas about the most suitable place for children and the proper roles of mothers in child development were pervasive.

Similar views were expressed in the other case studies. A representative for Glasgow education department at a conference stated nursery schools were necessary in prosperous and poor areas:

> It did not follow that because a child had moneyed parents he had a good home in the true sense of the phrase. For the upbringing of a child, she went on, the mere matter of money was a small part of the whole business.

> Poor homes were often splendid homes, places where a child, despite lack of worldly goods, was able to achieve the ideal of all-round development.
>
> In rich homes there might even be mal-nutrition. But she emphasises, though nursery schools should not only be for the under-privileged children, at the moment it was necessary to concentrate on them, as they were the biggest section of the problem. The best setting for any child was the home. A nursery school would have to be a very good one indeed before it could hope to equal the average family life.[115]

While this conference occurred in 1942, the argument that emotional or psychological deprivation could occur in any home gained momentum in the post-war period, of which Bowlby and Anna Freud were key figures. The stance that nursery schools benefited children but that the home was ultimately the best location for young children to grow, play, and learn was repeated throughout the fifties and sixties in local authorities. The Nursery School Association (NSA) which campaigned for greater provision held the stance that nursery schools were a vital supplement to the home:

> No home can provide all the child needs after the period of dependent infancy, if he is to grow adequately in mind and character as well as in physique. For this period the nursery school should be the natural extension of the home and in its home-like informality provide an all-round education...Many children who begin school at the age of 5 suffer considerable check in their physical and mental development – while they go through the painful process of learning, often too late, how to adjust themselves to the social life of a group of children.[116]

For the NSA, nursery schools were supplementary to the home, and vital in the development of children's emotional development. Children who did not attend nursery school were believed to be disadvantaged by not socialising with other children. The overriding impression gained is that while nursery schools were beneficial to children, the home was ultimately where their best education and care could be received.

From the mid-fifties the constraints on local authorities to provide nursery places were relaxed to create places for the children of trained working women, especially teachers.[117] In Glasgow, where criticism in 1957 was levelled against mothers using day nurseries as a 'cheap parking place' for their children while they worked, views about nursery schools were different:

> The nursery school is, of course, an absolute necessity in some cases if married women are to engage in work, which they are being urged to do. The estimate is that many thousands more places would be required in nursery schools in the city to meet the demand arising from the employment of married women.[118]

The contrasting attitude in this extract may be due to the different ages of children admitted to day nurseries and nursery schools, and the agendas of each facility. Nursery schools were for older children, usually between 2 and 5 years old whereas day nurseries admitted babies of any age. The distinctions drawn between the two types of care – between the social, health, and welfare agenda of day nurseries and the educational function of nursery schools – had wider implications. Nursery schools appear to have been accepted as a more desirable means of caring for children than health authority day nurseries. This may suggest why nursery schools were considered a suitable form of childcare when mothers work was considered. To explore this further, labour shortage in the case studies and the response of the local authorities is discussed.

Nursery schools were advocated in some local authorities as a valuable adjunct to mothers return to work. However, the NSA warned against nursery schools being used to enable women to work.[119] In Dundee in the early post-war period, tensions existed between the needs of industry and the economy for skilled female labour, and the welfare and education agenda of nursery school

professionals. In December 1946 the jute industry began a 5-day working week of 45 hours with work beginning at 7.30am. The Association of Jute Spinners and Manufacturers (AJSM), representing the employers, requested Dundee Corporation alter the opening hours of the city's nursery schools to 7 a.m. to allow women to leave their children there before work. In this instance, the Corporation was amenable to extending the hours of nursery schools. However, in January 1947 a deputation of 4 nursery school teachers expressed concern at the effects of these extended hours on the children, informed by a report on nursery school hours by the NSA. The deputation urged that steps be taken to encourage the part-time employment (e.g. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) of women with young children.[120] In March that year the nursery school teachers reiterated their belief that the long separation from mothers was bad for children; 'The nursery school was never intended to be a substitute for the home but was intended rather as a supplement to the home, and there was a grave and real danger of the nursery schools becoming the counterpart of the wartime nurseries.'[121] The AJSM responded by arguing that there were limits to the type of work which part-time workers could do, and claimed that part-time workers were employed in many factories, and 'everything was done to facilitate the employment of such workers'.[122]

Later in 1947, a deputation from the AJSM and Dundee and District Union of Jute and Flax Workers (DDUJFW), urged that the opening hours of nurseries and nursery schools be extended to 9.30 p.m. in response to new shift patterns. The DDUJFW contributed to the issue and emphasised economic needs:

> at this time the country could not afford to lose any workers engaged in industry, since upon production depended the future prosperity of the nation. The Government had appealed for the assistance of married women in industry and it was imperative that facilities should be made available for the children.[123]

The DDUJFW understood the necessity for the corporation to provide childcare facilities if mothers were to return to work in industry, however, this was framed in terms of the needs of the labour market. The union representative argued that the majority of married women workers preferred full-time to part-time work and that no complaints had been received from women since the new working hours were implemented.[124] In contrast to earlier that year, the corporation was less amenable to lengthening the opening hours of the nursery schools and appeared to have taken the concerns of the nursery school teachers onboard.[125] By this stage nursery schools opened at 7 a.m. and the new proposal would have nursery schools open for over 14 hours; although children were not in care for that full period. This suggests the health and welfare of children was paramount. Women who worked these evening shifts had to arrange their own childcare, and could not rely on services provided by the local authority.

Anxiety about the length of time children spent in nursery schools (and nurseries) was a recurring trend in post-war Dundee. In 1955 the Dundee Branch of the NSA and the Dundee Local Association of the Educational Institute of Scotland declared:

> A nursery school is part of the educational system and was never intended to be an ancillary to industry. Although mothers are working in industry, in commerce and in the professions all over Britain, Dundee and one town in England are alone in permitting these long hours for young children, hours which give them a night interval of only thirteen hours.
>
> Seventy-five percent of the mothers do not work prior to their children's admission to the nursery school and many regard the

> opportunity offered by the nursery schools, not as education but as a chance to make extra money, and many stop work again when their children go to school at 5 years old. Other children, whose parents wish them to benefit from the real purpose of the nursery school, the education of the under-fives, tend to be crowded out.[126]

There is a strong critical tone of mothers who used nursery schools for 'the wrong' purpose, as childcare while they worked, rather than as an addition or support to their parenting. The suggestion was that women left their children in nursery school to 'make extra money' rather than making important contributions to the household economy. It was erroneously believed women stopped work when their children reached school age. In addition, this memorandum argued that parents who wanted their children to benefit from education were marginalised by mothers who used nursery schools as childcare. A hierarchy of need was created, between mothers who used nursery schools for their 'proper' educational purpose and those who used them to work. A causal link was made between the availability of childcare and women's employment, rather than women's employment necessitating the availability of childcare. Theories of maternal separation were diffuse in these discussions:

> Among these children are some who, while well-cared for physically, are obviously suffering from a lack of that security which only maternal affection can give.
>
> It is widely recognised nowadays that long periods of separation from his mother have a bad effect on a young child, an effect that persists in adult life and produces a badly-adjusted citizen. The present set-up in nursery schools in Dundee encourages just this condition and should be changed.
>
> It is significant that the waiting lists for the two smallest nursery schools in Dundee where the hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. are relatively as long as for the bigger schools where the longer hours prevail and that the mothers of children in these smaller schools accept the hours without demur and make their arrangements accordingly.[127]

The deprival of children of maternal affection was emphasised by the Dundee branch of the NSA in this extract, as a direct link was made between nursery schools' long opening hours, maternal deprivation and maladjusted adults. The second section of the quotation indicated a belief that women were able to make alternative arrangements if nursery schools closed at an earlier hour, making this option both practical and desirable. The women using nursery schools were treated as a homogenous group – the ability of some women to make alternative arrangements, was assumed to be feasible for all women.

The attitudes of the NSA, nursery school teachers, employers and trade unions have been explored. However, the views of women's organisations have been absent. There does not appear to have been a mass, organised move by women's organisations in this period to campaign for childcare facilities. Yet the issue was not lacking from the minute books of women's organisations. The Dundee Women Citizen's Association (DWCA), with a predominantly middle-class membership, provided practical and financial aid to service providers such as the Grey Lodge Settlement's nursery school, the Dundee branch of Save the Children, the NSA, and the Dundee Association of Youth Clubs.[128] Representatives from the DWCA attended conferences of the NSA, meetings and talks, and reported back. The DWCA appeared to approach the issue of childcare from the perspective of educating mothers and rescuing children from neglectful parenting. For example, following a conference on Child Delinquency in 1944, the DWCA member who attended reported that 'education of the parent was most necessary'.[129] Similarly a report was proffered in 1954 of a talk titled 'The Training of Careless Mothers', in which the speaker stated she 'only wants more mothers to be trained and improved'.[130] Despite an air of criticism of the 'careless

mothers' the DWCA appeared to hold the view that mothers could be educated and trained in motherhood.

Similarly, nurseries and nursery schools were issues addressed by the Scottish Co-operative Women's Guilds (SCWG).[131]

> The economic circumstances of family life at present are driving more and more young married mothers into industry, although no adequate provision is made for the children not yet of school age....[Nursery schools] provided for the development of a child's character, self-discipline and an opportunity for eating, sleeping and playing in a happy atmosphere of co-operation. The need for such schools had become vital in industrial areas throughout the country.[132]

In this 1957 resolution, supported by the SCWG congress, nursery schools were perceived as an important ancillary to industry and to women's employment. While drawing attention to the wider benefits of nursery education to children, the focus for the SCWG was on caring for children while mothers were at work. The language adopted – of women being driven to work – evokes the theme of women working for financial necessity. 'Economic circumstances' of the family were perceived to be the cause of women's return to work.

Study of nursery schools has thrown a spotlight on differing agendas. Clashes between industry, trade unions, city councils, and nursery school teachers were integral. This conflict can be summarised as that between the needs of the economy (to increase the labour force) and the educational, welfare, and care agenda. In existing literature, it has been found that women often preferred informal forms of childcare to the formal, tightly restricted, and interventionist care of the local authority, employers and philanthropy. This is explored further through study of childminders.

Childminders

Women continued to use informal childcare arrangements, such as childminders, neighbours, friends and family members in the post-war period, suggesting an unsatisfied demand for childcare. It is difficult to quantify their use because of this informal characteristic. In the post-war period childminders were increasingly regulated, providing insight into this care. However, not all childminders were registered, thus maintaining informal and unofficial agreements.

Under the 1948 Nurseries and Childminders Regulation Act (amended in 1968), local authorities had responsibility to keep registers of and supervise nurseries and childminders as the following extract reveals:

> Every local health authority shall keep registers –
>
> (a) of premises in their area, other than premises wholly or mainly used as private dwellings, where children are received to be looked after for the day or a substantial part thereof or for any longer period not exceeding six days ;
>
> (b) of persons in their area who for reward receive into their homes children under the age of 5 to be looked after as aforesaid. The registers kept under this subsection shall be open to inspection at all reasonable times.[133]

Childminders taking non-family members, more than one child, or a child for a significant proportion of the day had to be registered. The regulation of childminding in the home is an important event in childcare. It suggests a shift in the control and power which women previously held over the sphere of childcare as informal childminders, through neighbourly, friendship and kin networks to local authorities. Government intervention was introduced to casual arrangements

between parents and childminders which became increasingly regulated and professionalised. It is important to recognise that these measures ensured children were looked after in 'suitable' premises by capable carers, as determined by the Medical Officer of Health for each corporation. A contemporary organisation states that 'registration offers a baseline safeguard to parents choosing this type of substitute care for their children',[134] implying parents could expect a certain standard of care and trust registered childminders.

Registrations in local authority minutes are a valuable source for historians and provide insights into who childminders were, who opened private nurseries, and what premises were used. Registration indicates the number of children cared for individually and collectively by childminders. This section now considers quantitative data on the numbers of childminders, private nurseries, and children cared for in the case studies.

Table 3.5: Registrations under the Nurseries and Childminders Regulation Act 1948, England and Wales, and Scotland, 1960 – 1966

	Year	No. of premises registered	No. of places provided	No. of persons registered	No. of children provided for
England and Wales	1960	601	14,595	1,531	11,881
	1961	747	17,618	1,780	13,999
	1962	932	22,591	2,206	18,016
	1963	1,243	31,045	2,597	---
	1964	1,585	38,144	2,994	---
	1965	2,245	54,911	3,393	---
	1966	3,083	75,132	3,887	32,336
Scotland	1960	29	831	17	254
	1961	32	926	27	355
	1962	45	1,023	34	441
	1963	49	1,041	104	802
	1964	79	1,694	96	1,254
	1965	116	2,555	122	1,668
	1966	183	3,876	187	2,324

Source: A. Hunt, A *Survey of Women's Employment; Government Social Surveys for the Ministry of Labour* (HMSO, London, 1968), p. 107.

Table 3.5 demonstrates the number of premises and persons registered under the 1948 Act in England, Wales, and Scotland. It indicates the number of places for children provided over a six year period. The data in this table suggests a steady increase in the numbers of registered premises between 1960 and 1966. Combining figures for England and Wales with Scotland indicates that places for 27,561 children were available in 1960, compared to 113,668 places for children in 1966. However, it is clear that the provision level per capita was very much higher – as much as double – in England and Wales as north of the border.

In Table 3.6 new registrations under the 1948 Act in the case studies are illustrated, using information available in local authority sources. Recording of this information varied from location to location, and from year to year. It is unclear how rigorously registrations were recorded. Comparison and analysis of

change over time is therefore problematic. Furthermore, the figures presented in Table 3.6 show only new registrations in each year, whereas Table 3.5 illustrated the total number of premises and persons registered at a point in time. Accumulated numbers for the case studies are not readily available. An attempt has been made to distinguish, where possible, between the registration of childminders, private nurseries, and playgroups. These notes aid understanding of the apparent sparseness of data.

Table 3.6: New registrations under Nurseries and Childminders Regulation Act 1948, Glasgow, Newcastle, Dundee, Preston 1948 – 1970

	Glasgow*		**Newcastle***		**Dundee**		**Preston***	
Year	**No. of Regs.**	**Places for children**	**No. of Regs.**	**Places for children**	**No. of Regs.**	**Places for children**	**No. of Regs.**	**Places for children**
1948					1	31		
1949					1		3	101
1950							1	3
1951					2		1	
1952								
1953								
1954								
1955							1	3
1956							1	3
1957	1							
1958							1	3
1959	6	78	1					
1960	2	18	5					
1961	1		2					
1962	9	46	1				3	58
1963					1	3		
1964	8	124	2		3	9	2	6
1965	7	75			3	30	3	22
1966			1	25	4	25	5	27
1967	7	145	10	176	5	45	3	11
1968	17	362	14	205	13	199	1	5
1969	29	299	15	133	11	145		
1970	21	312	32	211	7	144	4	95

*Glasgow registration data available for only for 1957 – 1970; Newcastle 1959 – 1970; and Preston 1949 – 1970.

Sources: Archives, Mitchell C1/3/134 Minutes of the Corporation of Glasgow, Nov. 1956 to May 1957, to C1/3/162 Minutes of the Corporation of Glasgow, Nov. 1970 to May 1971.

TWAM MD/NC/98/33 Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Health Committee, Minute Book No. 32, 11 June 1956 – 27 May 1959 to MD/NC/98/40 Minute Book, 13 January 1969 – 14 December 1970. MD/NC/98/39 and MD/NC/98/40 Reports of the Medical Officer of Health 22/3/1968, 14/10/1968, 10/3/1969, 14/7/1969, 13/4/1970, 8/6/1970, 13/7/1970, 14/9/1970, 9/11/1970, 14/12/1970.

LHC D42.6 Minutes of the Dundee Corporation and its Committees, 1947 – 1948, to Minutes of the Dundee Corporation and its Committees, 1970 – 1971.

LRO CBP/1/2 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Town Council and the Various Committees 1949 – 1950 to Minutes of the Proceedings of the County Borough of Preston, 1970 – 1971.

The figures available indicate Glasgow had the greatest number of new individual registrations from the time the Act came into force until 1970 at 108, followed by Newcastle with 82 registrations, Dundee with 47, and Preston with 29. From the registration data, this translated to 1,459 places for children in private nurseries and with childminders in Glasgow in the same period, 750 places for children in Newcastle, 600 places in Dundee, and only 337 in Preston. In considering these figures, it must be reiterated that they pertain to new registrations made, and do not account for revoked or rejected applications for registrations. Neither are these figures the total registered premises or individuals in each location. A report produced by Newcastle Corporation in 1968 revealed the total number of registered premises and individuals, and the number of places available for children. In 1968, there were 14 persons registered as childminders, caring for 166 children of nursery school age (3 to 5). A further 16 premises were registered, where a total of 382 children were cared for.[135] This was an accumulated total of 30 registrations, caring for 548 children in total. The figures in Table 3.6 suggest there were 14 new registrations that year making places available for 205 children in Newcastle. This clarifies the distinction between the numbers of new registrations per year and the total registered childminders and nurseries.

The quantitative approach is useful but does not reveal who childminders were. The majority of childminders were individual women looking after children in their homes. The women who sought registration tended to be married and a mother themselves. Often the fact they were raising or had raised their children was viewed as qualification enough to care for other children. In some instances, women had trained or were training in caring professions, such as nursing or as nursery staff which positively affected their application. To illustrate the applications, a fairly typical example which was received by Newcastle Corporation in October 1968, is presented. In this example, the applicant proposed to take 6 children, and planned to employ an additional member of staff:

> An application has been received from Mrs. L., asking if she could be considered for registration in accordance with the...Act.
>
> Mrs. L. proposes to take up to 6 children, between the ages of 3 and 5 years, into her house between 9 a.m. and 12 noon. The premises have been visited by the appropriate staff, the front room will be used for this purpose, heating, lighting, washing and toilet facilities are satisfactory. A gate will be fixed at the top of the stairs. There is a garden at the rear of the house where the children can play during fine days. It is proposed to employ a State Registered Nurse to assist at all times.
>
> It is considered that Mrs. L. is a suitable person to undertake this work. She has 2 children of her own, aged 8 and 7 years respectively.[136]

In addition to women caring for children in their own homes, women were also the named person registering play-groups, crèches, and private nursery schools under the Act. While industrial nurseries appear to only have existed in Dundee and Preston in the period of study, private nurseries were features in all of the case studies. Nurseries and playgroups were found in church halls and associated to other religious places (such as synagogues). Other premises registered included hospitals (in Dundee), universities (in Glasgow and Newcastle), youth centres, YMCA facilities, tennis clubs, adventure playgrounds,

community centres, and scout huts. There were a few exceptions where men applied for registration, particularly for churches and other religious institutions. Registrations for nurseries and nursery schools were made by clergy, session clerks, and other staff/volunteers on behalf of church halls and synagogues. Playgroups tended to be registered by a married woman and held in church halls and community centres.

The registration of childminders, private nurseries, and playgroups suggests there was a demand for further provision which was not met by the local authority. Informal childcare provided by kin, neighbours, and friends did not require registration under the 1948 Act and continued to be provided. This confirms the assertions of historians such as Davis and Lewis that women had to rely on informal childminding and the private sector as childcare as they returned to work after having children.

Conclusions

Exploring the provision of public and private childcare, this chapter has suggested that the level of availability of childcare is not a direct indicator of attitudes towards women's work. However, women's access to childcare was limited by powerful discourses about the effects of maternal deprivation on children which influenced the opening hours of nurseries and nursery schools. Provision was complex, and there were considerable constraints for any woman who sought external childcare.

Local authority day nurseries had rigid criteria for admittance. A hierarchy of need was constructed between women who identified their own need to work,

and between the local authorities' determination to limit places to families in need of extra support – whether social and welfare, or financial needs. Nursery schools were strongly supported by groups such as the NSA, and appear to have been viewed more positively by local authorities. Pre-school education was considered beneficial to all children, not only those from deprived homes. These ideals were thwarted by financial pressures affecting some families, and the need for mothers to work. Local authorities were limited in the building of new nurseries and nursery schools by restrictions on building materials, and by the reduction of the 100 percent grant in 1946. Women's ability to gain a place was constrained. However, industrial labour shortages in the early post-war period, and shortages of teachers and other professionals in the 1960s created tensions with the social, health, and welfare agenda of local authority provision. While local authorities made some concessions to labour needs and the needs of working women through increasing opening hours, or changing the priorities list, fears about the effects of prolonged separation of mother and child limited the extent of provision.

To facilitate the employment of skilled women workers during a period of boom in the textile industries, employers in Preston and Dundee created nurseries for their employees. The numbers of nurseries and places provided were small, but given the small number of local authority nurseries in these textile towns, industrial nurseries were not insignificant. However, these nurseries were created in a specific period of time, to alleviate a specific labour shortage in one industry. Their effects on women's work in the longer-term were limited; as Chapter Two demonstrated, jute and cotton were industries in decline, as women moved into service industries, shop work, and clerical positions.

Women continued to make informal childcare arrangements with friends, neighbours, and family while they worked indicating a failure of the local authority and employers to adequately supply women's demands. The informality of these arrangements means archival sources are unable to reveal much to historians about this care, in comparison to the 'top down' provision from national and local government. However, the registration of childminders under the 1948 Act lends some insight into the private sector, such as who childminders were, the organisations which created nurseries, and the rising popularity of playgroups in the sixties and particularly into the seventies. Informal childminding remained an important source of care. We can speculate that greater availability, personal relationships between mother and minder (and tacit approval of the minder's methods), the ability to create a mutually convenient arrangement, the relative absence of official control and intervention in the arrangement may be some of the reasons why women preferred informal care. Yet, women's preference for this care was made in the context of fears about maternal deprivation, the absence of freely available, affordable, state-provided nurseries, and universal nursery school provision. To emphasise this further, there were waiting lists for most local authority day nurseries, suggesting formal care was in demand. Issues such as the physical distance of mother from grandmother, as families moved to outlying new post-war housing estates, as well as the reluctance of working grandmothers to mind their grandchildren were important factors in women's childcare strategies.

Using the case study methodology, this study of childcare has suggested that the main distinction lay in the availability of workplace nurseries. Their availability in Dundee and Preston in the late forties and fifties was a hang-over from pre-war patterns. In that period, textiles still dominated these towns, and the

pre-established role of women in this industry influenced employers' decision to introduce nurseries to attract skilled women back into work. There were differences in the extent of provision in each location, but it does not appear that women benefited or were overly disadvantaged by place. Furthermore, the evidence strongly suggests that childcare, as one element of plans to encourage women back into the workplace, was largely ineffectual. Nurseries were limited to industries which needed female labour, and as Chapter Two demonstrated, women were increasingly moving into service, shop work, and clerical employment. The quantitative data indicates that the number of places for pre-school children could not account for the bulk of women's return to work.

The methodology used in this chapter has been an archival study using local government and other official sources. It demonstrates attitudes to childcare, and covertly, women's work from a 'top down' point of view. The absence of women's voices is notable. These official sources and this methodology do not reveal working-class women's views about the different pressures on them to act in certain ways, nor how they negotiated and interpreted these pressures. Questions remain over how far working-class women resolved conflicting discourses about their role, and what effect this had on their working lives and their understanding of it.

Oral history provides a potential solution to this problem. This thesis now introduces the third methodology, using women's own narratives of their work to illuminate the changes which occurred in women's lives during the transformative post-war period.

Notes

[1] N. Whitbread, *The Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School – A History of Infant and Nursery Education in Britain, 1800 – 1970* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1972), p. 103.
[2] Ibid, p. 120.
[3] For example, the *Dundee Social Union Report on Housing and Industrial Conditions and Medical Inspection of School Children* (John Leng, Dundee, 1905) linked the significant proportion of mothers at work with the high infant mortality rate in Dundee (an IMR of 174 per 1,000 births). Mothers at work in the textile trade did not rest for a sufficient period of time before and after pregnancy, and bottle-fed children. Mothers were identified as being in need of nourishment and rest, education in breast-feeding and cooking, as well as suitable childcare, p. xiii. The *Report* stated that 'young children, especially infants, require constant care and attention', p. 70. Baillie argued that the *Report* was 'used as a tool to blame 'lazy ignorant' working-class mothers for the woes of the city.' Cited in E. Small, *Mary Lily Walker: Forgotten Visionary of Dundee* (Dundee University Press, Dundee, 2013), p. 93. Bottle feeding was viewed as a contributory factor to high infant mortality rates. R. A. Cage, 'Infant Mortality Rates and Housing: Twentieth-Century Glasgow', *The Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 14 (1994), p. 77.
[4] A. Freud and D. Burlingham, *Infants without Families and Reports on the Hampstead Nurseries* (Hogarth Press, London, 1974).
[5] A. Davis, *Modern Motherhood: Women and Family in England, 1945 – 2000* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2012), p. 121.
[6] B. Mayall and P. Petrie, *Childminding and Day Nurseries: What Kind of Care?* (Heinemann Educational Books, London, 1983), p. 22.
[7] D. Riley, *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother* (Virago Press, London, 1983), p. 11.
[8] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, p. 123.
[9] Riley, *War in the Nursery*, p. 99.
[10] Ibid, p. 152.
[11] Ibid, p. 156.
[12] Ibid, p. 174.
[13] J. Tomlinson, *Democratic Socialism and Economic Policy* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997), p. 196.
[14] Ibid, p. 194.
[15] Ibid, pp. 193 – 199.
[16] Ibid, p. 193.
[17] Ibid, p. 195.
[18] Ibid, p. 199.
[19] J. Lewis, 'The Failure to Expand Childcare Provision and to Develop a Comprehensive Childcare Policy in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s', *Twentieth-Century British History*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (2013), p. 249.
[20] Ibid, p. 249.
[21] Ibid, p. 252.
[22] Ibid, p. 252.
[23] Ibid, p. 272.
[24] Ibid, p. 273.
[25] W. Crofts, *Coercion or Persuasion? Propaganda in Britain after 1945* (Routledge, London, 1989), p. 123.

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[26] V. Wright, 'Juteopolis and After: Women and Work in Twentieth-Century Dundee' in J. Tomlinson and C. Whatley (eds.), *Jute No More: Transforming Dundee* (Dundee, 2011), pp. 145 – 146.
[27] J. Tomlinson, C. Morelli and V. Wright, *The Decline of Jute: Managing Industrial Change* (Pickering and Chatto, London, 2011), p. 39.
[28] Wright, 'Juteopolis and After', pp. 146 – 147.
[29] C. Morelli and J. Tomlinson, 'Women and Work after the Second World War: A Case Study of the Jute Industry, circa 1945 – 1954', *Twentieth-Century British History*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2008), p. 81.
[30] E. Roberts, *Women and Families: An Oral History, 1940 – 1970* (Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1995), p. 135, p. 136, and p. 235.
[31] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, p. 157.
[32] Whitbread, *Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School*, p. 131.
[33] Ibid, p. 134.
[34] T. Blackstone, *A Fair Start: The Provision of Pre-School Education* (Allen Lane, London, 1971), p. 1.
[35] Ibid, p. 1.
[36] Ibid, p. 1.
[37] Ibid, p. 31.
[38] H. O'Connor, 'Resisters, Mimics and Coincidental; Intergenerational Influences on Childcare Values and Practices', *Community, Work and Family*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Nov., 2011), p. 405.
[39] Ibid, p. 407.
[40] A. Davis, 'Women's Experiences of Combining Childcare and Careers in Post-War Oxfordshire, c.1940 – 1990', *The Local Historian*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2013), p. 21.
[41] Ibid, p. 21.
[42] Ibid, p. 18.
[43] Ibid, p. 19.
[44] Whitbread, *Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School*, p. 111.
[45] Ministry of Health Circular 221/45 cited in Lewis, 'The Failure to Expand Childcare Provision', p. 253.
[46] A. Hunt, *A Survey of Women's Employment* (HMSO, London, 1968), p. 107.
[47] Lewis, 'The Failure to Expand Childcare Provision', p. 252.
[48] The children of married women teachers, nurses and medical auxiliaries was added to the priorities list in May 1965. Local History Centre (LHC), Dundee Central Library. D42.6 Meeting of the Health and Welfare Committee, 13 May 1965, p. 84.
[49] Report by Medical Officer of Health on Admissions to Day Nurseries, ibid, p. 85.
[50] Lancashire Record Office (LRO), Preston. CBP/10/1 Report of the Medical Officer of Health on the Health of the Borough 1953, p. 4.
[51] Ibid, 1953, p. 4.
[52] Ibid, 1954, p. 39.
[53] Ibid, 1953, p. 40.
[54] LHC D42.6 Report by Medical Officer of Health on Admissions to Day Nurseries, Health and Welfare Committee, 13 May 1965, p. 85.
[55] LHC D42.6 Special Schemes Sub-Committee of the Health Committee, 27 November 1956, p. 1072.
[56] Ibid, p. 1072.
[57] Ibid, p. 1072.
[58] LHC D42.6 Day Nursery Provision in Mains of Fintry Housing Estate, Report by the Medical Officer of Health. Special Schemes Sub-Committee of the Health and Welfare Committee 22 May 1969 and 29 October 1969, pp. 214 – 216 and pp. 950 – 951.
[59] *The Glasgow Herald*, 9 September 1957.

[60] Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (TWAM), Newcastle upon Tyne. MD/NC/31, 32, 33 Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Health Committee, 14 September 1953, 8 November 1954, 1 August 1956.
[61] TWAM MD/NC/98/35 Health Committee Report for the 3 months ended 31 March 1962, with figures for the comparable period in 1961. 12 February 1962, p. 27.
[62] TWAM MD/NC/98/39 Health Committee 2 July 1968.
[63] LHC Appendix, Special Schemes Sub-Committee of the Health Committee 27 November 1956, p. 1072.
Appendix III Report by the Medical Officer of Health on Day Nurseries, Health and Welfare Committee 10 February 1966, p. 1358.
[64] LRO CBP/1/2 Health Committee 9 December 1958, 9 June 1958, p. 66 and p. 376.
[65] *The Glasgow Herald*, 9 September, 1957, p. 5.
[66] ARMMS, Dundee. MS 66/X/1/4/5 Meeting of the General Committee, 27 November 1947.
[67] ARMMS MS 66/X/1/4/5 Labour Department, Proposed Nursery, Camperdown Works, June 1948.
[68] ARMMS MS 66/X/1/4/5 Meeting of the General Committee, 5 February 1948
[69] ARMMS MS 66/X/1/4/5 Labour Department, Proposed Nursery, Camperdown Works, June 1948.
[70] ARMMS MS 66/X/1/4/5 Industrial Committee, 1 July 1948.
[71] LHC Special Schemes Sub-Committee of the Public Health Committee, 12 October 1948, p. 1668.
[72] ARMMS MS 66/X/1/4/5 Labour Department, Proposed Nursery, Camperdown Works, June 1948.
[73] ARMMS MS 66/X/1/4/5 Industrial Committee, 5 August 1948.
[74] Ibid, 16 September 1948.
[75] Unless specified, money is given in pounds (£), shillings (s), and pence (d), and is written in the form in brackets.
[76] ARMMS MS 66/X/1/4/5 Industrial Committee, 1 July 1948.
[77] LHC Appendix, Day Nursery Charges, Special Schemes Sub-Committee of the Health Committee 27 November 1956, pp. 1072 – 1073.
[78] LHC Appendix III Report by Medical Officer of Health on Day Nursery Charges, Health and Welfare Committee 11 February 1965, pp. 1337 – 1338.
[79] ARMSS MS 66/X/1/4/5 Availability of Labour, Minutes of a Meeting, 17 May 1949.
[80] Ibid.
[81] ARMMS MS 66/X/1/4/5 Meeting of the Industrial Committee, 9 December 1948.
[82] Crofts, 'Coercion or Persuasion?', p. 110.
[83] LRO DDHs 49/1 *Lancashire Daily Post*, 17 October 1946.
[84] LRO DDHs 110 Box 1. *The North Lancashire Textile Employers' Association, Annual Report, 1946.*
[85] LRO DDHs 49/1 *The Preston Guardian*, 4 November 1944, *The Northern Daily Telegraph*, 8 October 1944, 17 October 1946.
[86] Tomlinson *et al*, *The Decline of Jute*, p. 175.
[87] Crofts, *Coercion or Persuasion?*, p. 123.
[88] LRO DDHs 110 Box 4. *Day nurseries in Cotton.*
[89] Ibid.
[90] LRO DDHs 110 Box 4. Copy of Press Communique issued on 23 April 1948.
[91] Ibid.
[92] LRO DDHs 110 Box 3. Correspondence, 9 June 1947.
[93] Ibid, Application for Redundant Hutting.
[94] Ibid, Correspondence March 1946 to June 1947.
[95] Ibid, Letter 23 July 1947.
[96] LRO DDHs 110 Box 4. Copy of Press Communique issued on 23 April 1948.

