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*Mature women re-entering employment : The role of the manpower services commission in meeting their needs.*

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MATURE WOMEN RE-ENTERING EMPLOYMENT :  
THE ROLE OF THE MANPOWER SERVICES COMMISSION  
IN MEETING THEIR NEEDS

BY Rita Johnston

Thesis submitted to the Council for National Academic Awards

Sponsoring Establishment : Sheffield City Polytechnic  
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in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree  
of Master of Philosophy.

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## ABSTRACT

### Mature Women Re-Entering Employment : The Role of the Manpower Services Commission in Meeting their Needs

Rita Johnston

This thesis reviews the re-entry experiences of women who left employment temporarily to raise a family. It investigates in particular the role of the M.S.C. with regard to these re-entrants.

The background to the research is given in three chapters which provide an outline of the current situation of women in employment, a review of the literature on women and work, and an account of the methodology to be used in the research.

The following four chapters present the results of a series of surveys conducted in the Sheffield area.

A pilot probe provided the local grounding. A standardised survey was conducted involving 480 Job Centre users.

Thirty-two potential Job Centre clients gave depth interviews; and an attitudinal survey investigated over 50 M.S.C. staff.

As well as confirming well documented re-entrant preferences for part-time work, close to home, in the traditional female job sector, the surveys also established that women are returning to work at a younger age, with younger

children, and after a shorter domestic break than had been previously supposed. The role of the M.S.C. in the re-entry process was seen as very peripheral by women at the two extremes of the socio-economic scale. Most effective service was given to registered clients and least to non-registered clients. Both groups were prevented from making full use of the M.S.C. by lack of knowledge of what services were available. Staff perceptions of client needs were generally closely in line with those of the re-entrants themselves though it was commonly felt that the current economic situation was particularly disadvantageous to this group.

In the final chapter of the thesis these empirical findings are summarised and assessed against the background of previous knowledge, and a commentary is given on the research process itself.

## PREFACE

The choice of this thesis topic resulted from personal experience. After withdrawing from employment and enjoying a domestic role for twelve years, I became a re-entrant via a TOPS funded post graduate diploma. On completion of this I found myself with considerable experience in one field - the problem of re-entering employment, encountered by women returning to work after domesticity! The thesis presents an account of the experiences of women in this situation. It investigates in particular the role, actual and potential, of the Manpower Services Commission in facilitating re-entry.

Obviously the investigation would not have been possible without the full co-operation of the M.S.C. to whom I am indebted, both metaphorically and literally, since they financed the research. Very many M.S.C. staff gave generously of their time, information and assistance. I am grateful to all of them, and in particular J. Gordon, Principal Psychologist E.S.D., and G. Platts, District Manager.

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and M. C. Ryan of Ashridge Management College.

I am also grateful for all the help and advice given by many staff and fellow students over the past two years, mainly in the Department of Management Studies but also from Departments of Applied Social Sciences, English, and Computer Services.

I would like to express by gratitude to Maureen Cooke, Jenny Garber, Jean Gibbons and Helen Hebblethwaite, who applied the questionnaires, and to Vilma Smith who typed the script. In addition my thanks are due to the over five hundred women who filled in questionnaires or gave interviews about their re-entry experiences.

Finally, I thank my husband Ron, not only for the help he gave, but also for that he thoughtfully refrained from giving, and to Christopher and Lucy who helped in numerous small ways.

Parts of this thesis have already formed the basis for publications, and acknowledgement is made to the editors and proprietors of the following:-

M.C.B. Books (For Chapter III)

Personnel Review (for part of Chapters V and VI)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
PREFACE	
<u>I INTRODUCTION</u>	1
Background to the Research	1
Research Objectives	3
Assumptions	4
Structure of the Thesis	6
<u>II METHODOLOGY</u>	8
Introduction	8
The Literature Review	9
The Pilot Probe	12
The Standardised Survey of Job Centre Users	14
The Depth Interviews Survey of Potential Job Centre Users	32
Survey of the Role of the M.S.C.	46
Summary	51
<u>III LITERATURE REVIEW</u>	53
Introduction	53
The Early Research Period	56
The Middle Period	61
The Later Period	70
Re-Entry	79
Relevance to the Current Research	84
<u>IV THE PILOT PROBE</u>	86
Reasons for the Pilot	86
Objectives	89
Sample	90
Findings	92
Implications	99
Evaluation	102
<u>V THE STANDARDISED SURVEY OF RE-ENTRY WOMEN USING THE JOB CENTRES</u>	103
Introduction	103
Findings	104
Summary	139
Evaluation	140

	<u>Page</u>
<u>VI THE DEPTH INTERVIEWS SURVEY OF POTENTIAL JOB CENTRE USERS</u>	151
Introduction	151
The Middle Class Sample	152
The Working Class Sample	181
Summary	208
Evaluation	210
<u>VII SURVEY OF THE ROLE OF THE MANPOWER SERVICES COMMISSION</u>	213
Introduction	213
Review of Publications	214
M.S.C. Staff Attitudinal Survey	228
Conclusions	239
Evaluation	241
<u>VIII SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</u>	242
Introduction	242
The Re-Entrants	243
The Role of the M.S.C.	248
The Research Process	252
Conclusions	255
<u>NOTES</u>	258
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	
<u>APPENDIX I</u> The Standardised Survey for Job Centre Users.	
<u>APPENDIX II</u> Coding System	
<u>APPENDIX III</u> Personal Schedule for Depth Interviews	
<u>APPENDIX IV</u> M.S.C. Staff Attitudinal Survey	
<u>APPENDIX V</u> Computer Analysis of the Standardised Survey (in separate volume)	

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

	<u>Page</u>
<u>BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH</u>	1
<u>RESEARCH OBJECTIVES</u>	3
<u>ASSUMPTIONS</u>	4
<u>STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS</u>	6

## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

Women are accounting for an increasing share of the labour force and this is expected to continue.<sup>(1)</sup>

Female employment has risen from 33 per cent of the total workforce in 1959 to 41 per cent in 1978<sup>(2)</sup>.

The return of married women to the workforce after childrearing has been the chief cause of this increase.

Activity rates for married women rose from 42 per cent in 1971 to 49 per cent in 1976. Moreover, this increase has taken place at a time of general economic recession and alongside an absolute decline in male employment.

Despite expansion in numbers, however, women's employment continues to be closely confined to a narrow sector of the economy, identified by Barron and Norris (1976) as the 'secondary sector'. This is characterised by low pay, high voluntary turnover, little interest in training and lack of solidarity. Typical of secondary sector employment are the clothing and footwear, and food and drink industries, and the distributive trades. Women also

predominate at the lower ends of the professional and scientific sector (junior school teachers and nurses). In relative terms, despite recent legislation to promote equality, job segregation has increased, due to the expansion of the service sector and the decline in manufacturing.

The earnings gap still exists. In 1979 the hourly rate for full-time female employees was still only 73 per cent of that for full-time male workers and was widening<sup>(3)</sup>. The gap is at its widest among workers in their forties, and in the private sector; and only half of full-time female workers are covered by occupational pension schemes compared with two-thirds of male workers.

At the same time, as activity rates have been rising, and progressive legislation has been confirming women's standing within the workforce, there has also been a sharp increase in female unemployment. Between 1976 and 1978 this rose by 53 per cent to become 28 per cent of the total unemployed. This trend is expected to continue since married women now pay the full National Insurance contribution and are thus entitled to claim benefit when they register as unemployed.

The unique characteristic of the female workforce is the strong preference for part-time employment. In 1971, 34 per cent of women worked part-time, and by 1976 this had risen to 40 per cent. This preference is particularly strong amongst married women, who comprise 83 per cent of the total part-time work force.

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Most research has tended to concentrate on the characteristics and attitudes of women in work, on motivation to work, or on the pressures inherent in the dual (career/domestic) role<sup>(4)</sup>. Comparatively little is known about the actual process of re-entering the work force for women who have had a break in employment for domestic reasons.

This study set out primarily to examine the process of women re-entering the workforce after a period of domesticity, with special regard to their attitudes towards the government supported agencies which are concerned with re-entry. Although some information already exists on the identification of likely re-entrants, on their motivation, on their work force characteristics, and on the effects of their working on their families, the actual process by which the women make the transition from domesticity to employment, and the impact of this process on the factors above, has been virtually ignored.

The research was also intended to examine the agencies themselves, their awareness of this group of clients, along with their attitudes towards them and their perceptions of the group's expectations of them. It seemed appropriate to investigate both at the formal level of policy statements and official publications, and at the informal level of actual staff attitudes. In supporting the research the Manpower Services Commission, with its mandate to serve all the population seeking employment, was conscious that for this rapidly growing group, unlike, for instance, the school leavers or the long-term unemployed, there was no one formalised policy.

The research was intended to establish what degree of congruity existed between the expectations and attitudes of the re-entry women on the one hand, and the awareness and consideration of these by the agencies on the other. Hopefully, a clarification of any incongruities would lead towards a revision in favour of an improved service towards this client group.

#### ASSUMPTIONS

Certain assumptions obviously underlay the objectives. First, it was basic to the research that there was such

an entity as 're-entry women' existing as a distinct and discrete group, with its own unique characteristics. This assumption was well supported by evidence from numerous sources, (Myrdal and Klein 1956, Seear 1971, Hunt 1968). The degree of homogeneity with regard to perceptions, problems and limitations was considered to outweigh the fact that recognisable sub-groups such as solo parents, had some specific problems. Secondly, it was taken as given that the agencies did in fact recognise the existence of this group and did have attitudes towards them, again an assumption supported by evidence, not least that the agencies would hardly be funding research into a group which they did not perceive to exist.

It was implicit that the study would be interventionist in nature. Because of the questions asked of them, the attitudes and expectations of the respondents could well be changed from what they had been initially. It was considered that it would be interventionist too with regard to the agencies, in that any changes made as a consequence of the work would be less a result of formal suggestions or recommendations, than as a result of their participation in and commitment to the research throughout.

Finally, it was recognised that there are certain characteristics inherent in all funded research and that the client has expectations of the researcher. As Cherns (1973) has noted with regard to consultants, it is necessary to enter the phenomenological world of the client organisation. It follows from this that normative practices of the organisation must be respected and the research conducted and presented in a form recognisable and acceptable to the client. Bearing this in mind, close consultation was maintained at all stages with the funding agency, the Manpower Services Commission (M.S.C.), at both formal and informal levels.

#### STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The thesis is presented in three major sections, the background chapters, the empirical chapters, and the review chapter.

The two chapters which give the background to this thesis are the methodology chapter and the literature review. The first outlines the situation to be investigated, the objectives set for each stage of the investigation, and the methods selected at each stage to achieve these objectives. The second chapter presents an historical phase model of the development of research on women and work, so as to set the current research within its academic framework.

The empirical section provides the major part of the thesis, consisting of four chapters. The first presents the pilot probe which tests the saliency of features identified in the review of previous research. The next chapter describes the investigation and findings of the standardised survey of those re-entrants using the Job Centres. The survey of the re-entrants not using Job Centres is presented in two sections dealing separately with the middle class and the working class samples. The final empirical chapter looks at the role of the M.S.C. in investigating attitudes towards women re-entrants both at the formal organisational level and at the local practical level. Because of the sectional nature of the research, a brief review of the substantive and methodological contributions is made at the end of each empirical chapter.

The final chapter of the thesis consists of an overall summary of the findings and an evaluation of the research along with the identification of areas warranting further investigation.

## CHAPTER II - METHODOLOGY

	<u>Page</u>
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	8
<u>THE LITERATURE REVIEW</u>	9
<u>THE PILOT PROBE</u>	12
<u>THE STANDARDISED SURVEY OF JOB CENTRE USERS</u>	14
The Target Population	15
Locations	17
Type of Survey	18
The Mailed Questionnaire	21
The Standard Interview Schedule	25
The Interviewers	25
Processing Responses	28
The Analysis	30
<u>THE DEPTH INTERVIEWS SURVEY OF POTENTIAL JOB CENTRE USERS</u>	32
The Sample	32
Interview Objectives	35
Type of Interview	38
Content of Interviews	43
Method of Recording	46
<u>SURVEY OF THE ROLE OF THE M.S.C.</u>	46
Review of M.S.C. Publications	47
Staff Attitudinal Survey	48
<u>SUMMARY</u>	51

## METHODOLOGY

### INTRODUCTION

Although an outline of the various components of the research design was decided before any work began, this was initially tentative, and remained provisional throughout the survey, continually being reviewed in the light of most recent findings. The study objectives remained constant however, despite the fact that ongoing investigation revealed increasing numbers of 'black holes' in knowledge and extremely tempting tangential problems. These are recorded as meriting further investigation, but it was felt that to explore them in any greater depth would distract from the major agreed objectives of the survey.

Because the research was investigating such disparate groups as Job Centre staff and women not using the agencies, a composite research design was necessary. Each stage had its own discrete methodology appropriate to the objectives of that particular section; it being more desirable to let the problem define the methodology rather than the reverse, particularly when one is

"Less interested in establishing intellectual control over man through preconceived analytical models than in encountering people and situations in an open, intersubjective manner."

(1)

This chapter then discusses the choice of methods used in the research. It begins with an examination of the purpose and organisation of a literature review. From this follows the justification and function of a pilot probe using key respondent interviewing. After this there is an account of the choice of a standard interview schedule for the survey of re-entrants using Job Centres. The next section discusses the survey by depth interview techniques of women not using the Job Centres. And finally the survey of the role of the M.S.C. looks at the procedure or document review and attitudinal survey methodology.

#### THE LITERATURE REVIEW

It is interesting that many theses present the methodology chapter after that giving a survey of previous work in the field. To conduct a literature review is perhaps so universally accepted a practice that the decision to conduct one is implicitly that

"Ignorance ... is never a good position to start from. An essential for any researcher is to familiarise himself thoroughly with the existing body of research and theory in his field of study."

(2)

Implicit too is the corollary

"Research which is not based on a review of relevant literature thus may become an isolated study which is at worst fundamentally unsound and at best bears only accidental relevance to what has gone before."

(3)

The decision to conduct a literature review is, however, a methodological one, as also are the consequential decisions of what literature to survey, how much of it to cover, and into what framework to place it.

The phenomenon of working wives and mothers is a complex one, with industrial, economic, social, cultural and psychological implications. Therefore, the range of literature to be covered is wide. It must also cover a lengthy period since current responses frequently reflect past experiences and decisions.

It was decided that it would be necessary to cover publications from all of the areas mentioned above, and for a time period extending from the end of World War II to date - that is roughly the life span of current re-entry women and so extends over the period during which their attitudes may have been formed.

Three months was initially set aside for this reading and an attempt was made to read in a chronological order, starting with such early works as those of

Harris(1954), and Zweig (1952). Obviously, as references built up and some publications proved quicker to locate than others this programme broke down somewhat.

One result of this was that a more complicated cross referencing system was needed.

It was this practice that clarified the next methodological decision with regard to the literature - the construction of some framework within which it could be set for more easy assimilation and interpretation. It became obvious that some topics or aspects of the subject would enter the field of discussion, move into centrality with a number of references, and then pass out again, giving way to another prominent topic, in a way similar to the emergence of Kuhn's (1962) dominant paradigms. In other words, that what was revealing itself was a phase model of successive foci of interest in the general field of women at work, a process which is disclosed in more detail in the next chapter.

The final decision regarding the literature review - when to stop - was the most difficult, despite cautions against.

"Getting bogged down in previous work to the exclusion of all else."

(4)

At the end of the allotted three months the full extent of potentially relevant literature was only becoming apparent. Nevertheless after this time it was decided in the interests of the overall research to confine the literature survey almost entirely to keeping up to date with any new publications or developments.

### THE PILOT PROBE

The study of published research provided a frame of reference from which it would have been possible to construct a questionnaire and a formal interview schedule. However, a phase model analysis of the publications had revealed that at least some of the findings may have been related more to the socio-economic milieu and to the focus of the researcher than to the everyday reality of the client group.

Talks with a number of people closely involved with re-entry women (W.E.A. workers, careers guidance, etc.) conducted during the literature review stage, had also suggested the view that there was some element of bias in the sum of published findings, which, they contended, presented a much more radical and ideal-oriented picture than they had found at case study level.

Quite apart from the content though, two methodological aspects had to be considered in relation to the pilot. First any research simply building on the published work of others would have limited its usefulness before it started, by drawing the parameters in first. It would be only testing within a given framework. Secondly, as interviewing was to be a major research tool, it was essential to test for interviewer bias and establish confidence in the method before starting the standardised survey. This seemed particularly important since research about re-entry conducted by a recent re-entrant could obviously be open to a suspicion of bias.

In consideration of all these factors, therefore, it was decided to conduct a small pilot probe. This is an accepted methodological procedure when attempting to

"... gain familiarity with a phenomenon, or to achieve new insights into it in order to formulate a more precise research problem."

(5)

Key respondents were selected to represent different social groups and different re-entry methods. The interviews followed non-directional narrative techniques, and the expectation was that such unprompted contributions

would clarify the relative salience of the different factors which had been identified by the published and verbal accounts as affecting re-entry.

#### THE STANDARDIZED SURVEY OF JOB CENTRE USERS

The information accumulated from the literature and the pilot was next used to design a research tool for the major survey of re-entrants.

The intention of this survey was to provide a broad coverage of the personal, social and work-related characteristics of mature women seeking to re-enter the work force with the help of the M.S.C. services, and to monitor their experience of the agencies. In order to help the M.S.C. by providing material of sufficient reliability to be used confidently for predictive purposes, it was necessary to provide both a sufficient and a representative sample. The former criterion necessitated a total in excess of 200 to allow confidence in the stability of its characteristics (Goode and Hatt 1952 ). The latter, though inherently limited by the regional nature of the survey, was catered for by using a number of different centres and contacting as high a proportion of the total target population as possible.