[97] LRO DDHs 110 Box 1. *The North Lancashire Textile Employers' Association, Annual Report, 1946.*
[98] Ibid.
[99] LRO DDHs 49/1 *The Northern Daily Telegraph*, 8 July 1944, *The Preston Guardian*, 4 November 1944.
[100] LRO DDHs 49/1 *The Lancashire Daily Post*, 13 September 1945.
[101] Clause 8 (2) (b) of the Act stated that local authorities should have regard 'to the need for securing that provision is made for pupils who have not attained the age of 5 years by the provision of nursery schools or, where the authority consider the provision of such schools to be inexpedient, by the provision of nursery classes in other schools'. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/7-8/31/section/8/enacted Accessed 22/04/2014.
[102] White Paper cited in Whitbread, *Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School*, p. 103.
[103] TWAM Proceedings of the City and Council of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1952 – 1953, p. 520, p. 521 and p. 525
[104] TWAM MD/NC/98/39 Agenda Item, Education Committee 2 July 1968, *Care of Pre-School Children*, p. 3.
[105] *The Glasgow Herald*, 23 September, 1948, p. 6.
[106] Archives, Mitchell Library. C1/3/135 and 143 Education Sub-Committee on School Welfare, 22 May 1957 and 23 August 1961.
[107] LHC Appendix A Local Joint Council Admission to Nursery Schools – General Observations, Joint Council of Dundee Education Committee and Dundee Association of the Educational Institute of Scotland, 28 February 1956, p. 63.
[108] TWAM MD/NC/98/39 Agenda Item, Education Committee 2 July 1968, *Care of Pre-School Children*, p. 2.
[109] Ibid, p. 3.
[110] TWAM Proceedings of the City and Council of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1952 – 1953, p. 519.
[111] Ibid, p. 520.
[112] Ibid, p. 520.
[113] Ibid, p. 522.
[114] Ibid, pp. 522 – 523.
[115] *The Glasgow Herald*, 1 June 1942, p. 4.
[116] Cited in Whitbread, *Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School*, pp. 103 – 104.
[117] TWAM MD/NC/98/39 Agenda Item, Education Committee 2 July 1968, *Care of Pre-School Children*, p. 2.
[118] *The Glasgow Herald*, 23 September 1948, p. 6.
[119] Ibid, 8 October 1951, p. 4.
[120] LHC D42.6 Nursery Schools and Classes Sub-Committee of the Education Committee 16 January 1947, p. 387.
[121] Ibid, 10 March 1947, p. 689.
[122] Ibid, p. 689.
[123] Ibid, p. 689.
[124] Ibid, p. 689.
[125]LHC D42.6 Joint Sub-Committee of the Education and Public Health Committees, 7 October 1947, p. 1611.
[126] LHC D42.6 Joint Council of Dundee Education Committee and Dundee Association of the Educational Institute of Scotland, 27 October 1955, p. 63.
[127] Ibid.
[128] During the war the women of the DWCA had sewn overalls for children in the nursery school. Dundee City Archives (DCA), Dundee. GD/MUS 113/1/6 Dundee Women Citizens' Association, Minute Book, 20 April 1964.
[129] DCA GD/MUS 113/1/5 Minute Book, 6 March 1944.
[130] DCA GD/MUS 113/1/6 Minute Book, 1 November 1954.

[131] In a presidential address made in May 1964, Mrs Moyles stated 'Within recent years our women have been active in demanding decent homes, better hospital services, nursery schools and a bigger slice of the national income for the old age pensioners of this country'. Archives, Mitchell Library. CWS1/39/9/14 Presidential Address, Rothesay, 7 and 8 May 1964.
[132] Archives, Mitchell Library CWS1/39/9/63 Sixty-Sixth Annual Report and Balance Sheet for Year Ending December 1957, p. 26.
[133] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/11-12/53/enacted Accessed 30/4/2014.
[134] L. Bostock, Social Care Institute for Excellence: *Effectiveness of childminding registration and its implications for private fostering*, SCIE position paper 1, January 2003, p. 8. Accessed online, 19/09/2011.
http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/positionpapers/pp01.pdf
[135] TWAM MD/NC/98/39 Agenda Item 2 July 1968, *Care of Pre-School Children*, p. 5.
[136] TWAM MD/NC/98/39 Report of the Medical Officer of Health 14 October 1968.

Chapter Four

Constructing the Married Female Self

Previous chapters used statistical, empirical, and archival research to establish a context for women's paid employment in post-war Britain. To recapitulate the main findings, the period 1931 to 1971 saw an increase of married women in employment. The significant differences in women's occupations between the case studies in the earlier twentieth-century gradually converged by the 1970s. Economic restructuring saw women workers concentrated in key areas: the service industry, sales and commerce, and as clerical workers. The numbers of women 'freed' to work by formal childcare were small. Childcare satisfied a social/welfare agenda and only marginally an industrial labour force agenda. Geography began to lose significance in shaping women's work, with convergence of experience between Dundee, Preston, Glasgow, and Newcastle over the third quarter of the twentieth-century. The sources used so far say little about women's own experiences and the place of work within their lives; their voices are absent.

Chapters Four and Five are complementary. Both use oral history methodology to explore employment in the post-war female self. Chapter Four analyses married women's experiences of combining their multiple roles as workers, housewife, and mother, and how they constructed an identity as a worker and as a 'good mother' in the interview. Chapter Five develops this using women's discussion of their paid work both in the period between school and

marriage, and work throughout the life-course. In these chapters women's identity as worker is explored to reveal the richness of women's life experiences.

Women who reached adulthood in this period were a transition generation between the end of the Second World War in 1945 and the onset of the Women's Liberation Movement around 1969. As we see, new opportunities for work and education in the fifties and sixties enabled working-class women to find interesting work, and to undergo occupational and status advancement in the affluent society. We further see that women's narratives about this transition were subtlety imbued with conflict between 'traditional' feminine roles and aspirations to satisfying, enjoyable work. Women's lives were in transition from earlier generations of women and, indeed, within their individual life. Through their agency, working-class women enacted change not merely in their own lifetime but to women's opportunities in the longer term. Work was part of the changing nature of the female self. In this way, the women interviewed for this project were pioneers, but their narratives are complex and often conflicted.

Themes are highlighted here which delve into women's construction of their sense of self. These themes are not exhaustive but have been selected to best illustrate the important place of work in women's changed sense of self as they reflected on their lives. A combination of women's narratives chosen as longer case studies on the one hand, and more succinct narrative examples on the other, are presented to develop and enrich understanding of each theme, embodying differences and similarities among the respondents. The testimonies presented display the diversity of interviewees and provide insights from which to explore the complexity of the issue. To launch this discussion, oral history research is

contextualised by considering existing literature on the self and oral history theory as an aid to comprehension.

Oral History Theory and the Self

Oral history is one means by which respondents can reveal their present sense of self and reflect on past experiences, but is not the only means by which the self is constructed. A point of debate is whether it is women's self or sense of self that has undergone change. There is no definitive answer to this question which would satisfactorily explain the diverse experiences the women I interviewed underwent. However, it is feasible that both are true. That is, the female self changed as they took advantage of new opportunities to become a more personally empowered, liberated, and autonomous self. However, women's sense of self also changed, as they strove towards an understanding of their self with which they were comfortable. What can be accepted is the notion of the narrative self; that people come to know their self by 'constructing a story or narrative which coheres the different parts of our life experiences'.[1] Stanley stated that people hold a self 'which can be invoked and described in autobiographical (written and spoken) accounts',[2] and that an interview or conversation is an occasion for portraying the self. The oral history interview allows respondents to compose their sense of self and identity through the events, anecdotes and memories they choose to tell. For Abrams, the oral history interview 'is a means by which subjectivity or the sense of self is constructed and reconstructed through the active process of telling memory stories'.[3]

Composure, the cultural circuit, and intersubjectivity aid understanding of the narratives constructed by respondents and the interpretation of those narratives by historians. Summerfield explained the cultural circuit, where:

> prevailing discursive constructions of the past 'contaminate' memory, in the sense that they overlay it with later accounts and interpretations of the period of history to which a memory relates, to such an extent that it is impossible for anyone to remember what they did and what they thought at the time independent of this 'patina of historical postscripts and rewritings'.[4]

Summerfield inferred that an 'authentic' memory is 'corrupted' by subsequent interpretations of an event or period, with the effect that respondents are unable to recollect their 'true' thoughts from the time. Social historians view the interconnectedness of culture and experience as an opportunity to analyse this process and its results:

> [t]he starting point of the cultural approach to oral history is to accept that people do not simply remember what happened to them, but make sense of the subject matter they recall by interpreting it. Understanding is integral to memory and, like any other knowledge, it is constructed from the language and concepts available to the person remembering. The challenge for the historian is to understand the cultural ingredients that go into accounts of a remembered and interpreted past.[5]

Thus what may be viewed as the fallibility of memory by 'traditional' historians[6] becomes an integral part of oral history analysis, and presents an opportunity to pick apart the creation and formation of those narratives.

In addition to the cultural circuit, composure is a valuable theory for this research. Composure holds two meanings. In the first, the respondent gives their interpretation of their experiences, and 'composes' their life-story. In the second, the respondent aspires to create and present a coherent version of their self that fits

within the current 'social world', and which is acceptable to the respondent – a composed sense of the self.[7] The attempt to achieve composure is a process, not an end point, as life stories are reworked in the light of subsequent experiences.[8] This does not occur in a vacuum, as the intersubjectivity and wider perceived audience of the interview influence the narrative and the self which is produced.

Intersubjectivity is another useful theory for these interviews. It helps illuminate why a particular self is presented in the interview. Oral history interviews are a collaborative process between interviewer and interviewee. The oral history interview is the meeting of two subjectivities, as the interviewer and interviewee each construct their own subjectivity, reacting and modifying their performance in response to the other.[9] Stuart reflected on the effect of the interview on the interviewer and vice versa, and demonstrated that 'the preconceived conceptions of the researcher; the role in a social sense of the researcher; the effect of the visual clues; how a researcher may dress; or their age, class or gender, and so on' can influence the interviewee.[10] Some specific issues of intersubjectivity relevant to this current research are now considered, reflecting on the researcher's subjectivity, as well as introducing the wider experience of the interview not conveyed by the recording or transcript of the interview.

In seeking to understand the intersubjectivity of oral history interviews, it is important to reflect on methodology and practice. Abrams noted that interactions between interviewer and interviewee, before and after the interview, in addition to non-verbal communication, are not revealed in the transcript, and highlighted that few historians write candidly about interview experiences.[11] Moreover, Borland indicated that researchers should reflect on their practice to produce a sensitive research methodology.[12] Borland explained the conflict for

feminist researchers, to balance their legitimate interpretation and desire to empower women, with interviewee's authorial authority, which becomes problematic when interviewees do not recognise the value of or share the researcher's understanding of the structural oppressions women experience.[13] Hierarchical authority and power relations at the time of the interview have been considered by other oral historians. McKenna questioned whether the interviewer necessarily feels powerful in the interview. Reflecting on her experiences interviewing elderly nuns as a young, early career researcher, she highlighted her feelings of powerlessness, while acknowledging that not feeling powerful does not denote an absence of power.[14] Aged 25 when she first conducted her interviews, with women who were older and of a higher social status, McKenna felt too young to 'cut it' and unconvincing as a 'professional researcher'.[15] This resonates with my own experience. I began my interviews a year younger than McKenna, and interviewed older women. With practice and confidence, my assertiveness in interviews grew, of course not to dominate the interview, but to steer discussion back towards the topic where in my view, certainly at the time, the conversation had 'drifted'. This was an exertion of my power as interviewer – dictating the topic of discussion (work), deciding what questions to ask, and bringing the interview around to the chosen topic. While this sits uncomfortably with aspirations to allow women space to speak about what was important to them, for this research on a specific aspect of women's lives, it was necessary to impose some control and boundaries on the interview. There remains a duty to the research. The aims of the interviews and of the investigation have a legitimate agenda, to recover and centre women's narratives of their work. This agenda is not intended to blunt or misrepresent the narratives of the interviewees. At the

moment of the interview the aims and methodology of the study have a purpose which is problematic to communicate to the respondent. In practice this was addressed by allowing women time to finish their anecdote or story, and then returning to the questions from the questionnaire. This is not against the interviewees' interests, as the research aspires to be in the interests of women as a disadvantaged group.

The conjuring of a past self by an interviewee is not a straightforward process. Stanley's study of feminist auto/biography provides useful insights into interpretation of the construction of 'the female self'. In the process of analysing the interview, a shift is made from the interview being a form of autobiography – as the interviewee tells memory stories about her life – to a source for the author's biography of the interviewee in which the researcher uses those stories to interpret the respondent's life. Stanley argues the author is an 'active agent in the biographical process, in the sense that she *constructs* the biographical subject rather than merely represents them 'as they really were'.'[16] The result of this intervention is important. Auto/biographers reduce the complexities of 'the self' to one omnipotent view. The oversimplification of the self removes from the sight of readers the range of interesting material available to biographers.[17] There is a two stage process, as the interviewee (autobiographer) who strives to achieve composure within the limits of the interview simplifies their narrative and sense of self, and the interviewer (biographer) does likewise. What is revealed through the interview and ensuing analysis is not a recreation or representation of the past, but a construction in the present. Linde indicated that there is a 'distinction between the narrator (the person doing the telling) and the protagonist (the person at the centre of the story) of the narrative.[18] For Stanley, 'the autobiographical past is a

product of different selves',[19] an accumulation of life experiences and the product of a changing sense of self over time.

The interviewee has the ability to recall her view of her self at points in her past, albeit mediated by subsequent experiences and the perspective of the present self. While Stanley correctly states there is no 'true self' and that the respondent may be limited by an incomplete sense of self in their past, the benefits for research of asking respondents to reflect is worthwhile. Rather than considering these features of oral history and memory as problems, they present opportunities for researchers to explore why and how the self is constructed by women, who recall how they felt at points in the past, and how their sense of self has changed.

This section has highlighted existing ideas on the self and oral history theories which aid understanding of oral history interviews conducted for this thesis. An interviewee's sense of self can be constructed and communicated through the oral history interview; however, this is not a straightforward process. The oral history interview is, of course, not the only place where a sense of self can be constructed; it is constructed in everyday conversation, the stories and reminiscences told to one another, and in written memoires and autobiography, among other means. The self of the past is constructed from the perspective of the present, shaped by the context of the time of the interview and having undergone changes to the self through life. The interview is a special stage for respondents to construct a self, within the constraints of a two hour long interview. This format necessitates some distillation and concentration of extensive life histories into a short verbal recollection. The results of the interview, the recording and transcriptions, are not perfect products, being incomplete in ways which are not fully manifest to the listener. The intersubjectivity of each interview present

opportunities for exploring the sense of self presented by the women interviewed. This offers salient space for exploring the place of work in women's changing sense of self in the third quarter of the twentieth-century. In accessing a sense of self, there are few means for historians to accomplish this than recorded oral history interviews. Furthermore, this methodology enriches and adds a methodological balance to the statistical analysis, policy-history, and archival research of Chapters Two and Three, and brings the subject of study – women – to speak of their own agency in the changing place of work in their lives during this key period between 1945 and 1970.

Historiography

There has been a historiographical trend of constructing married women's work in the twentieth-century as something to be begrudged, taken in times of financial hardship, with women drawing their identity from domesticity and the home. Considering the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, Lewis emphasised that domesticity was more important than paid employment to married women whose 'primary commitment was to the home and family'.[20] Lewis questioned how far 'the majority of unskilled women workers have ever moved away from the ideal of working for the family economy and towards a more individualistic notion of working for their own satisfaction'.[21] This view was echoed by Bruley who situated women's enjoyment of work within the context of expectations of domesticity and motherhood; 'of crucial importance though was the general expectation at the time that the lives of all women would centre on motherhood and that this was their central responsibility in life'.[22] Similarly

Davidoff and Westover furthered the supplementary and financial motivation argument, and suggested that married women worked temporarily when financially necessary, and withdrew when that necessity passed.[23] Furthermore, Davidoff and Westover argued:

> [t]he grinding double burden of managing household tasks, care of young children and extra earning, eased when the oldest children were able to earn. Then many of these women thankfully gave up paid employment.[24]

Working-class women worked in a narrow range of sectors until starting their family, after which they retired from work while children were young, before returning when children were older to increase the affluence of the family. While acknowledged, family poverty has largely been sidelined under narratives of post-war affluence.[25] One of the earliest historical studies of women's work in the post-war period was Tilly and Scott's *Women, Work, and Family* (1978) in which they argued women's paid work and family are inseparable and interdependent. In their analysis of women's return to work after having children, women's work was depicted as largely for financial return, while companionship, career advancement and the search for an interest outside the home were also important. Tilly and Scott noted that most women in the post-war period were no longer forced to work through dire economic need. Women were motivated to improve the position of the family and returned through individual choice. However, 'the women who exercised such choice were a minority'.[26] Davidoff and Westover outlined the conflicting messages women received in the fifties and sixties, between pressure for mothers of young children to be at home, and the 'strong incentives drawing married women back into the workforce, from employers who needed them and their own desire for an income to support a better standard of home life, as well as

to break the isolation of being at home'.[27] The results were that 'better educated young women who reached adulthood [found] their aims for personal development brought up short against discrimination in the work place and limitations of full-time housekeeping with no income of their own'.[28] A key contributor to this literature was Roberts, who interviewed around 90 women and men in Lancashire. Roberts argued that in the first half of the twentieth-century, financial necessity was women's motivation for working and that women's 'ambition was to stop work and to be at home; they saw their liberation as away from full-time work and towards domesticity'.[29] Roberts found her respondents were proud of their work 'believing they were supporting and helping their families by working outside the home'.[30] In Roberts' oral history research, she noted the conflicting messages which women received in the post-war period. However, Roberts argued that few respondents discussed this as presenting them with a dilemma.[31] These narratives of married women's/mothers' work considered work as a contribution to the family and household as the site of working-class women's identity.

In aspiring to understand women's experiences, it is necessary to search for women's own discussion of their work-life. As McIvor argued, 'any evaluation of the meaning of work needs to be grounded in the narratives of workers themselves'.[32] Oral history therefore plays an important role in recovering women's narrative of their lives and work. However, this has not necessarily resulted in a challenge to notions of women's domestic identity, and the supplementary nature of women's work. Most recently, for instance, McIvor argued the 'family appears to have continued to be the main focus and aspiration

for many young women, who expected to only be working for a short period before marriage and children – unless absolutely necessary financially'.[33]

Despite the framing of women's work within a domestic context, some historians have rejected the notion that this made working women acquiescent and apathetic, nor did this mean women's earnings were supplementary. Gordon's study of women's workplace resistance before the First World War re-evaluated working-class women's work and found that 'their earnings were central to the family economy, and that frequently women were family bread-winners'.[34] In addition she argued that 'women's collective struggles in the workplace...displayed an awareness of their common experience and identity as women and as workers'.[35] Whereas Roberts, Lewis and others had painted work as a peripheral aspect of women's lives, contributing to a domesticity-centred identity and enriching home life, by contrast Gordon suggested that despite the dominance of domesticity on women's lives, women acted collectively as women workers.

An additional theme in the historiography has continued to situate women's work within the context of dominant domesticity. Stressed here is the role of that context in shaping women's depiction of why they worked. This has important implications in seeking to understand not only why women worked, but women's sense of self and the place of work within that identity. Within this thread of research may be considered Williamson, who discussed this in terms of the attitudes of husbands to their wives working. Williamson considered that 'men's attitudes to female employment were crucial to any married woman's decision about her return to paid employment outside the home'.[36] She considered that the decision to work was complicated by the necessity to maintain gender

roles, and by women's need not to threaten their husband's status as provider and their own role as housewife.[37] While stating that married women returned to work for their own reasons, Williamson argued that the depiction of married women's work as for extras 'minimised the status of the jobs that their wives chose to undertake', which was depicted as not *real* work.[38] Thus in Williamson's reckoning the depiction of female employment as not real work, and as supplementary removed status from this work and did not threaten the male provider identity. It appears to be part of the same process by which women's work has historically been constructed as not work. A similar view was expressed by Roberts, who discussed that the perception shared by women and their families that women's wages paid for the 'extras' rather than 'basic essentials', marginalised their work.[39] This echoes Smith Wilson's analysis that:

> observers and the women themselves so often described wives' work as providing extras for the family, the value of women's work was debased. This obscured women's role in creating the affluent society and allowed the male breadwinner ideal to continue unaffected despite major social change, as the public still generally viewed men as having primary responsibility for family support.[40]

The need to preserve a male identity was influential in the depiction of women's work as for extras, to provide material goods and a higher standard of living, which had the result of lessening the value of women's work. Women also stressed the financial necessity of their work in order to make it appear acceptable to others, indeed, to their self. While recognising the financial necessity for many women, Todd discussed that monetary need could be used and presented as an acceptable justification for employment. In the context of improving economic circumstances for many families, 'providing for your kids could justify a woman

working outside her home'.[41] For Williamson, Smith Wilson, and Roberts, the perception that women worked for peripheral items rather than 'essentials' has de-valued women's work as marginal and supplementary to the male breadwinner income. Todd's observation suggests there is a greater complexity to women's depiction of their reasons for working.

In Chapter Three, theories of emotional deprivation caused by an absent mother were explored, demonstrating that an influential discourse was of the full-time stay-at-home mother. However, historians such as Smith Wilson and Todd have convincingly proposed that women redefined for themselves what a 'good mother' was. For Todd, this meant that the 'good mother' was constructed as one who took the opportunities presented by affluence, however fleeting, to improve living standards.[42] Smith Wilson indicated that 'many employed mothers began to challenge, although not overturn, the dominant discourse of the ideal mother as exclusively bound to the home'.[43] A 'good mother' was redefined by those women who returned to work as 'not solely one who stayed at the beck and call of her family, but one who nurtured their self-reliance and independence by not being constantly available, as well as by providing goods and pleasures otherwise out of reach of the family'.[44] In the context of 'Bowlbyism' and theories of maternal deprivation – which were top down invocations to mothers to behave in particular ways – Smith Wilson's interpretation suggests that women themselves were in the vanguard of redefining what a 'good mother' meant to them. By extension, this reveals that women were not passive recipients of discourse, but were agents of change.

The place of work in women's narratives of their self has sparked debate between historians of women's work. The issue is complex, and it is problematic

to succinctly extricate the meaning of work in women's lives. What is clear from existing research is that into the post-war period, expectations of and the dominance of domesticity on working-class women's lives influenced women's relationship to their employment. Women's work has largely been characterised as unskilled and poorly paid, particularly in comparison to male work. While some historians such as Davidoff and Westover, Lewis, and Roberts have largely agreed that women's work was to be begrudged, taken in times of hardship, supplementary and temporary, and something to be avoided, others such as Gordon, Smith Wilson, and Todd have assessed that, despite women's domestic responsibilities and expectations, they developed an important identity as a worker and breadwinner. Furthermore, Smith Wilson challenged the sense that from culture and prescriptive ideals historians can read women's experiences. What is clear, however, from these diverse historiographical themes, is the need to revert to women's own understandings of their work experiences.

This chapter now discusses the testimony of Helen, whose life underwent momentous transformation as she returned to education as a married woman, breaking free from banal office work to find satisfaction in a new career.

The Dead File Clerk's Epiphany – Helen

To digest the wide ranging issues connected to women's work and sense of self, an in-depth case study is analysed of a woman whose life highlights a range of themes explored in this chapter. Helen (b.1953,Fleetwood)[45] underwent huge changes in her life. Her self was liberated from the confines of domesticity and unsatisfying work. She encompasses the idea of working-class women immured in

soporific, unsatisfying work, breaking through and finding a career where she was able to flourish. Helen differs from most respondents by subsequently divorcing her husband, but this event adds to, rather than instigates, the dramatic transformation of Helen's life. Throughout her testimony, a strong sense of composure and reflexivity emerged. She had well-organised thoughts about her own life and feelings – for example, knowing from a young age she did not want children. Education was transformative and eye-opening for Helen. Her transition from a young woman with a lack of interesting opportunities, trapped in an uninspiring job and fulfilling the 'good housewife' role, to an independent woman with a satisfying career is prominent. Helen's narrative extends beyond the temporal limits of this thesis in that her 'epiphany' occurred in the early 1980s. However, there are strong reasons for including her testimony. Since people do not live their lives neatly in decades, some women came to their epiphany later than the studied time period, yet their experiences are useful in understanding the changed female sense of self. Helen's testimony is useful as it represents one type or template of experience, and, in particular, her narrative was so well told and articulated that its value was unmistakable.

Helen's tone, manner of speaking, and body language in our interview about career opportunities offered to her at school (office, shop work or nursing) communicated how unenthusiastic and unimpressed she had been; for instance, she sarcastically rolled her eyes and pantomimed dullness.[46] While she was frustrated at unrealised ambitions she felt at that stage of her life, she could not challenge the career restrictions as a result of being a girl. Helen was uninspired and stifled by her employment in a series of offices. Her final office job before she went to study at Newcastle Polytechnic was aptly titled the Dead File Clerk. One

day, she recalls, she had an epiphany while photocopying, realising she could not continue in that line of work any longer. This moment of clarity resulted in Helen redirecting her life, and also, for the historian, aids understanding of the dramatic change in Helen's sense of self.

She explained how she got to this point. At school Helen had clear ideas about her work. She explained the limited opportunities available to girls, and her thwarted aspirations:

> Well – it was either you went into an office or a shop. And occasionally somebody did some nursing – That's what girls were expected to do, you know. Because they were useless, they had to get married and have children, you see. That was their role. But I was always fascinated with the sea, and I wanted my father to take me with him on one of the trips, and my mother forbade it. And I did look into going into the navy, when I was coming up to leaving school. But girls didn't go to sea in the navy then. And I thought, well, if I'm going to be stuck in an office with a naval uniform on, and having my life signed away for so many years, I might as well stay at home and go to an office round the corner. So I didn't pursue that. And I was also very interested in horticulture, but they didn't take girls. So I ended up in an office 'cause I could type. And, uh, that was it.[47]

Helen felt there were limited jobs available for girls who were expected to pursue a domestic role. Faced with the choice of office work in the Royal Navy or a regular office job, she chose the latter option. Her acceptance of this comes through in her interpretation of what she saw at that time as low expectations for her future. The final phrase in this extract pertained to starting work in an office; 'that was it'. She repeated this phrase elsewhere, suggesting her present self's dissatisfaction with these options. Reflecting on this period of her life, she described her acquiescence to these expectations:

> I didn't really think about it. It was just a process. Um, because I think we all knew that that was it. That that's what we were expected to do, and we

> did it. You left school and you went from one place you went to all day, to another place, only you got a bit of money. That was it. – Well, I was disappointed but then I knew the answer before I asked the question – I don't know what I would have done really, if I'd had the opportunity at 16, that I had opportunities to do later. I just didn't have the opportunities.[48]

Helen described 'going with the flow', accepting the limited opportunities available and expectations to take a particular job and perform a certain role. In this recollection, Helen moved between her present and past selves as she distinguished between her past disappointment and her subsequent knowledge of the opportunities available to her later in life. Her statement 'I knew the answer before I asked the question' indicated she did not expect to achieve her aspirations. Additionally she was not sure what she would have done had she had the opportunities as a young woman. At that age she could not fight to do something different because of these restrictions and her lack of awareness of other options. Helen was disappointed, but accepted the limited choice of work available to her.

Helen's first job after leaving school in 1969 was as an office junior. Throughout her working life, Helen did not enjoy working in offices:

> I was bored out of my mind (laughs). That's all I can say about it. I was bored. And, the work I was given to do I could have done in half the time. But you don't do that, because a willing horse, you know, gets more to do. And so, you know, you work at the pace of everybody else. And, I was just bored and bored and bored.[49]

The recurrence of bored made plain her feelings; neither stimulated nor challenged by this work. Her final job was in a solicitor's office where, aptly and humorously, her job title was the 'Dead Filing Clerk', organising files for inactive clients. She described the job as 'a doddle. It was low paid. But I was bored'.[50] While in this

job, around 1982, Helen had a crystallising moment and determined to make a change:

> Well, I was standing in an office, feeding paper into a photocopy machine. I was 29. I thought, I can't do this another minute longer. I shall go mad. And, what can I do? And I looked at my O-Levels and I thought, well it's too late but I'll get in touch with the local college. And I could apply for...foundation in art, or something called a diploma in applied design. And I thought, well that sounds better. It'll give me a broader scope to channel my energies and see what I'm better at. So, I did that for 2 years, and then went on to do a degree in graphic design at the poly.[51]

Helen remembered detailed thought processes, which reveal the significance of this event to her life. The sense of an epiphany, that she could not bear office work any longer, and her need to break with that life, is powerful. Reviewing her qualifications, her options were again limited, but she found a college course which suited her interests. Helen's epiphany derives from Abrams conception of the 'epiphanic moment' in interviewee's negotiation between two selves within their narrative, as they strive for composure. It is 'an event or incident in the life story which presages a real life change'. This moment could occur in the real time of the interview, with a sudden spark of self-realisation.[52] Following Abrams, Helen's story of her photocopier epiphany allowed her to bridge the gap between two distinct periods in her life, with different expectations and opportunities. After completing her diploma at college, she commenced a degree at Newcastle Polytechnic.

Helen felt her successes in education and occupational advancement contributed to the breakup of her marriage. Her interpretation of her husband's attitude towards her work, indeed her changed self, evokes the conflicts and pressures women could experience. While Helen's husband was happy for her to

work and contribute to the household economy, this did not extend to equality in the home, either financially or in the division of labour. Early in her marriage, Helen mirrored her mother's behaviour,[53] being a 'good housewife' and going out to her office job:

> Oh, he liked me working. I was the typical, um, I suppose, housewife. I'd been brought up with an example of how women behaved in the house. They did all the housework and if they went out to work, they put their money in a joint bank account, and, if they needed anything they asked for the money. And I must admit it wasn't that forthcoming – You know, it's very handy to have somebody there all the time to do all the jobs and bring in a bit of money at the same time. Looking back I think I was a bit stupid, I should have, put my foot down a bit more. But I hadn't been brought up really that way. But, there you go. When you...I was the transitional generation – as far as the money went, the household finances he was totally in control of those. I had to fight for what I wanted. Not physically, you know, argue. And for the use of the car. I did most of the work in the house and he was a lot free, freer with his time off than I was. So, I suppose it was unequal. But he did earn more than I would have done at the time. But I don't see why that should make any difference in a partnership. But it did.[54]

Through these extracts Helen highlighted the inequalities within her relationship; that money was not freely given, she did the majority of the housework, and was denied access to the car. Her present self found her younger self 'a bit stupid' on reflection, however, that was how she had been brought up. Of course, Helen's recollections of married life may have been affected by her subsequent divorce, and she perhaps felt freer to criticise. Had the marriage lasted and remained a happy one, Helen's views may have been different.