## The Target Population

The first crucial step was to isolate the target population. The people the survey was aimed at were those broadly covered by Myrdal and Klein's (1956) 'dual role' description i.e. those women whose commitments were both to employment and to domestic activities. After surveying the literature, and talking with key personnel who had contact with this group, such as social workers and careers officers, certain parameters were drawn up.

1. The age group 20-50 years was chosen to include women who had had a very early or very late pregnancy.
2. Women who had no employment record at all were excluded on the grounds that, by definition, they were not 're-entrants' and also because their assumptions and expectations would probably be different from those of women who had work experience.
3. A break of four years in employment was chosen as the minimum for inclusion in the survey. This decision was based on

estimates of average break in employment of eight years (King 1975) and 10-20 years (Seear 1971), and after a small pilot probe had suggested only a slight downward modification of these figures. In the light of this accepted average, four years was thought to be the minimum break consistent with the 'dual role' idea of divided commitment. It was considered that a break of less than this time (still less than the minimum time from pregnancy to one child entering school) would suggest a low level of domestic commitment, and thus priorities and considerations atypical of re-entrants as a whole. A gap of less than this was also thought to be too short a time in which to have experienced the lack of confidence frequently associated with domesticity (Michaels 1973, Cook 1975)

4. Women who had no dependents living with them were likewise excluded on the grounds that they would not share the problems and conflicts established by previous research as typical of this group. Obviously, this would exclude, for instance, women whose children were in the custody of an ex-spouse, but include a woman whose break from employment had been to nurse a sick parent but who had subsequently married

a man with children for whom she was now responsible.

5. It was decided to include in the sample those women who had made their initial re-entry into employment within the previous two years. This was because the pilot probe had revealed that re-entry was generally a protracted adjustment process rather than a single event, and could take up to two years to complete.

The target population then was women between 20 and 50 years old who, after a break of at least four years, were within the two year re-entry adjustment period, and who also had domestic responsibilities for dependents.

### Locations

The two major Sheffield Job Centres are located within the central business district. One in West Street specialises in industrial employment, the other in commercial jobs. These two centres between them handle the bulk of all the Sheffield registrations and 'through traffic' (i.e. those casual,

non registering clients using the self service facilities). They were thus the obvious locations for contacting the target population. This specialisation by job type is not typical of Job Centres in general however, so the survey was extended to include one small town Job Centre dealing with all categories of employment (Rotherham) and one suburban Job Centre (Firth Park) taking its character much more from the immediate local labour market, with regard to both clients and employers. In this way, it was hoped to cover a full range of types of Job Centre, types of employment and types of client.

#### Type of Survey

The type of information required was of a mainly factual and descriptive nature, encompassing a descriptive profile of their re-entry women clients with regard to such personal factors as age, numbers of children, age of youngest child, marital status, and education. Work related characteristics such as qualifications, number of years worked, last occupation, length of time away from employment, etc. were also required, as were details of the respondent's interaction with the agencies. This last area covered

such factors as how long they had been registered, what personnel they had seen and what jobs had been referred to them, if any.

In addition to this major emphasis on factual material, it was decided to include within the survey some broad questions seeking client opinions and attitudes related to work and to the agencies. It was of particular interest to know, for example, how realistically clients perceived the current labour market, how they ranked their priorities when looking for a job and how willing they were to retrain. With regard to the agencies themselves it was important to know specifically which services the clients valued most and which least, where they thought they needed extra help and where they felt they could cope on their own.

For this type of large scale survey of mainly factual material two survey tools provided the obvious alternatives - the mailed questionnaire and the standardized interview schedule. Each has features to recommend it, each has limitations.

The positive qualities of the mailed questionnaire, its cheapness, its elimination of interviewer bias and its

operation by a controlled, methodical procedure all appealed initially to the funding agency. Its most obvious drawback - that the survey would be limited to registered clients, since no mailing addresses would be available for 'through traffic', was not of major concern to the M.S.C. since it saw its major responsibility as being towards its registered clients. Other perceived problems were the possibility of a low overall response rate, with a bias inbuilt in favour of the more literate, and those more motivated to respond by strong positive or negative feelings about the M.S.C. service.

The standardized interview method would allow a survey of both registered and through traffic clients and would provide a larger total sample size without the biases due to differences in clients' literacy and motivation. The chief problem with this method was that it was obviously intrusive, necessitating the presence of specially recruited interviewers within the Job Centres over an extended period. It was consequently also a more expensive method and would introduce the problem of controlling for interviewer bias, as well as the possibility that clients might be inhibited from making a totally honest response whilst within the Job Centres, surrounded by Job Centre staff.

"Anonymous mail questionnaires often produce a greater proportion of socially unacceptable responses than face to face interviews."

(6)

These problems, particularly that of intrusion, seemed to weigh heavily with the funding agency - perhaps conscious of the fact that this local survey, approved and overseen at national level, coincided with the dispersal of M.S.C. Head Offices to Sheffield, and might be seen locally as the thin end of a wedge of over intrusion to come.

Since there were drawbacks with both methods, and since the full and enthusiastic co-operation of the funding agency would be crucial to the research, particularly at the stage of implementing findings, a mailed questionnaire was chosen.

#### The Mailed Questionnaire

The questionnaire document itself was designed according to the now standard recommendations of Oppenheim (1968), and Scott (1961); particularly with regard to procedure, length, ordering and layout.

The questions were grouped into three clearly identified sections, with client centred titles, and ordered so as to move from that most obviously relevant 'You and Your Work', through 'You and the Agencies' to 'You Yourself'. The progression was not only from areas which the client would expect to be questioned about to those less obviously relevant, but also from the less to the more personal, and from the more factual to the more attitudinal.

The questions themselves were largely closed or limited option questions for a number of reasons. The information required was largely factual; the pilot probe had revealed the difficulty of coding open ended responses without distortion, and finally extensive reading, together with collecting verbal reports, pilot probing, sitting in on a New Opportunities for Women (N.O.W.) course and conducting a local radio 'phone-in', had all combined to establish confidence in framing questions so as to allow for a wide variety of anticipated responses.

A number of previous researchers, including Klein (1957), Arregar (1966), Hunt (1968), Myrdal and Klein (1956), Gavron (1968) Fogarty, Rapoport and Rapoport (1971), Oakley (1974) and Bailyn (1970), have produced questionnaires

directed at working mothers, though not specifically at re-entrants. Two major studies by Racape and Gontier (1980) and by Rothwell (1980) (as part of the Columbia University International survey), are under way, and a comprehensive and related survey by the M.S.C. under the direction of Ceridwen Roberts (1980) is planned. Notice was taken of these in formulating some of the questions and optional responses so that comparisons and complementary information would be available for future researchers.

The bulk of the questions, however, were aimed at exploring the new ground of the actual re-entry process and interaction with the M.S.C. agencies. In deciding on the content and wording of questions, the position taken is that recommended by Weisberg and Bowen noting that the researcher must acknowledge

"...the importance of relating research to pre-existing theory but allow for the discovery of relationships in the data, rather than limiting the studies solely to the testing of hypotheses."

(7)

The draft questionnaire was submitted by the MS.C. to the Central Statistical Office of the Cabinet Office who checked for bias, leading questions, etc. It was

also piloted by distribution to 15 women currently engaged in the re-entry process, to check for understanding and clarity of instructions. After minor amendments the final questionnaire was delivered to the Job Centres involved for distribution.

Recipients were to be identified at registration by Job Centre staff using the criteria determined (see Target Population p.15). Staff listed names and addresses and sent out the questionnaire, together with a pre-paid reply envelope and a covering letter.

This method of data collection commenced in May 1979 and was abandoned at the beginning of August 1979, having failed to produce the expected number of responses. A number of factors combined, some foreseen, some totally unforeseen, led to this conclusion. As anticipated, the response rate was low but this tendency was probably aggravated by influences beyond the control of the survey. The halt ordered in all Government research in the pre-election period (April/May 1979) had delayed the survey so that the summer holidays were approaching, with fewer mothers seeking work. And the increase in postal rates (August 1979) had meant that the pre-paid reply envelopes were no longer adequate. It is possible, too, that insecurity because of government staff cuts in the M.S.C. itself

led to lowered commitment of Job Centre staff towards extra work tasks such as that of identifying the target clients for the survey.

During the intervening months, however, trust between the funding agency (M.S.C.) and those associated with the research grew. Possibly the external threat of cuts had also consolidated the interests of Head Office and regional level M.S.C. staff. In any event, the more intrusive method of applied standard interviews within the Job Centres was now given a welcome acceptance that would not have been possible earlier.

#### The Standard Interview Schedule

The original questionnaire was revised and adapted for face to face administration. This necessitated incorporating instructions for interviewers and the provision of a number of option cards to be presented to clients when a choice of responses or an ordering of priorities was called for. In addition, an alternative section on 'You and the Agencies' had to be devised for through traffic clients, to parallel that

for registered clients (see Appendix 1). This revised document, now the Standard Interview Schedule had again to be approved by the Statistical Survey Office, and was ultimately ready for application by the beginning of September 1979.

### The Interviewers

Four interviewers were employed to apply the questionnaire in each of the four participating Job Centres. All had prior contact with the survey, through personal contact in connection with the pilot probe. Three were themselves re-entrants after bringing up a family, and the fourth had left employment after marital breakdown and was about to re-enter education as a mature student. Their selection was partly a pragmatic decision in that their briefing as to the background and aims of the survey would be easier and speedier than starting from scratch. It also reflected the belief that women sharing the same background experience and problems as the clients would be able to quickly establish that rapport necessary to achieve a high response rate. Also, by empathy they could sustain the relationship so as to get a high completion rate to a lengthy questionnaire. The problem of interviewers identifying with respondents and possibly leading to bias, was mitigated by the

formal instructions as to approach and method of conducting the survey, and by the highly structured nature of the interview schedules themselves, though this bias could not be ruled out entirely.

The interviewers were introduced to staff at each of the Job Centres before the survey started, and separate practical arrangements were made at each Centre to minimise interference with the normal work of the Job Centres and maximise both access to clients and comfort and privacy for interviews, insofar as this was possible.

Interviewing commenced in September 1979, and finished eight weeks later in November, it having been decided that numbers of re-entrant women would be high in this period after children returned to school from the summer holidays.

The interviewers were instructed to approach all women whom they thought might be within the required age range, to check that they did fit the sample requirements and then to ask them if they would participate in the survey.

## Processing Responses

Because a large response was anticipated, a computer analysis had been decided upon, and the possible responses to all but the few open-ended questions on the interview schedule had been pre-coded. Most of the coding was completely straightforward and obvious, of the variety

Question 2                    =    column 6  
Response 'a' code        =    1  
Response 'b' code        =    2 etc.

There were just five complicated coding problems, four of which involved calculating one composite code from a number of responses to separate questions. These were to estimate overall attitudes towards

- a) part time as opposed to full time work.
- b) the desire for re-training.
- c) the desire for Occupational Guidance  
and
- d) the clients 'orientation' or overall priorities and preferences.

Each of these areas was considered too important and significant for a code to be allocated on the response to one question alone, so, for example, the three questions relating to part time work in different parts of the questionnaire were all considered in allocating a single part time preference code.

The final coding problem was how to categorise jobs. The Codot<sup>(8)</sup> system used for general purposes by the M.S.C. itself would provide an individual coding for every possible job title or description. This, however, would have produced a proliferation of categories containing small numbers in each group. A number of other classification systems considered (Tolson 1972, Cornelius et al 1979, and Goldthorpe and Hope 1974 ) were largely male oriented or unduly complex and thus unsuitable for this survey.

It was decided that the purpose of the classification for this survey was not so much to provide the most accurate division into discrete job titles (how many had been bus conductresses, how many hairdressers, etc.) but rather to provide first, a description of the available re-entry work force at different skill levels, and secondly, to provide an index of occupational mobility,

real and potential. In other words, the purpose of the classification was to provide answers to such questions as "What percentage were semi-skilled non-manual workers?" and "Do they want to move up the employment scale or are they prepared to move down?". The most suitable procedure seemed to be an adaption of the Hall/Jones categorisation described in Kelsall (1974) where each category represents jobs requiring similar education and training. Though as Kelsall notes

'Whoever does this grouping, and on whatever basis it is done, there are bound to be grounds for criticism.'

(9)

Obviously, some element of subjective judgement is unavoidable in coding in this area without having a complete job description, but the system employed was considered the most satisfactory available (see Appendix 2)

### The Analysis

Analysis was by means of the computer programme 'Statistical Package for the Social Sciences' (10)  
The survey was designed to produce a matrix of 99 x 99 variables. The general rule for procedure for computer analysis - that the user should only test for what he has reason to believe may be meaningful, and then should only use such statistical procedures as are

relevant to the data, and which he can competently handle - was followed. For these reasons, analysis was confined to the tabulating of frequencies for all categories of all variables, and to testing for correlations between those variables which previous research had suggested might be related, or which seemed to merit investigation as analysis proceeded.

Each of the completed questionnaires was checked for responses to open-ended questions, for additional information volunteered and for any comments from the interviewees. These were analysed as systematically as the data allowed by listing all comments, grouping them into related categories and recording them by frequency of occurrence. Although admittedly impressionistic and anecdotal, these were considered important both in highlighting the re-entry situation from the clients viewpoint, and also in illustrating some of the limitations of large scale questionnaire methodology in general.

Finally, the feedback given by the four interviewers was also recorded, as providing an element of participant observation of both clients and agencies, additional to the more formal research tool of the standard interview.

## THE DEPTH INTERVIEWS SURVEY OF POTENTIAL JOB CENTRE USERS

As Weisberg and Bowen (1977) have pointed out, the study of any group must include information about those potential members of that group who choose to exclude themselves from actual participation. With reference to the current study it was necessary to investigate the situation of those women who could have been part of the M.S.C. client group of re-entrants, but who were choosing either not to enter employment or not to use the Job Centres as a means of re-entry. Obviously, this is not a clearly defined group and as such has no already established and recorded characteristics. The data collection, therefore, required different sampling and different enquiry methods from those used for the controlled sample of Job Centre clients.

### The Sample

#### a) Size

It is generally considered that for depth interviewing a sample of around 30 is an acceptable minimum (Dixon and Leach 1977 ). Oakley (1974) used a total sample of 40 and Gavron (1968) took 48 in each of her two groups. In both of these

cases, interviewing was the only methodological tool used. In the present study, however, it is supplementary to a questionnaire and, therefore, a total of around 30 depth interviews was considered adequate.

b) Composition

Since much previous research had suggested that social class was a significant variable affecting working mothers, a stratified sample with equal representation of middle-class and working-class was decided upon, and cluster sampling by residential area seemed the simplest way to achieve this. Two areas were chosen, one a mixed residential and industrial inner city area and the other, an outer upper middle-class area. Although these were at the extreme ends of the working/middle class continuum, indications from the Job Centre survey suggested that the client population was drawn from the middle ranks and that it was the extremes who tended to be the non-users.

c) Selection

As no sampling frame was available, standard random sampling methods were not possible,

but since qualitative and not quantitative information was the objective of this section of the research, this was not a crucial problem. The best available method of selection was to draw up a sample, which if not random did at least avoid inbuilt distortions.

Oakley (1974) and Gavron (1968) had both used the registers of general practitioners but this was not considered, as the pilot had suggested links between some medical factors - particularly depression - and desire to work.

The registers of the Family Planning Association were investigated as a possible source, but initial approaches were rebuffed on grounds of confidentiality. This selection in any case might have produced distortions due to a low representation of some religious groups and those couples who had chosen sterilisation.

Pre-school play or nursery groups were the other sample source considered. Although these would exclude those women with dependents other than

children, and also those whose youngest child was over five years, statistically they would include the group most likely to be entering employment within the next few years, and they would correspond to the major group of the target population - those mothers with young children. Since initial contacts proved promising, and since time was a major constraint on the survey as a whole, this sample source was chosen. In order to eliminate any antecedent variable any playgroup based on a particular church or selective school was avoided and two groups based on local state schools were selected.

d) Contact

Initial contact was made via the staff running the playgroup or nursery who were asked to supply names and addresses of all mothers except those who had expressly requested that they be excluded. Personal contact was then made at the home of the interviewees.

Interview Objectives

Whereas the questionnaire inquired into the broad demographic and factual characteristics of the re-entry

women, the aim of the interviews was to focus attention on the perceptions and attitudes of the women themselves. The questionnaire was largely descriptive - to answer the questions 'What?' and 'How?'; the interviews were intended to be largely explanatory - to answer the question 'Why?'. Detailed, quantitative inquiry would have been inappropriate for this group, not scientifically selected and whose characteristics were unknown. In addition, both the literature survey and the pilot had indicated that there were a number of areas of interest which were inappropriate for investigation by questionnaire.

The questionnaire is an excellent method of collecting data on a large scale, at a relatively low cost, but in order to maintain these advantages it must investigate within a fairly tight frame of reference. It is thus not suitable for obtaining a wide range response, or for testing peripheral views, and for the same reason, it has limited value in collecting data on attitudes, expectations and motivation.

It was particularly these wide ranging views and peripheral attitudes which were needed from this section of the research. Peripheral views of today, in a dynamic society, may become the majority or significant minority

views of tomorrow. Likewise problems limited to a small section - such as one parent families - become more significant as that group's representation in the community grows. It has been generally agreed that the best way of obtaining this sort of information is by interview. Only the individual can provide that data on his/her own perceptions so he/she must be approached as an individual. And there is a long tradition of interviewing in the social sciences, and particularly in this area of women and work. Zweig in 1952 justified his choice of this method saying:

"I was aiming, not at the representative picture of an average woman who has  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a husband and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  children, but at studying the problems of living persons set in certain environments and situations to find out their responses, their behaviour, and their mode of life at large."

(11)

Gavron (1968), Arregar (1966), Williams (1969), among others, have followed this tradition which Oakley (1974), defends against other, perhaps more prestigious, research methods.

"There is a widespread tendency in social science and in more popular discussions of opinion/attitude survey to assume that a large sample provides some automatic guarantee of reliable results, while a small one promises unreliability. This misconception is based on a naive idea of what constitutes 'validity' and 'representativeness' in research procedure."

(12)

### Type of Interview

The next decision to be made was 'what kind of interview?'. Most interviews can be fitted somewhere on a scale of structured at one end and unstructured at the other. The structured interview is, in effect, an applied questionnaire, where all the questions are decided in advance and asked in the same order using the same words. Obviously, when interviewing is being used to supplement a questionnaire this would not be an appropriate method to use. At the other end of the scale is the completely informal interview, described by Madge

"The investigator is left with a mass of fascinating and revealing individual case histories which he is unable to use as a safe basis for generalisations."

(13)

where the respondent is allowed range to bring up anything which she interprets as relevant. Whilst certainly

scoring highly on a 'richness' scale and obviously covering the widest possible range of peripheral views, this method was considered suitable for the pilot interview but was not found to be rigorous enough for systematic sampling.

Somewhere between these two extremes Merton and Kendall (1946) have placed 'The Focused Interview' which aims at the respondent having freedom of range within a framework closely set by the interview schedule intended to allow for standardisation not of responses, but of meanings. Certain topic areas are pre-determined but once one topic has been raised the ordering of the rest will follow the respondent's own train of thought. And within each topic area a 'funnel' approach is used whereby the respondent is allowed to give an initial general response, and by non-directive counselling techniques the interviewer gradually clarifies and makes specific the salient ideas of the respondent.

This method of focused interviewing seemed to be the most appropriate method considering not only the material being sought, but also the client population being sampled.

Many researchers have found two characteristics to be typical of the housewife group, namely feelings of isolation, and a lack of self confidence. In order for the respondents to reveal the information that is required, the interviewer has first to overcome these barriers. By allowing the respondent a degree of control over the pace and direction of the interview, her own confidence is increased, she is relieved of the feeling of being interrogated and of her anxiety to give the 'right' answer, and yet by providing a format it is implicit that the experiences she is concerned with are felt more universally. Under these circumstances the chances of authentic rapport are maximised. It will

"... retain the good qualities of the non-directive technique and at the same time ... evolve a method that is economical and precise enough to leave a residue of results rather than merely a posse of cured souls."

(14)

Along with any other interviewing method, however, there are inherent problems with the technique. Because the interviewer is part of the interview situation there is no doubt that this is a distorting factor and Goode and Hatt have cautioned

that the interviewer must

"... be aware of the fact the the respondent is ... guessing at the motives of the interviewer."

(15)

This is independent of, but related to, the problem of interviewer bias (discussed previously with regard to the pilot interviews). Because of both these factors it has often been suggested that interviews are wanting with regard to the twin scientific criteria of reliability and validity.

Oakley (1974) has gone further in suggesting that the reluctance to accord unstinting recognition to the interview as a research tool is a reflection of sexism within research. Interviews are based on traditional female, verbal and observational skills whereas questionnaires demand numerical and analytic skills, long associated with male aptitudes. Although this bias may be a factor, it does not really answer the criticism.

Reliability, or the possibility of replication, is hard to establish the more one moves from a structured to an unstructured interview, but so it is in any dynamic system. The findings of a geomorphologist measuring

stream velocity within a certain river system has to be taken on trust. That day and those exact climatic conditions can never be repeated. The criterion here is whether his findings fit generally into the broad outlines of previously established research. If they do not then the onus is on him to lay out exactly his research method and all the associated circumstances, so that others can try to rework the problem. This same criterion must be applied to interview methodology. As Kahn and Cannell (1957) have pointed out

"The interviewer is a technician who manipulates the instrument, takes the appropriate readings, and records the results. In this sense the interviewer's function parallels that of scientific technicians in other fields."

(16)

Validity - or the demand that the tool actually does measure what it sets out to, and not something else - is generally produced by a well designed schedule and a well controlled administration. Just, again, as one would not claim to establish stream velocity by measurements taken during a period of snow melt, so one would try not to interview working mothers about problems during a period of school caretakers' strikes. Ultimately it must be recognised that so

far as reliability and validity are concerned, any single piece of work is only as good as the individual researcher's honesty and judgement, but that this is equally true for the "hard" as well as the "soft" sciences.

### Content of Interviews

The material gathered was to be used to add depth and clarification to the more formal descriptions of the re-entry women based on the questionnaire, bearing in mind that attitudes and perceptions are

"... human appraisals, not objective facts existing outside man's lived world, and as such are a mixture of consensual and unique views."

(17)

Areas to be investigated were to include

1. The respondent's perception of, and attitude towards the domestic role in general and her own degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with it.

2. The respondent's beliefs regarding the social image of the housewife as seen and evaluated by her family, her friends, society in general, and as portrayed by the media.
3. The respondent's perceptions of and attitude towards her work role prior to domesticity, her satisfactions or dissatisfactions in working, her regret or relief at leaving work and her feelings about not working at present.
4. At which period of the transition stage from total domesticity to full-time work commitment she perceives herself to be i.e. considering future re-entry/having recently re-entered/in the process of re-entry/having 'concealed employment'.
5. The respondent's attitude towards possible re-entry; what aspects of her domestic role will be most missed, what aspects of new role are most looked forward to, what domestic changes will be necessitated and what problems anticipated in relation to this, and how long she expects the re-entry process to take.

6. The respondent's perception of the role of the M.S.C. agencies in this transitional period; her awareness of services, her opinions as to what help would be most useful, her experience of the agencies and of alternative job search methods, and her desire for training or guidance.
7. The respondent's future job preferences in relation to her previous work and in relation to her domestic role, with regard to short term and long term goals.
8. The respondent's age/education/date of last employment/previous employment category/husband's job/family income range/number and ages of children/domestic help/and mobility.

No statistical or scientific significance was to be claimed for these interviews, and it was understood that the yield would be impressionistic. In addition, it was realised that the respondents might project cognitive rather than operative values; and that their statements might represent what they would like to do, or what they think the interviewer wants to hear, rather than reflect their true behaviour or intentions.

### Method of Recording

The most suitable method of interview data collection is tape recording. Experience with the pilot probe demonstrated that listening back to one tape after another was conducive to the identification of key phrases and patterns of association. It was also felt that it would be a check on intervention by the interviewer - guiding towards certain responses unintentionally by tone of voice or interjection (though, of course, non verbal signals could be inadvertently given). Taping would also circumvent the problems of mishearing, mis-recording or continued 'editing', and finally it was found that this method seemed less obtrusive to the respondent than continual note taking.

### SURVEY OF THE ROLE OF THE M.S.C.

The aim of the research was always to run along two parallel paths, one exploring the views of the potential clients, the other the views of the M.S.C. itself. It was decided that the survey of the M.S.C. would be best conducted at two levels, one an overview of policy at national, organisational level, and the other an investigation of attitudinal response to clients at the local level.

Both investigations would be more closely monitored and controlled than the clients' survey, since not only M.S.C. management but also Union co-operation had to be sought, and for this it was necessary to detail areas of investigation beforehand. Inevitably the survey would lose in spontaneity and elasticity, but this was unavoidable.

#### Review of M.S.C. Publications

The overview of policy at organisational level was essentially a study of documents, since time was a major constraint, and in any case it was assumed that in a large centralised organisation such as the M.S.C., documentation would be the normal method for disseminating information and policy directives.

The documents to be studied would include the major published reports such as 'People and Jobs' (1971), 'TOPS Review' (1978), 'Evaluation of W.O.W. Courses' (1979) and 'Attitudes to the Employment Service' (1973), regular publications such as the D. of E. Gazette, and the internal staff newspaper MoSaiC, along with any other publications circulated internally by the MS.C. Obviously, the sources would be constrained by what the M.S.C. chose to forward, but there was no reason to believe that these would be limited by anything more sinister than forgetfulness or inefficiency.

Since no random sampling of publications was possible, a systematic content analysis was also inappropriate. It was accepted that the document survey would be impressionistic.

The topic areas to be specifically considered would be those identified as salient by the women questioned in the structured or the depth interviews. The aim would be to estimate the degree of fit between the womens' viewpoint and that of the M.S.C., the organisation theoretically at least, serving their needs.

#### Staff Attitudinal Survey

In any organisation it must be assumed that there will be some difference between the explicit official policy and the implicit operative policy, as reflected in the action of members of the organisation. It was therefore decided that investigation at local level should be concerned to uncover both the degree of fit between the viewpoints of clients and staff, and also that between staff viewpoints and the official organisational stance. As with the rest of this research, concentration was on the Job Centres since these are generally the first and most generally used point of contact between the M.S.C. and re-entry women.

Participant observation in a number of Job Centres over an extended period of time would have provided an ideal methodology for this section of the research. Unfortunately, this would have been unacceptable to staff unions, as well as impossible within the time span. It was initially decided therefore to conduct this part of the survey by means of a combination of spasmodic non-participant observation, and staff interviews.

When the method of data collection from clients was switched from mail questionnaire to applied questionnaire, however, the situation changed. Inevitably, Job Centre staff became much more aware of the survey, its aims and ongoing findings, through day to day contact with the interviewers and with clients who had taken part in the survey. To have conducted staff interviews as a means of establishing attitudes and opinions after this degree of exposure would have been to invite bias - respondents unintentionally giving the known preferred answers.

Because of this a different approach was needed which would distance the researcher from the data collection and would also allow respondents a feeling of choice

of approved answers. To this end, an attitudinal survey (see Appendix 4) was designed consisting of quotations from acclaimed studies over the past decade or so, where the opinions or attitudes expressed were partially exclusive (i.e. that agreement with one would rationally lead to disagreement with another). In this way, staff would be free to align themselves with some views but not others without the suggestion that there was one preferred or approved response. The quotations were not ascribed since it was felt that this might lead respondents towards overall agreement rather than disagreement, and might also introduce the problem of deciding how far the different ascriptions might have distorted the evaluation.

Though obviously less flexible and wide ranging than an interview, this method did have a number of positive features. It was simple to apply and process, and could be presumed to have a high degree of reliability. Even more important, from the M.S.C. viewpoint, it made only slight demands on staff time, and since it lent itself to controlled numerical analysis would be more acceptable evidence of staff attitudes at the feedback stage, when reports of interviews would have been dismissed for 'misunderstanding' or 'distortion'.

## SUMMARY

This methodology involves the use of a variety of research tools, including key respondent piloting, questionnaire/applied standard interviewing, depth interviewing, document review and attitudinal survey.

As stated earlier this mixture of methods came about as a result of letting the problem define the methodology.

At each stage the questions were asked

'What is the purpose?' and

'Which research tool will best achieve that purpose, most simply and most economically?'

The attitude adopted was pragmatic and the chief criterion for use was appropriateness for the task in hand.

What this plurality also reflects is the lack of any strong commitment to any particular methodology as 'superior' or 'better' than any other in a general sense. In particular, qualitative and quantitative findings are regarded as complementary aspects of the investigation, not as outcomes of rival methodologies which must be evaluated against each other.

Problems and shortcomings which occurred in the practical application of each methodological tool are recorded and discussed in the evaluation sections at the end of each of the four empirical chapters.

Overall, however, the 'collage' effect of incorporating a number of different research techniques gives some aesthetic sense of fitness, reflecting as it does the mixed and sometimes confusing world of the dual-role woman.

### CHAPTER III - LITERATURE REVIEW

	<u>Page</u>
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	53
<u>THE EARLY RESEARCH PERIOD</u>	56
<u>THE MIDDLE PERIOD</u>	61
<u>THE LATER PERIOD</u>	70
<u>RE-ENTRY</u>	79
<u>RELEVANCE TO THE CURRENT RESEARCH</u>	84

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

A piece of research is a product of its time and far from providing definitive and immutable 'answers', should be looked to to provide a step from which further studies can take off. Unless it is in an entirely virgin field, any new research project must consider the accumulated information from the past. The purpose of this is fourfold: to discover what has already been established; to uncover contradictions and ambiguities; to pinpoint any gaps in knowledge; and to delimit the boundaries of previous research that they might be extended. Nevertheless to present a review of publications over the last quarter of a century may seem an unnecessary extravagance.

The justification for a thorough review of what work has been done within the lifetime of the women involved in the present study, must be that yesterday's published research is part of today's available environment: part of what Popper (1972) calls World Three. One only has to ask if middle class women could be thinking about themselves as they do if Ms. Friedan (1963) and Ms. Greer (1971) had never written to see

the relevance of this argument. Moreover it is the issues which they raised, rather than the conclusions which they drew, which have proved more significant. For this reason I have not, at this juncture, subjected the findings to a critical evaluation, but instead tried to stress what questions were being asked rather than what answers were being given. Again this is necessary in order to show the psychological environment out of which those surveyed in this research are responding.

As the literature research proceeded three distinct periods emerged - an early, largely descriptive, factual, work-centred period; a middle prescriptive, comparative, analytic and woman-centred period; and a late period of consolidation, regulation and institutionalisation, process-centred.

The three periods seemed to correspond closely with different social epochs. The first phase was one of establishing a post-war equilibrium, both economically and socially. The middle period mirrored the mood of the liberation movements of the 'sixties, with the concurrent economic expansion and relaxations of social controls. And the final phase reflects the period of recession and collapse of economic and social confidence of the mid-'seventies.

The value of reviewing the literature in this three-phase historical model is that a further objective can be added to each of the four purposes outlined at the beginning. As well as discovering what has been established we can evaluate the discovery in terms of its own contemporary values. Having uncovered contradictions and ambiguities we can perhaps reconcile some, through an understanding of the different premises on which the conclusions were based. Gaps in knowledge and parameters of research can both be related to the prevailing priorities of the era.

If one regards development as a simple one-dimensional progression, with each successive point advancing the last position, then such a review would be merely an historical exercise and a bibliography plus a statement of current findings would have sufficed. However, if one sees in past studies not a relentless progression towards ultimate enlightenment but simply a reflection of whatever features of the total environment seemed salient at that point in time, then one is more realistically aware of the place and limitations of one's own research, affected, as it is bound to be, by the preoccupations and priorities of the time and place in which it is set.

Interest in the relationships between women's domestic and working roles seems to have been stimulated by the crucial part played by women workers during the Second World War. It was not that working wives were an entirely new phenomenon; on the contrary

"It should be remembered that with the exception of the middle classes in the nineteenth century, women have always worked."

(1)

What had happened, however, was that something which had once been 'natural' and therefore unworthy of comment, then 'unthinkable' - at least in nineteenth century middle class terms - and therefore impossible to discuss, had ultimately become 'optional'. Choice was involved. Arguments could be weighed, attitudes sought, opinions presented. In short, the topic had become ideal raw material for research.

As with the initial stages in most research fields, the early emphasis was on information gathering and cataloguing - a mainly factual gazetteer approach, as Klein acknowledges in her preface

"The first step in the study of any social problem is the observation of relevant facts and the recording of data in statistical terms."

(2)

Researchers such as Harris (1954), James (1962), Stewart (1961), Kelsall and Mitchell (1960) and particularly, Klein (1957), all collected vast amounts of information, classified by area, by occupation, by social class, etc., about working wives.

The general emphasis was on women in work, as opposed to attitudes or motivations towards work. In fact, despite Zweig's 1952 study suggesting the importance of psychological factors, it was generally assumed that working wives were merely a simple demographic phenomenon - the product of the increased incidence of marriage plus the decrease of average family size - and warranting little in-depth investigation.

"... more married women are able to go out to work for three major reasons - because there are more jobs available, because there are fewer single women to fill them, and because reduced family responsibilities and a longer life allow the wife and mother to commit herself to work outside the home."

(3)

Thus the tone of the early research was largely descriptive and non evaluative.

The basic assumption went almost completely unchallenged. It was axiomatic that, despite her work role, the woman was wife and mother first and foremost, and the interests of her family were sacrosanct.

"The outstanding impression gained ... is that women's lives are dominated by their role ... as wives and mothers. Home and family are the focal point of their interests and are regarded by themselves as well as by others, as their main responsibility. All other occupations are subordinated to this central function."

(4)

and even more emphatically,

"Housewives have no doubt that their first obligation is to their children and that work should not interfere with it."

(5)

When the woman's personal problems or difficulties were considered these were almost invariably associated with her role as mother, or less frequently wife, as demonstrated by the works of Myrdal and Klein (1956), Siegal (1959), Baers (1954) and others. Turner (1964) even contended that women looked to their work for material satisfactions only, while continuing to find the intrinsic satisfactions of life in the domestic role.

Many of these early studies, such as those of Smith (1961) and Cox (1953), were also employer-centred. Indeed, many were done at the instigation of the Institute of Personnel Management or of government departments such as the Ministry of Labour. They sought to investigate employer attitudes towards married women workers, and management willingness to adjust the work situation to accommodate them. Despite many negative findings

"... their concentration on domestic affairs ... prevents them developing the sense of loyalty and interest in the company's affairs which management requires."

(6)

and

"Complaints are made of their high rates of absenteeism and labour turnover. They create problems of organisation, and are believed to have an adverse affect on the morale of full time workers."

(7)

the tone was generally moderate. Arguments suggested for example, that when standardized for skill level, job security, etc. absenteeism was not significantly different from that of male workers, and a Fabian pamphlet demonstrated the self-fulfilling prophecy of some prejudice,

"Employers do not give women jobs at a level of responsibility and interest consistent with their ability and qualifications, because they fear they will leave after a short time. The women find their jobs unsatisfying and so leave, confirming the employers' original views."

(8)

The implication, though, was that with correct information, and in the light of reason, it was perfectly possible to provide for a balancing of employer and employee interests, and an optimizing of benefits for all.

Certainly, the emphasis was on what women could do for the economy, rather than on what working could do for women,

"They are essential because without their presence in the labour force we could neither produce and distribute the goods, nor provide the educational, health and other social services which characterize (our) society."