Helen recalled the turning point in her marriage, as she completed her degree. At first her husband approved of her return to education, however, his attitude changed when she was at the polytechnic. Helen endeavoured to explain exactly what had changed in the relationship. In the following extract, she repeated

'I don't know', signalling her confusion and uncertainty about what had changed for her husband:

> I don't know. He just went very cold. When I said, look, I've done, got this [qualification]. Oh. And, uh, I don't know. Things, things changed. Because I was still, I was still on the, the grant, I still had the money, and...I don't know. I think we just drifted apart. So... – We had a show at the end of the diploma where all our work was, you know, put up and that. And he came along. And it was during that that he just turned cold as ice. When he, when he saw all my work up, he hadn't realised that what I was doing meant something I suppose. I was just playing with coloured markers or just...I don't know. But...it stemmed from that point I think.[55]

This extract lacks her earlier clarity and composure and reveals Helen's confusion. The display of her qualification and work seemed to Helen to turn her husband 'cold'. With an almost throwaway comment, she lamented 'he hadn't realised that what I was doing meant something'. In line with her other comments it implies her paid employment was acceptable to her husband, but when it had more than financial value to Helen, the situation changed. Contrasted with the earlier tediousness of office work, education provided a new interest and a creative outlet, enriching her life.

College was a transformative and highly valuable experience for Helen. It liberated her from dull office work as she embarked on a gratifying and creative career. The college experience enabled Helen to meet people from different backgrounds and have new experiences. Helen compared her experiences with younger generations of women, highlighting the confidence they had to pursue different opportunities. Helen's use of metaphor and description in evocative language demonstrated what an 'eye opening' time it was for her. College transformed Helen's life and allowed her to forge a new self. The following extract reveals her experiences:

> as a mature student, only 10 years older than the others, they had a different attitude than I did, and different experiences. And my eyes were opened, I think I'd led quite a narrow existence up until then. And, I started to get wise. *And, really since then I've never looked back. 'Cause I've always been in control since then, of my own...Well, everything. And I don't regret being divorced and setting out on my own.* – The choices I had later on, I took full advantage of – what was available to me. Had I had these choices earlier, had I been free to do what I wanted to do when I was 16, I would have gone a completely different way. But I couldn't do it then, I did what I could when I could. *And I'm still doing what I can when I can. So, I've been very lucky, being born when I did, when things started to change. And, the young women now are extremely lucky. They can do what they want if they have the mind and the strength to.* – the girls [at college] were more assertive. They knew what they wanted and they were going to get it. – So, you know, I think going to the poly, it was two educations I got; the academic side, and the course I was studying, and the social, side of it, and the...Other people's existences and how they'd been brought up and what they were expecting, and, and why aren't you doing this? And I thought, oh, yes, why aren't I? So, I did. – I had a wonderful time, wouldn't have missed it for the world, it was a rollercoaster. And had my...It was, it was mind-blowing in a way, for me. You know, *it was as if I'd led my life in a dream up till then, and I was, my eyes were suddenly wide open*, and I was ooh, this is wonderful. I can go and do anything I want to do, you know. So, it was great.[56] [My emphasis]

In her narrative, college represented a break between her past younger self and her present self who became more confident and assured as a result of her experiences. The importance of these experiences is unmistakeable, enabling Helen to become something like the person she wanted to be. Contrasting her experiences with those of younger generations of women to describe the changes in her life, she spoke of college as 'eye opening', that she 'got wise', had her 'mind blown' and woke from a 'dream'. College was 'wonderful' and 'great' and she gained renewed optimism – 'I can go and do anything I want to do'. She compared her knowledge as an educated woman, with her 16 year old self, suggesting 'I would have gone a completely different way'. She constructed her present self by bridging past and present selves, reflecting on what she thought at that time, and what she felt about it in the interview. This is evoked by italicised sections in the

quotations above. These passages indicate Helen asserting her self to the interviewer; she became a woman in control of her life, with an interesting career and set out as a single woman, and that she now feels empowered to make the best decisions for herself.

Helen exemplifies a woman at one end of a spectrum who changed her life dramatically, with work and education playing an important role. She depicted a scenario of being constrained by a lack of career opportunities, knowledge, and confidence to seek out opportunities. In her early married life, she mirrored her mother's behaviour by working in an office and bearing the lion's share of domestic work. This made Helen unhappy and dissatisfied, and prompted a desire to change. College had wide reaching effects on her life. It enabled her to gain an education and have a career. The wider benefits of education were confidence to seek new opportunities and do what she wanted to do. Looking back over her life, this period was truly transformative, opening her constricted world up to a range of possibilities.

For Helen, education had a transformative effect and provided an opportunity for her to liberate herself from the confines of unsatisfying office work and domesticity. Her life had been transformed by her break from monotonous office work and the return to education; commencing a new career as a graphic designer and the beginning of a new independent life, suggesting the wide reaching effects of education for women's lives.

The Conflicted Self and Social Mobility – Teachers

The previous section illustrated the value of education and occupational mobility to a working-class woman's sense of self, and her negotiation of aspirations to a personally satisfying career with expectations of domesticity. Career and occupation in relation to women's understanding of their class and status is explored. This section focuses on women who entered the teaching profession after having a family. However, women who did not experience upwards mobility or undergo a career change are also discussed as a comparative element. Teaching was a key area of higher education for working-class women. In Chapter Five, it will be explored how teaching was a destination for grammar school girls, who were encouraged into this profession. The women discussed here, however, did not attend higher education straight from school, but as an adult. Composing a small number of interviewees, three women who became teachers are discussed. These women lived in Dundee and started teaching in the 1960s, when government concerns about a shortage of primary teachers resulted in a drive to recruit new teachers, and induce married female teachers to return to work. The women discussed remained married, raised a family, and combined a new found career with domestic roles and motherhood, although this caused some tension and conflict within their self. In Chapter Three it was noted that the admissions criteria for local authority nurseries were expanded to include the children of married women teachers, and this was part of the same labour shortage. The testimonies presented here encapsulate a number of issues affecting post-war working-class women, including education opportunities, social mobility, and internal personal conflict. In the late 1950s, new opportunities became available for women. The expanded teacher-training sector offered one, very significant opportunity. In 1965 alone, 26,000 women and 10,000 men began

teacher-training in Britain, the greater proportion of them in primary teaching, where women, many working-class and without university degrees, could obtain a distinct career shift into a profession.[57]

Clementine (b.1933,Dundee) exemplified themes drawing attention to the effects of education on working-class women's lives, and the problems of combining domesticity with a career. Clementine was disappointed when she was denied the opportunity to train to be a teacher after leaving school. A few years later, around 1951, Clementine made her first unsuccessful attempt to start teacher-training college. While she stated it was not an event she thought about often, her frustration emerged in her tone. She accepted this disappointment and felt unable to challenge this decision; 'I just accepted it. I mean at that age you just think well that's it. I'm not going...And I just thought, well I'm not accepted so I didn't take it any further'.[58] Clementine enjoyed her work prior to starting teacher-training. However, she brushed over aspects of this stating 'I had a couple of wee jobs that [are] not really worth mentioning'.[59] Having left school at 15, she began employment in the office of a Dundee based supermarket, from which she moved into a chemist. She remained there for 13 years, with a break to have children. It is clear this job was significant in her life. The recruitment scheme in the 1960s prompted her to apply again, and, with the necessary qualifications, she was successful. It was the move to teaching that was to be transformative.

Clementine talked fully and freely about her work, particularly teaching. A lengthy excerpt from Clementine demonstrates her changing train of thought as she strove to discuss her negotiation between her career and domesticity. Despite initial concerns about a shortage of teachers, Clementine did not find a teaching post straight away and worked in a community centre, before Dundee City

Council employed additional teachers in deprived areas. Moving to another school, it is at this stage in her narrative of her work that the following extract begins.

> I was there for a year, but my husband didn't keep well by this time, and between one thing and another, I think he felt that my mind was too much on the teaching aspect, and that there were things that, wouldn't say were being, neglected is not the word, but I think he found that when I came home at night there's just a pile of jotters with me to correct and preparing work for the next day et cetera, and I think he felt that, and he wasn't well, he had rheumatoid arthritis, and he was off work a lot. So at the end of the day, I left teaching at that stage. But then I did another course, I did a graduate secretarial course, and that gave me a diploma at the end of it, it's called a diploma for graduate secretaries, and I taught part-time then at the, it was called College Commerce at that time, Constitution Road, teaching typing and audio typing and I was offered some part-time classes doing shorthand, business studies, but because I had my diploma for the secretarial work and I also had my teaching diploma, so I could do that. But I just took the typing, I had part-time there, and two evening classes, and that suited me better. I didn't want to go back into having, from out the frying pan into the fire. And to be honest, the primary teaching, in some ways I think I was conscious to the fact that I worried a lot about it, which was not good for me. Was I doing the right thing, I hope I was doing the right thing, and eh, was I giving children, and it really worried me. And I thought, well, this is what bothered my husband as well. He said, you've lost weight, you're worrying far too much about this, and at the end of the day that was really the reason I gave up. But I enjoyed doing the classes that I had, then, at the college. And I did some of these classes right up until I was 62, when I retired.[60]

Clementine discussed her early teaching jobs. That she remembered these details suggests its continuing importance to her. In the above extract she talked about how this period came to an end, in part because of the clash between her home life, her husband's illness, and her obligations as a teacher. To clarify and highlight further the significance of what Clementine was saying here: she began working as a primary school teacher, but left to teach clerical work at college. She made this change because of the pressure she felt to be more 'domestic'. Her husband's role in this decision to make a career change to something less stressful is notable. The overriding impression is a feeling of guilt and tension as she

balanced her home responsibilities with her desire to pursue a career. Clementine struggled to speak coherently about this, 'chopping and changing' between unfinished phrases, until she recovered coherence, 'at the end of the day, I left teaching'. Her husband felt she was too focussed on her work, and although he was 'generally happy' with her working, he had stronger objections to her teaching. Disregarding her initial use of 'neglect', she nevertheless made clear the pressure to fulfil certain expectations within the home; when she was perceived as not living up to these standards, she sacrificed her career. Clementine was 'worried' about being overly involved in work, and questioned whether she 'was doing the right thing, and was I giving [the] children, and it really worried me'. The thought is incomplete, although she hints at concerns about how her career affected her children. Through Clementine's discussion of her work in this extract, she revealed her conflicted self and the tension she felt between her wish to do right by her family and by her aspirations to be a conscientious teacher. This internal conflict was manifest in her difficulty to articulate some of her thoughts, interrupting her narrative flow. Reflecting on this period of her life Clementine felt guilt as her work 'impinged' on her home life – hinting at whether she was doing the 'right thing' for her family This unease had not been entirely resolved at the time of the interview, given her apparent discomfort at expressing her feelings.

Discussing other aspects of this period of time, Clementine regained control over her narrative and highlighted how she fulfilled her duties as a mother and was confident her children were well looked after while she worked. For example, making clear her youngest son was settled at primary school before she started college.

> I wasn't really leaving them because they were at school, and I had all school holidays and the schools, and, I mean I finished work at the same times as they did. So there wasn't, and as I say my husband, was at home quite a lot because of his shifts and, y' know I was home really, so I wasn't really leaving them.[61]

Prompting this response was a question I had asked about how she felt 'leaving' her children to go to work. Allowing for the researcher's inexperience at the time, the concept of 'leaving children' to go to work is obviously a loaded phrase, and has negative connotations (of the mother who goes to work at expense of the children's care). This helps frame Clementine's almost defensive tone. However, on another level the provocative question instigated her to depict herself as a good mother. It afforded her an opportunity to demonstrate that she continued to meet her children's needs. Clementine's spirited reply illustrates not only her guilt and anxiety from the time, unsurprising given the conflicting discourses which remained in the period of the early seventies, but also present-minded concern about how her past decisions may be viewed by the interviewer and wider audience.

Marlene (b.1935,Dundee) and Harriet (b.1935,Dundee) were women of a similar generation to Clementine who also returned to education to become teachers in their married life. They became friends while at college and remained friends at the time of the interview, although they were interviewed separately. Harriet continued working after she married in 1954, but stopped work when she had her first daughter in 1958. When her eldest child was in school and her youngest started nursery (c.1963), Harriet decided to return to work, taking advantage of the recruitment drive for teachers, to study and go to teacher-training college. She emphasised her role in caring for her children while they were young, and that she did not start studying until they could be cared for elsewhere.

Harriet was able to study because of the temporary care provided by nursery and her mother-in-law. She discussed these arrangements:

> granny was quite capable and quite happy to, I mean she only, I mean I was there, I would see them off to school, she would be there at lunchtime, they didn't go to school dinners, and the school was just up the road, they didn't go to school dinners, and I always rushed home at night so that I was there for, I didn't hang on at the classes, the minute they stopped I was away, I didn't hang around for chit-chat or anything and I was home to see to my husband's meal and all the rest of it.[62]

Harriet justified her use of childcare, showing that she was there for her children in the morning and at night, and it was only at midday that her mother-in-law looked after them. Emphasising her sacrifices such as rushing home at night and not socialising after class, she made clear her children did not miss out by her decision to study. She stressed her role in the care of her children: 'I was home', 'I would see them off', 'I always rushed home at night', and 'I looked after them'. Through her own efforts she ensured her children received motherly care whilst revealing her sense of self as a 'good mother'. She hinted at feelings of guilt and conflict within her self, between her desire to study and find a purpose beyond motherhood, and her expectations to fulfil her role as mother in particular ways, namely being physically at home for the children. Her method of dealing with this conflict at that time was to forgo other aspects of life at college, namely the social side. In the context of the interview, she negotiated the two identities of mother and student, and made clear that her duties as mother were not sacrificed.

This section now turns to focus on issues of status and social advancement through education and employment. In part an issue of social class, this taps into questions about quality of life, identity, and self-perception.

Clementine felt she experienced upwards social mobility as a result of her teaching career. She focussed on occupation as a marker of class status:

> I always associated the working-class with, well my mother worked in the mill. My grandmother didn't work for as long as I remember, but when she did work she worked in the mill. And, my grandfather was a labourer, so therefore I would say we were working-class, there was no professionals or anything like that.[63]

She situated herself and her family within the working-class, and used occupation as a class identifier suggesting 'I was [a] primary teacher, so I think it would be more, sort of, maybe, lower-upper class. 'Cause I'm professional, is that correct?'[64] Clementine was prompted on this issue, as were the majority of interviewees, with class status part of the interview questionnaire. Whereas she had confidently stated she was 'working-class' when she was a child, she was more hesitant to define her status as an adult – 'I think', 'sort of', 'maybe' – and turned the question around to confirm her suggestion. Nonetheless, she felt she lost her working-class status as a result of becoming a teacher, even if she was unsure about what status this profession had conferred on her.

Harriet felt she achieved social mobility as a result of her own and her husband's careers, and proudly mentioned they had cleared two mortgages.[65] Talking about her childhood class, Harriet stated she was 'definitely working-class' because the family was 'dirt poor' and 'we were all the same, we were definitely working-class'.[66] However, she felt she changed class over her life, and had become middle-class 'because of my career, because of my husband's work...because of my financial background, definitely not working-class'.[67]

These Dundee women perceived that their new status as professionals, often in conjunction with their husband's profession and markers of affluence,

such as home ownership, had resulted in social mobility. In this regard, occupation and wealth were, to these women, indicators of class status. This can be explored further through the testimony of women who did not experience this upward occupational mobility. Hannah (b.1936,Dundee) seemed to be aware of changing perceptions of class, as well as an internal, almost psychological sense of class. Stating that she and her husband owned their bungalow and felt ‘better off’, Hannah felt:

> people would say that we’ve moved up. I don’t think I have, I still think I’m working-class. Still go out and make a living, but I don’t think it’s as difficult now...probably our parents worried about they’d no money ‘til the wage came in.[68]

Hannah thus acknowledged that, compared to earlier generations, she was in a better position. However, this did not change her sense of being working-class based on having to work for a living. A similar viewpoint was expressed by Barbara (b.1940,Preston); ‘I think we’re much better off now than we were...we’re working-class because we worked’[69] and by Sandra (b.1946,Preston); ‘I think we had no aspirations...I wouldn’t say we were middle-class by any stretch of the imagination, but probably we worked harder and we’re just a little bit above the bottom rung of working-class’.[70] For these women, perceptions of what it meant to be working-class were fluid and adaptable. They recognised that their economic position had improved on their childhood and the hardships their own parents had faced, but this was not at odds with a working-class identity. Improved living standards were partly a consequence of women’s increased participation in the workplace.

The narratives presented in this section have developed some of the themes of occupational and status mobility which Helen’s testimony launched. The conflicted self between domestic expectations and career aspirations were reflected in other women’s narratives. Education and new interesting careers enabled some women to break free from the limitations of domesticity. For Helen this meant a complete separation from her husband and the life her mother and father had expected for her, whereas the women who became teachers sought to successfully balance their expectations of home-life with a new career. This was not always achieved. In the process, these women overcame their initial career disappointments to become professionals, and in addition to this occupational mobility, experienced social mobility. Exploring class identity among women who did not become professionals indicates that the apparent affluence of the post-war period did not result in social mobility for all, although financial circumstances improved. In the following section, these themes are developed by exploring women’s decision to continue working after marriage, and to return to work after having children.

Deciding to Return to Work

Focussing on married women with children, this section explores how women discussed returning to work. It is well established that in the second half of the twentieth-century a bimodal pattern of formal employment became the norm for working-class women. Working after marriage until the birth of their first child, women returned to work when their children were older. The growing availability of part-time work, particularly housewives' evening shifts, aided this

change. In Chapter Three it was argued that the creation of formal childcare had a limited impact on mothers' return to work. However, what is less clear is women's own views and understanding of their employment. In the analysis in this section, women's agency is put centre stage. The reasons articulated by interviewees provide a vision of women's sense of self at the point of re-entering the workplace, suggesting how they wished their working life to be viewed. Reflecting on the move between these two worlds, the way women presented and explained their return to work suggests how they see their identity. The intersubjectivity and context of the interview had implications for the self constructed in the interview, as women sought to present themselves as good mothers who were physically present for their children, and provided financially for the family. Women drew on a range of reasons to explain their return to work after marriage and having children. These included financial reasons, to pay essential household expenses and to improve living standards and quality of life. Women sought challenges better suited to their abilities, and desired the company of the workplace.

A significant proportion of women I interviewed emphasised financial need in their reasoning for returning to work. Financial reasons referred to poverty and to increased income needed to maintain the higher standard of living enjoyed in the post-war years. Sandra joined the civil service when she was 17, around 1963/64. When she had her first child in 1970, three years after marriage, she left the civil service. She returned to work full-time in the Department of Health and Social Security around 1978 as a clerical assistant, before returning to the civil service. Sandra discussed her reasons for choosing to remain in work after she married; 'I think financial really, and lifestyle. Just to have more money coming

in'. In addition, she cited her reasons for returning to work part-time in a petrol station before her children started school:

> I wanted a holiday. We had no money for holidays. I think we were just about meeting our outgoings. But there was nothing spare, and so it was thought, well actually, I could get a little job. And I think a lot of women do that. It just gives you that extra income. And I think I felt a bit better, it was nice. It was almost my social life, going out a couple of nights a week and at weekend[s]...I think initially it was financial, but I think you enjoy going to work, you enjoy having your own money. Not only making ends meet, but having your own status and your own money, and...having a bit more responsibility for yourself.[71]

Sandra's return to work was initially a monetary decision to afford holidays, and lessen financial pressure. Enjoying the company and 'social life' it provided she found work made her feel 'better', and gave her status and responsibility. Attention should be drawn to Sandra's use of the third person – 'it was thought'. In addition to her repetition of 'I think', this seems to remove her agency and suggests hesitancy over her decision. Sandra developed the wider benefits she gained from work:

> I think when I went back to work when the children were both going to school – it became socially accepted that women went back to work. I think what I probably did was I wasn't adventurous in looking for a promotion and everything. *I saw my role as going to work and being at home for the kids*, and then...So that's, that's why when I got the opportunity to go to London, I thought it was my turn.[72] [My emphasis]

By the mid-1970s when Sandra worked full-time it was acceptable for mothers to work. The italicised phrase points up Sandra's sense of self at that time of her life. Her life was structured around work and caring for her children. Her characterisation of 'her turn' is interesting, suggesting that having fulfilled her role as provider and carer, it was time to do something for herself. Her views were

affirmed as she recounted criticism from a neighbour when she returned full-time to clerical work, at first on a temporary basis:

> I think the only criticism I got was in the early days from a couple of neighbours who said – you shouldn't be going out to work, you should be at home looking after your children. – But closer friends or family, it was accepted that, you know, the majority of married women with children were working. The lady next door said, I thought you were only going for 6 weeks. You know, are you not satisfied? I said, well it's up to us, to make our decision. I don't think I was bothered about it particularly. I was more concerned about what I wanted to do, not what the neighbour wanted me to.[73]

Aware of the conflict between more favourable attitudes to married women's work, alongside criticisms against mothers working, Sandra stressed her decision and her view that this was something she wanted to do, and which was congruent with other women's behaviour. Sandra's return to work was initially depicted as for additional money, but once she began work it was an asset to her life. It is important not to denigrate this financial motive. Despite the huge changes occurring in women's working lives, the monetary need to work and to present work in those terms persevered.

For these women, working for money was perceived as respectable, being essential and not a matter of individualistic choice or 'selfishness'. In the following examples, women's succinct responses are noteworthy. A slight difference is discernible among women who stated they needed to work (to pay bills, rent and mortgages) and women who worked to improve quality of life (such as holidays and household appliances). However, both reflect interviewee's sense of how 'essential' that need was. Women from the former group tended to make short, sharp statements with minimal elaboration, whereas the latter group were more verbose, making attempts to explain further. It may be the former women

felt their reasons for working would be instantly understood, while the latter felt the need to clarify. Considerations of the implications of the interview on the narrative presented are now proposed.

Intersubjectivity has been introduced as a useful theory for analysis of the interviews. It is conceivable women's decision to present work in financial terms was partly due to concerns over how this would be viewed by the interviewer and wider audience of the interview. Lingering debate over good motherhood and the working mother meant respondents may have perceived the interviewer as embodying these ideas. Indeed, the line of questioning adopted may suggest a subconscious internalisation of women's role on the interviewer's part. Asking 'why did you work at that time?' is skewed towards asking women to justify their choices. A desire to construct a self which was not open to criticism at 'leaving children behind' to work, or was selfish in a desire to work, meant that women wished to present themselves in a positive light.

Interviewees' understanding of financial need is now explored. Rose (b.1945,Omagh) strongly identified financial necessity as her reason for working after marriage and childbirth. Rose moved to Preston when she was 3 years old. Married in 1962, she had four children in total, the first born in 1963 and the last in 1980. She returned to work between each child's birth, as a night-time cleaner, allowing her husband (a trained butcher and long distance lorry driver) to care for the children while she worked. Rose stated succinctly that she worked because 'we needed the money to survive'[74] making clear the vital need for her wage. Financial need was also expressed by Dorothy (b.1927,Preston), one of the older respondents in the group. She married and had her only child in 1951. She worked in solicitors' offices as well as her husband's cobblers shop, and returned to work

because 'we couldn't afford it. I'd got to go to work'.[75] Therefore despite the narrative of affluence, for some working-class women financial necessity was very real.

Other women traversed financial need and improved living standards, in their testimony. Hilda's father worked at Leyland Motors and her mother worked in munitions during the war and at Horrockses' cotton mill as a weaver in peacetime. Hilda (b.1930,Preston) emphasised her poverty as a child; 'we were poor...we'd to do without lots of things'[76] and its effects on her adult working life. Leaving school, she became a velvet weaver in Preston until she married in 1955, leaving work because she wanted children, who were born in 1956 and 1958. Around 1969, with her daughters in secondary school, Hilda returned to the factory, although she left to become an auxiliary nurse. Her reasons for returning to work were largely financial, considering the need to meet household expenses, as the monthly payments for the mortgage absorbed the majority of her husband's salary. Secondly she suggested 'I wanted to give my girls things I never got',[77] including nice clothes and holidays. For Hilda, the need to pay essential outgoings as well as to improve the quality of life for her children was her motivation. Similarly Ros (b.1948,Newcastle) described returning to work in financial terms.[78] After leaving school she worked in the Co-operative until she had her first baby in 1968. Having three further children born in 1969, 1971 and 1981 she returned to work between the eldest two, leaving before the second child's birth. She returned to work again in 1983, taking a variety of cleaning jobs and shop work. Ros explained her return to work in monetary terms; 'Well, just to bring a bit of extra money in really, sort of, having a holiday, you know just more or less it was really

the main reason, just to save up so we could have a holiday, you know, once a year or something'.[79]

The similarities in these testimonies are notable. The return to work was articulated in financial terms. Women reported their wages were for extras for the family, which improved quality of life, providing experiences and material possessions – holidays and 'nice clothes' – which were denied to these women as girls. This intimates women's wages played an important role in the affluence of the post-war period, enabling families to have expendable income to improve their standard of living. However, it would be incorrect to consider women's wages as merely supplementary, especially with the negative slant this evokes. Women elected to highlight this aspect to present an acceptable reason for working, not wishing to appear selfish or individualist, but to avoid the appearance of poverty. It may seem obvious that money was an important reason for women's work, but the distinctions in how monetary need was depicted in these women's narratives is revealing. This was not the only return to work narrative utilised.

Boredom with the home and domesticity was a prevailing theme in the testimonies. A number of women interviewed described their tedium at home after having children and before returning to the workplace. Janet (b.1947,Preston) spent a number of years in the Middle East, but her life-course followed a similar pattern to women of her generation. Janet left school and became a clerical worker in an insurance firm. She worked after she married in 1969, albeit moving jobs to British Telecom in 1970, until she had her first child in 1974. Her husband's career resulted in a move to Iran in 1975. With tight constrictions on where she could go and what she could do, she felt apathetic. While Janet's experience was partly due to living in the Middle East, her isolation and lack of freedom was

replicated when the family returned to Preston permanently in 1978/79. Her husband remained in the Middle-East for work, although they later divorced. In the early eighties, Janet returned to work explaining that she felt unfulfilled at home:

> I didn't really need to go back to work, but one of the neighbours worked for a printers in Preston. And they were really, really busy. And she said, do you want to earn some pin money?...I was bored at home. I was bored. I needed to do something. So, I said, yeah, I'll come and help you. And I quite enjoyed it. Rather than being at home on my own waiting for the kids to come home.[80]

Janet's testimony emphasised her sense that she was working for herself, that she felt stale 'waiting for the kids to come home', and indeed that she was helping the printing company she joined. Janet made clear she did not have a financial need to work, but rather the wages she earned were 'pin money'. Nevertheless, it was monotony at home which was her motivation. Some women did not name the humdrum of domesticity specifically, but evoked feeling flat and uninspired at home. The sameness of Hannah's domestic routine meant she appreciated the company and the change afforded by work:

> [I] thoroughly enjoyed [work] as well because that was the first time I had been back out mixing with people, because my life was just my children, housework, shopping, children, and when I went back there, well there was more to life than this. But I was still with my kids. They came in from school and I was there. I took them to school and brought them back.[81]

Hannah sought more in her life than the repetitiveness of domesticity. However, she was quick to assert that although she wanted 'more to life', she remained an active and attentive mother, who was available for her children outside of school. Moira (b.1935,Dundee) expressed a similar view and felt working made her a better mother:

> I just felt I had to get out, I couldn't just be at home with kids all the time, as much as I loved them, I think I was maybe a better mother for it as well, because being out and about, meeting other people, you know, today that's just taken for granted every mother works.[82]

Moira felt her abilities as a mother were enriched by having a break from full-time mothering and from the company work provided.

For other women the combination of financial and personal need shaped the return to work, bolstering women's justification for working. Demonstrating this interconnectedness was Nancy (b.1933,Dundee) who suggested she returned to work to afford a better quality of life for her family, as well as weariness at home:

> I would say boredom in one way, and thinking well if I go back to work we can have better holidays and things like that. (Sighs) Probably not having all that much company, so you know just...(sighs)...there wasn't really much to do for...entertainment or anything.[83]

Nancy explained her return to work due to boredom, a lack of social opportunities, and a wish to take holidays. Nancy's testimony embodies a range of justifications at play in women's decision to return to work. Her full and complete answer made clear she had strong, valid reasons for wanting to work. It was as if being uninterested at home was not enough; she had to introduce additional elements to make her work appear morally acceptable, benefitting the family, and not only herself. Harriet, who had returned to work as a teacher in the seventies, asserted she wanted to work because of mind-numbing domesticity:

> Boredom. I felt I could do more with my life. Being stuck at home all day (laughs). No...my husband encouraged me, he realised I had a brain, why

> was it going to waste (laughs), I'd had my children, if it could be done. I felt I wanted company, I always liked company.[84]

Weariness and lack of company contributed towards Harriet's desire to return to work. Her return to education remedied the lack of intellectual stimulation. Harriet discussed her isolation, loneliness, and yearning for social aspects in the workplace. Her used of language is evocative, with her sense of feeling 'stuck' and 'going to waste'.

In women's narratives of post-marriage employment, a range of reasons intersected to aid women's explanations of their return to work. Women wished to present an acceptable return-to-work self. The intersubjectivity of the interview meant interviewees presented a cohesive self that was acceptable to them and to the perceived audience. Women respondents composed a narrative which fitted the self they wanted to portray. This varied from the hardworking woman who worked to pay the bills and provide for the family, to the woman who worked for holidays and 'nice' clothes for her children, to give the family a level of comfort unrealised before. Holidays appeared to be ascribed with special significance, as a marker of an affluent working-class family. Some reasons were family orientated, with work undertaken for the benefit of the family rather than benefitting the woman as an individual. For other women, the self portrayed was constrained by the domestic role. The sense of feeling stuck and trapped prompted a desire to seek work beyond the four walls.

Responses of Family to Married Women's Paid Work

The decision to return to work was not made in a vacuum. Relationships with others and different attitudes towards mothers' work impacted on the ease of that decision and how women felt about it. Having explored the ways in which women discussed their decision to return to work after they started their family, this section discusses attitudes towards mother's employment.

Attitudes to married women's work, particularly from husbands, lend insight into the barriers against married women and mothers taking work. Women's responses suggest how much stock they placed on the unfavourable attitudes of others, and their sensitivity to societal and family expectations. It is revealing that although work, increasingly so for post-war women, was becoming an individual experience and personally satisfying, women continued to refer to men and the family. The testimonies indicate a range of views towards women's employment from husbands; from disinterest and no voiced opinion, to willingness to leave the decision to their wife, to support and to encourage, and indeed, opposition. The latter attitude is explored first with an example from the far end of the spectrum.

Work provided an opportunity for Violet to establish an independent household away from an abusive relationship, and to prove herself as a good mother. Violet (b.1946,Newcastle) lived with her husband for 2 years, before leaving the marriage and raising her daughter as a single parent. The interview allowed Violet a space to speak about her experiences. She began by exploring her husband's exit from the military and their return to Newcastle from Germany, describing how the control and abuse in the relationship manifested itself. Work was a tool used by her husband to dominate her:

> ...he wouldn’t allow me to get a job, you know, when I was there.
>
> *When you were in Germany?*
>
> My place was in the home as far as he was concerned. He told me on the day that I got married, that I was now his property to do what he wanted with, and I had to obey. And when I was told that, I burst out laughing. But I lived to regret it. And I had all my money taken off us. I had to hand over all my savings and everything to him. And I had nothing.
>
> *Could you tell me more about that? About his...*
>
> He was abusive with me and everything. He, even after I had my daughter and we were back home, because – he’d come out the force and, um, he was messing around with work. So, the electric board offered me and another girl I worked with, we both had babies, said one of us could do 2 days a week and one 3 days. And they approved it as a job share. And he wouldn’t allow me to do it, so, he just wouldn’t allow me at all.
>
> *And...why didn’t he want you to work?*
>
> Because I was his property for to stay at home just to look after him. (laughs)[85]

Her account of her wedding day in 1973 and being told she was his property seemed to be a ‘rehearsed’, composed narrative, perhaps retold several times in her past. This was a turning point in her life as she entered this abusive relationship, where her husband controlled her behaviour. Preventing Violet from working was one means of exerting his control. Though there is a slight inconsistency in her narrative, as she did work part-time in Newcastle, her sense of his control over her is powerful nonetheless.

A change occurred in Violet’s life and testimony as she explored separating from her husband in 1975. Work served a healing function, giving her the freedom to leave this relationship and create a safe household for her and her daughter. She started by taking part-time evening work cleaning offices while her parents cared for her daughter. When her daughter started school, Violet took part-time work during the day in an office and a shop. When her daughter turned 13,

Violet started full-time work. Most important was the meaning of work in her life. Violet gave prominence to her new found independence and the role of work in her life; enabling her to leave her parent's house, rent her own flat, and support her daughter financially. In consequence, work returned her self esteem and independence.

> I was independent, I think because I'd been told I couldn't do this and I couldn't do that, I wanted to prove to people I could support my daughter...So that's why I worked, you know, all that time.[86]

> I think I'm a bit more easy going now. I think after my daughter grew up and I felt as though then, that I had, I had nothing else to prove because I had proved that I could bring her up decently and work and support her, and do everything like that...And I was nobody's dogsbody or anything anymore...I just felt as though I don't owe anybody anything now.[87]

Violet had become liberated, through work, from an abusive relationship. In turn her self became empowered. Her feeling was she became independent and proved she could set out on her own, and was not a 'dogsbody'. Her changed self was reinforced further when reflecting on her life. She felt she became a more relaxed person, having proven herself to be a good, competent mother by providing for her daughter. Violet observed differences between herself as a young woman and younger generations of women, stating:

> they will not stand for anything...it's their outlook, it's completely different to what ours was; but you see that was the way I was brought up. Because it was first with my brothers, they did nothing. You're the girl – Why is it always me? Why have I got to do this? And you're the girl, that's all I ever got, you're the girl.[88]

She contrasted the confidence and self-assurance of younger generations with her own acquiescence and obedience as a youth. Gendered expectations were important here, as Violet was obliged to do housework which her brothers were

not. In turn, she illustrated how she had changed through her life, no longer obeying or being a ‘dogsbody’.

Violet’s interview represents the extreme end of a spectrum, given her experience of an abusive relationship. However, her testimony illustrates the influence of personal relationships on women’s decision making and ability to take paid work. It shows the importance of work and an independent income to women’s ability to leave an abusive, violent relationship. Furthermore it demonstrates the relationship of work to women’s self-esteem and confidence. To explore this further, a range of reported attitudes, with responses from women, are now discussed.

In the main, respondents remained in work until their first pregnancy. Among the women interviewed, Marlene was rare as she left employment when she married in 1956 on the wishes of her husband. He was adamant she should not work and Marlene emphasised it was not her employer who had asked her to leave, despite recognising that ‘a lot of employers did at that time’. She described why her husband did not want her to work:

> I suppose just one of those things in those days, you know now it doesn’t matter, but he wasn’t very keen, and plus he didn’t want me to work because, I don’t know whether he thought it reflected on him that his wife was working, you know...I don’t know, it...(sighs)...I can’t honestly say how it was, he just (sighs)...Like everything else that was just the way it was in those days, you know his mother never worked so why should his wife, sort of things, you know, it was just one of those things.[89]

Marlene implied her husband’s views reflected wider societal objections to married women at work and referred to notions of working-class respectability; of a male breadwinner supporting a non-working wife. Despite her own mother having worked throughout her childhood, Marlene accepted this scenario was ‘just

the way it was in those days'. There was a powerful acceptance expressed here, that while 'now it doesn't matter', back then it was the way things were done.

Later in her married life, around 1962 when her daughter was 5, Marlene started teacher-training college in Dundee. She discussed the sudden change in her husband's attitude:

> I just happened to say, see my husband wouldn't let me work 'cause that wasn't, that wasn't the idea in those days, you didn't go out to work once you were married, so I had just one night said...'I've a good mind to go and be a teacher myself', and he said, 'well why don't you', so I was off...like a shot![90]

Marlene tested the waters with her husband and broached the issue of starting work. Her husband's attitude had become more favourable and Marlene seized this opportunity – 'I was off like a shot!' While accepting not working as 'just the ways things were', she was ready and willing to take up the chance when it was presented. This perhaps implies she had thoughts about returning to work prior to this moment of spontaneity. Marlene explored why she thought her husband's attitude had changed. She framed this in terms of wider societal changes, which brought about modifications to women's lives:

> I think just society changed, and...well when I started working and, as long as...(sighs) my mother was still there you see to look after my daughter, we only have the one daughter and that was, I mean she just meant, she, the sun just shone off her, and he just didn't want 'anybody' looking after his daughter, if anything happened to 'his daughter', but once he saw that everybody was okay, he was quite happy with that
>
> *In what way do you think society changed, you mentioned there, what do you think changed?*
>
> Well (sighs) more women began, began to, more things were coming into, into, what I mean eh, like you were saying about washing machines were coming in, people wanted more goods, as they call white goods, I was fortunate, even though I wasn't working I had all the things that I needed, televisions had come onto the scene, everybody wanted more so more

> women went out to work to get all the...you would say the periphery, eh things, you know the peripheral things that eh they couldn't afford on one salary, you know so that, I mean and there was plenty of work around, work, people were needed, they were needed in teaching. Married women then could work, 'cause you used to have to, to have to leave when you were married, but you could carry on when you were married and that, as I said it was society that changed all sorts of things, you know it became freer, I suppose with the swinging sixties (laughs) – I didn't go back to work because of that, because my husband had a good job and I mean I had all the things that, that I needed, I mean I had a television, washing machine, fridge, 'phone...I had all the things like that, I went back to work 'cause I was bored, I mean I was sick looking at the four walls. I think that maybe encouraged him to let me go out to work, 'cause he was fed up hearing me say 'I've nothing but these four walls...to look at', and all my friends had gone back to work and I didn't have anybody around to go out and spend the afternoon with. My daughter was at school and one thing or another, I really was bored at home.[91]

Through this extract Marlene explained her husband's change in attitude, and her return to work. This illustrates the interconnectedness of multiple factors shaping women's return to work. She outlined wider societal changes in women's lives; growing acceptance of married women in paid work, and the affluent consumer society. However, she felt she returned to work because of dissatisfaction with the tedium of home. She felt her husband was aware of her weariness, prompting his acceptance of her 'new self' and his change in attitude.

A picture has begun to be created of the attitudes of husbands to their wives' employment, proposing examples where husbands prohibited their wives from working or pressured women to leave work, and those where the husbands changed their attitude. The majority of women interviewed reported their husband had no objections to work after having children, with attitudes ranging from disinterest to support. An example comes from Ella (b.1950,Preston) who stated her husband's attitude to her employment was 'none whatsoever'.[92] Rather than implying disinterest, this illustrates no strong feelings against her working. In most cases, women's response to questions about their husband's attitude was he was

'quite happy' or 'fine' with his wife's employment. Some women supplemented these comments by reiterating the financial aspect to their return to work, such as Nancy whose husband 'didn't mind...he was quite happy, 'cause as I say, it gave us money for holidays abroad and things like that'[93] or Harriet's husband who was 'quite happy, I was contributing to the mortgage'[94] or Joyce (b.1931,Dundee) who reported her husband 'was quite happy for me to be working, and to bring some money in as well because we were needing money'.[95] These brief responses were supplemented by more expansive answers. Financial reasons for employment and domestic duties were prominent. Barbara found her husband was supportive and interested in her work, explaining her earnings helped the household budget:

> There was no problems there. It was, you know, what you did. Um, and if I wanted to work, fine. If I didn't want to work, fine. But it was, it was hard. It was more of a struggle financially, just having one wage coming in. He worked on the railway. Um, but you managed. And of course the mortgages that you could take out then, were very restricted to the amount of money your husband was earning. Didn't take the wife's earnings into consideration, which to me was a good thing, because you could afford your mortgage if you stayed at home, if I didn't work. [96]

Barbara's husband was happy either way, with no preference about whether she should take a job or not. The monetary help was welcomed and she felt she had the option to be a stay-at-home mother as it would not affect their mortgage. While the choice to work existed in theory, what seems to be communicated is happiness with women's work because of the money it provided, which alleviated strain on the 'breadwinner' of the family. Women's work was accepted or welcomed when it intersected with financial need and 'helped' with rent and mortgage payments. In other instances work was acceptable as long as it was 'convenient'[97] and fitted around women's domestic duties, especially childcare

considerations. Ruth (b.1932,Newcastle) indicated her work was acceptable to her husband because it could fit around family responsibilities; 'I think he didn't mind, because we could fit it in with – the family and everything'.[98]

A number of women reported their husband's dissatisfaction or objection to their work. The strength of objections ranged from a preference that mothers remain unemployed to an outright objection. In the following examples, despite a negative attitude from their husband, women continued to work, suggesting they did not always hold sway. Ros suggested 'I don't think he liked us working. I think he was still of the old school where a man should support the home and family'.[99] Ros suggested it was an 'old-fashioned' ideal of a male wage supporting a household that informed her husband's attitude towards her employment. Ros continued to work nevertheless. Gwen (b.1946,Glasgow) opposed her husband's negative response to her employment and used the interview to highlight her decision to work despite his opposition:

> He didn't think that I should be working. He thought I should be in, in the house, you know. It was...He didn't like that [work] give me that wee bit independence, you know. – It was just a feeling I got, you know, with...He did say that he didn't like me working, but it was my choice I felt, you know. And I did it, you know, even thought I was going against him, you know. It was just something I had to do, you know. I just felt I wanted to do it.[100]

Gwen's husband made his disapproval known and she reiterated that work was something she wanted to do, and which gave her independence. Ros and Gwen's decision to go against their husband's preferences can perhaps be contrasted with Grace (b.1925,Dundee) who was more inclined to acquiesce to her husband's view:

> I had the offer of a full-time job at Timex in the personnel [department], but at that stage I wasn't prepared to go full-time, and it was a full-time job. I didn't want to, well, my husband wouldn't let me either (laughs). Because he used to have to go away quite often, so a full-time job wouldn't have been... – He didn't mind, I went temporary to the gas board, and again there was a lady leaving that was secretary to the boss there, and I was offered this job, and he said, no. I think you should wait for the other job, and it'll be more. The hours weren't so long and it was a bit nearer to home, and one thing or another, and was more convenient for me running a family and working as well, so that's how I came to go to the Air Training Corp. – You've got to have common sense about these things, you know, in my opinion it's all right a woman having a career, but if you want a family as well you're got to give away a little bit, so I was quite happy to do that. It was, it would have been less responsibility, and there is only so much you can cope with efficiently.[101]

Grace was content for her husband to have a say in whether she worked, and in the specific job she accepted. This came through as advice about fewer hours, and more money, but in other instances it was forbidden because it did not fit in with family. The notion of a convenient job is given credence by Grace who stated she took one job because it allowed her to raise her family simultaneously. Finally she voiced her opinions on women's dual role, and her sense that while women working was 'all right', when a family was started it was women's responsibility to 'give away a little bit'. Not only did Grace agree with her husband's control over her work, but articulated the feeling that her family ultimately took priority. In this way Grace asserted her sense of self as a good mother, stressing that although she was employed, it was her home and family which was her priority.

Negative attitudes towards mothers' work caused discomfort and guilt amongst women respondents. Pauline (b.1952,Preston) was aware of wider pressures in society and comments made by her husband and friends which affected how her work was received. She hinted at feelings of guilt, due to remarks and questions from others:

> When I started doing a bit more, I know my husband sometimes got, 'oh, I'm being left again to make the tea and that'. And when I went into my career, there was a lot of support from the family, but one or two friends whose husbands, who their wives didn't work, hm, hm – How is she going to manage with the children? Yeah, so there was, there was some degree of criticism. It was fine you working, but don't try to go out as well, socially, because you've got everything you're doing with working. The woman's place thing, is in the home. It's all down to it's okay for a man to have a career, but not as acceptable for a woman to have a career. You feel a bit defensive, because you know you've put all these systems in place. And you're doing...it for yourself, but you also know there's no way you would neglect your children. I think little difficulties arose if they had something on at school and you couldn't get there for it. I suppose more defensive you'd feel.[102]

Pauline felt that while she was working, she ought not to have a social life. She was aware of pressures to take responsibility for childcare and stressed she would never have neglected her children, resenting the criticism from friends at the time. It encapsulates the pressures and internal conflicts Pauline felt, between her desire to do the best by her children, but to work and have a career. Pauline used feminist language to point to gender inequality, and at the crux of the matter was ongoing beliefs that women's duty was to the family. She did not necessarily dispute this but asserted her legitimate desire to work, knowing for herself that she had put suitable childcare in place and was a 'good mother'.

This section has presented testimony from women who gave their view of their husband's attitude towards their work. A range of attitudes were expressed, from complete forbiddance, opposition, acceptance, disinterest, and support, as well as change. The testimony suggests that despite the significant changes accruing in married women's working life indicated by statistics, there remained objections in some quarters, beside complex and ambiguous feelings which invoked guilt. Disrupting or even destroying the family, the negative effects of a

working mother composed a robust discourse to be feared by women and men alike.

The significance of this finding focuses attention on the limits of a statistical approach on its own to the expansion of women's working lives after marriage and motherhood. Market force participation data suggests a satisfactory conclusion to women's involvement in the labour market; that (married) women worked in increasing numbers, in the bimodal pattern and the part-time work they yearned for. In contrast, the oral history evidence indicates a more complex account. Working-class women in Newcastle, Glasgow, Dundee, and Preston strove to negotiate their own lot within the family. This meant finding a 'convenient' job in practical terms – working around childcare and unpaid domestic labour – as well as negotiating the influential discourses and views about women's role in the raising of children, emanating not merely from their husbands but also from their own existing sense of self which they were seeking to modernise. This is explored further still in the following section.

'I wanted to look after my own children' – Access to and use of Nurseries and Childcare

With external childcare seemingly available to women, lessening the practical restrictions on mothers' work, the complex attitudes of women to childcare suggest women's absorption of the importance of full-time non-working motherhood in raising children. Chapter Three studied the provision of nurseries and other childcare options for children of working mothers in post-war Britain from a policy perspective suggesting uptake by women was not extensive. Oral

history used here explores women's attitudes towards childcare. Despite its increasing availability, working-class women's responses to these services were varied and complex, tapping into notions of married women's role and 'good' mothering. Women's discussion of childcare enriches understanding of this issue, indicating that attitudes to childcare, as well as childcare itself, posed a barrier to mothers' employment.

With regards to terminology, in Chapter Three the distinction between different types of care, and the welfare/care and education of children was emphasised. In this section these are considered together as 'childcare', as many women did not distinguish between the different forms (nurseries, nursery schools and childminding). This is an interesting feature of the interviews, and this section of necessity follows the lead of respondents.

Discussion about childcare allowed women to present themselves in a particular light. A woman constructed her self as a 'good mother' who was *there* for her family and did not sacrifice her children's wellbeing for her own employment and individualist aspirations. Interviewees appeared to have in mind a perceived 'poor' mother who 'farmed' her children out to others or left them as 'latch key kids'. The issue is not about whether such a mother existed (or exists), but rather about whether the women interviewed contrasted themselves against this 'straw-woman'. Attitudes towards childcare overlapped with surprising continuity among women who did and did not use childcare. Where women did make use of childcare, this was not painted by the respondents as an easy option. Women highlighted the sacrifices and hard work needed to ensure they were at home for key points in the day, such as seeing the children off in the morning and being home for their return, and conversely how jobs had to be convenient for the

family. Women justified their use of childcare with an almost apologetic tone, accompanied by emphasis on the temporariness of care and their presence at important daily events. Women with a negative attitude towards childcare, although not necessarily those who did not use childcare, articulated their view that mothers should be home for their children. They were more confident, passionate, and less reticent about the role mothers played in their children's upbringing. With the exception of women who talked about their own mother making use of wartime nurseries, there was a notable paucity of women who spoke about childcare in positive terms as enabling them to seek work or further study. They made clear their use of childcare did not detract from their selves as good mothers. A woman, whether using childcare or not, constructed a self who was a good mother, opposed to an imagined mother who did not spend quality time with her children, was individualistic, and prioritised work over motherhood.

Women who were positive about childcare highlighted its benefits to children. Marion (b.1928,Paisley) was a political woman, who had been involved in women's organisations and campaigns throughout her adult life. After her third child was born in 1965, she became involved in a campaign for nursery education following the publication of the Plowden Report (1967).[103] Marion commented it 'didn't matter whether your mother worked, see the Tories said, aye that's you working-class women wanting to dump your weans [children]'[104] and made clear her view that nursery education ought to be provided for all children over 3, not only the children of working mothers. Although Marion's children had not benefited from nursery education, she emphasised the positive benefits of nurseries for children, rather than temporarily freeing women to work. She felt this campaign was a success overall, resulting in a purpose built nursery in Paisley.

Marion suggested that nurseries did benefit mothers, describing some of the women who had children in the nursery as 'nice girls...[who] could be helped',[105] which seemed to contrast with the demonising of working-class women she had previously discussed. It implies this view was perhaps held by other people – not unsurprising given that local authority nurseries prioritised 'problem families'. Although she disagreed, it may be considered that Marion partly subscribed to this discourse; the converse being there were some 'girls' who could not be helped. Marion was not alone in foregrounding the benefits to children of external childcare.

Other women held a positive attitude to childcare. Gail (b.1948,Glasgow) described her use of childcare in terms of the benefits to her children. Gail married in 1975 and had children in 1976, 1978, and 1983. With knowledge of her grandchildren's nursery education, she referred to the difference between nurseries when her youngest was born and the present day:

> nurseries were coming in then...the same standards were not applying to nurseries as apply now, they weren't so education[al] I think probably as they are now, where there's a definite core curriculum for 3 to 5 year olds which my own grandchildren are now adhering to.[106]

Gail had used Mother and Toddler Groups, and Playgroups with her own children, forms of childcare where mothers stayed with the child. She talked about the benefits of these groups to her children, and in this way justified her decision to use them:

> I felt for them it was nice. I'd always obviously been at home as a child, I never had to get organised and out to nursery or anything...so for them I felt that was a better option...that sort of relaxed...the ladies who helped out were all homely types...they were all loving and happy with kids, so I

> wasn't interested in necessarily whether the house was kept up or not, but as long as the kids you know had [a] pleasant time in them that was fine by me...we didn't have a nursery school, not for the first two...they went to Playgroup...mixing with other children and that was playing more than the more formal education they get in nursery nowadays.[107]

Through this discussion she made clear her children's enjoyment was her priority. Compared to Marion, she highlighted the fun and play aspect of this care, rather than educational benefits and a formal curriculum. The overriding impression is of the importance of children's enjoyment of childcare, the benefits to them of playing with other children, and being around 'homely' women. Women who talked about using childcare attempted to justify their decision, stressing the benefits to children, the absence of neglect on their own part, and the efforts they made to fulfil their duties as a mother. This was part of a process by which women sought to construct their self as a good mother, stating the positive aspects of childcare for their children, rather than forming an identity beyond domesticity. This was not the only discursive process women used to construct their identity as mother.

Not all women agreed with these benefits of childcare. Indeed, to negotiate the discursive conflicts, some women adopted a negative attitude towards childcare, despite making use of it. Women interviewed for oral history projects in both Lancashire by Roberts and in London by Spencer were aware of and absorbed Bowlby and Winnicott's ideas in a simplified form and without being able to name these theorists.[108] By articulating negative views about childcare women aligned themselves, to a degree, with these ideas. Situating themselves against childcare and stressing the role of mothers in the care of children, women constructed their sense of self as a good mother who did not put her child at risk of psychological trauma. However, not all women who found issues with childcare,

or its extensive use, avoided these services. To bridge this apparent contradiction some women used childcare and stressed the temporary nature of that care and the active role they played in raising their children. In addition, critiquing women who 'farmed' their children out for most of the day was another means by which these women contrasted and made their experience distinct and acceptable.

Negative attitudes towards childcare were found both among women who used childcare and those who did not. Gloria (b.1949,Glasgow) and Hannah spoke about childcare in negative terms, emphasising the important role mothers played in their children's upbringing. Gloria briefly made use of childcare whereas Hannah did not. It would be easy to assume Gloria did not use childcare, given her attitude and the small space given over to it in her testimony:

> I think you've got to make the choice to bring up your children. And this is personal, and I know it's changed...I think you make a decision, I'm not going to work, I'm going to have children. And I think, now this is personal, that they should be there until the children are 5 before they consider going out to work. I think you miss so much. And they certainly went into nursery, uh, not, not full-time. Uh, Caroline's nursery placement was in the mornings and Thomas' was in the afternoon. And that was preparing them for school. Um, they certainly went to toddlers' groups, so they were mixing with other children. But I just personally I think they should be there for the babies...I personally think the mummies need to be there.[109]

Gloria contrasted the mother who is available and at home for her children with the mother who returns to work, and focuses on materiality and individuality. Stating 'you've got to make the choice to bring up your children', she emphasised the role of mother in raising children while indicating 'I know it's changed'. Gloria also seemed to have imbibed a simplified version of maternal deprivation discourses, suggesting when children reached 5, mothers could then consider returning to work. Gloria nevertheless made use of childcare. She overcame

potential contradiction by indicating that her children attended nursery part-time in preparation for school, and that nursery enabled them to mix with other children. In a similar way Hannah emphasised her personal role in raising her children although she did not use childcare. She felt it was a mother's responsibility to look after children full-time and verged on a judgemental tone against women who did use childcare. However, her kindly personality was reflected in her comments. Despite her views, she felt 'if you are not getting the support from your partner, you cannot criticise, 'cause you don't know the story'. Nonetheless, Hannah insisted that her children did not use childcare:

> [They] were never in a nursery or a playgroup. I would sit on the floor with them and make things and read with them, and crafts and things. They were never in a nursery...I was maybe a possessive mother – my belief was always that mums should stay at home with their children, and I felt that for years, and I said you could work round it. You don't have tae put your children away to childminders for material things. I think they want too much. I know everything is very expensive now, and there is a lot of things, and there is women who their husbands don't hand up the wage, because one of my daughters friends was like.... she had to go out to work, and she knew how I felt about it, because I used to see her daughter and think, what a sad wee girl she was, going home and letting herself in and I thought, I would try and work round that. But then if you are not getting the support from your partner, you cannot criticise, 'cause you don't know the story.[110]

Hannah emphasised the hands-on role she took in raising her children and the fact they were never in a nursery, contrasted with mothers who, Hannah felt, left their children in nursery to work and buy material possessions. She tempered this by suggesting the cost of living and raising a family had increased. Additionally, the financial relationship of an unequal marriage may result in monetary difficulties for women. Nevertheless, she suggested 'you could work around it'. On reflection, Gloria and Hannah's caution could be a product of the interview. They did not

know my view on nurseries, and no doubt politeness and not wanting to offend played a role in their narratives. Despite their views on the importance of mothers presence in raising children, Hannah appreciated that circumstances may make childcare a necessity, while Gloria emphasised her views were her personal opinion; 'I think' and 'personally'.

In these ways, women using childcare experienced internal conflict. On the one hand, they saw the benefits of work materially to their families and developmentally to their own contentment and composure as a married woman. On the other hand, they seemed to subscribe to a powerful discourse about the use of childcare as a reflection of bad motherhood. Women were at odds to justify their use of childcare and the efforts taken to ensure their children had the consistent physical presence of their mother. Questions may be raised about the origins and pervasiveness of this discourse. Fears about the effects of working and absent mothers on the physical and emotional wellbeing of children had existed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. However, theories of maternal deprivation became more widespread in the period after the Second World War, as described in Chapter Three. That some respondents talked about the necessity not to leave children before the age of 5 suggests the pervasiveness of these discourses. Elements of these discourses of good motherhood being full-time are contemporary, with debates over what it means to be a good mother still current. Discussion over women trying to 'have it all' – a career and be a mother – and criticism of women 'farming' their children out contributes to a sense that such views still hold some sway in the contemporary period. It may be the women interviewed were mindful of these issues, and perhaps were concerned that the interviewer (or the wider audience of the interview) held these views of

motherhood, and thus wanted to present an acceptable self. This is in part a question of intersubjectivity. Respondents may have read an unconscious acceptance of these views in the interviewer. I have reflected on how the questions asked in the interview may have been unintentionally biased in their assumptions about women's role. For instance, asking why women wanted to return to work or why they did or did not use childcare. Such questions could be interpreted as requiring women to justify and explain their actions. Childcare is undoubtedly a complex issue. The testimony presented has indicated that despite the changes in childcare provision in the post-war period, discourses of acceptable motherhood being full-time pervaded, in the attitudes of other people to women's work and internalised in women's own feelings of guilt about working.

Conclusions

Chapter Four has explored working-class women's testimonies as they talked about their experiences of employment after marriage, considering women's construction of their sense of self in relation to the two roles of worker and mother. Intersubjectivity has been reflected on as a mechanism by which a particular conflicted self was presented by respondents in the interview. The use of a particular line of questioning, the interviewee's perception of current attitudes and of the perception of an interviewer's (critical) view, impacted on the responses given and the self presented.

In the midst of this period of change to married women's approach to paid work outside the home, they continued to construct their sense of self as founded upon being a good mother. In the interview, women sought to find a balance

between their two roles. The particular circumstances of the interview meant the balance was weighted in favour of motherhood, as women sought to stress that they were good mothers and not neglectful. In this regard, Smith Wilson's argument, that women redefined what good motherhood meant for themselves, is potent. For, within this conceptualisation of their self, the importance of employment to these women's lives is richly apparent. Women were expressing increasing boredom with domesticity. The benefits which they articulated about their work – of doing something for their self, of being a competent, valuable individual, the company provided by the workplace, and the improved quality of life – emphasised that work held an important purpose to many women beyond financial return.

Women's return-to-work self has been explored through various themes found in women's testimonies. There were multifarious reasons women gave for returning to work, from financial, including aspirations to provide a good standard of living for the family, to a personal desire to find a satisfying job and enrich their life and wellbeing. The attitudes which women felt were held by their husbands, highlighted some of the opposition to mothers' employment. That some women went against their husband indicates the slow and inconsistent nature of attitudinal change. But, it also suggests the developing strength of purpose as women's agency propelled them, one by one, to do what they wanted to do. The issue of childcare illustrated a number of factors. The overarching impression is of respondents' negativity towards external childcare. Positive attitudes stressed the benefits to children, rather than enabling mothers to work. Through discussion of childcare women were able to further emphasise their sense of self as a good mother. This meant negotiating conflict between discourses of full-time, non-

working motherhood, with women's own knowledge that their children were well looked after. In the process, women defined for themselves what good motherhood was; and employment was congruent with their conceptualisation.

Domesticity was an important feature of women's lives. With the return to employment, women continued to identify with a motherhood role and combined this with their resumed identity as a worker in former forms of employment, or a new identity as a career woman and professional. Women expressed an important feeling that after their children had grown-up and they had been a 'good mother' by staying at home, unless financially necessary, it was now their turn to do something for themselves. However, they continued to make sacrifices and put procedures in place to ensure they fulfilled their motherhood 'duties' while they returned to work. Nevertheless, the attitudes of husbands, friends, and family, as well as lingering discourses over full-time motherhood, contributed to internal conflict, guilt, and distress about doing the 'right thing'. Women negotiated an emerging expectation on them to return to work during marriage, set against existing notions of full-time motherhood. The discourse of full-time, non-working motherhood persists to the present day. However, it is a contested discourse which has lost its previous dominance. Women's life-choices and the discourses on which they can draw have become multiple and variable. A two-income household was on its embattled way to becoming the norm by the 1970s, even if this process was not completed. What emerges is individual working-class women's 'heroic'[111] determination to escape the ennui and monotony of home and family, and live an interesting, satisfying life after marriage.

Notes

[1] L. Abrams, 'Liberating the Female Self: Epiphanies, Conflict and Coherence in the Life Stories of Post-War British Women', *Social History*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2014), p. 14.
[2] L. Stanley, *The Auto-biographical I: The Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto/biography* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1992), p. 62.
[3] L. Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Routledge, London, 2010), p. 35.
[4] P. Summerfield, 'Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews', *Cultural and Social History*, 1 (2004), p. 66.
[5] Ibid, p. 67.
[6] Such as Hobsbawn (1997), ibid, p. 65.
[7] Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p. 175.
[8] Summerfield, 'Culture and Composure', p. 69.
[9] Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p. 58.
[10] M. Stuart, 'And How Was It For You Mary? Self, Identity and Meaning for Oral Historians', *Oral History*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Autumn, 1993), p. 81.
[11] Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p. 9.
[12] K. Borland, ''That's Not What I Said': Interpretative Conflict in Oral Narrative Research' in S. Berger Gluck and D. Patai (eds.), *Women's Words, The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (Routledge, London, 1991), pp. 64 – 65.
[13] Borland, 'That's Not What I Said', p. 64.
[14] Y. McKenna, 'Sisterhood? Exploring Power Relations in the Collection of Oral History', *Oral History*, Vol. 31, No. 1 The Interview Process (Spring, 2003), p. 68.
[15] Ibid, p. 68.
[16] Stanley, *The Auto-biographical I*, p. 9.
[17] Ibid, p. 11.
[18] Linde cited in Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p. 39.
[19] Stanley, *The Auto-biographical I*, p. 61.
[20] J. Lewis, 'Introduction: Reconstructing Women's Experience of Home and Family' in J. Lewis (ed.), *Labour and Love: Women's Experience of Home and Family, 1850 – 1940* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986), p. 4.
[21] J. Lewis, *Women in England, 1870 – 1950* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, London, 1984), p. 173.
[22] S. Bruley, *Women in Britain since 1900* (Macmillan Press, Basingstoke, 1999), p. 122.
[23] L. Davidoff and B. Westover, ''From Queen Victoria to the Jazz Age': Women's World in England, 1880 – 1939' in L. Davidoff and B. Westover, *Our Work, Our Lives, Our Words: Women's History and Women's Work* (Macmillan, Hampshire, 1986), p. 3.
[24] Ibid, p. 13.
[25] S. Majima and M. Savage, 'Contesting Affluence: An Introduction', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (2008), pp. 445 – 455, and S. Todd, 'Affluence, Class and Crown Street: Reinvestigating the Post-War Working-Class', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (2008), pp. 501 – 518.
[26] L. A. Tilly and J. W. Scott, *Women, Work, and Family* (Routledge, London, 1987), p. 224.
[27] Davidoff and Westover, 'From Queen Victoria to the Jazz Age', p. 33.
[28] Ibid, p. 33.
[29] E. Roberts, *Women's Work 1840 – 1940* (Macmillan, Hampshire, 1988), p. 73.
[30] Ibid, p. 15.
[31] E. Roberts, *Women and Families: An Oral History 1940 – 1970* (Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1995), p. 125.