(9)

Integration of work with domesticity and the establishment of a symbiotic relationship between working wife and employer, these then were the central issues of the early period of research, lasting roughly until the mid-1960s.

## THE MIDDLE PERIOD

Obviously, there was no clear break. Some American publications, such as Bennett and Cohen's (1959) dealt with topics which appeared in English works only later; some periodicals and journals published material out of phase with books or official reports. Some strands continued unbroken. Fact gathering studies continued with the works of Eversley and Gales (1969) and Hunt (1968), and re-statement of the primacy of the interest of the family has been incorporated into the works of many researchers, such as Harris (1969) and Seear (1971). Moreover, particularly in the works of Klein (1961) and (1965), one finds a sensitivity in anticipating issues, such as the extent of domestic job sharing and the low self-image of the housewife, of a type which were to preoccupy the researchers of the next decade.

That said, however, the mid-sixties did see a very distinct shift in emphasis. The contraceptive pill made possible for many married women a conscious and secure choice between resuming work or continuing child-bearing. The first stirrings of the Women's Movement, and the publication of such seminal works as Betty Friedan's 'The Feminine Mystique' (1963), focused attention on the new options; and as a consequence, the woman herself, her aspirations and motivations, gradually became the focal point of research.

Early work, such as that of Thompson and Finlayson (1963), tentatively suggested that internal as well as external influences on working women should at least be considered.

"The decision to go out or to stay at home depends upon a complicated interplay within the family of economic, social and psychological factors, and this takes place in the wider context of local customs and industrial conditions".

(10)

The explanation of working wives as a mere demographic phenomenon was dismissed by Goode (1964), arguing that

"... human behaviour is never determined by the conditions of action alone, there have been many occasions in human history where women have been employable and labour short and women have still not been employed, and that therefore beliefs and attitudes must constitute an additional factor."

(11)

and Tsuchigane and Dodge (1974) insisted

"Social and economic factors, rather than demographic factors, explain the increase in female employment."

(12)

Most of the literature which proliferated at an enormous rate in this period was woman-centred, but interpretation of her attitudes varied. Many researchers still

emphasised the predominance of the family role.

"... her husband is the only source of all her emotional, intellectual and spiritual satisfaction, her one legitimate contact with 'the world at large'. To rely for so much on any individual human relationship means straining it as far as, and sometimes beyond, the limit of its endurance."

(13)

Michaels (1973), Gavron (1968) and others identified low self and social esteem as motivating factors.

"... further reasons which induce married women to go out to work are factors which depress the role of the housewife : financial dependence, and the low esteem in which domestic work is held in our society."

(14)

Fogarty, Rapoport and Rapoport (1971) distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, Harris (1969) and Myrdal and Klein (1968) having previously assumed that intrinsic satisfactions were an exclusively middle class phenomenon. Meanwhile, Wild (1971) was supplying evidence that

"the nature of the actual work done is of overriding importance as a source of job satisfaction for a minority but nevertheless significant proportion of the female labour force."

(15)

At the same time, a number of official bodies concentrated on women's rights and opportunities in terms of social justice.

"... the main case for doing more for women rests essentially on simple considerations of equity. So long as they are denied access to better paid, more responsible and more satisfying employment ... women will remain 'second class citizens' and this is no longer acceptable."

(16)

Some had a rather simplistic and unquestioning faith in the current egalitarian ethos -

"In Britain the full participation of women in industry, in the professions and in all kinds of public administration is today accepted as a normal feature of the national way of life."

(17)

Others, such as Arregar (1966), were concerned to identify the negative factors which put constraints on the woman, effectively preventing her from taking up the available opportunities.

One characteristic of much research done at this time, and extending into the next period, was a tendency to evaluate the position of women by using direct comparisons with men. With some studies, such as Constantinople's (1973), this took the form of comparisons of

psychological characteristics, such as motivation and aptitude; with others, such as Hutt's (1972), the measurement of physical and mental ability characteristics whereas with Fogarty et al (1971) it was the measurement of career orientation.

Another very noticeable feature of the period was a distinct 'up market' shift in investigation. Arregar (1966), Williams (1969), Musgrave and Bennett (1972), Fogarty and the Rapoport (1971) and Kelsall, Poole and Kuhn (1972), all concentrated on the graduate, or professional working mother. The justification for this emphasis was generally two-fold; economic, in that these were the people with training and skills which it was important to maximise; and social - and more contentiously - that these were the pioneers, the trend setters for the life styles of the working women of the future.

"Where there are changes underway it is often the 'creative minority' which will exercise increasing influence as time goes on rather than the numerically dominant majority at any given time."

(18)

and

"The minority creates the patterns which are later adopted by the community as a whole."

(19)

Perhaps the most significant development at this time, however, was not in the content of the research but in the methodology. Previously the most popular research tool, used by Klein (1965) and Hunt (1968) to such good effect, had been the structured interview, based on questionnaires, often with closed or limited choice response questions. Myrdal and Klein (1968) had noted the limitations of the technique

"... the material available was much too heterogeneous to be used with any pretention to scientific accuracy."

(20)

With the publication of 'The Captive Wife', Hannah Gavron (1968) illustrated the enormous potential of the focused interview as a sensitive research tool. She was able to identify and highlight those influences which were salient to the women themselves, as opposed to those concepts which appeared relevant to the researcher. For instance, while other researchers were concentrating on the mother's aspirations and self-actualisation, and playing down the financial drive, by stressing that it was not those wives in greatest financial need who worked, Gavron's interviews led her to conclude

"... in an affluent society acquisitiveness can be as strong a drive as sheer necessity."

(21)

Her main contribution, however, was in stimulating a more self-conscious methodology. Discovering that some of her own findings conflicted with those of the Newsoms (1963), she concludes

"Whether this represents differences between London and Nottingham, or differences between interviewer expectations is not really clear."

(22)

Many later workers were increasingly conscious of the extent to which research methods influenced research findings. Arregar (1966) justified selected interviews on the grounds that,

"Any loss in statistical validity is to some extent compensated by a gain in depth."

(23)

Hunt, finding that four out of every five women surveyed gave financial reasons for their return to work, comments,

"Undoubtedly many working women were constrained to give an answer which they felt to be socially acceptable, and, therefore, mentioned the reason for working which they considered would justify them."

(24)

Finally, Fogarty et al (1971) discussed at length the value of a multi-method approach, allowing for both a

systematic and impressionistic presentation of data, including strategies that are

"... qualitative, quantitative, documentary, direct observation, cross cultural etc. based on assumptions implicit or explicit, and choice and interpretation of events based on these, plus the resources and opportunities available. The choice of methods and strategies in any complex investigation is something that emerges from an interplay between the specific interests, competencies and inclinations of the individual researchers, the financial and personal resources available, the time span allowed for study and the opportunities of the environment."

(25)

Although most of the work done at this time was valuable both in extending knowledge about working wives and in developing a coherent theoretical framework for this knowledge, nevertheless since almost any work on women found an immediate and insatiable market, it was almost inevitable that some inferior work was published. Some studies concentrated on very marginal or esoteric aspects of women's motivation or work orientation, such as whether the woman, as a young child, had identified more with her father than her mother, her position in the birth order, and whether the house she lived in was owned or rented. Others show such limitations in research design as to provide no more than anecdotal interest. Thus for this period, even more so than usual, it is essential to check back to the original sources in order to evaluate 'findings' or conclusions.

Although the initial period of research, from the end of the war to the mid-sixties, had been largely descriptive and concerned with 'what is', this middle period of the mid-sixties to the early seventies, was much more prescriptive and centred on 'what ought to be'.

"The emphasis has now shifted from the discussion of 'what can women do?' to one of 'what should women do?'"

(26)

Sweeping changes were called for in the nature of the family, the structuring of work schedules, and the provision of social services. It must be remembered, though, that these measures were pressed for against a background of full employment, an expanding economy and an increasingly urgent demand for more labour,

"These changes have occurred during a period when the growth of labour demand (especially in the rapidly expanding tertiary sector and non-manual occupations) was particularly favourable to the employment of women, and it is evident that demand factors have made employment an increasingly viable alternative to work in the home."

(27)

It was implicit that the needs of the economy as well as the needs of the women themselves, would best be served by the employment of married women, and the only problem was how to best accommodate them.

The close of this period coincided with the onset of the recession of the early 1970s; though again it must be stressed that there was no clear break, and the work of some researchers, particularly Seear (1971), but also others such as Musgrove and Bennett (1972), clearly anticipated the mood and preoccupations of the next era.

### THE LATER PERIOD

Many researchers did, in fact, continue established lines of study, though in general in greater depth and with more emphasis on quantification than previously. The psychology of the mother was further explored in the works of Michell (1971), Nandy and Nandy (1975) and Stein and Bailey (1973). Ginsberg (1976) investigated the links between domesticity and clinical depression, considering the evidence or improvement associated with finding employment outside the home; and King's (1974) work continued in the studies on the man/woman contrasts, incorporating the latest biological findings including speculation on links between the extra 'x' chromosome and greater resistance to illness and infection in women. Although confirming some long-held beliefs about some gender specific differences in aptitude (such as female verbal proficiency and male spatial skills), and establishing that 15% of the female work regularly loses one day off work through menstrual discomfort, King does find that

'within sex' differences are generally greater than  
'between sex' ones, and concludes,

"It is important to emphasise that, whereas the biological distinction between the sexes is constant, permanent and universal, the cultural distinctions that follow from it are variable, transitory and culture specific."

(28)

Despite these continuing threads, the early '70s saw a shift in direction in the bulk of the research published. It could hardly have been otherwise considering the concurrent changes in the social and economic framework. The impact of the recession came, paradoxically, just as legislation was confirming the place of women within the labour market,

"Recession coincided with the expansion of employment opportunities and changes in the attitudes of society towards women and work, which were encouraged by favourable legislation and supportive policy measures."

(29)

Both the effects of the recession itself and the implications of the new legislation spawned new sub-fields in research on women and work. As had been the case with the entire subject two decades earlier, initial studies tended to be descriptive and concentrated on fact gathering. Government publications included the Equal Pay Act 1970, the Green Paper 'Discrimination Against Women' 1972, the government consultative document

'Equal Opportunities for Men and Women' 1973, the White Paper on 'Equality for Women' 1974 and the 'Sex Discrimination Act' 1975. In addition, there were the reports of various 'Quangos' investigating the operation of the legislation; the Equal Opportunities Commission report on 'Equality Between the Sexes in Industry' (1979); the Low Pay Unit's report on 'The Part-Time Trap' (1979); and the report on implementation by the National Council for Civil Liberties (1977). Some of these studies have been both questioning and critical of the status quo, for instance, the E.O.C. publication on protective legislation (1979)

"The women are protected from excessive hours, but also from reasonable hours and good pay: who benefits? Clearly the men, who are receiving time and a half or double time sometimes for these extra hours."

(30)

Amplifying these official findings have been the studies by Wolff (1977), Mephan (1974), and Nandy and Nandy (1975) and Pettman (1979) along with Fonda's (1976) documentation of entitlements and provisions. Official and independent researchers alike seem to agree that as yet legislation has produced little improvement for women and conclude with Wolff that

"... formal equality does not ensure operative equality."

(31)

and

"Legislation, therefore, appears to have gone a long way towards enforcing equal conditions of employment for men and women. But studies ... leave one most pessimistic about the power of legislation to achieve such equality."

(32)

The sub-group of studies concerned with the effects of the recession itself also concentrated on collecting factual data. What in the sixties had seemed like the irresistible force of expansion had now come up against the immovable object of recession, and previously held assumptions had to be checked against new information. At present, no clear picture is emerging, and studies present conflicting views. The O.E.C.D. investigation contends,

"In the United Kingdom female employment increased while male employment declined absolutely as well as relatively."

(33)

and Layard et al (1977) made further encouraging discoveries,

"Between 1973 and 1977 the real weekly wages of women have risen by about 10%, while the gross real wages of men have fallen by nearly as much."

(34)

However, Werneke (1978) has pointed out that for the 75 per cent of married women who opt out of paying social security deductions there is no incentive to register as unemployed and the official estimates of unemployed females may well underestimate the real figure by as much as a half. Furthermore, she suggests that many potential working wives do not seek employment in times of recession

"Empirical evidence has shown the discouraged-worker effect to be particularly strong among married women over the course of the business cycle. They tend to leave the work force when they cannot find jobs or they postpone their decision to look for work until the employment situation brightens."

(35)

Meanwhile, the 'added worker effect', of wives seeking work either to supplement income during inflation or to replace a breadwinner made redundant, appears to have been much less during this period, perhaps partly because, with more wives working anyway, there are less to 'add', but also possibly due to the operation of the social security system.

Researchers have also speculated on the implication of the recession for the future trends in women's employment.

"The scramble for jobs among current members of the labour force is likely to take precedence over the search for new workers. Furthermore, it is recognised that governmental policies and programs with respect to the labour market, women, and social services are in flux because of pressures from different groups to obtain additional assistance in the face of increasingly severe budget constraints."

(36)

Concurrent with the changing economic situation at this time there was an awareness of a changing social and cultural situation. An ageing population coupled with contraction in National Health Service provision has meant that for many women 'domestic ties' are now as likely to mean an ageing relative as a young child - a factor established by Greenalgh (1977) as considerably reducing probability of participating in the work force.

Changed social mores and the liberalising of divorce laws altered the concept of marriage. Blaxall and Reagan (1976) refer to 'the myth' that 'every woman will marry and stay married.' Hunt (1975), Cook (1975) and Adam (1975) cite divorce as an impetus to work

participation whilst Fogarty et al (1971) suggest that many women regard work as,

"... an insurance in case of widowhood or separation."

(37)

Adam (1975) notes that in 1971 the estimate of families with the mother as sole or major breadwinner was 16% and must have increased since.

"The increase in divorce, separation and desertion has greatly enlarged the number of women who are heads of families and as such the sole or major breadwinner."

(38)

The incentive to work has led to a much higher economic activity rate amongst widows and divorcees, than amongst married women. As Adam has noted,

"The former wife lost her position, her former income and her social life."

(39)

At the same time, some shift in cultural values seems to have taken place. Whilst in the early 1970s calls for the right to self-development through work had come to sound like a moral imperative,

"... for surely work is not just something we have to do in order to eat: it is the natural function of all civilised human beings."

(40)

by the late 1970s political parties had all rediscovered 'the family'.

Against this background the somewhat strident crusading tone of the middle research period seems to have been replaced by a mood of formalisation, consolidation, and organisation, together with the first movements towards implementation - even institutionalisation - of the ideas and recommendations which had come out of the earlier research.

A characteristic of many of the papers of this later period (perhaps simply as a reflection of a change in sources of funds for research), is the amount of international comparison.

"... each nation's experiences with respect to the re-entry of middle-aged female job seekers has relevance beyond its borders."

(41)

Since Seears' O.E.C. study in 1971, international comparisons include official publications such as the

Manpower paper on 'Overseas Practice' (1975), and King's 'Training for Re-entry in the O.E.E.C.' (1975), while few writers have failed to take account of the experience of other countries. Mephan (1974) discusses the behavioural effects on working mothers of the French family allowance system, and Cook (1975), suggesting that government reluctance to increase facilities may be due to anxiety lest it be interpreted as enticing mothers from the home, demonstrates that better opportunities have not led to significantly higher activity rates among mothers of young children in Sweden. Manley and Sawbridge (1980) attempt to account for the English situation by comparisons with other Western countries.

While the comparative studies were extending the research field on a macro level, at the same time there was an expansion of research at a micro level, with workers producing specific studies of separate industries or professions. The Department of Education's pamphlet 'Return to Teaching' was typical, and similar works were produced for the Civil Service, banking, nursing, engineering and catering industries. Because of this great proliferation of information, it is perhaps hardly surprising that the latest development in the cycle of research seems to be a call for consolidation, integration and liaison. A number of recent works such

as those of Pettman (1976), Winship (1977) and Evans and Morgan (1979), have attempted to summarise and systematize the material. Fonda and Moss (1976) suggest an effort to,

"Increase contact at the local level between representatives or organisations and others concerned with the employment of mothers."

(42)

and recommend that,

"Local further education institutions might be involved in carrying out such a study. Areas to be covered might include the availability of counselling, training and retraining schemes, and refresher and reorientation courses."

(43)

#### RE-ENTRY:

Of particular relevance to the current study was a focusing of attention on the actual process of returning to work, identified by many researchers as the crucial period at which women could be aided.

"I believe that the biggest need women have in this whole employment field, is very much more help in going back to work when they have had their children. This is where the greatest frustration is, the main waste of talent and skill."

(44)

The problem has been defined as initially one of lack of information.

"Women who have been absent from the labour force for a prolonged period are usually unfamiliar with current job opportunities and whatever skills they may have developed during earlier training and employment may be rusty or obsolete. Moreover, the type of work they formerly performed either may no longer be available nor personally acceptable."

(45)

Seear (1971) makes the same point.

"With a gap of 10-20 years, their knowledge of the labour market, always sketchy, is now both limited and inaccurate."

(46)

While the Department of Employment suggests a consequence of this lack of information,

"... women who are not working often suffer a loss of confidence in their ability to manage a job, and if they are not given facilities to prepare themselves for the return to work, they may well be deterred from returning altogether."

(47)

To deal with this, Seear (1976) suggests guidance at this stage - echoing the call of almost all researchers since Klein.

"... it is clear that the woman needs to be able to discuss her total problem with someone who understands the psychological, practical and vocational aspects of re-entry - to be able to give her at the same time self confidence and a realistic appreciation of what taking a job means."

(48)

Opinions on how to implement this varied. A C.O.I.R. pamphlet in 1972, confidently asserted,

"The department's Occupational Guidance Service is of particular help to women considering returning to work."

(49)

though in 1971 only 24 Department of Employment Centres had professionally trained occupational guidance units, and even in 1975 less than 20,000 women in all took up occupational guidance. Even where available, confidence in the service was not universal. The 43rd Annual Conference of representatives of trade unions catering for women workers reported,

"Within the Department of Employment, there is both insufficient awareness of the special needs of women and insufficient effort to encourage women to use what services are known."

(50)

and Mephan in 1974 commented

"... some members of staff in the exchanges have an inadequate knowledge of the needs and qualifications of those seeking work. In particular, the mature married woman seeking to return to the labour market has special needs to which too little attention has been paid."

(51)

The overall picture was thus summed up by Cook (1975).

"We treat these matters as though a woman's decision to go to work were solely her personal choice, and she alone should carry the responsibility and expense for the causes and consequences."

(52)

The most dramatic practical response came from Ruth Michaels (1973) in her report of the re-entry course for women at Hatfield Polytechnic, specifically directed at the,

"... mature woman who may wish to return to active working life, but is unsure or unaware of how best to do so."

(53)

The course differed from most in that it was non-directive. It aimed at increasing a realistic awareness of opportunities, full-time and part-time, paid and voluntary, whilst at the same time increasing the self-confidence necessary for the women to take advantage of those opportunities for which they seemed most suited. The course also departed from accepted practice in its recruiting procedure, advertising in family planning and welfare clinics, as well as local libraries, and demanding no entry qualifications. The course hours of 10.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. were also chosen specifically to facilitate attendance by women with domestic responsibilities. Though the evaluation of this venture showed its worth, and the Department of Employment pronounced,

"There is evidence that the few facilities which do exist have attracted women in large numbers and often many more than could be accepted."

(54)

Cook found in 1975 that,

"Women's opportunities for getting job information, counselling, refresher courses or training are very few and only unsystematically available."

(55)

A call for a more systematic approach was made in a Manpower Paper where it was noted that the T.S.A. five-year plan for 1974-9 was to investigate the possibility of providing refresher courses and self-assessment and work-appreciation courses for married women returning to work. The 'Wider Opportunities for Women' pilot courses set up in response to this have now been evaluated and found to be

"... meeting real needs of returners."

(56)

They are now offered in a number of selected regions and their results will continue to be monitored.

#### RELEVANCE TO THE CURRENT RESEARCH

Hopefully, it will be obvious that the current study fits into the mainstream of evolution of research on working women - reflecting the contemporary preoccupation with re-entry, in an organisational framework, and specifically answering calls for integration and liaison at local level: and in fact can be seen as a response, still not met, to Sears' call in 1971 to,

"... examine the extent to which there exists a demand for employment for re-entry women, both from the woman concerned and in the economies in which they live. On the assumption that such a demand would be found to exist ... to see what steps were being taken to facilitate the re-entry process, how effective these measures were proving and what further developments might be suggested."

(57)

The following three chapters set out to establish this 'demand for employment'; and the fourth empirical chapter investigates 'the steps ... taken to facilitate the re-entry process' with regard to the role of the M.S.C.

CHAPTER IV - THE PILOT PROBE

	<u>Page</u>
<u>REASONS FOR THE PILOT</u>	86
<u>OBJECTIVES</u>	89
<u>SAMPLE</u>	90
<u>FINDINGS</u>	92
<u>IMPLICATIONS</u>	99
<u>EVALUATION</u>	102

## THE PILOT PROBE

### REASONS FOR THE PILOT

After reviewing the literature on women and work and talking with a number of people directly concerned with individual re-entry women, such as careers officers, social workers and adult education personnel, lack of congruence between the views expressed in published research and the opinions given by verbal contacts became apparent.

In general terms the published research suggested a widespread dissatisfaction; it called for a radical review of the work role of women, and of the state in providing child care, and other amenities; and it was job centred, calling for greater equality in promotions opportunities and career structures. The field workers on the other hand suggested that returners had an attitude of acceptance of the status quo with only vague irritation. They stressed women's concern with a traditional view of the domestic role in which the mother is primarily responsible for the welfare of the children; and identified priorities in employment largely associated with adjustment to

domesticity, part time work, mobility, job sharing etc., largely within the traditional job market.

The problem this lack of congruence presented for the current research, however, was not who was right and who wrong. What seemed important was that two views existed. A number of possible reasons for the dichotomy, not mutually exclusive, suggested themselves.

1. The published work is nationwide whilst verbal contacts were mainly, but not exclusively, northern. It may simply be that Sheffield is atypical.
2. Publication takes time whereas verbal interviews reflect the current attitudes; there may have been a shift in attitudes.
3. Field workers get their information verbally and usually at a fairly unstructured or informal level; researchers for publication rely heavily on more structured schedules, often with less stress on individual situations and verbal reporting. The dichotomy may reflect the divergence in methods of data collection.

4. Researchers select both the survey and the sample - they go to the population with their ideas, whereas with case workers the population come and bring their problems to them.
5. Research workers who publish may themselves be more career oriented than the field workers and their different expectations may be reflected in their findings.
6. Some views may be easier to get published (perhaps being more controversial or marketable) than others.
7. There may have been some element of interviewer bias in the opinions collected verbally.

Whatever the reasons for it, the dichotomy suggested first that anyone investigating a subject should consult both publications and verbal sources, and secondly, that

"There is ... a very real danger of the research worker assuming that concepts which are cognitively organised in his own mind 'exist', and are equally clearly organised in the minds of his respondents."

(1)

There is a danger of bringing to the research too clearly formulated views, which subsequently influence the findings.

It was with these considerations in mind that the pilot probe was undertaken, in an attempt to ground the research firmly in the Sheffield area in 1979/80.

### OBJECTIVES

The aims of the pilot were to be:-

1. To conduct minimally directive, narrative interviews, at which the women could describe in their own terms why they had decided to return to work, what means they had taken to gain re-entry; and how they evaluated their own re-entry experience.
2. To confirm, question or give depth to insights gained from published research and verbal informants.
3. To add any new areas of investigation.
4. To test for interviewer bias and to evaluate interview techniques.

5. To take 1 - 4 into consideration in the design of focused interviews and questionnaires for the survey proper.

#### SAMPLE

Having decided on a pilot study it was necessary to consider its composition. Restrictions of funds, personnel and, most particularly, time led to the conclusion that six interviews would suffice. These were to cover:

1. A working class woman who had returned via informal channels;
2. A middle class woman who had returned via informal channels;
3. A working class woman who had returned using the agencies;
4. A middle class woman who had returned using the agencies;

5. A woman returning via the formal education system; and
6. A potential re-entrant, undecided about returning.

These key respondent figures were selected by a number of people interested in the project, so as to avoid one constant antecedent variable. No person was to be interviewed whose opinions were known beforehand.

The interviews were conducted in January 1979, four at the homes of interviewees and two at their places of work. The shortest lasted 40 minutes and the longest two hours. All were taped - in whole or in part.

Because the first aim of the pilot was to get a feel of the range of the topic, and because the interview method was to be largely non-directive, it was inevitable that much interesting material was collected which was not directly relevant to the study in hand, but worth bearing in mind. For instance, it was observed that the working class interviewees constantly referred to relatives or close neighbours as their reference group, whereas the middle class women compared their position with that of friends.

## FINDINGS

All six interviewees considered that, ideally, mothers should stay at home with pre-school children, four expressing this solely in terms of 'duty' or 'responsibility', three proferring criticism of mothers known to them who neglected this 'duty' for no obvious reason, but only one expressing positive pleasure and satisfaction in the experience.

After the pre-school phase, five of the six were agreed that there was a general expectation that the mothers would and should return to work, four recording having experienced this personally as a social pressure.

Int. 1.            "It's your lot now isn't it?  
When your family's old enough to  
go to school that's it! You've  
got to go out and get a job."

Int. 6.            "You can't respectably say - at a  
party - 'I'm a housewife' ....  
There's a feeling that 'surely you  
must want to do something else?' "

The most common specific motivating factor mentioned was 'depression', quoted in four cases. In association with 'boredom' and 'isolation' it was obviously a potent motivating factor. The positive statement of

the same situation was only given once.

Int. 4.            "... in fact what I was  
                  really missing was just  
                  using my brain."

Financial motivation covered a variety of situations.

In one case it meant genuine financial necessity.

In another, it signified a desire for a degree of  
financial independence of the husband. In two cases  
it meant a desire for unspecified 'extras!.

Int. 2.            "... the money always comes in  
                  handy."

And in one case, coupled with isolation, the financial  
motivation was quite specifically to get a car to  
return to visit relatives each weekend.

Against the trend of previous research findings, the  
husband's attitude was mentioned spontaneously on only  
two occasions. In one, her husband's negative  
attitude towards child-minding was given as a reason  
for changing an evening job. The other recorded her  
husband's encouragement to take up an educational course.

Int. 3.            "But at least I had -----(husband)  
                  to encourage me .... Now I think  
                  without that I wouldn't have dared  
                  to try".

When questioned it appeared that three husbands had at first been against the idea of their wives working though they were all subsequently reconciled to it. Two husbands were seen as being quite indifferent, leaving the decision entirely to their wives: even though currently in favour of their wives working, there was little evidence of support from them by way of domestic help. The only wife who said,

Int. 6.            "He's quite good really. If he sees anything needs doing he'll do it."

was, in fact, not working. Two other wives said their husbands were very willing to help 'if asked'. One working class wife volunteered that she relied heavily on her eldest daughter, and two mentioned labour-saving devices.

Again, unexpectedly in the light of the previous research, no one spontaneously mentioned her own mother working when she was young, though it transpired that five had done so. Once the topic had been introduced, though, one woman gave her unhappy recollections of this experience as a reason for only working within school hours. Another wife recollected that her husband's mother had worked, suggesting this as a reason for his domestic helpfulness.

The chief factor inhibiting return to work mentioned by the interviewees was lack of confidence, reported by four of the six. Children were obviously considered to be so basic a consideration as to be scarcely worth making explicit. In fact, they were rarely mentioned throughout the tapes, though consideration of them was implicit in such remarks as 'of course it had to be in school hours' or 'I wanted to be near - in touch'.

The actual process of initial re-entry was a more homogeneous experience than their varied motivation would suggest. In three cases the re-entry was a result of pure chance, through an informal local source. In the fourth case these elements also applied though after some conscious job search. It is worth noting that in every case arrangements for the care of children were made after getting the first re-entry job, not beforehand.

In all but the one case of financial need, where the mother worked full time and left the child with a grandmother, the major considerations were of hours and mobility, to fit in with domestic requirements.

Three of the five returned to work while they still had a pre-school child, one to evening work, one working Saturdays and one in university vacations, all arranged so that the husband could look after the children. As the children reached school age, however, each mother sought a part-time job, close to home, in school hours, as did the two others who delayed re-entry until their children were at school. (In one case a job accepted on these criteria proved so unsuitable as to lead to illness).

It seemed to be only after this initial re-entry had been negotiated, some confidence had been acquired, and domestic duties had been organised around a work routine, that the women seemed to take stock, consider the number of working years ahead, and make some decisions about training, education or a move to a more suitable job. It is interesting that when asked if there was anything in their re-entry experience that they would change up to this point every reply was negative, but always with the addition to the effect that there had never seemed to be any choice or option.

After making an initial re-entry one woman had used the Job Centres, along with a variety of other sources, having decided,

Int. 4. "I wanted a job that was interesting ... No way was I going back into work if I was going to be stuck into something deadly dull."

Another had opted for formal education at this stage,

Int. 3. ".... so it was after that I really seriously started thinking 'there's a hell of a lot of years ahead of me to work - and I'd like another job but what on earth am I going to do?' I mean, I felt so limited".

and had based her choice of course on balance of marketability and interest.

Three had considered training. One had reluctantly decided against because it was only available full time.

Another had rejected the idea for the same reason and also because a friend who had trained had been unable to get a job and was back in her original work. The interviewee saw this as,

Int. 1. "A waste of everybody's time and effort."

On the other hand, the one woman who had done a T.O.P.S. course but then returned to her old job strenuously denied that it had been a waste of time.

Int. 5. "Oh no! It was marvellous ...  
It really was a great course ...  
It was the people you see ... They  
were all the same age group ...  
The same thing - families growing  
up and they wanted to get back to  
work ... We laughed and laughed and  
laughed! .... We were all in the  
same boat! "

Obviously, the interviewee had used the T.O.P.S. training as a re-entry or self-presentation course - the way, in effect, that all the women had used their first re-entry job.

The weight of evidence from the six interviews was against the myth that women return to work part-time when their children are young with the intention of progressing to full-time work as they get older. Four of the six women said they would not return to full-time work under any circumstances.

Int. 2. "You can't do a full-time job  
and do justice to it. It  
wouldn't be fair on either side".

Int. 5. "There's enough to do with a family  
and a house to run. It just works  
out nice if I can work mornings.  
I've got the afternoon to shop and ..."

The two who said they would consider full-time work were not stating a preference or saying that they planned towards it, but merely that they would not rule it out as totally unacceptable. Although three interviewees mentioned intrinsic job satisfaction, in only one case was it suggested that this might override extrinsic inconvenience.

Reflecting on their re-entry experiences, four of the interviewees had used the word 'lucky', three repeating and stressing it. It seemed apparent that although all were working hard and competently, and asking for no special concessions from their employers, somehow all felt that finding a job which simply allowed them to satisfy their family responsibilities without strain or exhaustion was a matter of undeserved good fortune.

### IMPLICATIONS

By allowing the women to relate their own experiences, giving their own emphases and making their own associations, two hitherto ignored aspects of re-entry emerged - both worthy of further investigation.

First, although many previous researchers have stressed the need for help and guidance at the point of entry, the pilot clearly showed that for many people there is no such point. Re-entry is not an event but a process, sometimes a very protracted one. It begins, characteristically, when the woman first makes any economic move outside the home - casual evening work, weekend work, contract home-based work. As family needs become less rigid and demanding, small adjustments are made in hours, distance from home, type of job etc., in a very adaptable, pragmatic way. As well as opportunity one other factor seems relevant here. Four of the interviewees felt that their concept of 'the ideal job' for them had changed over the period of domesticity. In every case this was in the direction of 'meeting people' or 'working with the public' etc. - a reaction, perhaps, to the years of isolation. As the process of re-entry proceeds, confidence returns and domestic work fits into a new pattern, then expectations, ambition and job satisfaction seem to emerge. Typically, the more major adjustments, by means of training or further education, occur at this point.

The second new association suggested by the pilot study is that of domesticity, moving house, and depression. It would seem from this probe that there

is evidence that a move to a different city either at the point of or shortly after the wife has made the initial re-entry move is an extremely traumatic experience. In all four cases when this happened the result was severe depression, in one case needing medical treatment, in another manifesting itself in feelings of isolation so severe that the woman was unable to answer the 'phone.

In each case, desire to escape this depression became a major motivation to return to work, whilst paradoxically presenting problems in implementing the return process. Not only had the supporting structure of friends and relatives been withdrawn, but also the local employment situation was unfamiliar and in some instances (for example, when moving from London) the actual type of work was no longer available.

This factor is obviously worthy of further investigation, and if found to be general, could have serious implications for firms involved in decentralisation policies and for organisations requiring their young staff to make frequent moves.

## EVALUATION

The substantive conclusions from the pilot were first that the general lines of enquiry of previous research and their findings were still salient, though there has perhaps been some shift in emphasis. Husbands' attitudes seem less influential now than general social pressure, and most women seem to feel that they 'should' work. Secondly, two new lines of enquiry emerged which merit further investigation: the relationship between geographical mobility and womens' activity rates, and the concept of re-entry as a process rather than a single stage event.

On the question of methodology, the range and variety of experiences and attitudes recorded in the interviews gave grounds for reassurance that interviewer bias was not apparently exerting a significant effect. The difficulty of making a content analysis and comparing interview information led to the conclusion that for the survey proper, a much more structured interview framework would be necessary. The pilot thus served the function recommended by Magee

"Detecting mistakes and inherent dangers by critical examination and discussion beforehand is an altogether more rational procedure, and one as a rule less wasteful of resources, people and time, than waiting till they reveal themselves in practice."

(2)

CHAPTER V - THE STANDARDISED SURVEY OF RE-ENTRY  
WOMEN USING THE JOB CENTRES

	<u>Page</u>
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	103
<u>FINDINGS</u>	104
Personal Characteristics	104
Work Related Characteristics	110
The Re-entry Process	117
The Role of the M.S.C.	119
Observations of Interviewers	136
<u>SUMMARY OF FINDINGS</u>	139
<u>EVALUATION</u>	140

INTRODUCTION

The literature review and the pilot probe provided the background information from which it is possible to construct a questionnaire survey of re-entry women using Job Centres, the design, target population, application, and analysis of which has been described in Chapter II (pp II 14 - 31).

The findings of this survey are presented here along with some interpretations of their meaning and significance. As was revealed by the literature survey, however, interpretations and evaluations of data are likely to be influenced by conscious or unconscious factors, in the social and economic environment, and in the personal bias of the researcher.

Findings concerning the personal and work related characteristics of the women, the re-entry process and the role of the agencies have been extracted directly from the questionnaires. An additional section of findings presents the observations of the interviewers working within the Job Centres. Finally the evaluation indicates some of the limitations of the survey.

## FINDINGS

Findings are based on the computer analysis of the 480 completed Standard Questionnaire Schedules.

### I. Personal Characteristics of the Re-entry Women

#### 1. Age

65% of the women were under 35 years of age, and of these 13% were under 25 years.

29% were between 35 and 44 years, and the remaining 6% were 45 or over.

If women with less than a four year break had been included, however, the size of the younger age groups would have been considerably increased.

#### 2. Marital Status

83% of clients were married. A further 2% were living with a partner. Of the unsupported clients, 8% were divorced, 3% separated, 3% single and 1% widowed. Because of the very small numbers in all categories other than married, all correlations of any variable with marital status are suspect.

#### 3. Children

38% had two school age children living with them.

34% had one and 15% had three.