[32] A. McIvor, *Working Lives: Work in Britain since 1945* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2013), p. 46.
[33] Ibid, p. 94.
[34] E. Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland, 1850 – 1914* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991), p. 4.
[35] Ibid, p. 289.
[36] M. Williamson, ''I'm going to get a job at the factory': Attitudes to Women's Employment in a Mining Community, 1945 – 1965', *Women's History Review*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2003), p. 411.
[37] Ibid, p. 413 and p. 417.
[38] Ibid, p. 414.
[39] Roberts, *Women and Families*, p. 126.
[40] D. Smith Wilson, 'A New Look at the Affluent Worker: The Good Working Mother in Post-War Britain', *Twentieth-Century British History*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (2005), p. 206.
[41] S. Todd, *The People, The Rise and Fall of the Working-Class, 1910 – 2010* (John Murray, London, 2014), p. 197.
[42] Ibid, pp. 209 – 211.
[43] Smith Wilson, 'A New Look', p. 207.
[44] Ibid, p. 207.
[45] Helen came to live in Newcastle in 1975.
[46] These non-verbal cues were noted in the research notebook.
[47] Interview with Helen, LS100394, p. 7.
[48] Ibid, p. 8 and p. 9.
[49] Ibid, p. 23.
[50] Ibid, p. 9.
[51] Ibid, p. 8.
[52] Abrams, 'Liberating the Female Self', p. 21.
[53] Helen highlighted the control her father exerted over her mother, such as wiping a white handkerchief around the skirting boards to check for dust. Helen described her father, a fisherman, as a man who got drunk when he was home from sea; he would vomit, expecting his wife to clear up the mess and, later in the marriage, he was violent towards her.
[54] Interview with Helen, LS100394, p. 10 and p. 15.
[55] Ibid, p. 10.
[56] Ibid, pp. 15 – 17.
[57] Dyhouse cited in Abrams, 'Liberating the Female Self', p. 17.
[58] Interview with Clementine, LS100372, p. 11.
[59] Ibid, p. 8.
[60] Ibid, pp. 11 – 12.
[61] Ibid, p. 14.
[62] Interview with Harriet, LS100369, p. 16.
[63] Interview with Clementine, LS100372, p. 2.
[64] Ibid, p. 2.
[65] Interview with Harriet, LS100369, p. 15.
[66] Ibid, p. 3.
[67] Ibid, p. 3.
[68] Interview with Hannah, LS100360, p. 4.
[69] Interview with Barbara, LS100404, p. 2.
[70] Interview with Sandra, LS100406, pp. 3 – 4.
[71] Ibid, p. 13 and p. 14.
[72] Ibid, p. 12.
[73] Ibid, p. 14 and p. 15.
[74] Interview with Rose, LS100408, p. 13.
[75] Interview with Dorothy, LS100403, p. 20.

[76] Interview with Hilda, LS100383, p. 3.
[77] Ibid, p. 17.
[78] See Chapter Five for more information about Ros's early life.
[79] Interview with Ros, LS100397, p. 7.
[80] Interview with Janet, LS100410, p. 13.
[81] Interview with Hannah, LS100360, p. 20.
[82] Interview with Moira, LS100361, p. 10.
[83] Interview with Nancy, LS100363/364, p. 21 and p. 22.
[84] Interview with Harriet, LS100369, p. 16 and p. 25.
[85] Interview with Violet, LS100399, p. 13 and p. 14.
[86] Ibid, p. 16.
[87] Ibid, p. 22.
[88] Ibid, p. 22.
[89] Interview with Marlene, LS100368, p. 11.
[90] Ibid, p. 10.
[91] Ibid, p. 13 and p. 14.
[92] Interview with Ella, LS100411, p. 18.
[93] Interview with Nancy, LS100363/364, p. 20.
[94] Interview with Harriet, LS100369, p. 14.
[95] Interview with Joyce, LS100365/366, p. 46.
[96] Interview with Barbara, LS100404, p. 12.
[97] The use of 'convenient' here draws on Sharpe's discussion of a 'convenient job': ''good' jobs are rarely those that offer any interest or reasonable wages, but those that fit in best with domestic arrangements.' S. Sharpe, *Double Identity: The Lives of Working Mothers* (Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1984), pp. 48 – 69.
[98] Interview with Ruth, LS100395, p. 17.
[99] Interview with Ros, LS100397, p. 7.
[100] Interview with Gwen, LS100416, p. 6 and p. 7.
[101] Interview with Grace, LS100371, p. 21.
[102] Interview with Pauline, LS100407, p. 14.
[103] Central Advisory Council for Education (England), *Children and their Primary Schools* (HMSO, London, 1967). This was presaged by a *Scottish Primary Memorandum* (HMSO, Edinburgh, 1965) on very much the same theme. D. Carr, P. Allison, G. Meldrum, *In Search of Excellence: Towards a More Coherent Scottish Common School Curriculum for the Twenty-First-Century*, p. 14. Accessed online 9/7/14 http://www.scotedreview.org.uk/pdf/211.pdf
[104] Interview with Marion, LS100373/374, p. 4.
[105] Ibid, p. 4.
[106] Interview with Gail, LS100375/376, p. 29 and p. 30.
[107] Ibid, p. 26 and p. 29.
[108] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, p. 123; Smith Wilson, 'A New Look at the Affluent Worker', p. 214.
[109] Interview with Gloria, LS100413, p. 14.
[110] Interview with Hannah, LS100360, p. 23 and p. 24.
[111] 'Heroic' here draws on and adapts Summerfield's understanding of women's 'heroic' and 'stoic' narratives of the Second World War. P. Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1998), pp. 77 – 99.

Chapter Five

Becoming a Worker

In Chapter Four, women's dual identities as mothers and as workers were explored, and women's negotiation of their sense of self as 'good mothers' was demonstrated. Women sought to balance their aspirations to interesting and enjoyable work with their expectations, based in large part on the assumptions of society at large, of domesticity, redefining for themselves what it meant to be a 'good mother'. Chapter Five shifts the focus to women's discussion of their paid work. The period between leaving school and marriage, and women's thoughts on work throughout their life-course are considered to provide a whole-life context.

This chapter is concerned with how working-class women constructed their sense of self as worker and ascribed meaning to their employment. A thematic approach illustrates features of work which were important to respondents. Not unexpectedly, women generally viewed their work as an important and enjoyable element in their life, which brought a source of pride in their skills and abilities as workers, as well as enabling friendship and companionship with other women. Chapter Five has two parts to illuminate working-class women's paid employment. In the first section women discuss their entry into the workplace from leaving school. Issues such as parental and school guidance are explored, suggesting the extent, quality, and usefulness of guidance offered. It will be shown that some women felt pressured into work by parents, especially in cases of financial need, while others felt they had support from parents to stay at school and 'do well'. Common experiences included women's

memories and awareness of the limited options available to them as girls. Though jobs appeared plentiful and 'you could leave one job on the Friday and have a new one on Monday', these options were within a small pool of career paths. Frustration emerged in the interview with subsequent knowledge gained as an adult about the education and career opportunities that became available, but about which women received no information, support or encouragement. Central here is the role of the interviewer and intersubjectivity; the interviewer, likely perceived by respondents to be an embodiment of women's changed experiences and opportunities in the workplace, arising in large measure through enhanced educational opportunities, could be challenged by respondents to appreciate how different their opportunities had been some decades ago. This generated a lingering 'what if?' in interviews as respondents reflected on what might have been, had the social mores been different in their younger years. This conflicting of the female self of those born in the midst of worker change is examined in-depth, led by a lengthy example of one woman who realised during her interview that she had missed out on opportunities as a young woman, and then reflected on the real effects this had for her life.

Analysis is taken further in the second section which explores women's narratives of their lived work experience. Women's pride in their skills and abilities at work are considered alongside their enjoyment of work and aspects thereof. Despite often monotonous, low-paid jobs characterised by employers and trade unions as unskilled, women expressed, in modest language, pride in their skills as a worker. Ability to work fast and earn a high wage on piece-rates, craftsmanship and production of high quality goods, accurate and efficient office work, being known as a good shop assistant – these were a selection of the skills

held in esteem. Linked to women's pride in their skills was their enjoyment of work; varying from the pleasure of working life in general to specific jobs or aspects of a job. Workplace friendships and social aspects of work were important elements of women's gratification with their work.

An analytical theme running through this chapter is that working-class women have struggled to find a narrative which adequately explains their working experiences during these post-war decades of transition in married women's work. Working-class women have to create their own means to construct and communicate their sense of self in oral history interviews. This is evidenced by a number of features of the interviews. Women generally stated their enjoyment and satisfaction with their work. Yet work did not necessarily elicit impassioned or lengthy responses. Issues such as pride in skills, tasks or comparisons between liked and disliked jobs, amusing anecdotes about work, and discussions which linked the relationship between women's work and personal lives did, however, elicit greater enthusiasm. In seeking to reconcile the brevity of some women's responses, the eagerness to talk about certain aspects of work, with women's general enjoyment of work, it is tentatively suggested this has been due to ongoing contemporary, as well as historical, interest in 'the problem' of the 'working mother'. It would seem that this is a specific issue to do with women's view of married work. This finding appears to contrast heavily with Stephenson and Brown's research, discussed elsewhere in this thesis, who found that women born in the early twentieth-century thoroughly enjoyed their work prior to marriage and could recall it in great detail and with huge pride and enthusiasm.[1] Women's enjoyment of their work, both before and after marriage, is not disputed. What does appear to be in evidence is that the conflict which women experienced during

marriage has seeped into their memory of their whole working life. In addition, it must also be considered the specific applicability of this conflict to generations of women undergoing conflict, who worked and married in the different context of the post-war period. To develop these issues, this chapter begins by exploring the historiography of women's working lives.

Historiography

The association of women's employment with marriage and motherhood has meant women's work throughout the life-course has been framed within expectations of domesticity. Within the historiography, there appears to be consensus that young working-class women fully expected to marry and start a family, to withdraw from the labour force, unless financial necessity forced their return. This was explored in Chapter Four. Historians have interpreted women's work within this discursive context. The study of married women, mothers, and their employment continues to be a vital area for research and indeed, the previous chapter suggested there is still much work to be undertaken in this vein. However, the focus on married women and mothers at work has framed understanding of women's employment and resulted in a relative neglect of single and childless women's work, in addition to different stages of women's life-course.

Research has highlighted the continued financial motivation of women's work. McIvor indicated the importance of money to women, suggesting that 'financial freedom' rather than 'financial necessity' was a greater motivator for women.[2] This supported Lewis's assertion of the value of financial freedom and independence to women's sense of self:

> While a large number of the jobs performed by women have been and are routine and boring, companionship at work and a feeling of self-worth derived from a measure of financial independence have repeatedly been shown to be important components in women's views of employment.[3]

It may be a truism to state that the financial return of paid employment is important. However, what is discussed here is the wider meaning of that money to women, providing some financial freedom. Financial necessity (both in terms of poverty and changed definitions of need) remained important.

In the post-war period, marriage, motherhood, and domesticity remained an aspiration and expectation for working-class women. However, the significance of this to women's employment has been debated by historians. Roberts argued that 'in general working-class women did *not* regard full-time paid work as something they would undertake for the whole of their adult lives'[4] and that this expectation continued into the post-war period:

> Girls' ambitions did not centre on work, but on marriage and children. Work may have been enjoyable, but it was not seen as a lifetime commitment. Fifteen-year-old girls envisaged a job with or without training, then marriage with a continuation of paid work until the birth of the first child.[5]

In the post-war period girls' expectation to marry, have children and leave full-time employment remained powerful. While suggesting women greatly enjoyed their work, Bruley situated this within the context of domesticity and motherhood; 'of crucial importance though was the general expectation at the time that the lives of all women would centre on motherhood and that this was their central responsibility in life'.[6] As Todd has argued, although the aspiration to retire from

full-time employment on marriage prevailed into the 1950s 'close scrutiny of...workplace behaviour offers little support for contemporaries' conviction that this shaped a detached indifference towards their work'.[7] Considering youth as a distinct stage in the working-class life-course, Todd argued the significance of paid work to young women's lives indicates femininity was not entirely centred on domesticity.[8] Although the aspiration to domesticity was strong, this did not prohibit women from actively engaging in and enjoying their jobs.

Before marriage and starting a family, women could be invested in, enjoy, and be interested in their work. The contemporary notion of girls 'drifting' into work, being attracted by the firm offering highest wages is challenged. Questions may be raised about how and why young women entered or chose a specific career path. For Roberts, the role of parents in children's choice of work was important. She considered parents could be split into two groups; parents who expected children to leave school and find a job to contribute to the family income, and 'a growing minority' who encouraged their children to remain in the education process as long as possible. In both cases work or education remained gendered. Roberts also found that children obeyed their parents, and rarely defied their wishes, with the result that 'retrospective resentments about those decisions were not, however, unusual'.[9] Willis proposed however, that to most working-class young people (boys and girls), education meant little, meaning they left school as soon as possible, partly because of economic pressure to contribute to the family income.[10] Focussing on girls in particular, Todd argued that social background, particularly father's occupation and income, shaped the jobs available to young women.[11] Todd also argued that mothers played a practical role in finding a first job for their daughter, and that indirectly 'daughter's aspirations were shaped by

maternal hopes, but also by a critical evaluation of their mothers' lives and by a wish to escape from the poverty and domestic burden their mothers had experienced'.[12] Girls were practically assisted to make their first moves into the world of work by their family, particularly their mother, and the types of work open to them were shaped by the economic position of the family. Girls aspired to improve their own life's circumstances compared to their own view of their mother's life.

Following the 1944 Education Act, a tripartite education system was introduced, where students were allocated to a grammar, comprehensive, or technical school on the basis of their eleven-plus results. Kynaston was negative about working-class attitudes to education, describing a 'fatalistic' approach to education; 'taking what was on offer, and in many cases not even contemplating the possibility of anything better'.[13] Yet, he drew attention to many examples of working-class parents and children who aspired to attend the grammar school and were crestfallen to 'fail' the scholarship exam. Entering the grammar school was not without its problems, as working-class children could find themselves isolated at school from their middle-class classmates, and at home from their friends and neighbours.[14] In addition to class, there was a gendered dimension to education. Kynaston noted that education was 'dimly perceived in the case of daughters', although for girls and boys, there remained an expectation to leave and get a job at the earliest opportunity.[15] For Todd, the 1944 Education Act had helped to ensure continued education for girls, even if the ideas which shaped attitudes to female education lingered.[16] Grammar school education furnished the economy with the types of workers needed. Todd demonstrated that boys were more likely to leave school at 15 years old than girls during the 1950s. The clerical and technical jobs

which were increasingly available to women needed qualifications which were taken at 16 years of age.[17] For Todd, the opportunities and jobs which emerged were a result of the changing economy, not a changed education system.[18]

Historians have challenged the view that women had little interest in their work, or derived no enjoyment from the experience. There lies a complex relationship between structural 'oppression' and expressions of agency by working-class women. As McIvor argued:

> there was a conflict between the material reality of structural and deep-rooted subordination of women at work within an intensely patriarchal capitalist economy and society, and the ways that women actually perceived and narrated their work experience.[19]

Within the context of women's position in society, in low-paid and low-status work, women have discussed employment as a positive experience. Hakim characterised this as a paradox, that women have been concentrated in the lowest paid, least skilled jobs, but enjoy their work. She explained this as a consequence of women's apparent home-centred life goals.[20] Gordon and Breitenbach agreed in part by remaining realistic about the working conditions of the majority of working-class jobs; 'the hours were long, the pay low and the work usually arduous. And yet men's work, which was not so very different, is often written about positively, stressing its enriching aspects and its importance to self-esteem'.[21] However, in contrast to Hakim, Gordon and Breitenbach illustrated convincingly that women could draw an important identity from work, unity through workplace relationships and activism, and that paid work meant more to women than a supplement to the home. This contrast to Hakim's essentialist view of women's work orientations is key. The focus on domesticity both in the past

and in the historiography has affected how historians have interpreted women's work; in sum, because women expected to marry and retire from the workforce, their employment was not important to them. A number of researchers used single occupational or regional studies to illustrate women's relationship to their work. Sanderson found female civil servants reflected on their work with satisfaction and pride.[22] Roberts found that female interviewees who worked in offices 'gained satisfaction from the skills they had and some were proud of having work which was generally regarded as being 'superior' to either shop or factory work'.[23] Black's clerical workers employed in the fifties and sixties 'remembered what 'great fun' they had in the early days, 'more like an extension of school than work'.[24] Bruley asserted that women in light engineering in London acquired a level of skill which was never acknowledged, and a 'camaraderie which overrode the monotonous routines of their daily work'.[25] Bruley concluded that 'despite the monotony, poor pay, low status and few prospects, many of the women interviewed were emphatic about how happy they had been at work'.[26] MacDougall's study of female textile workers in Peebles suggested that women workers had a 'rich and varied work experience' with female factory workers narratives' depicting positive stories, filled with detail of labour processes and friendships found in the factory.[27] Considering workers more broadly, McIvor suggested many manual workers gained satisfaction from 'enduring and resisting tough and demanding work regimes' while stressing the importance of relationships in individuals' work satisfaction.[28] Workers defined themselves on their 'skill, productivity, earning power, craftsmanship, strength, endurance, adaptability, graft, professionalism, service to the family, the community and society'.[29] Roberts noted the difficulty in generalising about girls' experiences of

work, that there were 'no jobs which were either liked or disliked by all those who tried them'.[30] She identified a range of factors which caused unhappiness including low wages, poor relationships with supervisors and other employees. By contrast social contacts with other women, and pride in the skills acquired or in the advancement achieved, contributed towards enjoyment.[31] However, an enjoyable experience of work was not shared by all working-class women. Todd found that pride in work was more common among women who held varied, interesting, and skilled jobs, with potential for promotion. Young women employed in less interesting work did not express the same gusto.[32] The localised studies of women in particular occupations remain important in combating the view that women workers had little interest in, or enjoyment of their work. However, it is important to recognise that this does not denote that all jobs were enjoyed by all working-class women.

The oral history methodology has contributed to the argument that women found work satisfying. This leaves open the question of why women enjoyed this work; what specifically was agreeable about it. This is, of course subjective. Considering the oral history method McIvor argued that:

> [e]xperiencing relative isolation and perhaps social exclusion in older age, for example, may lead respondents to emphasise nostalgically the positive socialising and camaraderie aspects of work.[33]

Thus the content of the interview is not static or fixed, but is affected by a range of contextual factors – in this case, the respondents' experience of old age and retirement. Bruley however, asserted women's statements about their enjoyment of work 'cannot be merely attributed to the fact that in old age (and often with failing health) these women were bound to be positive about their younger days'.[34]

The oral history interview is an interpersonal experience. The intersubjective relationship of interviewer/interviewee, context of the interview, and the current life-stage of the women interviewed, influences the responses proffered. The women interviewed were aware their lives and work were the focus of the interview. Some were hesitant about how far they could help, seeking reassurance – 'is that any use to you?' – or indeed stated they did not have an interesting life. However, with reassurance, the fact of my interviewing and taking interest in their life arguably helped to endorse their life narrative. They were of course more likely to speak about work given this was the direction of the questions. It is important to acknowledge their discussion of work was forthcoming and positive because respondents knew this was my interest. Stephenson and Brown reiterated the significance of work to working-class women's lives. They found in their study of women who worked in the first half of the twentieth-century in the Stirling area that 'the clearest indication of the role of work in respondents lives comes from the lengthy answers given to interviewers' questions on their employment in contrast to the short answers regarding their marital status'.[35] The oral history method is hence vital in understanding women's subjective experiences of work. In their study of 80 interviews, working-class women spoke at length and in great detail about short periods of paid employment in their lives, illustrating the significance of this experience to women's life stories. However, there is not necessarily a direct correlation between wordy interview answers and the extent of satisfaction. Some women used succinct answers and understated language to depict pride in and enjoyment of work.

This conflicted and varied response of women to their employment leads to the argument made here that there is an absence of a suitable agreed public

narrative for working-class women to make use of in their own recollections of work before, and indeed, independent of their role as wife and mother. There is difficulty for women to talk about the everyday experience of work in the same manner that is virtually universally evident for men. By telling anecdotes and seizing the opportunity to talk about individual events, women were, to some extent, able to overcome this difficulty. For the oral historian, reading against the grain, and interpreting what is not said becomes a valuable method to understand women's relationship to their work. There is still much work to be undertaken on working-class women's work, not least, on the role of work in women's sense of self and their identity; an area of research which this thesis contributes to.

In this literature there are two broad themes in understanding working-class women's relationship to their work before they married. The first is the overarching expectation of domesticity, and girls' aspirations to leave work either at marriage or when starting a family, even if the reality might differ. The second is that these expectations did not mean women had little investment in their work, but rather sought a job to their liking. Women expressed their pride, interest in, and enjoyment of their work, and the friendships found there.

The analysis of oral history interviews with working-class women begins with Ros' narrative, who came to a realisation during the course of her interview that opportunities were available to her as a young woman which she had not been able to take up. With a lack of self-confidence, an authoritarian father, and without knowledge of these opportunities, she came to the conclusion that although those options theoretically existed, her work choices were constrained by her personal circumstances.

'Life's full of 'if onlys'' – Ros

Some women interviewed were conscious their younger self was not aware of opportunities available to them or empowered to seek out information. This occurred in Ros' interview. Ros (b.1948,Newcastle) reflected on her first experiences of work with some sadness and regret and felt she might have pursued a different path had she been encouraged to fulfil her potential. Ros' interview sheds light on the interpersonal, and sometimes unpredictable, oral history method. The interview furnished Ros with knowledge of opportunities women her age had, of which she was seemingly not previously aware. In the course of the interview she had to accommodate this new information, which challenged her narrative of her life experiences. Nevertheless, she successfully gained composure and situated new information within her existing narrative, using this to emphasise how far women's opportunities have changed.

When Ros reached school-leaving age in 1963, her father told her to find employment and contribute to the family finances:

> I had a fancy to go into nursing, but my father was really quite strict and he didn't give me any encouragement that you could go on and have a fantastic career. And I was old enough to leave school. I was 15 in the Christmas, and then you could leave – at Easter – So, I was told in no uncertain terms to leave school at Easter and get out there and get a job, and bring some money in the house. So...And I feel like, now when I think back, I should have had more confidence in myself to go, 'cause like, now youse young 'uns, you just go and do what you want. You know, the – I didn't have the confidence in myself to go and find out how to go about it. I just went into a job in a shop and that was it, sort of thing. I just stayed there.[36]

This extract demonstrates Ros' disappointment that she did not have the confidence in herself or encouragement and guidance from her family to pursue nursing. She complied with her father's insistence that she should leave school and become employed. The latter section of the extract is revealing. Her present, more confident, and knowledgeable self reflected on her life and contrasted her experience with young people's opportunities today. Indeed she addressed the interviewer directly – 'youse young 'uns' [you young ones] – challenging the interviewer to appreciate how different things were for her generation.

Ros was interviewed individually, but her friend Sally (b.1952,Newcastle) was present.[37] At points in her interview Ros referenced Sally, who had been interviewed first, discussing their contrasting experiences, as the following quotation shows:

> But now when I think back, like Sally says, there was opportunities out there in our generation, more jobs in the papers. If I'd had more confidence in myself, I would have, you know, sort of looked and went out there, and probably would have made more of a career for myself, you know. Life's full of 'if onlys' (laughs)...I didn't have the confidence to go out there and look for myself as to how I could go about that. And whether I could have stood up to my father and said, I'm giving, I'm not working in this shop, I want to go into nursing and that's what I'm going to do, I don't know what the consequences of that would have been.[38]

Having heard Sally's experiences Ros appeared to realise that opportunities were available. This prompted Ros to reflect further on her self; she lacked the self-confidence as a young woman to challenge her father and explore the possibility of becoming a nurse. This realisation caused a degree of discomposure in Ros. She constructed a view of her life that she would tell the interviewer; that things were different in 'those days', she was not confident, had to obey her father, leave school, get a job, and marry young. Ros had to adapt her narrative to account for

new information in Sally's testimony causing discomposure; it was not that the opportunities were not available, but she was not confident enough to seek these opportunities. It placed pressure on Ros whose new knowledge challenged her understanding of her life. Lack of confidence was forced to take a bigger role in her narrative than Ros was perhaps previously prepared to accept. However, she recovered composure, by reasserting that she had not been instilled with the confidence to find these alternative opportunities.

The unsatisfactory guidance received by her at school contributed to her narrative of not having all the information needed to pursue a career:

> I mean, there was a careers teacher, but I think unless you were really, sort of, right and thingy, clever, they didn't really encourage you. You were encouraged into, like, you know, these sort of jobs, you know. They didn't...I mean, for all I wanted to go into nursing, I wasn't given any advice of how I could about that, do you know what I mean.[39]

Ros felt she received inadequate advice. The 'clever girls' were encouraged to pursue their potential. She knew she wanted to be a nurse but without practical guidance from her school, which probably had knowledge and experience in this area, she entered unskilled work, where she would remain throughout her life. Additionally, Ros reflected on her mother's attitude which influenced her own ideas about her life:

> Well, my mother, I think as I say, she just accepted her life as it was, and I suppose we probably just thought well we should have, we have to accept our lives as, as the way my mother's was and [she didn't push us] to make a career either, you know. I think that's why I drifted early into marriage, because you think, oh well that's a way out, kind of thing. Because I mean, our generation, we did kind of marry quite young. She wasn't one for pushing us.[40]

Ros felt her mother did not encourage her to seek a career or satisfying work. Echoing the example given by her mother, Ros accepted ‘her lot’, did not pursue a career, and married early as an ‘escape’. She did not clarify what she sought to escape from; it may have been unskilled work. Ros’ narrative was of not being encouraged, or given information, to enable her to make an informed choice about her future career. Drifting into unskilled work and an early marriage, she mirrored her mother’s example and obeyed her father. The result was regret and an abiding ‘what if’, of what could have been, had she received support and knowledge to pursue a career.

Ros’ narrative introduces some issues addressed in this chapter regarding women’s relationship to the workplace. Despite the apparent proliferation of new opportunities for working-class girls in the post-war period, the lived reality was more complex. A range of factors combined to limit women’s ability to take advantage of these opportunities. Ros’ testimony exemplifies one overarching argument of this chapter, that working-class women had constrained choices as they made the move from school into the workplace. This gendered dimension is explored in the following section, as women talked about their memories of leaving school and entering the workplace.

‘I had this ambition and it never got fulfilled’ – Entering the Workplace

This section explores the pressures affecting female respondents' first steps into employment as young women. The role of family in influencing or arranging girls’ first job is investigated, along with careers advice provided by school and teachers. It will be suggested that girls leaving school in the post-war period and

earlier had a limited set of gendered job options. While exercising agency over which job to take, these choices were constrained and limited, although some of these ties were loosening. The strength of parental and school influence on choice varied. With the benefit of hindsight, some women became aware of the different options which had become available to women. Their expressions of frustration are an insight into these women's sense of self. The 'what if?' or 'if only I had known' suggests the women interviewed felt capable to pursue these career opportunities but were denied the chance to try. This section explores the extent to which the life-event of leaving school was discussed as traumatic or welcomed, and how that event is viewed by the present self. Many women recalled in great detail, and discussed their continued reflection of this event, suggesting its importance and significance to their understanding of their life.

Reflecting on their self, some women recognised their increased confidence as they became adults but that as girls, they felt unable to challenge authority – such as parents or school – and accepted guidance provided. Comparisons were made between 'then and now', explaining that in their youth, interviewees listened to their parents. Intersubjectivity came into play here as women compared their experience of youth with their perception of the interviewer's. The post-war young woman, lacking in self-confidence and assurance, who obeys her parents, was compared to an imagined modern young woman who is aware of her opportunities and is empowered to seek them out.

In women's work narratives parents influenced the type of job or training which women took on leaving school. For some women, a parent arranged for their daughter to commence work at a firm. Jane (b.1941,Preston) followed her father into English Electric. He facilitated her start at the company, and organised

for 'the lady that was in charge to come to our house, to start me off really, before I went'. [41] Her father played a direct role in her entry to the workplace. In addition to practical assistance, parental attitudes and influence indirectly affected the jobs that young women started. Despite changing attitudes towards women's work in the post-war period, traditional views about women's role persevered, particularly in the ideas of parents. Audrey (b.1934,Dundee) indicated that her father's expectations influenced the type of school and work she was encouraged into:

> I could have got a bursary to Morgan [Academy], but my parents weren't, my father particularly, wasn't keen for me to go to Morgan 'cause he said, girls just grew up and got married. I always remember him saying that. 'Cause I was clever at school. I was top of the class. And I went to Stobswell [School] to do a commercial course. And I ended up in an office. But I was Dux when I left Stobswell. I don't feel, I don't think I was pushed enough to do...I think I could have possibly have done more. I had potential. But I was, kind of, lazy I suppose. And if someone had pushed me, I might have done more, but as it was I just ended up doing office work.[42]

Audrey had a choice of schools based on her academic performance. While she was satisfied with her choice, her interpretation of her father's view implies her decision was made within constraints. Reflecting on her choices she felt frustrated at unrealised ambitions. She felt she had potential and could have done something else, but without the encouragement of adults around her, she was content to start work in an office. Her father's attitude, that academic education was wasted on girls who left work to marry, affected her opportunities. In addition to traditional views and expectations that girls would work for only a short time in their life-course, women often felt they lacked confidence as young adults to challenge these views.

Parental influence could deter daughters from pursuing their career aspirations, indicating the strength of parent's control and authority in the decision making process. Pauline (b.1952,Preston) was one of the younger generations of women interviewed. Her testimony reveals the continued power of parental authority over entry into the workplace, even in the late 1960s when 16 year old Pauline was leaving school. Pauline identified a strong urge to be a nurse after watching the hospital soap opera *Emergency Ward 10*[43] on television. However she did not achieve this aspiration until she was 39. She explored her work history:

> [I] left school at 16. Um, went into office work. Um, but parents... Looking, when I look back, I don't think they wanted me to go into nursing, for some reason. I don't know why. So whenever I suggested applying, they could always find a reason why [not]. Oh, oh, well you'll be homesick or, oh, well, um, your skin's not good, it might, uh, you might not be able to nurse. There was always a reason why I couldn't. So I kept putting it off. And then I got a job at the Post Office as a post office counter clerk. I absolutely loved that. So stayed there, got married and stayed there until I had children. And although I always wanted to go into nursing, the pay in the Post Office was quite good compared to nursing. So, when you've just got married and you need the money, it was too big a jump to go into nursing. But the wish to nurse never left me, which was why I did it when I was 39...*And at 16 you just listened to your parents. Well, you did then. You probably don't now.* – And it's only when I look back years later, I could see how many obstacles they'd put up. And probably if they'd have said, oh, yes, go and do it, I would probably have gone and done it at 18.[44] [My emphasis]

Pauline adhered to parental wishes and followed their advice at that impressionable age. While her parents did not forbid her to nurse or push her into other work, their discouragement was nevertheless influential on Pauline's decision making. Pauline stated that when she was 16, she expected to accept her parents' guidance, and reflected that she only realised barriers were up against her entry into nursing with hindsight. Finding enjoyment in her office work and career at the Post Office, her earlier career aspiration did not disappear, and as a mature

student she trained and worked as a nurse. Pauline expressed disappointment and regret at not having done this after school and felt she missed out on the social aspects of being a student nurse, such as living in the nurses' home. However, she appreciated her greater life experience benefited her performance as a nurse.