Less than 3% had more than three school age children. Of the 10% who did not have any school age children, almost all had pre-school children; in only a few cases did clients claim dependence of post school age children.

All but 8% of clients had at least one child under 12 years, and 30% had a child of four or under. A majority of clients, 56%, were returning to work when their youngest child was six years or under.

4. Education

90% of clients had left school at the age of sixteen or under.

8% had left between 17 and 19 years and only 2% had stayed in full-time education beyond the age of twenty.

5. Qualifications

74% had no qualifications on leaving school.

9% had 1 - 4 C.S.E. or O levels.

6% had more than five C.S.E. or O levels.

10% had 'other' qualifications and only 1% had degrees.

6. Training

Over one-third had had some post school training, however, mainly commercial training at various levels, and in 52% of cases in the clients' own time and at her own expense.

7. Husbands' Occupations

Nearly 60% of all clients' husbands were skilled or semi-skilled manual workers. Only 11% had professional husbands. The remaining 30% were non-manual workers, fairly evenly divided among skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled.

8. Social Mobility

Just over one-third of clients had been upwardly mobile on marriage, over one-third had stayed in the same social category, and under one-third had been downwardly mobile. Social mobility was measured by comparing the employment category of the respondent's husband or partner with that of her father. If the husband's category was higher than the father's the woman was deemed to have been upwardly mobile.

9. Orientation

An index of orientation was calculated by combining the priorities indicated by the client, both in the features of the job she was seeking, and in the features which would cause her to reject a job. Possible orientations were domestic (priority that work should fit in with family commitments), work (priority that intrinsic and extrinsic features should be satisfactory), social (good social relationships), and any combination, giving seven groupings in all.

Domestic orientation was clearly strongest. In almost a quarter of the clients it was exclusive of any other considerations. In addition, 25% had a domestic/work orientation, 18% a balanced domestic/work/social orientation, and 7% a domestic/social orientation.

Only 23% of clients excluded domestic considerations, and were either totally work (9%), totally social (6%), or work/social (8%) in orientation.

A number of other variables were tested against orientation to see which were significantly associated with this index. Not surprisingly, the strongest correlation was with the age of the youngest child. An exclusively domestic orientation was demonstrated by 20 - 33% of all clients with children in each age group up to the age of 12 years, at which point there was a dramatic fall to only 8% of women with domestic orientation. The pattern for women with domestic/work orientation followed the same trend. It would seem that the child's switch to post primary schooling is associated with a shift in orientation of the mother.

There was a slight correlation between orientation and marital status, work orientation being slightly less common among married women than in other groupings. Social mobility had some influence too, in that clients who had been downwardly mobile on marriage tended to have higher work orientation - perhaps to regain a lost status, or else expressing dissatisfaction with marital experience.

More interesting than those associations which were revealed, however, were the findings of no association where one might have been expected. There was no evidence from the data that the clients overall orientation was significantly related to her age, her number of children, her years of work experience or her length of time away from employment. Increased years of education, qualifications, and status of husbands employment showed very slight influence, and whereas it might have been supposed that these would lead to increased work orientation, in fact, the marginal shift seemed to be towards increased social orientation. This suggests that all these factors may be linked to increased affluence and therefore, to more freedom to discriminate amongst jobs.

The only work related variable which showed strong association with orientation was previous occupation. Although all unskilled workers showed similar distributions, at the semi-skilled and skilled levels, manual workers were much more likely to show domestic orientation than non-manual workers, who were more inclined than any other group towards social orientation. The highest employment category represented - lower professional/administrative - showed markedly higher proportions in the work/social groupings.

These findings suggest that the basic orientation and priorities of the women seemed to be determined pragmatically by their personal experience, both of job and motherhood, rather than by social or structural factors. It must be noted, however, that the 'orientation' index is intended as a measure of overall psychological priorities, and is distinct from 'motivation' which focuses on the specific desire to return to work at this particular time - whatever the client's basic orientation, motivation seemed to be overwhelmingly financial.

## II. Work Related Characteristics

### 1. Previous Occupations

Broad based categories were used for comparative purposes (see Chapter II p 29 and Appendix II ) since individual job titles would have produced too small numbers in too many groupings.

25% of clients had worked in unskilled non-manual occupations.

20% had had semi-skilled non-manual jobs.

19% had done unskilled manual work.

13% semi-skilled manual work.

12% had done skilled non-manual work.

7% skilled manual work and

3% had had lower professional jobs.

## 2.2. Experience

A majority (59%) had worked for between four and ten years prior to domesticity.

28% had worked for less than three years and

13% had worked for longer than ten years.

Overwhelmingly first pregnancy was the reason for leaving employment (82%), though 9% had left on marriage. Only 2% had continued to work until the birth of their second child.

## 3. Gap in Employment (1)

48% of clients had had a gap in employment of from 6 - 12 years.

29% had been left for over 12 years and

22% had been left for five years or under.

With regard to this last figure it must be remembered that women with a gap of under four years were specifically excluded from the sample and evidence suggests that exclusions on these grounds were considerable (see p. 141).

Therefore, although the figures quoted might seem to confirm King's 1975 estimate of an eight year

average gap for child rearing, the exclusions, plus evidence that the Job Centre is not typically the first method of re-entry, suggests a much shorter gap.

4. Job Sought

The largest single group of clients (26%) was looking for 'anything'.

The next largest group (19%) was seeking unskilled non-manual jobs.

18% wanted semi-skilled non-manual.

18% wanted unskilled manual.

7% wanted semi-skilled manual.

6% wanted skilled non-manual jobs.

3% wanted skilled manual and

2% wanted lower professional jobs.

When compared with their previous employment

51% of women wanted no change.

8% desired upward job mobility and for

37% domesticity had resulted in acceptance of downward job mobility.

These figures contrast sharply with a 35% upward social mobility on marriage.

The most stable occupational groupings seem to be the semi-skilled and unskilled non-manual workers. The group most likely to be seeking a change in occupation is the semi-skilled manual group.

5. Motivation

Motivation was measured according to the reasons given by respondents for their returning to work at present.

Financial considerations were paramount in re-entry motivation.

11% indicated financial motives exclusively.

25% gave financial plus social motives.

20% gave financial plus intrinsic work satisfaction motives.

32% included financial, social and work motives.

Thus only 12% of all clients did not indicate financial priorities in deciding to return to work. Of these 8% wanted to work for social reasons alone and only 4% gave job satisfaction reasons alone.

12% maintained that were it not for current financial need, they would prefer not to work at all, while a further 77% indicated that if financial need was not a consideration they would only work part-time.

Motivation appeared to be related to husband's occupation in that exclusively financial motivation was strongest among wives of unskilled manual workers, whilst financial/work satisfaction motivation was strongest amongst wives of husbands in lower professional jobs.

At all skill levels, financial/work satisfaction motivation was stronger among wives of non-manual than manual workers, whilst the reverse was true of financial/social motivation. Motivation for work appeared to have no significant relationship to the clients' basic underlying orientation - mainly because financial considerations were so dominant at all levels.

6. Desire for Part-Time Work

23% of clients were looking for part-time jobs only.

48% expressed a strong preference for part-time work

22% showed some preference and only

7% preferred to work full-time.

Despite these preferences, 17% of clients were actually looking for full-time work at the time of the sample, the discrepancy invariably being accounted for by financial need.

The preference for part-time work was clearly related to family commitments since 69% of clients said they would like to work full-time if they had no dependents. The actual number of dependents did not seem to be significant, since there was no correlation between desire for part-time work and number of children. The age of the youngest child was significant, however, with the least desire for part-time work coming not only from mothers with the oldest children but also from those whose children were the very youngest. Clients' own ages reflected the same pattern with those seeking full-time work coming from the oldest and youngest groups.

That young mothers with very young children are more likely to be seeking full-time work than those who are older, and with older children, may to some extent reflect the different hours of child supervision of childminders/daycare centres, as against school hours. It is also probable though that this former group is working out of real financial necessity and does not, therefore, feel that part-time work is a viable option. This interpretation of the data is

supported by the fact that desire for part-time work is strongly correlated with marriage, whilst a higher than average number seeking full-time work is associated with those separated or divorced.

Correlations between desire for part-time work and other work related variables produced some interesting findings. There was no evidence that desire for part-time work was at all related to levels of qualification attained. More surprisingly, the association with years worked prior to domesticity was a negative one. Those who had worked for the longest time have the strongest desire for exclusively part-time work whilst those who worked for the shortest period are the most likely to be seeking full-time employment. This may be a reflection of financial factors, however, the latter group representing low income families characterised by early marriage and motherhood.

The association between preference for part-time work and husband's occupation is very strong indeed. As might be expected there is a tendency

for desire for part-time work only, to increase along with husband's occupational status. More interestingly perhaps, is the finding that at all skill levels wives of non-manual workers are more likely to be seeking part-time work than are wives of manual workers. This may be due to differences in financial standing, differences between the groups as to the social acceptability of wives working and/or to differences in the flexibility of working hours of manual workers vis à vis non-manual workers.

### III The Re-Entry Process

72% of clients thought that re-entry would be a difficult process - although 36% had expected to find a job within one month. A further 31% had thought it would take between one and three months to find a suitable job, and only 33% had expected to be still looking for a job in over three months time.

As many clients pointed out, these expectations had proved to be over optimistic. It was already over six months since over half of the clients had decided to return to work and 15% had actually been registered at a Job Centre for more than that time.

1. Perceived Handicaps

'The current economic situation' was the problem most often cited (by 68% of clients) as a barrier to employment.

50% felt constrained by lack of adequate information about the local job market.

47% felt handicapped by a 'lack of confidence'.

47% felt lack of qualifications to be a problem and

22% felt that their age restricted their re-entry opportunities.

2. Mobility

The vast majority (79%) would not be prepared to travel more than one journey by public transport to get to work. A further 9% were seeking jobs within walking distance of their own homes.

Mobility is strongly related to the age of the youngest child; whereas those willing to travel one public transport journey are evenly spread through all the groups, those seeking work within walking distance of home are most heavily concentrated where the youngest child is one or two years old, and those willing to travel more than one journey have their highest representation in the group with children over 12 years of age.

Mobility also reflects expectation of payment. Again, those willing to travel one journey are fairly evenly distributed. Almost half of those wanting work close to home, however, expect payment in the lowest category. None of those willing to travel more than one journey is seeking work in this lowest category and a quarter are seeking work in the highest payment category.

#### IV. The Role of the M.S.C.

Only 32% of the clients in the survey were actually registered with the Job Centres.

The most common reasons for registering were 'to get information and advice about jobs available locally', and 'to get help and advice from staff'. Other suggested reasons for registering - to get training, occupational guidance or state benefits - were of minimal significance.

Reasons for not registering were given in answer to an open-ended and uncoded question, but the majority fell into one of two groups, those who

had not realised that they could register and those who had simply not yet got round to it. The next most common categories were those who were already employed but seeking a job change, and those who maintained that they had been discouraged from registering by the Job Centre staff. (This response was most frequent from those seeking part-time clerical work possibly because of the lack of part-time jobs in this sector).

1. Registered Clients

Time Registered

Almost half had been registered for over six months (47%).

11% had been registered for 4 - 6 months.

25% for between 1 - 3 months and

14% for under one month.

Contacts

Over half those registered reported contact with reception only. The rest claimed to have seen an employment officer. This finding obviously needs careful interpretation, since Job Centres do not normally register clients at reception. It would seem that either some women had wrongly identified the person they spoke to, or else that some considered that they had registered when in fact they had not done so formally.

Almost half (48%) of those registered had had at least one job referred to them. But 52%

of these had either been unable to attend or had decided not to attend for an interview. Of the rest, 20% were interviewed but not offered the job, 23% were offered the job and accepted it, and 6% were offered the job but declined it.

### Training

36% had discussed training with Job Centre staff but only 7% had actually applied for it.

70% of all registered clients thought they would consider training if it was offered, but generally with reservations, the main one being that it would have to considerably improve their job prospects (47%), 36% would consider training only if it was local and 36% only if it was part-time.

Of those who totally rejected the idea of training, most did so because they believed themselves sufficiently trained already.

### Client Evaluation

Two functions of the Job Centres were identified by over half the clients as the most valuable:-

'Help from staff in obtaining a suitable job' and  
'Information about the local job market'.

Information about other services - training and occupational guidance - was of lesser importance, and practical assistance - about interviews and application forms - was clearly of least importance, the last being given lowest priority by almost 70% of clients.

It would seem that skilled help at a personal level and linked to local awareness is the requirement of the majority of clients.

Of the registered group only 9% thought that Job Centre staff had no influence with employers, whilst 23% considered that they had 'a lot' of influence.

#### Effects on Clients

Although 65% were still looking for the same job as when they first visited the Job Centre, a number of clients acknowledged changes in their job seeking. For 8% this was negative - wondering if it really was an opportune time to re-enter

employment, but for the rest the change was in the direction of less rigidity in their job requirements.

57% were now considering a wider range of jobs.

36% were considering training.

29% were considering different hours.

15% were considering a longer journey to work and

15% were considering accepting less money.

Only 4% of the registered clients were relying solely on the Job Centres for re-entry, and well over half were using three or more other means of job search.

## 2. Non-Registered Clients

As with the registered clients, over half had decided to return to work over six months previously and again the smallest group (17%) was that of clients who had decided to return less than a month previously.

Again, most had also used other forms of job search, supporting the pilot finding that visiting the Job Centre is unlikely to be the primary step in re-entry.

### Reasons for Visiting Job Centres

The most common category recorded was 'other reasons', since a majority of clients replied 'to look for a job' - a response which had been presumed too obvious to be allocated a category. This apart, the next highest group of clients were 'just passing', followed by those who had been 'personally' advised to use the service. Interviewers noted that a number of clients were accompanied by husband/friends/relatives. Those who visited as a direct result of advertising in newspapers or on T.V. totalled less than 3% in all.

### Information

62% of the non-registered clients had no knowledge of any other M.S.C. services.

T.O.P.S. was best known - 23%.

Only 6% knew of Occupational Guidance.

Nearly a quarter were unsure what influence, if any, Job Centre staff had with employers. Over half thought they had 'some' or 'a lot' and only 7% thought they had none at all.

### Requirements

Again, what most clients were seeking was local job information (90%) followed by 'help from staff' (72%).

Similarly, information about training and Occupational Guidance was considered the next most useful service. A clear majority, however, did not think that advice about filling application forms or interviews would be very useful.

Just over half had considered training, but 41% of those required that it should be local and 29% that it should be part-time.

73% said they would consider Occupational Guidance if it were offered - though it is hard to determine what was understood both by O.G. and also by 'consider'. Perhaps the figure of 27% who would not consider it is the more significant.

### 3. Comparisons and Contrasts between Registered and Unregistered Clients

As a majority of clients in both groups had made the decision to return to work over six months prior to the survey, there seems little support for the 'impulse decision' theory of women returning

to work. The fact that such a high percentage were not only willing to assist with a long questionnaire but also, according to the interviewers, expressed so much gratitude that their requirements were being considered, suggests that this is a client group seriously committed to seeking employment.

Seasonal fluctuations in this client population (there was even a noticeable 'tailing off' towards the end of the survey period), should not, therefore, be taken as evidence of a low or fluctuating motivation to work. Rather, it would seem that this is a response to the constraints inherent in the dual role of the working mother. When long school holidays approach, the mother decides to postpone job search - hardly surprising when over half the clients had a youngest child of six years old or younger.

### Requirements

The requirements of both groups of clients, registered and unregistered, were the same. They wanted help from the staff and they wanted local job advice. Less importantly, they wanted information about training and

occupational guidance. Least of all did they require practical help about interviews or form filling.

### Influence

It might have been considered that clients who registered did so because they considered the Job Centre staff were very influential with employers, and that those who did not register assumed the staff influence to be less.

Figures from both groups were very similar, however, but with the registered clients having a marginally lower opinion of the influence of the staff.

### Expectations

It could be suggested that clients who registered as unemployed might be leaving the Job Centre to do all the job search for them, whereas those not registering were using the Job Centres as one means among many of finding employment. In fact, the data clearly show that it is the registered clients who are the most likely to be using a greater number of alternative approaches to getting a job. From this it could be taken that decision to register may be a sign of commitment to employment.

## Training

There were a number of differences between the two groups with regard to training. More of the registered group would consider it (70% as against 52%). This group was more concerned that the training should considerably improve their job prospects. They were also, however, more concerned that it should be available part-time. One interpretation of this could be that a part-time requirement, far from indicating a less serious approach, in fact simply suggests a more considered and realistic assessment of their situation on the part of the registered clients. It is perhaps worth emphasising again that of the one-third of all clients who had done some post school training leading to qualifications, over half had done this in their own time and at their own expense. This again suggests a serious commitment. That this may not be fully appreciated by Job Centre staff is indicated by the statistics that of the 36% of registered clients who had discussed training with staff, only 7% had gone on to apply for it. Volunteered additional inform-

ation from some interviewees suggested that they had not only been discouraged from applying for training but had felt, as they phrased it, 'put down'. The impression received (as distinct from 'given') was that staff regarded it as inappropriate for mothers of young children to seek training.

#### 4. Differences Between Centres

One unexpected, though perhaps not really surprising, finding was that the various Job Centres differed markedly in their re-entry women client populations. The women at the suburban centre were overwhelmingly domestic in their orientation, were seeking jobs nearest home and expecting the lowest payment. More surprisingly, though one might have thought that work orientation would be highest at the commercial centre where clients were likely to be better educated and more qualified, this was not the case. It was the industrial centre, where clients were mainly seeking unskilled manual jobs, which showed the highest work orientation and the strongest desire for full-time work. By contrast, the commercial centre showed most social orientation

and desire for part-time work. This suggests that perhaps work orientation is a necessity for the less educated less skilled, and that social orientation is a luxury enjoyed by the more qualified clients.

5. Client Suggestions

Clients were invited to put forward any ideas they might have as to ways in which the Job Centres might facilitate their re-entry process, and 26% responded positively.

No attempt has been made to evaluate the practicality of any of these suggestions. They are simply recorded, as collected data, grouped into related categories, and presented in order of the frequency of the ideas being expressed. Their value lies not only, perhaps not so much, in their usefulness for planning future policy, as in providing the M.S.C. with insight into what their clients - under ideal circumstances perhaps - feel would be a useful service.

(a) Advertising and Publicity

The survey revealed that knowledge of

M.S.C. services was poor, but also that current advertising had had an extremely small impact on clients. A number of suggestions were made about this.

- More advertising of services offered, both inside and away from the Job Centres.
- Use of local radio to advertise local skills needed and details of training available locally.
- A mailing list of local classified jobs (similar to estate agent lists). This could be partly client financed.
- A window board for jobs suitable for mothers so that it would not be necessary to take young children inside just to look. It is worth noting in connection with this point that the interviewers, in all but the spacious suburban centre, reported that mothers with children seemed to be severely handicapped in their job search.

(b) Use of the Job Centres

As the survey showed, actual help from staff was identified as the strongest need of this client group, perhaps less confident and less au fait with the world of work than other Job Centre clients. In the light of this it is perhaps not surprising that a number of clients would have liked a little more support, even 'spoon feeding', requesting:

- A 'floating' staff member in self service who could approach anyone who seemed 'lost' and explain the layout and facilities.
- Special display boards were requested for:-
  - school hours jobs
  - over 40s.
  - home workers.
- Lists available at Job Centres giving Local Authority nurseries and registered child minders by postal districts.

(c) Employer Education

Job Centre staff were generally perceived as having 'some' or 'a lot' of influence with employers. Many clients felt that staff could present their requirements and preferences to employers. It seemed to be felt that at present the staff are simply representing the employers' requirements, leaving the clients with a 'take it or leave it' situation. Suggestions in this area included:

- Alert employers to the numbers of women seeking school hours or flexi-time arrangements.
- Encourage part-time working and job sharing schemes.
- Encourage home working arrangements.

(d) Training

Volunteered comments about training strongly reinforce the view that re-entry women take

a serious and responsible view of training, and, any idea that they want to take training courses just for their own sake is not supported by evidence from the survey. Suggestions were very much geared to considerations of maximum work efficiency.

- Encourage 'work experience' schemes for re-entrants.
- Encourage 'on the job' training/refresher schemes possibly combined with day release.
- Make more use of local schools as centres for evening refresher courses and training.

#### 6. General Comments from Clients

Just under a quarter of all clients proffered general comments on information totally unsolicited by the survey. (This may be seen as evidence of the empathy established by interviewer and interviewee, and thus a validation for using re-entry women to conduct the survey). Many of these comments were idiosyncratic, but some more general points did emerge.

- (a) A number of women maintained that if their husband's earnings, or family allowances, were higher, they would prefer to do voluntary work or to take up cultural activities rather than get a job. Even though actual numbers are small, this is an interesting finding at a time when people are expressing concern that increasing unemployment will automatically mean loss of social identity and self worth.
- (b) Many single parents pointed out that although their personal preference would be to work part-time, allowing them to get both earnings and social contacts whilst leaving them time to cope with house and family, the '£6 trap' (2) after which earnings are deducted from social security precludes this option. They were thus reluctantly forced into full-time employment, feeling it to be at the expense of their own and their childrens' physical and mental health. These cases obviously made a strong emotional impact on the interviewers.

- (c) Surprisingly, since they were ostensibly looking for permanent jobs, a number of women volunteered the information that they intended giving up work for the duration of the summer school holiday period. (This was a decision made in September/October to take effect in the following July.)
- (d) Totally gratuitously expressed sentiments of overall satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the Job Centre Service were often given - the latter marginally exceeding the former. Where any specific features were mentioned it seemed that what caused satisfaction - the freedom to look round on your own - was also what caused greatest dissatisfaction - 'no-one seems to be bothered with you'.

#### V. Observations of Interviewers

Although it was no part of their contractual role, it is hardly surprising that having selected women with an interest in the survey to do the interviewing they would readily volunteer comments and suggestions of their own. These observations were taken from verbal comments at three joint

meetings of all the interviewers, one shortly after the interviewing started, one half way through and one after the end of the survey, and in written diary notes which two of the interviewers had kept during the survey. Their contributions fall into two groups, about the clients and about the service.

### The Clients

The overall impact of the clients on all the interviewers was to present, very strongly, two apparently irreconcilable images. First was the obvious desire for work, keenness to get any help that was available, persistence and often financial need, coupled with what one interviewer described as a 'lack of pushiness' on behalf of the clients. Second, was the recurring image of lack of qualifications, poor work history, restrictions as to mobility and hours available, and lack of definite work plans or aspirations. They noted that many of the women who were in the middle of the re-entry process 'know and resent the fact that they are under-achieving'. On the other hand, when asked about lack of confidence a number of clients had maintained that their confidence had increased during the period of

child rearing, a finding so contrary to that usually recorded in studies of re-entrants that it might be suggested that it is generally the more confident who approach the Job Centres.

From older re-entrants they were often presented with the view that mothers with young children should be staying at home to look after them and not seeking work. These returners frequently went on to ascribe society's ills to this trend.

### The Job Centres

#### 1. Facilities

Only the interviewer at the spacious suburban centre had no negative comments at all about facilities.

In every other case, interviewers found the premises cramped at least at certain periods of the day and week.

Though the self-service area is intended for browsing they found a lack of facilities to aid job search, such as extra seats, small tables, scrap paper, etc.

They also noted the lack of public toilet facilities.

All noted a lack of effective information about services available - though in some cases improvements took place during the survey period.

2. Staff

Although on very rare occasions the interviewers had to deal with clients who felt upset or angry about their reception by the regular staff, their overall impression was that a good service was being offered. As one interviewer put it "there was much more genuine concern than I personally would have expected from a government department". The problem seemed to be not that staff were unwilling or unable to help, but that clients were unaware of how best to obtain the help they needed.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The typical re-entrant using the Job Centre, as indicated by the modal findings, is in her late 20s/early 30s and is married with two children, the youngest under six. She left school at 16 with no qualifications and got employment as an unskilled, non-manual worker. She worked for seven years before leaving at first pregnancy, and she is seeking re-entry after a break of eight years. Her work

preferences are for part-time employment, in the traditional female sector of the economy, close to home; because her orientation is basically domestic. And she is looking to the Job Centre primarily for information about job opportunities available locally. She is generally lacking in knowledge of additional services such as Occupational Guidance, but would be prepared to undertake training if this would increase her employment prospects.

## EVALUATION

### The Sample

The original estimate was that for this section of the survey, concerned with general factual data collection, any number in excess of 200 would be considered adequate, this being the lowest number for which a confidence level is usually calculated. The achieved total of 480 responses is thus very satisfactory.

This figure probably represents somewhere between 80% and 90% of the total eligible client population at the time of the survey - it is obviously impossible to be precise because interviewers engaged in questioning one client could only estimate numbers of potential clients they were unable to approach at that time. Of clients who were approached, the response rate was over 90%.

The distribution of the sample between Job Centres is satisfactory in that it probably represents a proportional representation of re-entry women using the various centres. The largest group (40%) used the industrial centre, just over 30% used the commercial centre, and the other 30% used the Rotherham and suburban centres.

### Exclusions

Roughly 75% of those women approached by the interviewers in the Job Centres fell outside the criteria of the sample. Some were outside the age groups, some were women established in employment but seeking a job change. Of those excluded by the criteria of the survey, but clearly within the re-entry group, two categories stood out.

The first and largest was of women seeking to return to work in under four years from leaving employment for domestic reasons. This criteria for inclusion in the sample had been fixed with reference to previous research (Cook 1975, Hunt 1968, King 1975) but it now appears that assumptions about break in employment may have been severely exaggerated.

The second major group ineligible for the survey were those who had made their initial re-entry step more than two years previously. The pilot interviews had suggested a period of 18 months to two years for the completion of the re-entry process. It now seems that this estimate may have erred on the conservative side.

### The Application

This was undoubtedly a success. The original idea, based on considerations of least direct interference with the Job Centres and least cost, was to conduct the survey by mail questionnaire. This was discarded in favour of face to face administration when it became obvious after a couple of months that numbers produced by mail response would be inadequate. However, when responses came to be coded other advantages of face to face application appeared. Among the mail responses a number had misread or not followed instructions (e.g. when asked to 'number 1, 2, 3' had ticked '3'). A few had missed out some questions completely by apparently turning over two pages at once. And finally, mailing necessarily excludes those with low literacy levels, and in all but the commercial centre interviewers reported having to help clients who had 'left my reading glasses at home' or otherwise seemed to be having difficulties.

One possible advantage of the mail questionnaire was that critical views could be expressed in complete anonymity, whereas clients might be reluctant to be critical actually in the Job Centres. Numbers of mail responses were too low to check this but a subjective view is that they did contain more critical comment. It could simply be that those clients with a grouse were more motivated to respond.

Apart from the decision to have interviewers rather than a mail questionnaire, the actual choice of interviewers who had empathy with the clients was an important factor in the success of the survey - vide the response rate.

(One interviewer also provided a classic case study of a typical middle-class re-entry into full employment. After nine years of total domesticity, a Wider Opportunities for Women course had helped to raise confidence as well as to suggest wider possibilities than just to try to return to teaching. At this point, a chance personal contact had provided the opportunity for part-time work on the survey. The work experience served not only to increase confidence but also to reassure that domestic responsibilities could be coped with, and to accustom the family to extra income. At the end of the part-time employment, her commitment and efficiency had so impressed the staff that she was offered temporary full-time

employment at the Job Centre. This was later confirmed to a permanent appointment, and at the time of writing negotiations are in progress after which it will be possible for her to apply to work reduced hours, which is her ultimate goal. The entire sequence of events from decision to give up domesticity to becoming a permanent part-time member of the work force will probably be completed in around the two year period postulated in the pilot survey!)

### The Questions Asked

The questionnaire had been constructed with a lot of discussion at each stage, and had been carefully piloted, therefore it was not surprising that there were few problems. Only one question provided any real difficulty and it was just unfortunate that it had not been of significance to anyone in the pilot. In asking what rate of pay clients were seeking, both an annual salary range and its weekly equivalent were offered. However, a number of clients seeking part-time work were obviously only thinking in terms of hourly rates, a direct translation of which into full-time rates would have frequently produced an upwards distortion. This problem applied particularly at the suburban centre. It was dealt with by coding the rate by its equivalent part-time or full-time job.

One other item revealed how even where both question and response are unequivocal, problems can arise.

A high positive response (73%) indicated that clients would 'consider' 'Occupational Guidance' if it was offered. What does this mean? The answer is probably, unfortunately, 'very little'. Marketing research abounds with examples of surveys where clients would consider changing to Brand X, which when marketed fails abysmally. Interviewers felt too that despite their efforts some clients had not made the distinction between the Occupational Guidance service and general job advice. What the response undoubtedly does indicate is the overwhelming predisposition of the clients to seek and accept any personal help which is offered.

Apart from these two questions, however, the interviewers reported no problems with the survey. That the questions seemed relevant and sensible to the clients was suggested by the 100% completion rate and interviewers reported that many respondents asked interested questions about the survey as a whole or certain sections of it.

#### The Type of Question

Because of the large scale of the survey and the inherent problems of coding responses and processing

data, closed or multiple choice questions were preferred to open-ended ones. Since the questionnaire had been designed only after extensive reading, key person interviewing, a pilot probe and a local radio phone-in, it was felt that enough was known about the situation to design a questionnaire of this type.

Of the 50 questions, only four were genuinely open-ended and a further six had 'anything else' or 'other response' categories in addition to multiple options. Positive response to the four open-ended questions ranged from 11% to 26% and for the 'other' categories it was much lower - in two cases nil. The majority gave responses along the lines of 'I've never given it much thought' or 'I don't really know'.

Overall, then, it would seem that the policy of offering mainly closed questions was realistic, both in terms of the target sample and in terms of the questionnaire methodology.

Although it might appear that the most interesting and useful information was collected in answer to the open-ended questions, e.g. that asking for

suggestions to improve the service, it must be remembered that these came at the end of a long questionnaire. Arguably, it was due to the build up of confidence and rapport in responding to the closed questions that the clients felt able to proffer their own ideas at the end. This might not have been the case had there been a lot of open questions and clients had heard themselves often replying 'I'm not sure' or 'I don't know'.

#### The Questions Not Asked

Obviously, however carefully a survey is checked (this was approved by the Central Statistical Office of the Cabinet Office) and piloted, the checking can only be of what is there. What does not become apparent until the end of the survey at the processing and analysis stage, are omissions, questions which, in the light of the findings, one wished had been included.

One omission was a question on total family income. It would, with hindsight, have been useful to correlate this with, for instance, desire for part-time work. The correlation with husband's occupation was strong, but this additional information might

have given an indication of whether this was for financial or status reasons. In the light of the observation of interviewers that a number of clients were accompanied in their visits, it might have been helpful to know if clients had husbands who were, or had been, Job Centre users. It would also have been interesting to find out if husbands of respondents were currently unemployed. This might have been related to whether or not the women had registered as unemployed.

Two other limitations in the questionnaire were revealed with hindsight, both relating to lack of differentiation within categories. In the questions relating to part-time work no distinction was made between part-time within normal working hours and part-time work in unsocial hours. The other was that, within the survey as a whole, no distinction was made between initial re-entrants seeking their first job of any sort since leaving for domesticity, (including part-time or informal employment), and those women who were seeking to make adjustments within the re-entry process, having already had some work experience prior to visiting the Job Centre.

## Conclusions

The value of a large scale questionnaire is that it can yield a high numerical and proportional response. This is its strength, that numbers produce a high reliability and a consequent high confidence rate. Unfortunately, it is also its weakness, in that large numbers produce aggregate totals that iron out individual inconsistencies and irrationalities, producing an overall picture which is more logical and rational than reality. Nothing, for example, in the computer print out suggests the idiosyncrasy of one questionnaire where a client of 50, with no qualifications, who had last held an unskilled manual job over twenty years ago, was seeking part-time work, close to home, paying over £3,640 annually (full-time equivalent), and was expecting to find such a job in 1 - 3 months. These exceptional cases become homogenised in the statistical analysis, so that the findings hold for the majority only. This, however, is more of a theoretical or academic problem, since for all practical purposes it is the composite client group that is of more interest to the M.S.C., not the mavericks.

One other limitation is inherent in questionnaire methodology. While it is adequately reliable when

dealing with objective factual data - age of youngest child, number of years worked, qualifications, etc., it is less adequate in areas of non factual, more subjective judgement, e.g. motivation, orientation. It is for this reason that insights from the large scale survey are complemented by data from the smaller but much deeper focused interview sample.

CHAPTER VI - THE DEPTH INTERVIEWS SURVEY OF POTENTIAL  
JOB CENTRE USERS

	<u>Page</u>
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	151
<u>THE MIDDLE CLASS SAMPLE</u>	152
Life Style and Personal Character- istics	152
Work History	155
Transition to Domesticity	159
Domestic Experience	161
Re-entry	167
The Potential Role of the M.S.C.	177
<u>THE WORKING CLASS SAMPLE</u>	181
Life Style and Personal Character- istics	182
Work History	186
Domestic Experience	190
Work During Domesticity	195
Future Work Plans	199
Re-entry	203
The Potential Role of the M.S.C.	204
<u>SUMMARY</u>	208
<u>EVALUATION</u>	210

INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out to complement the previous one, both in terms of the sample of women re-entrants, and also with regard to the methodology. Estimates of women re-entering employment after domesticity put the figure at around 1m annually. Those actually registering with Job Centres, however, are only a small fraction of this total. Since registration with a Job Centre seems, in practice, to be almost a pre-requisite for access to such other services as TOPS courses and Occupational Guidance, it appears that the government supported agencies are being by-passed by the majority of their potential client group of re-entry women.

In investigating the service given by the agencies to re-entry women, therefore, it was decided that it would be necessary to seek information not only from their clients, but also from a sample of the potential client group who are currently not using their services.

The aims, sample selection and method of survey for this group are set out in Chapter II (pp 32 - 46). The largely qualitative findings are intended to balance the quantitative data of the previous chapter and presented separately for the two groups interviewed, the middle class group and the working class group.

## THE MIDDLE CLASS SAMPLE

### Life Style and Personal Characteristics

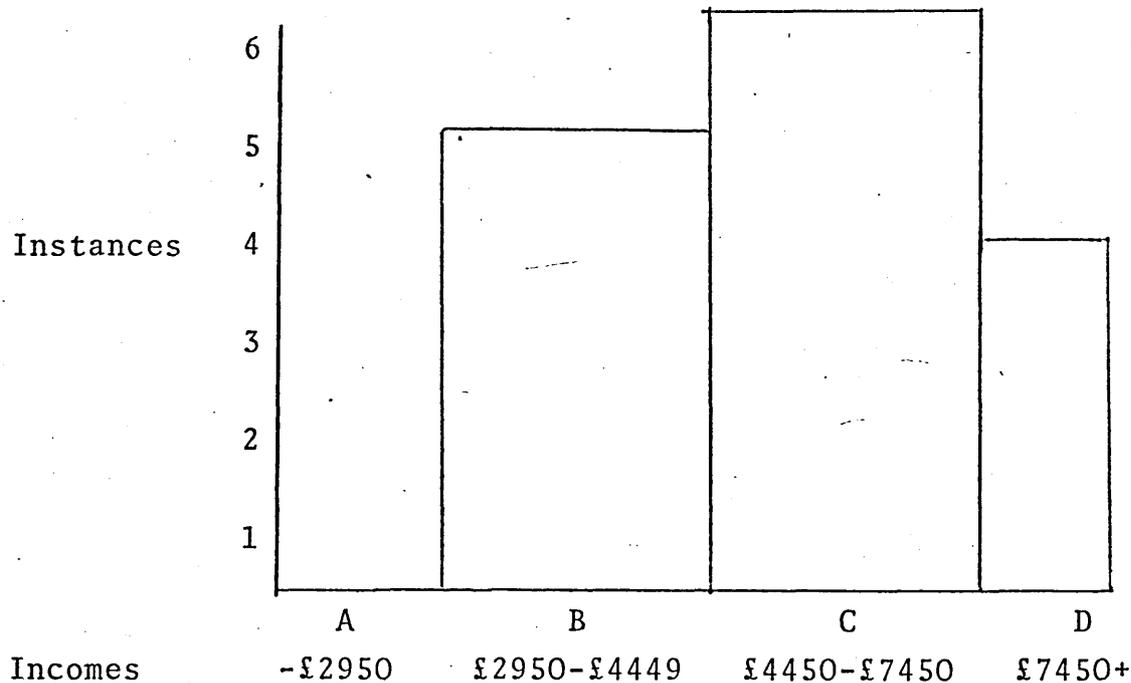
All lived in detached or large semi-detached post-war houses, within one mile of each other in the Hallam District of South West Sheffield. All had lived in their present homes for at least two years, and most for considerably longer. Of the 15 interviewed in this sample, eight had always lived within the Greater Sheffield area, the other seven had either moved in from other areas (5) or spent a number of years living elsewhere (2), having been raised in Sheffield.