There was a gendered dimension to women's work opportunities in life. From a young age, Pauline was aware her opportunities differed from her brothers due to her parents' expectations that her education and career would be stunted by marriage and having children:

> This is, probably a bit beside the point, but it is something I've often thought of. When I took my eleven-plus, my brother took his the year before and passed it and went to grammar school. The year after me, my younger, the third one down, took his eleven-plus and passed it and went to grammar school. But there were contingency plans in place, because the secondary school in the area wasn't very good. So, he was put in for entrance exams at other grammar schools where they [her parents] would have had to pay for him to go, private ones. I was never put in for...Had I not passed my eleven-plus, I would have gone to the substandard secondary school nearby. But my brother would not have gone there. – He would have got into a grammar school elsewhere. Which to my mind, shows that families expected the boy to have a career, but the girl to have a bit of a job until she married and had children. – there was never any emphasis on going to university or having a career, because the answer to everything, well, what's the point, because you'll be married and have children and then you'll give it all up.[45]

This extract illustrates the tenacity of gender role expectations. While her brothers were encouraged to study at a 'good' school by her parents – a welder and a former factory worker/shop-assistant/housewife – who were prepared to pay fees to send them to grammar school, the same contingency plan was not made for Pauline. Leaving school in the late sixties, as ideas about women's place in society were changing and diversifying, Pauline's parents continued to follow ideas about sex-typed gender roles.

An alternative perspective was provided by Bessie (b.1944,Glasgow). Her narrative was imbued with regret, but took a positive turn. Bessie went against her parent's aspiration that she should improve on their working-class background. Her assured younger self was rebellious and was attracted by the prospect of earning. She felt sadness at having left education too soon, especially with subsequent appreciation of the financial sacrifices her parents were prepared to make. However, her pride at sending her son to college and forging her own career later in life compensated for some of her regrets.

Bessie went against her parent's wish that she would stay in school, and started work in Templeton's carpet factory. She described the circumstances that led to her decision:

> some of my friends had left school and went into factories, and they were in what was called the piece work, you earned your own wages then. You know, I mean, you could earn good [money]...Silly me, wanted to leave school. And I had fought with my mum and dad. They wanted me to stay on...You know, you're young, you're silly, you know, silly thinking. That was a big sacrifice for them. To want me to stay on and...I mean, the school sent for them because the school wanted me. I was clever, I was clever. And, uh, anyway, it kind of broke their heart and that. But I worked in, different jobs, but over the years, I mean, through studying on my own and different opportunities I've got, I'm an NLP [Neuro-linguistic programming] practitioner. I'm a hypnotherapist. I'm a coach. I'm a Reiki practitioner, crystal Reiki as well. I'm an aroma-therapist...And I've taken all these things up. So, it might be later in life, but a lot of the things that I want to do, I've managed to accomplish. So, it's never too late for education, pet, never too late.[46]

Bessie highlighted the sacrifices her parents were willing to make to provide her with a better standard of life. Coming from a working-class background in Glasgow's Gorbals, her parents shared their love of the arts with their children. In Bessie's narrative her school was keen for her to stay on, and her parents were willing to make sacrifices to enable her to do so. In the quotation her parents'

voices come through as Bessie 'speaks' to her headstrong younger self – 'silly me', 'you're young, you're silly'. Strengthening the momentousness of her decision, she felt she broke her parents' hearts by leaving. However, by retraining and having an interesting career, Bessie felt she had become a successful individual.

Bessie's friends had talked about the wages they earned which gained her attention. In the following extracts, Bessie described her attraction towards leaving school and starting work:

> Templeton's carpet factory was one of the biggest employers then. And no matter what department you went into, you were in piece work. So, you had a chance to earn really good money if you were working with a good partner. And I would do that and then I would give my mum my wages, and she would give me back my pocket money. And I'd have enough to get nylons, you know, a bit of make-up and you know, your hair lacquer et cetera and that sort of thing. – And every second Saturday, me and my brother...we would go to the dancing in the afternoon.[47] – a couple of my older friends had already went into the Templeton's. It was one of the biggest employers as I said to you. And, you know, they were telling me the money, not lying. They were saying the money and like that. Oh, you know, when you're young and you're wanting make-up, you're wanting clothes and you go out to the dancing, pet. – You know, and you're no realising at that time the sacrifice that your parents are willing to do for you to send you to college and then, you know, to university. So, as I said, that's when I went into Templeton's. But if you were leaving [school]...they'd advise you about, maybe, shop work. You know, office work. And, which in the secondary, I mean, you went through all that. I could have went into an office. There was no problem about me going into an office. I mean, I knew everything to do, shorthand typing and that. I was very good like that, I had all the high marks and that. But it was the money that was the draw to be quite honest. It was the money that was the draw, pet.[48]

The appeal of the money she could earn in the factory compared with school or another job influenced her decision to leave school and start work there. Her desire for leisure consumption, such as going dancing and make-up, was important in her decision making process. Bessie reflected on her changed self. At the time she left

school, money, dancing, make-up, and clothes were important to her. By contrast, her present self had changed priorities and an awareness of all her parents had done for her. In this context chastising herself, 'silly me', takes on further significance.

Other women overcame limiting circumstances to achieve a satisfying career. Despite gaining a free place at grammar school, Ruth's home situation inhibited her ability to enter her chosen career. Her grandmother fell ill when Ruth (b.1932,Newcastle) was 15 (c.1947), and her mother moved to Yorkshire to care for her, leaving Anne to look after her 5 siblings at home, despite the protestations of her teacher. She stated 'I always resented that in a way – I didn't like it because I wanted to stay [at school]. I was wanting to be a teacher'.[49] Although frustrated at having to leave school, Ruth was content with how her life had panned out. She outlined her sadness and regret at leaving school before she was ready, and relinquishing her wish to be a teacher, with her ultimate enjoyment of her Post Office career and raising her family:

> I sometimes still think about the grammar school and how I had to leave. You've got to leave to look after the family. And I sometimes think of that. And then I think back to my mum when she was in the same situation and her father said that. You've got to leave, you know. And I thought, well, it's happened to me as well. History's repeated itself. But overall, you know, it hasn't been bad. – I thought about my poor mum and how she must have felt. But, I mean, I've got my children and they're doing alright, and that's the main thing now, you know, the little family. And just to see my little grandson. He's just made his first Holy Communion at school.[50]

This testimony is striking for the insight revealed into the longstanding effects of this life-event. She continued to reflect on this as an adult, leaving a lingering 'what if'. Nevertheless, she highlighted her feeling that raising and enjoying her family was one of the most important aspects of her life. She fore grounded her

obligation to her family as her mother had done. The enjoyment gained from family and her job at the Post Office compensated to some extent for not achieving her aspiration to teach:

> I just wanted to be a teacher. I don't know why. I just wanted to be a teacher. I had this ambition. And it never got fulfilled. It probably was a good idea. I couldn't be a teacher now I don't think. – I liked the Post Office and enjoyed that. And I did enjoy it because I thought it was...I remember thinking, I'm working in this place, all these telegrams and, all these things that I'm doing. And it's really good and I enjoyed it, seeing the telegrams coming through and sticking them all down. And then going onto the counters which was a little bit [of a] higher post and serving customers. And I just enjoyed serving people and communicating with them. And helping them, that sort of thing.[51]

Ruth's narrative takes on a tone of 'making the best of it'. Although she had an unfulfilled ambition, she speculated that she might not have enjoyed being a teacher. In this extract it is interesting that Ruth shifted from an assertive first person pronoun to a more passive 'it' – 'I had this ambition. It never got fulfilled' – rather than 'I did not do it'. This suggests she felt this was an experience which happened to her rather than one she enacted herself. Despite unfortunate circumstances or headstrongness causing difficulties in women's narrative of their early work-life, women such as Ruth and Bessie overcame potential trauma by focussing on the aspects of their life which had turned out well for them and their achievements.

Early experiences in school could be detrimental to women's self-confidence as they grew-up and made choices about work. This brings into focus the importance of women's empowerment, suggesting women were more likely to seek out opportunities and interesting work if they had confidence in their abilities instilled in them at school. Barbara (b.1940,Preston) did not enjoy her time at her

convent grammar school. Recalling regular events as well as isolated instances, Barbara evoked her feelings of being put down and having her confidence chipped away. For example, to receive test results the school would sit in assembly while each class was called to the front of the hall. Standing in a semi-circle, each girl's mark was read out; the girl with the top mark would move to the top of the semi-circle, the girl with the lowest mark would be left standing at the bottom:

> you were constantly moving, you were shuffling down and down and down, until if you were near the bottom of the class you were waiting for your name to be called out. It was just awful. It was a real put-down for the majority of girls. It was awful, absolutely awful. I've never, ever forgotten it. And because that was a regular thing. And you used to dread it, because I knew I wouldn't come...I used to hope that I would come somewhere in the middle. And I didn't. I always ended up near the bottom of the class. And it's so embarrassing in front of the whole school, to know that you're bottom of the class. Oh, it was dreadful. It doesn't do anything for your self-confidence...you just think you're rubbish.[52]

As this extract makes clear, the competitiveness and pressure to perform academically and the emotional effects of not achieving those standards impacted her self-esteem negatively. In another isolated incident Barbara's self-worth was further diminished by the words of her teacher. One of the nuns at the school returned from Lourdes with a medal:

> and she said the person who does me the best essay, gets the best mark, can have this medal. So, I wrote the best essay, I got, I came top of the class with that. And she said, oh, you're not good enough to have it. So...so, it just...it was a put-down all the time. I have more confidence now.[53]

The cruelty of these words and these events undoubtedly affected Barbara's self-esteem. Her recollection of the details many years later suggests the impact they had on her life. Barbara underlined the effect her school life had on her self-

confidence. Reflecting on these experiences, she felt she overcame these setbacks to become a more confident person. Nonetheless, these aspersions did impact on her working life to some extent:

> it's only really, in more recent years that, I realised I could have done so much better for myself if I'd have wanted. But I'm not an ambitious person – I would never push myself, never. And that is possibly because of the way things were at school, I don't know. But other people said, why don't you apply for this job? I mean, so I did, and got a promotion out of it. So I've never had the confidence really, I suppose, through the school.[54]

Barbara suggested she did not have the inclination to push herself and be ambitious. Despite her abilities – noting she had gained a promotion – low confidence affected her aspirations. Reflecting from her present self, Barbara came to the realisation she could have pushed herself more, but did not have the self-esteem instilled in her to do so. In the following passage, Barbara discussed her thoughts on her working life, her feeling of satisfaction and lack of regrets about her work-life:

> I'm quite happy with what I've done. I've always enjoyed the work that I've done. And to me that's the most important thing. I might not have made a fortune, but I've enjoyed doing what I'm doing. – I don't think I would have wanted to go on to university. I don't know. It was never really an option. – [It wasn't a good school for the pupils] But you survive and you make your own...You make your friends, and you know, you make your own way. So, no, I don't have any regrets in the jobs that I've done at all. 'Cause I've always enjoyed it.[55]

From these reflections Barbara made clear her perseverance to overcome earlier challenges. Although she was denied reassurance about her abilities as a girl, and given limited options for further study or training, Barbara was retrospectively self-comforted by her ultimate happiness in her work. Her statement about

survival is fascinating. It suggests she struggled through these problems to achieve a satisfying life. Despite comparatively recently realising she did have the abilities and could have been ambitious, she did not voice any regrets about her working life.

Working-class women exhibited mixed responses to leaving school, and subsequently taking work. Beatrice (b.1935,Glasgow) was one of the few women interviewed who never married or had children, working for a longer continuous period of her life in a clothing factory. She described her entry into work:

> I had no idea what I wanted to do, but my auntie, when I was leaving school and I was ready to leave, I loved school, I didn't want to leave school. Loved school. Um, but my auntie worked in a clothing factory, so...I thought, oh, I quite fancy that. And her husband, he worked in one of the warehouses in the town. So, he got hold of me and says, look if you would rather do warehouse you wouldn't get as big a wage, but you'd go to work dressed and all that. I said no, I wanted to go into the factory. And I was there was there for – 42 years and then I was made redundant. Can you believe that? – I worked at different jobs in it, I ended up running my own department. [56]

This extract demonstrates Beatrice's ability to exercise choice about what type of job she wanted when presented with the option of the factory with higher wages or the warehouse where she could 'go to work dressed'. Her choice was validated in her narrative by the length of time worked there, and that she gained a supervisory position. The wider significance of Beatrice's choice in the matter was revealed below where she described how this made her feel grown-up:

> I was quite surprised; it was the one and only time I ever felt, um, sort of, grown up. I was working for about 6 months and my mother said – do you like this job? Are you happy in it? Because if you don't, now is the time to look for another job. And I was amazed at getting the choice of doing that.[57]

The choice to leave and find a different job made Beatrice feel adult. Although her mother was looking out for her interests, giving her the benefit of her knowledge (that leaving at that stage would give Beatrice time to train in another job), Beatrice interpreted this as being treated as an adult. She could have left if she was not enjoying work, further suggesting enjoyment of work was an important aspect to both Beatrice and her mother. As Beatrice's narrative suggests, her family and friends played a direct role in helping her start work by finding out about jobs, sharing information, and knowledge to ensure she was happy with her decision. Another means to investigate women's entrance into work is to explore the availability and quality of 'careers advice' offered to girls at school.

Oral testimony suggests that careers advice provided at school varied. Advice was determined by individual teachers and the school itself, rather than the region or area where women grew up. Girls in grammar schools were most likely to receive careers advice, although it was not always useful. Dyhouse highlighted the close links between women's entry into higher education and the country's need for schoolteachers.[58] It appears that in the early twentieth-century, teaching posed a significant opportunity for further education for working-class girls. Indeed, Anderson noted that for women, higher education was dependent on the demand for teachers which 'put an upper limit on its expansion'.[59] However, Todd observed a negative aspect to this, as demand for teachers meant 'working-class girls were pushed into teacher-training despite achieving the grades required for university entrance'.[60] It appears that although the grammar school was a beneficial experience for many girls, the tightly defined and restricted jobs available after school, for which girls were coached, meant 'new horizons' far from opened up.[61] In secondary modern schools advice about jobs did not seem to

be received as a matter of course. It may be posited that friends, family, and word of mouth were greater sources of information about work.

Women's overarching feeling was of the limited options available to them as girls. The same choices emerged time and again: office work, shop work, nursing, or teaching. Jeannie (b.1932,London) contrasted the contemporary period's abundance of opportunities with those in her youth; 'there wasn't a great choice. It was either secretarial work, nursing, teaching or office work – There wasn't the selection there is these days.'[62] The following examples convey that limited options were available and the usefulness of the guidance given was largely not helpful. Ella (b.1950,Preston) recalled the 'vague' careers advice she received at her Catholic grammar school:

> they didn't give us very much at school, vague talks about going to be teachers or going to college and doing something else, nobody was giving you any sell other than that. They used to occasionally tell us about those, fortunate girls who might have a religious vocation. But, other than that, that seemed to be the prime objective. But getting us into well paid jobs didn't seem to be a huge priority.[63]

The shaping of career advice and expectations by religious education recurred in interviews with women who had attended Catholic schools. With no interest in teaching or college, or indeed, a religious vocation, the guidance Ella received was ineffectual. She felt the school did not encourage girls into good jobs. Christine had a similar experience. Christine (b.1949,Preston) recalled a lecture about representing her grammar school in adulthood:

> Well, if you can call it career advice, we all got taken into the library before we left school, or at the end of that term with one of the nuns. And she, all she did was instil in us about, we had to keep the name of the school, you know. Our behaviour reflected on this school, and blah. And that was about it, really. But we didn't really get any career advice at all.[64]

Advice about work, study or training was not forthcoming and the school's reputation was of utmost importance. While some women felt they did not receive suitable careers advice from their school, in other schools, women felt shepherded into a narrow range of options. In some schools teaching was the expected route for female pupils, and girls who did not have an interest or aptitude in this area did not receive relevant information. Dorothy (b.1927,Preston) had a funded place at her grammar school and had clear notions about what path she was expected to take:

> I should go to college and be a teacher. But my mum and dad would have had to have paid. And I never wanted to be a teacher. I wasn't interested in that line at all.[65]

Dorothy had little interest in becoming a teacher. She knew from a young age she wanted to work at the Lancashire Insurance Committee, being encouraged to do so by her next door neighbour, who was director. Although her grammar school offered guidance to girls who expected to become teachers, it was a friend who gave Dorothy the practical advice and assistance needed to enter her chosen field. Similarly, Sandra (b.1946,Preston) felt teaching was the great aspiration for girls at her secondary school, however, her testimony strongly suggests a 'hierarchy' of careers for girls. With her disinterest in teaching, advice had a limited effect:

> certainly at [my] secondary school I got career's advice. There was a great push for you to do, for people like me to do teaching and things like that. But I never wanted to do teaching.[66]

Sandra continued by describing that if girls 'like her' in the top class, did not go into teaching as expected, they would take shorthand and typing. The system of 'streams', especially at grammar schools, strongly influenced the jobs girls could do. Oral testimony suggests that if girls did not want to choose from these limited options, there was little suitable advice available from school. Where women did exercise agency about the direction of their working lives, this was within constrained options.

Underpinning careers advice lay ideas about the role of women in society. Even by the early seventies, when the following respondent was leaving school, the notion of the non-working wife whose life centred on home and family was expounded, although this was a beleaguered discourse. Pamela (b.1956,Newcastle) attended a Catholic school and felt she received limited guidance on future careers, being encouraged to 'marry well' and become a housewife:

> I think you, once you went to see the careers officer. But I went to a Catholic school, and, oh, you weren't supposed to work. You were going to be a lady, you know, and you married someone who was going to keep you. You know, so, there really it wasn't a big thing for them to actually want you to really get a job. You know, so it wasn't...They never really thought about, you were just taught how to be a lady, and how to do dinner parties and things like that really. Not practical things at all. – I wouldn't say you got really any careers advice. – 'cause you weren't expected to have a career.[67]

Again, religious education and a conservative view on women's work strongly affected the guidance Pamela received. Pamela's understanding was her school did not encourage the students to work, expecting girls to become ladies and focus on

homemaking. It is difficult to know how far she accepted this view at the time. Pamela's interpretation of this attitude in hindsight takes on a sarcastic tone, as she illustrated the change between her adolescence and the contemporary period. Intersubjectivity is at play here as the respondent attempts to connect with the interviewer, highlighting the incredulity, the 'would you believe...?', and emphasising the difference between the past and present.

The financial needs of the family also shaped the decision to leave school and the choice of job. It may be expected that the necessity to leave school to earn money would be more common among women of an older generation. However, the interviews indicate women born into the 1950s felt a sense of duty to earn. This suggests that despite increased affluence in Britain, children's wages continued to be valued in the post-war period. A number of women felt they had to work because their parents could not afford to keep them in school. Rose had a strong notion of duty to help her mother. Rose (b.1945,Preston) had 9 siblings and felt a sense of 'willing obligation' towards her mother; 'you knew, when you got to 15, you had to leave and get a job. And [I] couldn't wait to do that and tell my mum'.[68] She wanted to assist her mother:

> I just wanted to help my mum, to make life easier for her. – My mum probably would have allowed us to [stay at school/take a different job], but she needed the money. So, we never even gave ourselves a second thought.[69]

Rose's desire to help her mother is strong here. It was an obligation, a duty, but one that she fulfilled with gusto. Rose did not convey a sense of being put upon or that she was missing out on opportunities by leaving school. The willingness of Rose to alleviate her mother's burden may be contrasted with the reluctance of

others to leave school and contribute to the household. Ella was aware from childhood that she would have to work. Her father was a highly qualified master-builder, and her mother returned to work around 1960 as a shorthand typist. Ella passed her eleven-plus and had a scholarship to the convent grammar school. Achieving good O-Levels, Ella reluctantly left school before sixth form, aware of the pressure on her father to support the family:

> I think that was very much foremost in my mind. [I] had a sort of, upbringing where it was constantly reminded that my dad was bearing the burden of bringing home the bacon, so to speak. I didn’t feel at all resentful. – I remember during my school years when jobs were discussed, my father saying, they’re getting £8 a week at Orrs mill, and if you’re not going to work hard at this school that we’re sending you to, we could always take you away and you could go and work in the mill. It was a veiled threat to get us to study harder and whatnot.[70]

Whether serious or made in jest, her father threatened to send her to the mill if she did not work hard at school. Ella’s generally humorous recollections of her school days, of being a loud and boisterous student, were tempered by more serious consideration of her father’s attitude towards her education. Despite his acquiescent support of her education, Ella was aware of pressure on her to work, although she did not feel ‘resentful’ about this. In her memories of leaving school she recalled a conversation with her father:

> My dad had actually said on the day I was supposed to make my mind up, if you want to stay on at school you can, you know. But it was in such a grudging and, sort of, um, uh, I’d rather you didn’t, sort of attitude in between the lines. Oh no dad, no, I’ll leave school and I’ll go and get a job.[71]

Ella was aware of the need for her to contribute to the household income and of the pressure on her father to support her while she was at school. While her father

was not authoritarian, young Ella picked up on and remembered his views. She did not appear to resent this subtle pressure to leave school (as while she was intelligent, she was not very studious and perhaps was not invested in school), and accepted this situation. It may be that this responsibility was inculcated from a young age, resulting in neither resentment nor a wish to challenge her father's views.

The 'threat' of the mill was a regional peculiarity to Preston. Dorothy was presented with the mill by her parents as an unappealing alternative if she did not commit to her grammar school and find suitable work afterwards. Her mother had worked in mills in Preston giving Dorothy knowledge of the conditions:

> That was the threat of my life – But my mum and dad said at the time, if I didn't get a decent job, I would have to go in the mill. And that was the threat to me. Because to me, when I would go and meet my mum and I'd go as far as the mill, and they'd open the doors, the noise was horrendous. – The noise was horrific.[72]

Conditions in the mill made it an unattractive job. The threat for Dorothy seemed very real, fearing that would be her life if she did not work hard at school. Dorothy avoided the mill by working in an insurance office before she married. She was one of the oldest respondents interviewed, however, the threat of the mill was recalled by younger generations – for example Barbara who was born over two decades later. A regional peculiarity, it suggests that for working-class girls low-status work was still a real possibility. It was evoked as a 'threat' implying that more satisfying work was available, and desirable to women, within a gendered context. It suggests parents wanted 'something better' for their daughters, and encouraged them to work hard to achieve this goal. It may be questioned whether a similar threat was made to Dundee girls. It appears that this was not the case.

Many parents were keen for their daughters to avoid mill and factory work, and aspire to 'something better'. Marlene (b.1935,Dundee) portrayed a narrative of improvement and progress through the generations. Her mother was a weaver in a jute factory who 'would not be associated with the 'mill workers''.[73] Marlene felt she was working-class when she was younger, and, while declining to venture an opinion about what class she became, she discussed how her 'mother's family's philosophy was always that you did bet[ter], more for your children than you did for yourself, you know you, you always, you made, you did better each time you went on'.[74] In a similar vein, Harriet's parents had imbued in her the importance of improving circumstances and 'bettering' oneself.[75] Harriet's father wanted his daughters to progress, deciding they would not work in industry; 'he was determined that I was not going near the mill'[76] and that 'he wanted something better for their children. I mean they all did in those days'.[77] Financial restraints limited how far this was possible. Harriet (b.1934,Dundee) was Dux at her secondary school, and the headmistress encouraged her to go to a selective secondary school. Her father, an overseer in a jute mill, could not afford the uniform and other necessities. Thus Harriet left school and became a shorthand typist in a law office. Asked if she was disappointed Harriet responded:

> No, not really, I knew the situation, you know so it was a case of out, get some work, get some money. I mean by this time, I was staying with my father and that but I mean the money wasn't there to send me, so you just accepted it.[78]

She accepted her obligation to put her aspirations on hold to contribute to the household, illustrating the material factors which limited working-class girls' education and opportunities to advance into higher-grade work. Finally, Moira

(b.1935,Dundee) talked about her mothers' employment as a jute weaver, and her aspiration that she would not work in the mill:

> [My mother wanted me] to have a better life and more comfortable life than what she had ever experienced, I think that drove her a bit. And she obviously wanted the best for me, she didn't want me to ever, she always said, 'you'll never work in a jute mill, never'.[79]

Thus in Dundee, the sense of wanting to avoid the mills and factories of the jute industry was evident. This was not in contrast to the threat of the mill in Preston, but was a different means to achieve the same goal to 'get on and do well'.

Enjoyment of and Pride in Work

Despite the perseverance of some 'traditional' views into the third quarter of the twentieth-century, for the women interviewed these views were out of step with their own. Work had real and powerful value to women's lives, their self esteem and confidence. Most interviewees stated that they enjoyed their work, with some jobs and tasks being more satisfying and interesting than others. Talk of the companionship of the workplace indicates the importance of these relationships to women's wellbeing. Women spoke of pride in their work and the skills they held. Whether speed, dexterity, precision or other markers of skill, women boasted they could work to a high standard. This section draws testimony together, considering the manner in which women talked about their work, illustrating that it was not 'just a job', nor did they feel they were marking time until marriage and starting a family.

The majority of women interviewed enjoyed work as the following brief extracts attest. Presented here are 'typical' responses from women, who were not verbose about their work satisfaction but nonetheless made clear work was pleasing. For example Kathleen (b.1946,Newcastle) did not feel her career in chemistry was the be-all and end-all of her life; 'I've enjoyed it yes...but I've never missed it when I wasn't there – I can't say that I lived to work, but I did enjoy what I did'.[80] She enjoyed work but did not miss it having retired. Harriet succinctly stated her enjoyment of work and linked it to her skill; 'I enjoyed that, I was always good at shorthand and typing (laughs), so I enjoyed that – I found it interesting, or I wouldn't have stayed'.[81] Meanwhile Bessie highlighted the importance of her friendship circle in her discussion of work:

> I've worked with good people. There was a few like we all have, managers that, you know, no matter what you would do it was never good enough, you know what I mean. But, on the whole, I was always blessed that I always, sort of, landed in a good group, you know. It was, sort of, work together, laugh together and cry together, you know. So, yeah, I enjoyed, I did enjoy working life. I did enjoy it.[82]

While there were negative aspects of work for Bessie, work was pleasurable for her and friendships with other workers made her feel 'blessed'. A final contribution to this overview of common responses about work enjoyment is made by Christine. In this extract, Christine's relationship to work changed over her life-course:

> I think after I had the children, it was more a case of I need to earn some money. But I can quite honestly say, the jobs I've done, I enjoyed. Apart from the last job I had, it was good fun at first and it's like everything. The cut backs, we got new bosses and, oh, people left, they shared the work out, and it got very stressful in the end. And to be honest, I was glad to leave.[83]

After having children she focussed on financial need, but felt she had enjoyed work overall. As with a number of women, particularly those in professions, Christine felt her last job before retirement was less satisfying, with the economic recession and internal restructuring having an effect. These extracts reveal that working-class women generally enjoyed their work, yet the brevity of the responses lends the impression that work did not inspire a rousing response, suggesting work was not necessarily the zenith of women's lives.

Not all women interviewed depicted themselves as passionate about or invested in their work, reflected in testimony by terse responses. This may partly be a consequence of women's personality, exhibiting their taciturn manner of speaking, shyness, or lack of confidence with the interview scenario. Nevertheless, the pithiness and content of such answers displays some disinterest in discussing the subject matter of work. This can be considered through Hilda's testimony, an excerpt of which is presented below.

> *How did you feel about that, about wanting to be a nurse but you'd kind of had to go into the factory?*
>
> I was upset about it. I really was. Oh I didn't like it at all.
>
> *And was it a job that you, did you enjoy working in the factory?*
>
> Yes, yeah. Company. Yeah.
>
> *And so, what sort of job did you do in the factory?*
>
> I was [a] weaver.
>
> *And did you get a lot of training to be a weaver?*
>
> No, just got put in the deep end.
>
> *And you know, what sort of things did you dislike about that sort of work?*
>
> I don't know, I did enjoy working there though you know, made some good friends. No I don't think there's anything I disliked about it at all.[84]

This extract illustrates the concise answers Hilda (b.1939,Preston) gave to questions about her work and is fairly typical of her interview. Of course, a range of factors must be considered. Hilda may have felt unsure about the interview, and been reticent about saying or revealing too much. It could be a consequence of ineffectual interviewing, reflecting the interviewer's failure to inspire Hilda to open up. On reflection, the questions here were closed, rather than open, and thus did not provide an opportunity for her to speak at length. It is conceivable that the succinct answers reflect Hilda's disinterest or lack of confidence in talking about her work. Nevertheless, as Hilda specifies in the extract, she felt there was little she disliked about the velvet factory, and that overall the job was enjoyable. This is not contradictory. It suggests a complex relationship to work. Jobs could be enjoyable and satisfying, but might not necessarily evoke enthusiasm. The varied responses of women to their working life are considered further with Eileen, who enjoyed her work despite feeling that she drifted into her career path. Eileen (b.1946,Glasgow) was not entirely disinterested in her work, however, she characterised her working life in terms of 'drifting'. She felt 'I have just really fallen into jobs all the way along the line',[85] and considered her lack of ambition when leaving school:

> I wasn't terribly ambitious, I must admit. And, no, I didn't have any set plan at all. What I wanted to do. – I didn't really know what I wanted to do, and then I went to the place, just at Charing Cross, it was the Royal College of Shorthand and Typing. So I thought okay, I'll go for that, so I went there and, when I was what, 16, and that was a year's course in shorthand and typing. And then, I got an office job and well, I graduated from a typewriter to a computer eventually. And that was it really, but, I think I was totally un-ambitious. I didn't want to go to university, I didn't, I don't know, I didn't see what I could do. Probably too lazy, couldn't be bothered, the work involved.[86]

Eileen felt she had no fully-formed ideas about what type of work she wanted to do when she left school. She 'drifted' into shorthand and typing rather than making a conscious, definite decision that it was what she wanted to do. Nevertheless, she knew she did not want to go to university, or be a teacher as her grammar school expected, suggesting she was active in the process by deciding what she did not want to do. Eileen enjoyed her work, including sociable aspects and the work itself; 'I've enjoyed it. I suppose we'd a lot of people coming and going – I enjoyed the people and the contact, and strangely enough the work I am doing in the school is in the career's department. And that, you know that's interesting.'[87] This quotation implies she found enjoyable work. Eileen took pleasure from her interest in her job in school administration as well as the company of the people she worked with. This suggests some women were not emotionally invested in their work; however, this was not a universal experience. Enthusiastic responses revealed the aspects of women's work which were felt to be important.

In Nancy's interview, being unfairly treated at work lessened her enjoyment of work, resulting in an enthusiastic response which seemed at odds with the rest of Nancy's testimony. Nancy (b.1933,Dundee) appeared to 'drift' into the workplace. Asked what job she had hoped to take when she was at school or at the point of leaving, Nancy responded 'I never thought about it –you just kept going – and took things as they came'.[88] Nancy's concise responses were replicated throughout her interview. However, she became animated when discussing her sense of the injustice of receiving unequal pay. Having worked at the office of National Cash Register (NCR) until 1954 because 'when you got married you had to leave',[89] she worked on an assembly line at Timex when her

children were teenagers to make additional money and alleviate the dullness of home. She expressed a preference for her work in the NCR office over the irksomeness of the assembly line:

> NCR was...friendlier. You were working with people and sort of, you could talk to them, but I mean when you worked in the Timex they, well the people were friendly enough but you were doing your own job and you couldn't really sort of stop and have a blether with somebody, you had to keep going.[90]

The pressure of piece-work at Timex lessened her enjoyment of work. Whereas in the office she could chat, on the assembly line, piece-work did not afford the same chances. Her view of the unfairness of the pay elicited a forceful response in the interview:

> you had to take a total off, but what annoyed me was, there was a man sitting next to you and he didn't, they didn't have to take totals off, but the women did. Very, very...what would you say? *Sexist*. – [T]hat was just the way it worked in the Timex, it was the same with anybody that wasn't 18, if they started work when they were 16 they got less pay than somebody sitting next to them that was over 18, I mean it was just so *unfair*.[91]

Nancy reiterated her sense of the injustice that women were not paid the same as men, and that young workers did not receive the same wages as workers over 18. Nancy's recognition of inequality at work is interesting. Given the period of time when many of the women interviewed worked, with agitation for equal pay, it is revealing that inequality at work was not a theme which more women discussed. The acceptance that this was how things were is striking. Nancy's testimony had a powerful sense of perseverance. She felt the importance of fair treatment and understood the value of her labour.

In the post-war period, much of women's work was considered unskilled, such as in Censuses and academic studies of work. Yet women recognised their skill and abilities in their work, and took great pleasure from having worked hard to hone these skills. Interviews with Hannah and Jane support this argument. Hannah (b.1936,Dundee) began her training as a tailoress[92] for 2 years on Saturday mornings in the Singer sewing machine shop in Dundee while she was still at school. To commence training, her father had to pay fees at half a crown a week, and Hannah felt his confidence, and financial investment, in her was due to her early displays of talent:

> I had always been good with my hands as well, and as I said, my dad was good with his, I think I picked up things off him. I was able to knit, no-one showed me how to knit, and I could do fair isle and I could follow the pattern.[93]

After finishing school, she was frustrated at initially being rejected from an apprenticeship with one business on account of being Catholic.[94] On the strength of her sewing teacher's reference, she started an apprenticeship at Cairds. The following extensive extract substantiates the notion that women were proud of their skills as a worker. A lengthy and detailed narrative of Hannah's working life has been reported in full to give an accurate account of her discussion and to give an indication of how flowing her narrative was:

> I had brilliant training. I could make anything. – Everything was done by hand. We made kilts, and doublets, and we did work for the royalty from Balmoral and everything, their kilts would come down and get picked out and made up on the other side. And it was very, very expensive, the ordinary working man didn't go there. It was like Savile Row stuff. And it was all done by hand. So when they were closing, there was a girl who worked with me...she said, my sister works in a factory on the industrial estate that does the dress making. It's not tailoring, it's dressmaking, and

> her job will be free. So my boss said to me, go, wear the coat that you made. I left school at 15, so I was only about 17/18. Wear the coat you've made, the skirt that you've made up, go up. So I made an appointment and I went away up and they asked me a lot of questions. Can you put on a collar? A collar? Yes can you put on a collar? And I said, I made this coat, so I took it off, and I made this skirt and I made this blouse. Oh...start on Monday. So I left the tailoring and went to this factory who made fashions. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. So I think a lot of maybe my confidence came about because, you worked in rows, and there were 14 girls, 7 on each side, and you were on the sewing machines, but you made the garment from start to finish. Not the way they do it nowadays. Nowadays you do a sleeve, or a pocket, or you do...we made it all, so it was nightdresses, beautiful things, underwear, beautiful things. Maybe babies wee frilly pants and stuff like that. And our whole bench done the underwear, and the next one would do children's wear, and the next one would do blouses, and then there was bridal, and aw that. – it was a beautiful factory, not like the workshop I was in with wooden floors and wee lights. This was a beautiful new factory. It was up on the industrial estate. And they made for...lots of shops in town, and things were sent away. And you got music for an hour in the morning, and an hour in the afternoon. And you all got your chance to pick, whatever was in the top 20, you got what you wanted. – And it was good, 'cause the music, it was a break for you, you know you thought, you had your break, you went and you had a canteen and it was all clean, and lovely towels on the wash hand basin. I loved it, and I thought, this is great.[95]

Hannah had great pride in her work, producing high quality tailoring for prestigious customers which enriched her self-respect. Her aptitude for making things from an early age was improved by her training. Describing modelling the garments she had made at her interview at the factory illustrated her pride in her skills and talent as a tailor. Moving from the shop where she produced high quality goods to the factory represented a new stage in her working life. The work itself was interesting and she acquired skill to work fast and earn money on top of her minimum wage. The process of producing 'beautiful' clothes was satisfying and gave her a sense of accomplishment. Moreover, the workplace surroundings were desirable. The bright airiness of the new factory, its facilities and the treat of music during the day increased her happiness.

Hannah's sense of pride in her work was bolstered further, as she seized the opportunity in the oral history interview to make plain her father's pride in her tailoring skills. She revelled in the recognition of her skills by her father and others:

> Well my dad was absolutely delighted when he saw that I had got through this, and he used to stand over me. If I laid my mum's dining room table out and put a length of cloth on it my mother used to go...and the scissors came out and I would cut it, and he would stand behind me when I was sewing...look at that, look at that, look what she's made...and he was so proud. And I made my sister's wedding dress, and I made my own wedding dress, and all the bridesmaids, my mother's outfit. And he would tell everybody...she made it herself. Very, very proud of us.[96]

From this extract, it is possible to imagine her father beaming over young Hannah as she worked, or him talking her up to people admiring the outfits she made. Hannah's recollections suggest the boost to her self-esteem by his pride in her abilities. She did not return to dressmaking as a job after she relocated with her husband, and stopped work altogether when she had children. However, when her children had grown-up, and the family had returned to Broughty Ferry, she taught dressmaking and sewing at a community college through evening classes.

Recognition of and pride in work skills was particularly clear for Jane. Jane's pride in her skills was shored up by being interviewed and by interest in her role creating the Deltic locomotive (British Rail Class 55). Jane left school at the age of 16 and worked in the office at the milk marketing board for 6 months, before becoming an engineering tracer in 1958. Before the interview Jane remarked on the coincidence that she was interviewed for another project about the Deltic which she and her friend traced at English Electric. Her delight at having worked on the Deltic in particular, and drawing in general emerged:

> I got my job at English Electric which I wanted, and I was an engineering tracer. And, for this now, I'm going to be invited – to an exhibition at the steam museum down on docks, because, they're bringing in the Deltic, and a friend and me traced the Deltic before it came out. And this lady's interviewing me and taking all my instruments and all my papers that I did when I was learning to trace. To put in the exhibition – Oh I did [enjoy it]. It's not an easy job, this lady that interviewed me said she didn't realise how hard it was. But you used Indian ink, and a pen that you, you had a thing in it that you put your ink in. You'd to do circles, well it was difficult really. I had to trace the, the little lion that's on the train, and that was very difficult to do, it was only about this big (gestures) But, it was very interesting, I liked it very much, it was just a pity I left when I [had] my first child. I couldn't go back. Now it's done on computers.[97] – I enjoyed all of it. I very much enjoyed drawing, it was on, like a linen that had stuff on it. It was blue and it had something, linen dipped in something you know. And all these drawings, there's a pile this big of all my practice work. And you had to learn to print very neatly and I still do.[98]

Jane vaunted her skills and craft, and her enjoyment of this work. At the time of interview, she was in the process of actively reminiscing about this period in her life. As a result, the tools and materials used and particularly tricky tasks were at the forefront of her mind. She had kept some of her training work, further suggesting its significance to her life. The project's request for Jane's contribution to the exhibition reinforced and validated pride in her role in its construction. The intervention of this interview with Jane further legitimised her gratification and provided her with additional space to express her pride. This demonstrates the importance of context on the 'objectivity' of the oral history interview although this does not lessen its value. Women's views about their work are not static and unchanging, but are fluid and alter with subsequent experiences in women's lives.

Jane was disappointed not to return to this field of work after having her child. By the time she was able to re-enter the workforce (around 1981 when her daughter was 10 years old), her skills were superseded by technology. Learning new skills provided self-esteem as the following quotation outlines:

> I'd have like to have gone back but you couldn't then 'cause it was done on computers. And I went to college to learn how to do it. And I paid £200 for the course. Everybody else had gone from their companies and got paid for it, and I was the first person to pass it. They had to go back and redo it. And I passed but then I couldn't get a job 'cause I don't drive a car – I never got back to my job. And I couldn't remember a thing how to do it now. I could still trace, but I wouldn't be able to do this on computer. I'd have to go back and redo it.[99]

Her pleasure at being the only person to pass the course, was followed by frustration that transport issues let her down. The manual skill of tracing remained with her and was a source of great pride for Jane, something she was enthusiastic to talk about. Hannah and Jane's pride in their skill attests to the aspects of work which reveal women's sense of self as a skilled worker.

Women used other means to narrate their working life. Recollections of amusing stories and anecdotes, in conjunction with a generally positive attitude towards work or a particular job, suggests this period of women's lives was remembered with fondness. One recollection came from Joyce (b.1931,Dundee). An engaging story teller, in one anecdote she vividly described an event when she worked at Timex in Dundee:

> I remember one of the times when I was over here, they were all machines and you sat at benches, and you've the contraption in front of you. And you would put the bezel which was the back of the watch, the job I did anyway, and you would put it onto a little platform thing, fit it in there, and then you would bring down the clamp, and that would stamp UK Time on the back. And you did it, I think you kicked it, and that pressed the bent thing and brought it down. I think that was how it done it. And you sat in a row, and I remember doing this one time, I mean it was piece work what they called it, so the more you did the more money you got. Now that was never my kind of work. *Never*. I was better doing practical work, but not having to work that way. – Anyway, I remember this one, in Timex, and putting the bezel in, and either kicking it or bringing the thing down, but you got, it was a rhythm you did, so it was 1, 2, 3, duh, 1, 2, 3, and that was how it went. And I remember doing that, and what I'd done, I'd put my finger in it (laughs) and brought the thing down. And I realised what I'd done (makes panting/panicked noise) and I was just so frightened that

> I'd taken the end off my finger. – Actually it didn't do any damage at all, but the thought was there that it had and I thought, [I'll be] going about with UK Time on [my finger] (laughs).[100]

Peppered with 'pantomimed' actions and 'sound effects' at appropriate moments in the story, the value of stories such as these lie in their illustration of the pervasiveness of these jobs in women's memory. The repetitive tasks are remembered so well that women can 'perform' the motions many years later. The basis of such narratives lies in the monotony of these tasks. The actions are remembered because they were repeated, not because they were especially entertaining.

While Joyce had good memories of working in a range of jobs, she disliked factory work, particularly piece-work, indicating her partiality towards more gratifying employment. In a protracted section of testimony she connected her work history with her life more generally; her love of romance novels, the draw of escaping a difficult home life, and her snapshot memory of meeting her future husband for the first time. Joyce heard tales of 'bad husbands' and 'downtrodden wives' as a child. Her parents had divorced and remarried different people and she felt uncomfortable staying with her mother and stepfather; 'I think I was going through a period that, I didn't fancy being in the house with my mum and another man in her bed'.[101] Though she continued to live with them, her disinclination towards marriage made itself apparent. The importance of a satisfying job in her life was more acute, as she was making decisions about work knowing she would be a worker for life:

> I look back now and I think it affected in as much as there was no way I was gonna get married. –I was 'round about 19 or 20 or something, and probably I was thinking, maybe I could get something else to do, you

> know, obviously bored with what I was doing – 'Cause it wasn't my kind of job anyway, factory work. And I had come up with this in the *Courier*, I'd seen an advert for interviews for the NAAFI, at Condor [Marine Base, Arbroath]. So I must have been looking at this thinking about the Governess and things, going away from home, and so that was what made me get in touch with them. – And I worked in the WREN's car, as they called it. And I loved that. Thoroughly enjoyed it. But so that I could get home, I used to go out with the mobile cafe, like a snack van. And that used to go round all over the airfield. – But then I remember, also to make up the hours that I was doing, I had to work up at the PO and Chief's mess, in the bar, in the evening. Now I went up to do that, but I hated that. Well I hated serving them, that was what it was. I was fine with the women, but I didn't like serving the men. I wasn't confident. And so I was quite happy to take the glasses and wash them behind the bar. But I remember this one time, in the morning when we'd gone in, the bar was open, and this PO at the counter, of course the ones that were serving, he was well known, and I remember him asking for a brandy and lime. And he was sort of hanging on the bar. And this was him, he'd been drunk the night before, well this is the man I ended up marrying. (Joyce and LP laugh)[102]

Much is revealed about her attitude to working life. She disliked factory work, and it bored her, which inspired change. Knowing she was not going to marry and thus would remain in work for a longer period of time undoubtedly changed her tolerance of this job. Work at the military base within the catering service was more enjoyable. A changed tone in the extract suggests a new zest for work. Although there remained aspects of her job which she disliked, overall she 'loved' work and 'thoroughly enjoyed that'. The final section of her narrative, meeting her husband at the bar is important. It marked the moment when her expected life-course changed.

The interviews indicate the importance of interesting work to women's lives and wellbeing. Pamela worked as a budget controller at the Co-op when she left school and she discussed her reasons to change jobs. In a lengthy testimony Pamela described her work at the Co-op, and highlighted the effect of being told she could not have children on her attitude towards this job. While Pamela

enjoyed working at the Co-op, the realisation that it might become the main interest in her life changed her view:

> I loved working at the Co-op. And I loved... 'Cause I was there 13 years. I enjoyed working there. But then I think I thought well, when I have a family I'll leave work and not work. But then when we were told I couldn't have children, I thought, I don't want this. And that's why I moved to the Garden Festival, because it was something totally different. And I thoroughly enjoyed it, you know. And, as I say, then I fell pregnant which wasn't expected, um, and then I knew I wouldn't have any more children, and I wanted to make the most of what I had. I didn't want to miss a minute of him.[103]

The fact she was there for a long period of time indicates her enjoyment of this work. In part this was connected to her belief that when she started her family, she would become a stay-at-home mother. Learning she could not have children was a turning point, as her expectations of how her life would pan out changed. Realising she would have to work for longer than anticipated, her job at the Co-op lost its appeal – 'I don't want this'. She discussed in the interview that she and her husband changed their plans, deciding to work temporarily and spend their time travelling. While working as a budgeter at the Gateshead Garden Festival, she became pregnant and decided to leave work to raise her son. Pamela seemed to centre her life on being a mother. Finding out she could not have children was a disappointment, hampering her plans. But becoming pregnant she appreciated the time she could spend with her son; 'I didn't want to miss a minute of him'.

Pamela's view of her life-course was unusual in comparison to most other women. While 'traditional' views continued to be espoused into the seventies, very few women articulated the view that they planned to leave work permanently when they had children. Pamela made an active and conscious decision that motherhood was the eventual aim of her life. Pamela's school experience was

discussed earlier, with her memory of being expected to be ‘a lady’ when she left school – ‘you weren’t supposed to work. You married someone who was going to keep you’.[104] Pamela did not articulate her life as conforming to other people’s expectations, but seemed quite unique among other respondents in her narrative of making the choice to leave the labour market completely after having her son.

A further method women used to discuss their work was to compare liked and disliked jobs or tasks. Where women compared pleasant with unpleasant jobs, this was complimented with discussion of particular aspects of work which were liked and disliked. This was especially found among women who entered professions such as nursing and teaching and who were less likely to move occupation. Sally started as a cadet nurse aged 16, before training as a nurse at age 18. She contrasted the agreeable aspects of work with those she did not enjoy:

> Just meeting all the people, and, learning new things. We didn’t do very much nursing [during training], because we weren’t allowed to. But we went into each of the different departments. So, we went into X-ray, into the records office which was awful. Just filing records. And, the X-ray was lovely because we actually looked after patients. And things like, I also remember working in the diet kitchen, which was just the ordinary kitchen for the hospital. But there were people – would have to have a special diet. You know, like diabetics and different, you know, low-fat diets and all sorts of stuff. And I worked in that, but the only unfortunate thing, the diet cook always had a Wednesday off, and so they made me work in the main kitchen of the hospital. And on a Wednesday was always kidneys on toast, for evening tea. And they used to make me actually take the skins off hundreds of kidneys. I can’t eat a kidney ever again. – didn’t get to see very much death at, the age of 16, but the...What I didn’t like was, when I worked in the records department, and which was also like a casualty department, was seeing the casualties come in. I didn’t like the blood and gore [part of] nursing. I didn’t like to see the blood and gore bits. I thought, whether this is for me or not. But fortunately when I went and did my training, I didn’t have very much to do with, the casualty department, so that was good.[105]

Anecdotal stories, sometimes told with humour, as in her story about preparing kidneys, illustrate the type of day-to-day grievances which affected women's enjoyment of their work. Unpleasant experiences such as the 'blood and gore' of casualty, and unvaried tasks such as filing, deviated from her overall enjoyment of being a nurse, particularly caring for patients, meeting new people, and learning new skills.

Outlining her work history Clementine (b.1933,Dundee) described in-depth her rich work experience. Working as a make-up demonstrator at a chemist, and latterly as an independent demonstrator, her enthusiasm for this work is apparent in the following excerpt:

> I loved working [there]...because there were certain things there. We had trips down to Nottingham and down to London, and, I demonstrated some of their – make-up at WRI [Women's Rural Institute] meetings. I was a make-up demonstrator, but not a full-time one, but somebody would write in asking for a make-up demonstration, and I would go to maybe church meetings, WRI meetings, mothers groups, that sort of thing. Which I did also when I worked for a year at Menzieshill. I got my own kit of make-up, and with the young mothers group we had a 6 week session of doing different aspects from skin care to, right up to doing diets, you know, things like that. I enjoyed that as well.[106]

From this extract her joy working with beauty and cosmetics is clear. The variety of tasks, the opportunities for travel, new experiences, and constructing programmes was gratifying. As discussed earlier in this chapter Stephenson and Brown argued the space given over to employment in oral history interviews indicated the significance of work to women's lives. The extract presented above was part of a lengthier section from Clementine's interview.[107] In combination with the more truncated manner in which she talked about, for example,

housework, this suggests work was an important and essential aspect of Clementine’s life as she spoke freely and enthusiastically about it.

Women often remained in the same line of work, such as clerical or shop work, but made distinctions between jobs which were enjoyable and those which were not. Norma (b.1946,Newcastle) worked in offices throughout her life, until re-training as a teacher in her forties. She found some office jobs more interesting than others. For Norma, challenging and stimulating work was more desirable:

> My last job in [an] office I did [enjoy] because it was a small mental health organisation and so I had to set up all the systems, so I set all the accounting systems, I set up all the other systems that you need, you know your, standard letters and different things like this so I had to set everything up so that used my logic, absolutely used my logic and then...I had to deal with the people that came in and people on the phone and that, that used the pastoral side of me and it was a mental health service user led group, which means all the management committee had mental health problems, so sometimes you would have also to listen to them. So I did that, so I...that job in the office probably used more of my skills, other office jobs *I was bored to tears*, which was why I...apart from the one at the ministry which I stayed at because as I say, the living on my own and having equal pay to a man, that helped me to live on my own prior to that I couldn’t have afforded it, so – it enabled me to get out of the house where I just didn’t want to live anymore.[108] [My emphasis]

Norma appreciated her early jobs as they enabled her to leave her family home and live independently. However, her enjoyment of different office jobs varied. Those which challenged her, allowed her to use her skills and aptitude were satisfying and enjoyable. Norma devoted greater space to her discussion of a satisfying job, however, this was also her final job before returning to study full-time, and so was conceivably fresher in her mind. Yet, prioritising the liked job over the disliked job, and her apparent struggle to find something good or useful to say about the ‘boring’ office job strongly implies that not all office jobs were equal.

This section has presented testimony from women with a range of work-life experiences. Women spoke of their pride in their skill as workers, their enjoyment of work – even if not all jobs or tasks – and the importance of friendships and getting along well with colleagues. Anecdotes and stories allowed women to reveal their sense of self as worker, and demonstrate their interest and involvement in their work. However, some women had difficulty composing a fluid work narrative, particularly when their work-life was largely uneventful. In these cases brief statements professed their enjoyment of work, but with little further elaboration. Existing case studies in the historiography (such as those of Stephenson and Brown, Bruley, Roberts, and Sanderson) are useful in aiding the understanding of women's manner of speaking about their past work-life.

Conclusions

Women's recollections of work were diverse in character. Oral testimony provides rich insights into women's memories of working-life. Women of the post-war period had a smaller range of employment options than in contemporary Britain from which to choose their career, and a range of personal and structural factors combined to affect women's work choices. The discussion was advanced by exploring how women felt about their work decisions in hindsight. Women's work experiences were incredibly mixed. Some jobs were enjoyable, some were not. Within enjoyable jobs there were tasks or aspects of that work which were disliked and vice-versa; some tedious jobs could provide benefits to women's lives.

McIvor cautioned that interviewees may filter their working lives through 'rose-tinted spectacles', with retirement, old age, loneliness, and world-weariness increasing the appeal of past jobs in the present. Hindsight undoubtedly aided women to talk about their work by comparing jobs, as women reflected on their whole working life and considered the careers they might have taken if they had the opportunity. This reveals just how tightly constrained women's choices were when they were leaving school and entering the workplace, and focuses attention on how far society has changed for women. By drawing the younger interviewer into the narrative, invoking her to realise how different things were for them compared to women 'these days', elucidates the changes the women interviewed had witnessed – with some regret they had not benefited from these changes when they were young women.

Conflicting interpretations of the oral history testimony emerge. The short responses among women who otherwise stated they enjoyed work and the few women who spoke freely and openly about the place of work in their life, could be interpreted to mean women actually had little interest or investment in work. However, the anecdotes and stories which women tell about their working lives suggest the contrary. Work was important in their lives, giving them stories and memories (which it could be imagined are regaled from time-to-time), enjoyable experiences, friendships, as well as contributing to their wellbeing and self-esteem (both positively and negatively). To bridge these conflicting interpretations it is proposed that in the absence of suitable public narratives of work which adequately describe women's experience independently of being 'working mothers', women are forced to find their own material within which to construct a narrative. Women's work continues to be viewed as supplementary and temporary,

and biological function shapes how women's work is viewed. Working mothers and career women continue to be treated with suspicion among some society groups and in contemporary media. To imagine this does not affect women's views of their working life would be to ignore the very real power of patriarchal attitudes on women's understanding of their lived experience. This is not to argue for the creation of a public narrative of women's work; however, it has been suggested that this silence has influenced the ability of women who started work in the post-war period to compose a narrative of their work-life before and independent of their role as wife and mother.

Women's narratives are sometimes stunted, evidenced in occasional short answers and some difficulty finding words. By telling anecdotes, detailing (dis)liked tasks and jobs, and weaving work around wider life, such as in relation to expectations about children and marriage, women told *their* experiences of work. The challenge facing the interviewer and researcher is reading these stories and trying to reach conclusions about what these women are saying. Of course, this is true of all oral history. Stephenson and Brown proposed that '[i]t may be that historians have difficulty in articulating the ways in which experience of employment shaped working-class women's lives'.[109] One particular challenge of these oral history interviews has been to understand the 'language' and the story these women told. Coming to the interview as a young inexperienced researcher, with expectations of a coherent, composed narrative from interviewees, it is clear these women were telling me something important about their working lives. Post-war working-class women have been disadvantaged by the lack of a dominant, coherent, 'culturally approved' narrative of women's work outwith the 'dual role' and narratives of improvement and social mobility.

Notes

[1] J. D. Stephenson and C. G. Brown, 'The View from the Workplace: Women's Memories of Work in Stirling, c.1910 – c.1950' in E. Gordon and E. Breitenbach (eds.), *The World is Ill-Divided: Women's Work in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Centuries* (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1990).
[2] A. McIvor, *Working Lives: Work in Britain since 1945* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2013), p. 111.
[3] J. Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1992), p. 69.
[4] E. Roberts, *Women's Work 1840 – 1940* (Macmillan, Hampshire, 1988), p. 15.
[5] E. Roberts, *Women and Families: An Oral History, 1940 – 1970* (Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1995), pp. 57 – 58.
[6] S. Bruley, *Women in Britain since 1900* (Macmillan Press, Basingstoke, 1999), p. 122.
[7] S. Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England, 1918 – 1950* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005), p. 164 and p. 221.
[8] Ibid, p. 6 and pp. 229 – 230.
[9] Roberts, *Women and Families*, p. 51.
[10] Willis cited in McIvor, *Working Lives*, p. 17.
[11] Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family*, p. 94.
[12] Ibid, p. 140.
[13] D. Kynaston, *Austerity Britain, 1945 – 1951* (Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2007), p. 574.
[14] D. Kynaston, *Family Britain, 1951 – 1957* (Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2009), p. 411.
[15] Ibid, p. 162.
[16] S. Todd, *The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working-Class, 1910 – 2010* (John Murray, London, 2014), p. 221.
[17] Ibid, p. 221.
[18] Ibid, p. 232.
[19] McIvor, *Working Lives*, p. 101.
[20] C. Hakim, 'Grateful Slaves and Self-Made Women: Fact and Fantasy in Women's Work Orientations', *European Sociological Review*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Sept., 1991), p. 101.
[21] E. Gordon and E. Breitenbach (eds.), *The World is Ill-Divided: Women's Work in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Centuries* (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1990), p. 5 and E. Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland, 1850 – 1914* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991), p. 288.
[22] K. Sanderson, ''A Pension to Look Forward to...?': Women Civil Servant Clerks in London, 1925 – 1939'in L. Davidoff and B. Westover (eds.), *Our Work, Our Lives, Our Words: Women's History and Women's Work* (Macmillan Education, Hampshire, 1986), pp. 145 – 159.
[23] Roberts, *Women and Families*, p. 56.
[24] M. Black, 'Clerical Workers in the 1950s and 1960s: The Use of Oral Evidence', *Oral History*, Vol. 22, No. 1, Working Lives (Spring, 1994), p. 51.
[25] S. Bruley, 'Sorters, Pressers, Pippers and Packers: Women in Light Industry in South London 1920 – 60', *Oral History*, Vol. 25, No. 1 Sporting Lives (Spring, 1997), p. 78.
[26] Ibid, p. 81.
[27] McIvor, *Working Lives*, p. 62.
[28] Ibid, pp. 62 – 63.
[29] Ibid, p. 60.
[30] Roberts, *Women and Families*, p. 53.
[31] Ibid, p. 53.

[32] Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family*, p. 159.
[33] McIvor, *Working Lives*, p. 56.
[34] Bruley, 'Women in Light Industry', p. 81.
[35] Stephenson and Brown, 'The View from the Workplace', p. 24.
[36] Interview with Ros, LS100397, p. 5.
[37] Sally and Ros were interviewed after a social group they attended at the Unitarian Church, Newcastle. I interviewed them before they left to attend a reading group together at the library. Through mutual agreement they were in the room, but did not participate, in each other's interview.
[38] Interview with Ros, LS100397, p. 5.
[39] Ibid, p. 5.
[40] Ibid, p. 6.
[41] Interview with Jane, LS100382, p. 7.
[42] Interview with Audrey, LS100370, p. 9.
[43] Emergency Ward 10 was on British television between 1957 and 1967. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0159870/ Accessed 8/9/13.
[44] Interview with Pauline, LS100407, pp. 8 – 9.
[45] Ibid, pp. 16 – 17.
[46] Interview with Bessie, LS100415, p. 8.
[47] Ibid, pp. 8 – 9.
[48] Ibid, p. 13.
[49] Interview with Ruth, LS100395, p. 6.
[50] Ibid, p. 25.
[51] Ibid, p. 14.
[52] Interview with Barbara, LS00404, p. 9.
[53] Ibid, p. 9.
[54] Ibid, p. 10.
[55] Ibid, p. 10.
[56] Interview with Beatrice, LS100379, p. 9
[57] Ibid, p. 12.
[58] C. Dyhouse, 'Signing the Pledge? Women's Investment in University Education and Teacher Training before 1939', *History of Education*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1997), p. 208.
[59] Anderson, ibid, p. 208.
[60] Todd, *The People*, p. 231.
[61] Ibid, p. 231.
[62] Interview with Jeannie, LS100401, p. 7.
[63] Interview with Ella, LS100411, p. 10.
[64] Interview with Christine, LS100409, p. 9.
[65] Interview with Dorothy, LS100403, p. 7.
[66] Interview with Sandra, LS100406, p. 8.
[67] Interview with Pamela, LS100398, p. 13.
[68] Interview with Rose, LS100408, p.8.
[69] Ibid, p. 10 and p. 11.
[70] Interview with Ella, LS100411, p. 9.
[71] Ibid, p. 9.
[72] Interview with Dorothy, LS100403, pp. 5 – 6.
[73] Interview with Marlene, LS100368, p. 4. This tapped into notions of working-class respectability, the physical and discursive separation of spinners in the mill and weavers in the factory. V. Wright, 'Juteopolis and After: Women and Work in Twentieth-Century Dundee' in J. Tomlinson and C. A. Whatley (eds.), *Jute No More: Transforming Dundee* (University of Dundee Press, Dundee, 2011), pp. 133 – 136.
[74] Interview with Marlene, LS100368, p. 2.
[75] Harriet's mother passed away when she was a child, and Harriet lived mostly with her father and step-mother. Interview with Harriet, LS100369, p. 13.

[76] Ibid, p. 2.
[77] Ibid, p. 1.
[78] Ibid, p. 13.
[79] Interview with Moira, LS100361, pp. 3 – 4.
[80] Interview with Kathleen, LS100402, p. 20.
[81] Interview with Harriet, LS100369, p. 14.
[82] Interview with Bessie, LS100415, p. 13.
[83] Interview with Christine, LS100409, p. 10
[84] Interview with Hilda, LS100383, pp. 12 – 13.
[85] Interview with Eileen, LS100380/81, p. 10.
[86] Ibid, pp. 8 – 9.
[87] Ibid, p. 11.
[88] Interview with Nancy, LS100363, p. 10.
[89] Ibid, p. 10.
[90] Ibid, p. 16.
[91] Ibid, p. 17.
[92] As a female tailor producing and altering garments for men, tailoress was the term Hannah used to describe her job.
[93] Interview with Hannah, LS100360, pp. 14 – 15.
[94] Her positive reference from her sewing teacher would convince this business to change their mind and offer her a job. She seemed to delight in turning the tables and rejecting this offer.
[95] Interview with Hannah, LS100360, pp. 15 – 17.
[96] Ibid, p. 19.
[97] Interview with Jane, LS100382, p. 7.
[98] Ibid, p. 8.
[99] Ibid, pp. 9 – 10.
[100] Interview with Joyce, LS100365, pp. 31 – 32.
[101] Ibid, p. 38.
[102] Ibid, pp. 33 – 35.
[103] Interview with Pamela, LS100398, p. 15.
[104] Ibid, p. 13.
[105] Interview with Sally, LS100396, pp. 7 – 8.
[106] Interview with Clementine, LS100372, p. 12.
[107] Reaching around two typed A4 pages of text.
[108] Interview with Norma, LS100400, p. 25.
[109] Stephenson and Brown 'The View from the Workplace', p. 25.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

In this final chapter, findings from the preceding research chapters are drawn out and woven together to reach conclusions about working-class women's experiences of paid employment between the end of the Second World War and the early seventies. Three central arguments have been made; the post-war period was transformative and saw an increase in married women's formal employment outside the home, regional differences in women's employment patterns across the life-course diminished, and individual women's agency played a vital role – a much greater role than merely government policy or economic drivers alone – in bringing about the momentous changes to the place of paid work in women's lives.

Women's agency in creating changes to their work-lives has been stressed. Women's lives were not changed solely as a result of external factors. Individual women were vital in reforming the landscape of their own life, and thereby women's working lives as a whole in the post-war period. The personal struggles of many women to escape stifling full-time domesticity and enact these pivotal changes to their lives have been exposed. Coming into conflict with families, friends, neighbours, their husbands, and, indeed, within their selves, women adjusted to an emerging world where their own ambitions extended beyond the confines of domesticity, and were realisable.

Overview

In the post-war period in Britain the two-income household was becoming the norm. The proportions of married women in formal paid employment increased. Women's part-time and full-time work rose, however, part-time work continued to be gendered feminine. A range of factors contribute to explanations for married women and mothers increasing labour force participation. Economic restructuring changed opportunities for women workers. In the first half of the twentieth-century, manufacturing and primary industries were integral to the economy of northern Britain. Domestic services and manufacturing bases, such as textiles, declined as employers of women. The growth of new manufacturing industries, such as light engineering, and the growing service sector employed women, whilst simultaneously increasing the demand for female clerical workers. In locations such as textile towns, patterns of women's employment after marriage and having children changed concomitantly with economic restructuring. Women in Dundee and Preston had tended to work full-time after having children; this changed post-war as women returning to work after starting a family tended to return part-time at first. Economic restructuring generally benefited women by opening up employment in these sectors, within tightly gendered ideas about what constituted appropriate work for women. Women also made a significant contribution to post-war restructuring, voting with their feet to work in jobs which they preferred, albeit within constrained choices.

Demographic and social changes aid explanation of the increasing married female workforce. Marriage was increasingly popular through the post-war period.

Women married at a younger age. The pool of single women workers shrunk, in favour of married women. Contraceptive use, particularly after its legalisation in 1967 and the increasing availability of 'the pill' meant married couples could plan their families. Women spent smaller periods of their life in pregnancy and child-rearing. However, this must be considered alongside fears about children's mental deprivation and 'Bowlbyism' which placed increasing pressure on women to attend to motherhood for the first 2 to 5 years of their children's lives. Women in this period experienced conflict from others and within their self over what it meant to be a good mother; between full-time motherhood with minimal separation from children, and a mother who worked to provide better material circumstances for their family, as well as enriching their own life. There was a change from earlier periods where working-class families had felt greatest financial pressure when children were young, requiring mothers to take paid work at that time, withdrawing when finances improved and children themselves were old enough to work. The raised school leaving age, and indeed, raised parental aspirations for their children meant women were more likely to work than children. In this period, women worked in a bi-modal pattern, leaving work to start a family and returning part-time when children were older. Full-time work came later in their life-course. Women's working patterns altered further still as the twentieth-century progressed. The introduction of statutory maternity leave in 1975 meant women could return to their previous career, and have become increasingly likely to return to work full-time. Maternity leave was a symbol of the new age of women's work.

Women and Work

In the existing historiography, focus has largely been on women's work in the home, and its implications for women's paid employment. Women's relationship with domesticity and the family has been an important frame upon which women's work has been understood. Tilly and Scott's early influential work on European women's work found that:

> women's childbearing capability (whether they were married or not, or ever had children) seems to have affected the meanings attributed to their work – by employers, parents, state officials, and themselves. However different these meanings were in the different time periods we studied, they had the similar effect of representing women workers as an exception to the general category of the (male) worker.[1]

Women's biological capacity has dictated the meaning of their work, and constructed working women as distinct from the norm, the male worker. Simonton's long narrative of women's work across the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth-centuries highlighted that '[i]n the case of women, the married woman/mother was the model whereas numerous females were not married or mothers at any point in time. Thus central ideas which emerged about one point in the female life-cycle tended to colour the position of all women'.[2] This theme was echoed in other work.

In the historiography of women's work the methods used by contemporaries to characterise women's employment as not work, and to impose constraints was explored. Women workers were painted as a threat to the moral fibre of the family and the community, and had to be controlled. John's study of

the pit brow lasses in nineteenth-century Lancashire exemplifies this theme most clearly. To reiterate her conclusions, John argued that constructing the female manual labourer as an example of 'degraded womanhood' aided contemporaries to understand ideal femininity.[3] The clash between prescriptive discourses of femininity and the necessity for working-class women to take paid work is an integral feature in understanding women's work. Additionally Simonton demonstrated that the proportions of women working and the diverse range of their work illustrated that women were not 'sequestered or protected in a private place'.[4] In Simonton's analysis the depiction of the workplace as a male space, and the definition of work by male standards, subordinated women's work and contributed to 'identifying women as not workers' and defining tasks women did as not work. She assessed that 'redefinitions tended to make women's work even more invisible, while the visible woman worker had to be controlled, categorised and constructed as a temporary worker or not a worker...[t]he belief that this was not real work because it was occasional and not done in a proper 'workplace' was coupled with a perception that married women did not work.[5] Expectations that married women would not work, and definitions of what constituted a 'workplace', made women's work (both paid and unpaid) invisible or, as in John's research, condemned as an abomination. Gordon's work on women's labour movement participation between 1850 and 1914 in Scotland found similar results. She examined factory and workshop legislation, which restricted the hours and location of women's work, and trade unions and employers who excluded women from apprenticeships and training. Gordon underlined trade unionists' fears about the effects of women's work, expressing 'concern about the atrophying of domestic skills, the threat to the spiritual and material wellbeing of the family and

the morals of working women'.[6] Gordon offered examples from piecers in Glasgow, spinners in Dundee, and coal pickers in Lanarkshire who 'offended the moral sensibilities of male labour'.[7] Against this historical context of fears about degraded womanhood working-class women's comparative welcome into the workplace in the late forties, fifties and beyond acquires greater significance. It illustrates a dramatic departure from previous attitudes towards the working-class woman worker.

Cultural approaches to women's work illustrated the condemnation of women's work as a threat to femininity and the morality of the family. Women workers remained concentrated in low-skilled and low-paid work. Some historians have re-evaluated women's work to indicate it was not only supplementary to a male, breadwinner wage but was integral to the household finances, such as Gordon's conclusions that women's 'earnings were central to the family economy'.[8] This was reiterated by Smith's interpretation that women's status as head of household afforded them opportunities for gender empowerment.[9] However, it must be reiterated that although women full-time workers were important to household economies, their status in the workplace and the home largely remained secondary to the ideal of the male breadwinner. Roberts argued that women's control as household managers conferred on them a degree of power. She suggested that in the post-war period 'the increasing number of women who worked outside the home were not able to replace the power and status they had lost in the home with equivalent power and status in the workplace'.[10] The construction of women's wages as supplementary to a breadwinner wage marginalised women's work.[11] As convincing as this is, by re-evaluating post-war women's work, it is possible to challenge this marginalisation

of women's work in the historiography. It was not the fact of working-class women's work that lessened women's status, but the ongoing construction of women's work as temporary and supplementary to a male wage, alongside gendered ideals of women's role.

In the 'affluent' post-war society, the meaning of economic necessity changed significantly from before the Second World War.[12] Although affluence is contested, increased opportunities for financial improvement for some working-class families affected women's work. With increasing male wages, women's employment continued to be perceived as supplementary to the male breadwinner income, with some women framing their work in terms of purchasing 'extras', such as holidays and new consumer goods, or to pay mortgages and increased rents. However, this can be considered as economic necessity, and as integral markers of affluence. Even though the avoidance of poverty motivated some women, working for these 'extra' goods and services does not devalue that necessity. As standards of living rose, the meaning of economic necessity changed. The consumer goods in shop-windows and the lifestyle sold in advertisements were appealing to working-class workers. However, Todd demonstrated that this affluence was out of reach for many working-class families, and achieved through long-hours, hard work, and often a reliance on credit.[13] Women's paid work may have been perceived as supplementary – by women themselves – but it was necessary to achieve and maintain these raised aspirations. In addition, women felt pressure to make their work seem acceptable, to themselves, their family, and the audience of the interview. Within this context, a key element is the meaning of paid employment to women's lives. In so doing, explanations for women's work shifts from economic to oral historians.

Oral history has proven vital to the study of women's experiences of work in the post-war period. One issue with existing written and published autobiographical accounts of working-class women's lives, such as Heron's *Truth, Dare, or Promise* is that often these accounts come from women who have had the privilege, education, and means to write about their lives. Oral history overcomes this problem to some extent, although it holds its own problems as a methodology and as a source. A thread in the historiography has stressed that despite concentration in low-status work, working-class women expressed their enjoyment and satisfaction with this work. As McIvor identified, there is a contrast between the structural 'oppression' of women workers, and their lived experiences.[14] Stephenson and Brown's oral history research argued that for married women 'work could mean a release from domestic confinement, giving access to friends and companionship outwith the often claustrophobic restrictions of family and neighbourhood'.[15] The lengthy answers given to questions about employment, in contrast to shorter answers on married life, illustrated the importance of work to women.[16] In a similar vein, Todd argued that while most young working-class women aspired to leave full-time paid work after marriage this did not shape a 'detached indifference to their work'.[17] Indeed McIvor, Roberts, Sanderson, Stephenson and Brown, Black and Bruley have demonstrated women's enjoyment and fond recollections of their working life through their own oral history interviews and existing oral history archives. Without losing sight of poor working conditions, the monotony and arduousness of women's work, it is apparent that employment was personally valuable and enjoyable to working-class women. However, in this thesis I have attempted to take this analysis further and suggest that some women were bored and uninspired by their limited job options. They

sought exciting and stimulating careers and returned to study in order to enrich their lives. Unfortunately, not all were empowered to make these changes. In this regard oral history serves a useful function in accessing women's own thoughts and feelings about their work.

Space is taken here to reflect further on Roberts' conclusions from oral history research with women and men in three towns and cities in Lancashire in the period 1940 to 1970. Roberts argued that women until the 1940s held an ambition to stop work and be at home, viewing their liberation in domesticity.[18] Roberts noted the conflicting demands placed on women in the post-war period, however, she found that few women discussed this as a dilemma.[19] Among her respondents, only a small group of women discussed boredom or unhappiness at home.[20] This thesis challenged, to a degree, Roberts' conclusions about women's working patterns, as it does not reflect the inner turmoil women experienced. Roberts' pioneering oral history research on post-war women's lives has been valuable in extensively studying women's own views of their life and their work. However, this thesis has attempted to show that some of her interpretations regarding women's sense of self as rooted in domesticity are not entirely correct. In particular, her assertion that 'they were mothers first and workers second',[21] does not do justice to the negotiations working-class women made in order to fulfil the real expectations (both from outside sources and within their self) to be a 'good' mother with their own aspirations to a life outside domesticity after marriage.

In addition to Roberts' research on a similar chronological stage to this thesis, Todd's work on young women workers between 1918 and 1950 is useful in understanding the work experiences of women at an earlier stage in their life-

course. For Todd's young women 'the experience of work shaped a sense of identity, grounded in class but mediated by gender and age'.[22] Todd explained that although the workplace was important in young working-class women's everyday life, women identified less with the workplace than did male workers.[23] Indicating continuity with Roberts' assertion of continued aspirations to full-time domesticity, Todd stated that young working-class women continued to hanker for marriage, and to retire from full-time paid employment.[24] Yet, this must be tempered by young women's new aspirations and expectations for their youth:

> Young women certainly were attracted by marriage, but the growing acceptance of youth as a distinct life stage characterised by a degree of social freedom offered women a space to articulate and pursue alternative ambitions by the early 1950s. The confinement of these aspirations to youth meant that they did not pose a direct threat to marriage or motherhood.[25]

Thus, while young women hoped to marry, youth was a period to explore and pursue their aspirations; as long as this occurred in a certain life-stage, this was non-threatening. Young women who grew up in the interwar years had raised aspirations which were thwarted by poverty, but this germinated hopes and aspirations for their daughters' generation, who entered a more affluent and buoyant labour market in the forties and fifties.[26]

This thesis has drawn inspiration from Todd's analysis of women's work and marriage aspirations, alongside Roberts' domestic orientated analysis of women living and working in the post-Second World War period. In both historians' analyses there is consensus that working-class women continued to aspire to marriage and motherhood, and, concomitantly, to withdraw from the labour force. But conclusions about the primacy of domesticity to women's

working lives are only partly correct. This thesis aimed to suggest the experience was more complex than Roberts' 'mothers first, workers second' summary implies. Todd's conclusions help to reveal this complexity. For young women in the interwar period, work was an important aspect of their lives, as they formed an identity partly shaped by class and gender. These women held aspirations and hopes which were disappointed by the economic necessity and poverty of the period. In consequence, they instilled in their daughters hopes and aspirations for 'something better'. Where Todd argued that women were not 'detached' and 'indifferent' to their work, Roberts appeared to disagree; suggesting that although women enjoyed their work and the company it provided, employment had little weight on women's sense of self. Roberts suggested women did not feel conflicted by the alternatives to domestic ideology. However, it is clear that through the course of the twentieth-century, and through individual women's life-course, their aspirations and hopes for 'something more' forced a change from their youthful expectations to retire from the workforce. Indeed, the need to be non-threatening resulted in women's self depiction as a 'good mother', and framing their work self, to some extent, within this model. This thesis has thus aligned with Todd in this regard, demonstrating the engagement, and agency women used to find work which was stimulating and enjoyable.

However, this issue has been taken further in this study focussing on the post-war period and women's married lives. Married women continued to value work which engaged their mind, was enjoyable, and interesting. This was communicated in oral history interviews using different narrative styles. On the one hand, women who retrained in a new skill, particularly in professions, strongly indicated how important this was to their lives. For a minority, such as Helen

(discussed in Chapter Four) this resulted in a total break from the confines of domestic expectations, and forging a new professional, career orientated, independent lifestyle. In the main however, retraining meant negotiating conflict to construct a new professional identity which benefited the individual, and allowed women to fulfil their expectations to care for the family and home and to remain a ‘good mother’.

On the other hand, the importance of satisfying interesting work was found among women who had not experienced these new opportunities. For these women, such as Ros discussed in Chapter Five, regret, annoyance, frustration, disappointment, and the lingering ‘what if?’ emerged; that they had not been aware of or confident enough to seek out these opportunities. In addition, acknowledgement of how far women’s lives had changed added to this sense of thwarted ambitions, as women compared their lives with those of their daughters and granddaughters’ generation – and indeed of the interviewer’s. Whether women were able to retrain or not, oozing from their testimony is their sense of malaise and frustration with domesticity particularly after their children no longer required full-time motherhood; evocative language such as ‘stuck’, ‘staring at four walls’, and ‘going to waste’ exemplified this.

The place of work in women’s lives significantly changed come the post-war period. The role that women’s work in the home has played, both in material terms (namely, women’s ability to go out to work) and ideologically (women’s expected or potential maternity shaping all women’s access to training and work), has not been disputed. However, a central argument of this thesis has been that the importance of employment, and interesting employment at that, to married women strongly suggests that by the seventies, marriage and childbirth did not shape

women's own relationship to their work at all points in their life-course, if it ever had.

By the seventies a dramatic shift in women's work occurred. Women expected to return to work after a period of time concentrating on full-time, non-working motherhood. The two-income household was becoming the norm, even if a hegemonic transformation of discourses on women's work was delayed in developing. Women expected to work for a longer period of their life, and it was welcomed to alleviate the weariness and tedium of full-time housewifery after a break to raise their family. The introduction of maternity leave in 1975 through the Employment Protection Act further signalled this change, enshrining women's right to return to their job after having a baby.

This thesis has attempted to furnish a new approach to the topic of women's work by making use of a range of methodologies to explore the issue in the round. In the following section, the strength and weaknesses of these methodologies in this thesis are considered, as is the benefit of making use of multiple methods.

Methodologies

A multi-methodology approach has been taken to explore the topic of women and work in a series of regional case studies of four industrial towns and cities in northern England and Scotland. The interaction between the three methodologies explored in this thesis has attempted to add value to study of such a complex area of women's lives. The use of one methodology provides a limited perspective to women's work. Historians need to disentangle and complicate the

picture of women's employment. The use of multiple methodologies adds texture to trends of women's employment. Each method has strengths and weaknesses in studying the past in general, and this area of research in particular. When used together, these weaknesses are counteracted to some extent, producing a rich picture of women's working lives, and illustrating the main arguments of this thesis.

The statistical and quantitative method used in Chapter Two illustrated the context of the period 1931 to 1971, in which women interviewed commenced their working lives and returned to the workplace. The Census and Annual Abstract of Statistics provided indispensible information on the proportions of women in work and the types of work women undertook at national and local level. Statistical analysis demonstrated the rise in married women's paid employment over the course of the mid to late twentieth-century. However, quantitative data is limited. It was shown that the Census and Abstract were flawed and inconsistent in enumerating married women and part-time workers, reflecting the changing priorities and interests of Census takers. Statistical sources are subject to social mores, much like any primary source. There are difficulties in drawing comparisons between Censuses due to changes in the way occupational categories were enumerated. However, the statistical methodology demonstrated women's move from domestic service and textiles, to new manufacturing, service, and clerical work. This methodology is not able to answer questions about women's reasons, contribution, and impetus for wanting to continue to work, and the changed circumstances which enabled married women to return to work in such large numbers after the Second World War. These limitations of statistical analysis are overcome to some extent by the use of other methodologies.

Documentary research of the agencies and organisations which provided childcare explored the impact of childcare on women's ability to return to work after having children. The discussions surrounding the creation of childcare in local authorities and in industry revealed the tensions between different agendas; most notably between social policy and economic policy. It revealed that the pressure for nurseries and other childcare to be provided did not, in the main, originate from working mothers themselves. The views expressed in these official sources were those of the organisations represented. Again, these documents are a product of their time, reflecting the biases and priorities of the historical context in which they were produced. This is not necessarily a weakness of the source and is generally unavoidable, but it must be borne in mind that the method is subject to the limits and specific aims and agendas of the source. In minute books and official reports, as in statistical sources, the views and voices of working women themselves are notably absent. This is not surprising as this was not the remit of the local authority or of leaders in industry. Overall, when the evidence of childcare is considered in the post-war decades, it becomes apparent that it had minimal instrumentality in fomenting the great change of rising married women's participation in the paid labour market.

Much more important in this social revolution for married women, this study suggests, were women themselves. As earlier discussion of women's history sought to demonstrate, methodologies can be exploited to counteract the male, white, middle-class bias of sources and of analysis. Oral history was used to explore women's experiences and attitudes. The interview provided women with a space to construct their narrative of working life. Oral history examined the ambitions, anxieties, and exhilaration which, by turns, women of this generation

felt as their work and home life unfolded. In this regard, the oral history method has been invaluable in tapping into women's own understanding of their experiences. Criticisms of oral history have focussed on the subjectivity of the interview and fallibility of memory.[27] However, responses to these criticisms are that these features present important opportunities for cultural historians to explore how women's narratives of their lives are constructed and modified over time and through the life-course. Oral history has had further limitations for use in this thesis. Oral history stands apart and is rarely combined with other methodologies. Used independently of other sources, interviews provide a snapshot into individual women and their work at a particular point in life. The working-class women who came forward believed their life experiences had value to the researcher, had confidence to talk about their life to a stranger, and felt that they had an important story or view to tell a willing audience. Shy women or those who received the flyer and decided not to make contact, perhaps thinking they had nothing significant to say, are not represented. This is not to say their experiences are not valuable, rather, what is emphasised is that oral history respondents are a self-selecting group.

The diverse methods used in this thesis complement and augment each other, while the various strengths and shortcomings of each method are acknowledged. This has meant using archival research and statistics more thoroughly and extensively than merely contextualising and framing oral history – or indeed using oral history to support the findings of archival research. The three methodologies reinforce and enrich each other.

Avoiding the Teleology of Government and Market Economies

A central aim of this thesis has been to question the notion of an externally-engineered growth of women's work, by the state and by industry, in the form of childcare and other welfare inducements. Throughout the thesis the importance of women's agency in the rise of married women's paid work in this period has been privileged. The importance of individual life experiences and aspirations in creating these long-standing, collective changes to British women's life and work patterns, which remain today, has been emphasised.

Structural changes in the post-war British economy benefited women, and women have been integral in these changes. In Chapter Two quantitative sources charted changes to women's labour market participation over the period 1931 to 1971. Key findings included a considerable increase in married women's work across the four case studies of Glasgow, Dundee, Newcastle and Preston, while the site of women's employment changed over the course of the later twentieth-century, to the service sector, retail, and offices. The proportions of women engaged in part-time work increased significantly. In Chapter Three the provision of childcare through nurseries, nursery schools, and childminders was explored, showing that the childcare provided in the four case studies was largely not intended to enable women to return to work en masse after marriage and early motherhood. Nurseries and nursery schools provided by the local authority prioritised a child welfare and education agenda, reinforcing the role of mothers in raising children. In discussions surrounding childcare emphasis was on correcting disadvantages, such as women who were required to work, who lived in poverty, or were otherwise not able to provide suitable full-time care for their own children.

This was illustrated by the priority admissions criteria which indicated great concern with illegitimacy and the 'problem family', and that women were required to have a 'legitimate' need to work in the eyes of the local authority. This was supported by oral history in Chapter Four, where many women interviewed stated that there was 'no such thing' as childcare when they started their family, illustrating that availability of nurseries was not widespread or common knowledge. Indeed, Davis found in her study of Oxfordshire a 'stigma' attached to day nurseries.[28] The most common time for the women interviewed to re-enter the workplace was when children started primary or nursery school, suggesting that while nursery schools were not provided with the intent to enable women to work, in reality many women used this as an opportunity to return to work. Where women did use external childcare for young children, this was largely informal and provided by a grandmother, a neighbour, or friend. Thus while there was overlap in the social childcare which local authorities wanted to provide and the childcare needs of women who had a wish to return to work, there was not a simple cause and effect relationship. The Childminders Act 1948 signalled the government's willingness to legislate and sanction the creation of private nurseries and register childminders. It indicated the government's desire to control and regulate who was looking after children in lieu of mothers. Under this Act, industrial nurseries were created by companies to attract women back into employment. In these nurseries the needs of industry and the export market were prioritised over women's wishes. Industrial nurseries served a specific purpose during a short time period. Nurseries were located in mills and factories, whereas statistical data illustrated that women were increasingly moving away from manufacturing. Even then, the small numbers of places for children in industrial

nurseries, combined with the changing location of working-class women's work, strongly suggests that the impact of nursery places in industrial and non-industrial workplaces was minimal in these four places.

Childcare had a limited numerical effect on mothers who returned to work. While few historians would now accept that nurseries were created as part of an evolving agenda to encourage married women back into work after having children, it is worth reiterating this point. Local authorities did not view their function as encouraging women back into work, and it is clear that increased availability of other formal forms of childcare was not the main cause of the move towards the employment of women with children. Statistical analysis enabled a thorough description to be made of the changes occurring in the post-war period to women's employment patterns while study of childcare provision revealed the reasons for the momentous return of women to work after having children.

It became clear that the impetus and the drive to work came from women themselves. Oral history interviews provided vital insights into this issue. The testimonies of working-class women as they talked about their working lives were extensively explored in Chapters Four and Five. Women expressed a diverse range of reasons for wanting to return to work. Economic need and aspiration emerged time and again in the interviews as women sought to explain their desire to return to work after they had children. But at the same time, many women expressed the feeling of being bored at home, particularly after children had started school. The 'problem with no name' Friedan found did not only exist for highly educated middle-class women, but also for working-class women who were frustrated by domesticity and by the lack of outlets for their potential.

Investigating how women interpreted the place of work across their whole life narrative, it is clear work was an important feature of their lives. They made important decisions about what sort of work they wanted to do as they left school, demonstrating commitment to and positive engagement with their work. Within a limited range of options women exercised choice and agency to select a work-path which suited their interests, abilities and aspirations. For the majority of women interviewed, marriage and having children was expected and embraced as a positive aspect of life with some exceptions. This did not agree with Roberts' finding that women defined themselves primarily in terms of the home and family at the expense of the workplace. Rather this thesis has found Todd's argument, that women did not draw an identity solely from domesticity in their youth, more accurately reflects women's changing sense of self through the life-course. Indeed, this thesis has aimed to advance Todd's argument beyond the early twentieth-century and into a different stage of changing women's life-courses in the post-war years. Although the primacy of motherhood and domesticity remained hugely important in women's lives, it is apparent that both single and married women sought personally satisfying work and careers. Family and the sense of duty to children were important in women's lives, but this did not override the importance of work to women's lives. The testimony strongly suggests a messy, complex, and nuanced relationship between women and their employment, a relationship which changed, but did not deteriorate, through their life-course.

Converging Narratives around the Country

Industrial northern Britain provided the geographical context for this thesis. Case studies in Britain's industrial heartland were taken as representative of mainland Britain as a whole. To understand how far location affected women's access to and experience of work four case studies across two countries were investigated to ensure the diversity of industrial towns and cities was properly exposed. The impact of regional employment opportunities on women's access to work has been a key research goal, seeking to discover how far location was a determining factor on women's experiences of working life. In taking this regional approach, this thesis sought to ensure that neither Scotland nor England were isolated as different in women's experience. The case studies selected were in Scotland, Glasgow and Dundee, and in England, Preston and Newcastle-upon-Tyne. In-depth study of the four locations explores the effects of the site of women's work on their experience. With the exception of minor divergences, over the course of the post-war period, location lessened as a determining factor on women's relationship to the workplace.

Dundee was chosen because of its moniker as a 'women's town', with Preston having a similar reputation. The dominance of textiles – cotton in Preston and jute in Dundee – and the high numbers of women employed in these industries resulted in such a reputation. Dundee and Preston have attracted particular attention from historians (such as Gordon, Breitenbach, Wright, Tomlinson, Schwarzkopf, Singleton, and Hunt). Cities were studied which did not have such large or visible numbers of women and married women working to prevent a skewed analysis. Glasgow and Newcastle, with authoritative 'hard-man'

masculinity, have historically been dominated by heavy industries, such as shipbuilding, iron and steel works. This does not mean that there were no women/married women workers in these places; rather working women's visibility was obscured.

A pivotal argument of this thesis has been that from the end of the Second World War into the 1960s there was a significant move towards convergence across the four case studies in the proportions of women and particularly married women in work. There was no great story of divergence between locations in this period. Newcastle and Glasgow appeared to conform to the narrative of post-war increase of women's and particularly married women's participation in the labour market. Newcastle particularly saw a huge increase in the proportion of women at work – a symptom of higher male wages there earlier in the century. In interwar and early post-war Dundee and Preston there appeared to be a decline in the proportions of Dundee women who were employed. However, for married women and part-time workers there was an increase. It can therefore be considered that women in Dundee and Preston gradually stopped working full-time, but increasingly married women workers returned to work in a part-time capacity. Thus, from around 1951 all four locations began to converge and became increasingly similar in the proportions of women and married women in employment, and in the types of jobs women were employed in. By 1970 the differences between each case study were minimal, although the journey to this point differed. Economic restructuring affected regions to varying degrees, but the ultimate effects were similar by the seventies. The narrative of increase in the numbers of women employed occurred in tandem with the convergence of

regional difference in female employment into what might be considered a national picture.

Oral history evidence supports this narrative of convergence. Location had a limited impact on the narratives of women I interviewed. The only notable regional and industrial difference appeared to be the 'threat of the mill' that women of all ages in Preston described.[29] Within a British context, the location where women grew up and lived for most of their adult life began to have limited impact on working-class women's work. What appeared more significant to women's entry to the workplace, in terms of 'careers advice' and guidance was the type of school attended, and the expectations and aspirations of parents. Women who had attended grammar school, particularly Catholic schools, more commonly recalled careers advice, which varied between expectations to become a teacher or (by that period) quite outdated guidance on femininity, domesticity, and 'being a lady'. In both instances, this guidance was largely unusable, except to grammar school girls who did want to be teachers. Women who attended other schools recalled unsatisfactory careers advice. In either case a limited range of options were offered; shop, office, factory, nursing, or teaching. Among parents', aspirations to 'something better' were common but far from universal. The realities of poverty and low-income determined how far these aspirations were met straight from school. Women's own desires as girls – to leisure and financial freedom – affected their destination after school. Among other parents the financial state of the household, as perceived by women in their youth, necessitated well-paying work. Personal relationships and the influence of parents, husbands, family, and friends, were relatively more important in shaping women's access to work than location.

The availability of industrial nurseries in Dundee and Preston marked these places as different from Glasgow and Newcastle. However, this does not contradict the narrative of convergence. The enthusiasm for industrial nurseries among textile employers in Dundee and Preston, and the marginally more favourable response to childcare among the local council in these locations in the early post-war period, was a consequence of the earlier predominance of women's work in textiles and a product of the drive to expand particular industries and increase exports. Of course, it was demonstrated that admissions to local authority nurseries were expanded in the 1960s as a measure to combat fears about a shortage of teachers. However, this was occupationally, rather than regionally specific. That regionally and industrial specific childcare did not continue beyond the early post-war period indicates the diminution of regional diversity.

Omissions and Possibilities

The limits of space and time have necessitated omissions which would have further broadened and deepened understanding of women's work in this period. The work experiences of other social classes have not been considered in-depth, nor have those of single women or unmarried mothers, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual women, women with disabilities, or Black and ethnic minority women. These women have not been actively excluded from the research. In this thesis, class and gender have been the lenses through which women's experiences are interpreted. To avoid listing categories which may be embraced in a liberal project of inclusion, of particular interest to future research will be the consideration of race, nationality, and immigrant status as categories of analysis,

and as factors which shape and affect women's experiences of work. Speculatively, it may be suggested that the new opportunities of the post-war period for working-class women have benefited white, British-born women; immigrant, Black and ethnic minority women have been relatively excluded from these opportunities. This may not be a universal experience as women immigrating, for example, to train and work as nurses may have had distinct experiences. What is clear is that there is a rich seam of research to be explored further in this area. It will require a rigorous methodology which starts with race, class, and gender at its analytical roots, not the addition of race to existing analysis of white working-class women.

There is further need to explore the relationship of work in the life narratives of single and childless women. Although a small number of such women were interviewed for this research, to fully understand their experiences, their marital and motherhood status needs to be placed at the heart of the analysis, as women's status as working mothers has been in this thesis.

A particular theme which has emerged is of the importance of education. It would be valuable to relate careers guidance at different schools for working-class girls to their work destinations. In addition, the return to education later in life is significant and this would further enrich understanding of the changes to women's lives over the third quarter of the twentieth-century.

These omissions do not materially weaken the analysis and interpretation of women's work and life experiences in this thesis. In the four towns were to be found common patterns of industries, economic change and work opportunities for the vast majority of the workers of northern Britain. Through the limits of time and space, this research has focussed on white, working-class women who have

generally been married and had children. This was a common, almost standard pattern of life in these communities. The possibilities for future research suggested here would serve to bolster understanding of post-war women's work and further disentangle the complexities of women's lives in the twentieth-century.

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[17] S. Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England, 1918 – 1950* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005), p. 164.
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[19] Roberts, *Women and Families*, p. 125.
[20] Ibid, p. 127.
[21] Ibid, p. 139.
[22] Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family*, p. 13.
[23] Ibid, p. 157.
[24] Ibid, p. 157.
[25] Ibid, p. 229.
[26] Ibid, p. 226.
[27] L. Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Routledge, London, 2010), pp. 6 – 7.
[28] A. Davis, 'Women's Experiences of Combining Childcare and Careers in Post-War Oxfordshire, c.1940 – 1990', *The Local Historian*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2013), p. 18.
[29] Whereas in Dundee, the mill or factory continued to be something which many women reported their parents wanted them to avoid. The aspiration being for girls to 'do better' than the mill was present in both towns; what was different was that the mill was remembered as a threat in Preston to encourage girls to work hard at school.

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Appendix One

Biographical Information on Interviewees

Appendix Two

Interview Questionnaire