Two thirds of the women fell into the middle age group specified (30 - 34) with four older and one younger. All were married; 12 had two children and three had three. One mother of two considered that her family may not yet be complete, and only one mother admitted that her children were not planned. Of those with two children the norm for the gap between births was three years; of those with three children the range was five to eight years. For eight of the families the youngest child will be enrolled in school for the current academic year. None had other dependents living with

them, although one family did include a physically handicapped child needing constant hospital treatment who would be dependent for an indefinite time.

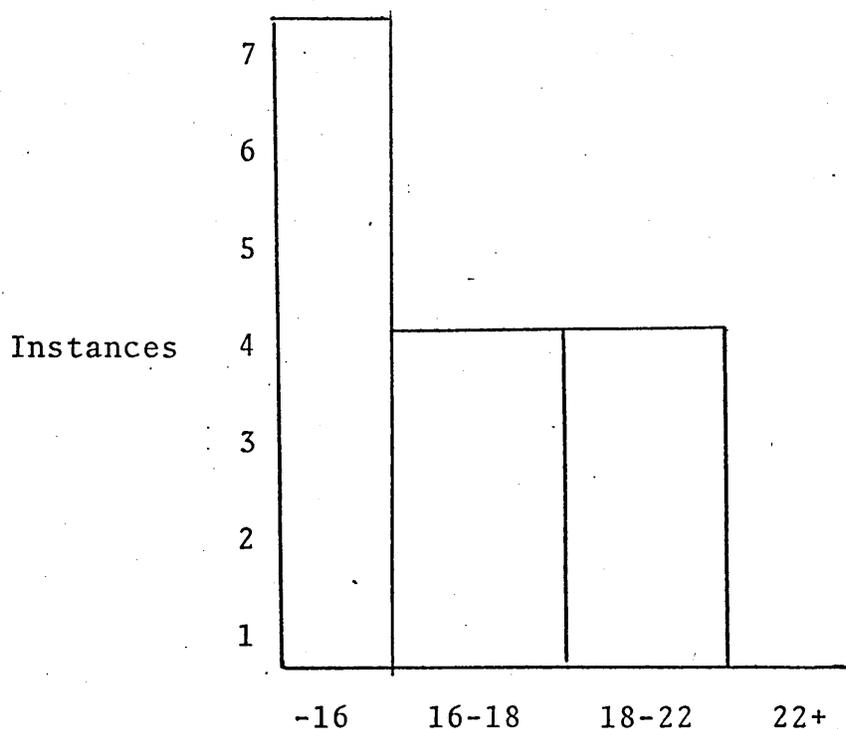
Husbands' occupations included area sales representatives (3), lecturers in higher or further education (4), managers for large national companies (3), and one each of engineering consultant, hospital consultant, head chef, surveyor, and self-employed shop owner. No incomes in the 'A' category were recorded but distribution through the other three categories was almost evenly spread.

Distribution of Incomes



Eighty per cent of the women held driving licences, though only two had their own cars. Just less than half (7) had left school under the age of 16 years and none had received full-time education beyond the age of 22.

Age at leaving full-time education



Over half of the respondents made comments drawing attention to the amounts of leisure and choice in their lives. When recounting what they would miss on returning to work two said 'sunbathing in summer', a number of others indicated that they enjoyed domesticity more in the summer

'because of the garden'. On the other hand four mentioned feelings of isolation and boredom during the previous winter 1978/9 (particularly severe here - the suburb with the highest altitude in the entire country).

Four women mentioned doing voluntary work, at various levels of commitment from a regular weekly service to an intermittent help with fund raising. Others mentioned less specific social interaction, and it would appear that the local junior school encourages parent participation and assistance with such things as cooking and craft classes.

### Work History

All but one of the women interviewed had worked continuously from leaving full time education until the onset of first pregnancy - a range of from three to 13 years (rounded to the nearest year), with eight years being the average length of employment for all the women. The one woman who left work before pregnancy did so with the desire to start a family, attributing failure to conceive to work stress.

Years in employment from leaving education to  
domesticity

Instances	4															
	3						x				x					
	2		x				x		x		x		x			
	1		x	x	x	x	x		x		x		x			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
		years worked														

The largest single occupation represented was clerical work (5 cases) closely followed by teaching (4). In addition, there was one representative each of,

- Professional Musician
- S.R. Nurse
- Dental Nurse
- Bank Clerk
- Confectioner and Store Buyer.

All claimed to have enjoyed their work experience in general, though some only moderately or with reservations. Typical comments ranged from,

"I couldn't put my hand on my heart and swear that I'd enjoyed every moment of it".

to

"I enjoyed it very much indeed. It was just what I'd wanted to do for a very long time."

More significant, therefore, are the responses identifying the most and least satisfying aspects of their work experience. The three outstanding satisfiers, specifically identified by 7, 6, and 6 women respectively were autonomy, responsibility and capacity for individual input. The four ex-teachers in the sample were all anxious to stress the relative autonomy of the classroom but others, for instance a buyer and a receptionist also identified being on their own and organising their own work as a major factor in enjoyment of work.

Increased responsibility was appreciated by all those who had experienced it, even when it had not been actively sought nor anticipated with pleasure.

"I hadn't thought that that was important to me. I think it shocked me. I thought I'd be quite happy just to be told what to do and to do it ...But I quite like power actually!"

The sense of making an individual or unique contribution also increased satisfaction. Two different aspects were noted, personality characteristics which two teachers and both nurses felt had helped them to give and get something extra from their jobs; and an almost aesthetic

satisfaction experienced by the confectioner and one clerical worker. Less frequently mentioned sources of satisfaction - though perhaps because taken for granted - were

'the person I worked for' - 4 mentions  
'money' - 3 mentions  
'the people I worked with' - 3 mentions.

The aspects of employment causing dissatisfaction tended to be the reverse characteristics of the satisfiers. The single factor causing most irritation was over-supervision or over-direction 'people watching over you'; being 'messed about'; 'always checking up on you'. This strict discipline was an irritant even when it was external and impersonal - one teacher complained about being 'always 'summoned by bells' '. Any interventions by supervisors which tended to depersonalise the work were also resented - both a nurse and a shop worker reported the frustration of being discouraged from a too personal approach to patients/customers. Minor sources of dissatisfaction proved to be the person worked for, and the people worked with. Pay was not mentioned by anyone as a source of dissatisfaction.

Perhaps the chief finding was that the most important influence within the work experience tending to promote

positive attitudes towards work, and a general career orientation, was the combination of stability with one employer whilst experiencing upwards career mobility. It was noticeable that women who had combined these two factors in their work experience were closer in their views to each other, than to those in their own or similar occupations who had stagnated or who had changed employer.

These findings run counter to the continuing myths about womens' employment - that their primary interests are social, working for companionship, that they dislike responsibility, and that they are more amenable to strict discipline and supervision than their male counterparts.

#### Transition to Domesticity

Considering the high degree of overall enjoyment of work expressed it is interesting that only one woman admitted regret at leaving employment (this incidentally was also the one case of unplanned pregnancy). And there were many comments such as,

"After 11 years I felt I'd had enough".

"You think - Oh the rest of my life working here!"

All the women very obviously regarded child-bearing as a socially accepted and approved alternative to working.

Very frequently, moreover, pregnancy seemed to follow a period of lowered commitment to work. Six of the women had had to change their employment following their husbands' move to another district; a further two had had changes within their firms which they had not welcomed; and one more claimed to have reached a point in her career which would have necessitated a move.

"I'd reached a certain level and it was a case of career or children."

Despite the obvious chronological links between reduced work commitment and the start of pregnancy, all the women strenuously denied that childbearing had been consciously used as an option to withdraw from employment. Each maintained that she had wanted a family and that it was simply fortuitous that pregnancy occurred at a time when work seemed least attractive.

## Domestic Experience

Attitudes towards domesticity did not reveal the same blanket approval as was maintained towards employment. This could simply mean that society, particularly since the onset of the Women's Liberation Movement, is willing to tolerate the expression of negative attitudes towards the domestic role. But it was apparent too that comments about domesticity, whether positive or negative, tended to be more strongly and emotionally expressed than those relating to work. Only five women seemed to adopt consistently moderate or qualified attitudes, and the remaining ten did not so much range between, as gravitate towards the extremes of,

"I wanted a family very badly indeed -  
A great driving force you know, and oh, I'm  
so .... I've really been bowled over completely  
by it all."

and

"I went into fits of depression. All I  
could see for the rest of my days was being  
cooped up here with nappies. I couldn't  
see anything bright at all."

the majority tending towards the former.

In contrast to their accounts of work experience the women found it less easy to identify specific sources of satisfaction or dissatisfaction - or at least to relate aspects which they particularly liked or disliked to their overall feelings towards the domestic role. Perhaps the nearest they got was in defining what would be most missed on returning to work. Again autonomy was obviously the most prized item.

"the freedom to do what you like when you like."

Second to this came social factors. Paradoxically while a number of studies have suggested that women return to work to relieve isolation, many women in this sample seemed to feel it would threaten their social contacts.

"I think, well which is more important? Well for me the things I do socially are."

However, it was obvious that many women had used the autonomy of the housewife role to recreate for themselves the satisfactions which they had received from employment, whilst eliminating the negative aspects such as supervision and imposed time keeping. One ex-teacher made the link when talking about her enjoyment of teaching young children.

"I enjoyed the children's friendships ... you know ... confidences, little things like that ... which is the same thing now I enjoy with my own children you see."

An ex-clerical worker obviously experienced the same pleasure in both work and domestic roles, saying

"I just used to enjoy getting pencil figures onto the typewriter and looking at a whole page - quite huge ones sometimes - and seeing how neat I'd done it."

and later

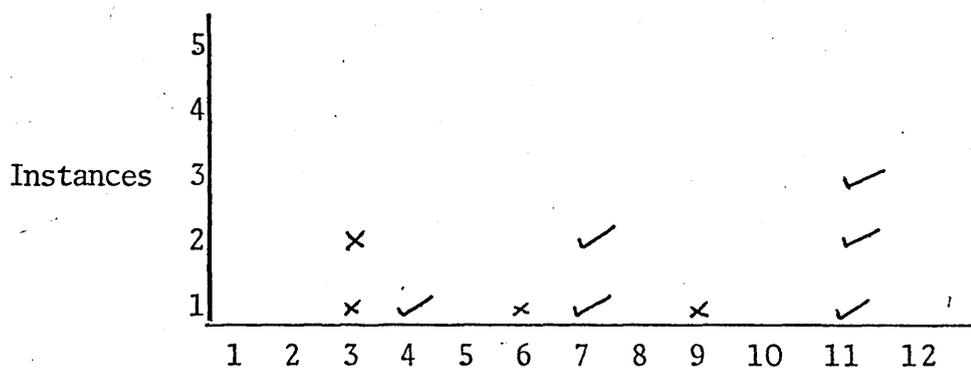
"Well it probably sounds so silly, but when I've had a good day doing the house through and I think at the end of the day, 'Oh it does look nice' - I suppose in a way I just take pride in what I'm doing."

There was no general agreement about the satisfaction of the housewife role, but there did seem to be a number of common factors between those women who found most pleasure in it. Personality obviously played some part. Those enjoying domesticity were noticeably the more gregarious, often with a number of strong social networks based on neighbourhood, schools, church, evening classes, etc.; whilst the group not enjoying domesticity tended to be considerably more isolated. Comments such as 'I'm not one for coffee mornings' were typical of this latter group - incidentally, of the six most happily domesticated group, four had Welsh connections.

There were some statistical differences between the two groups. Those enjoying domesticity had worked for longer before their first pregnancy - an average of  $8\frac{1}{2}$  years as

against five for the group with negative feelings. And none of the latter group had stayed in full-time education beyond the age of 18, whereas of the four women in the sample who had, three were among those strongly enjoying the housewife role.

Enjoyment of Domesticity by Years Worked



X = strong negative response

✓ = strong positive response

5 cases intermediate

This would seem to contradict the assumptions of some previous workers who have suggested that more education and longer work experience for women tends to orientate them towards careers and away from domesticity. It is also a popular myth that those who most enjoyed and found fulfilment in their work would find most frustration and depression as 'captive wives'. This again does not appear to be supported by the findings. In fact all the evidence from this sample suggests that a positive attitude towards work, is followed by a positive attitude towards domesticity, whereas a lukewarm work experience seems to be followed by a lukewarm domestic experience.

As well as identifying what things enjoyment of domesticity is linked to it is also valuable to discover what factors seem not to be related with it. Strength of the marital relationship (as indicated not only by what is said but by the number of times the husband's opinions are introduced, whether he is identified by name rather than 'my husband', etc.) would seem to have some bearing, though any more specific measures, such as amounts of domestic help given apparently have no correlation at all. The spatial closeness of the extended family also seems totally unrelated, despite assumptions that the geographical mobility of the workforce has contributed to the breakdown of family life.

Perhaps most significant was the finding that enjoyment of domesticity was not strongly related to the women's perception of social attitudes towards their domestic status; and the weak relationship was negative rather than positive. Six women felt no overriding pressure either way. Six felt a strong social pressure towards work.

"I think that one is made to feel ... well ... insignificant, if one doesn't have a job. I think that it undermines your morale in some ways you know; the fact that you're not able to combine motherhood with a job ..."

"I think there's a lot of pressure because everyone else works you feel you must work."

"Some women say 'Oh I'd get bored to death at home all day' ... They look down on you really."

Yet the remaining three were conscious of an equally strong pressure to remain at home.

"He can't understand me wanting to go back to work at all. He thinks I'm mad ..."

"He feels quite strongly about it ... that if you have children you should stay at home to look after them - mind you he's not the one doing it."

Interestingly, all those who felt pressure to return to work referred it onto peer groups, either neighbourhood or professional, whilst those experiencing pressure to stay at home all spontaneously attributed it to husbands and/or extended families. Without exception everyone discounted the media as a source of pressure.

Of the six who felt most pressure to work, three were among the group of mothers with strongest domestic orientation: of the three feeling strongest pressure to stay home, two were women with strong work orientation.

Neither consciousness of social pressure nor overall enjoyment of domesticity provided a measure from which re-entry plans could be predicted however.

## Re-Entry

Although all but one of the women in this sample left work believing that they would be adopting a totally domestic role for a number of years (five years per child being the minimum quoted), one third of the sample had some paid employment at the time of interview. Two more women, though not working at the time, had had a period of paid employment since starting a family.

In every case but one, financial considerations were a major incentive. The entire group with family incomes in the lowest category represented in this sample is either working or has worked since first pregnancy. This group also includes all those with husbands in occupations which are relatively insecure (three area sales representatives and two self-employed small businessmen at times of wife's working). Three of the women returned to work when their husbands were either un or under-employed, and were available to look after the children. If financial pressure provided the motivation, then family co-operation provided the opportunity to work, no help from outside the extended family was used by any of these early re-entrants. Three worked at home (two childminding, one teaching music) and the other two worked unsocial hours (nights and Saturdays) whilst their husbands cared for the children.



By contrast those women who have remained full-time housewives since first pregnancy were, in general, those who left school later, had managerial or professional husbands, and were higher than average on the sample family incomes. Of these only two were intending to return to work as soon as their youngest child was settled into school, the remainder (six) planned to stay at home until the youngest was through middle school, around twelve years. Two were not certain they will go back to work at all.

The longer withdrawal from employment in favour of child-rearing amongst the better off and more highly educated of the middle class women seems to be a matter of commitment. It does not necessarily imply that these women either enjoyed work less, or enjoy domesticity more than the others in the sample. As one mother expressed it,

"I'm not terribly maternal, but I wanted a child - I've had the child - I knew I wouldn't go back to work - that I'd look after it. So the question of whether I'm particularly enjoying it doesn't enter into it. I don't even question that side of it. I would do it anyway because I think that's right."

Whether working or non-working however, the women were practically unanimous in favouring part-time work. Only

four envisaged working full-time ever again, two of them in teaching, with the obvious advantages of hours and holidays accommodating children, and one only after her children were grown up and working or left home.

The fact that opinions were set so firmly against full-time working may well be a consequence of both devotion to family and home -

"They're my first priority. They always will be my first priority, and I will know that."

"I couldn't take on a job and neglect the house - or family of course - it would worry me that."

and the conviction that, however much they worked outside, the prime responsibility for the household would be theirs.

All but three acknowledged help to a greater or lesser extent from their husbands. Of the three who did not record help, two accepted 'He's not the type' while one justified his attitude, accepting a division of labour which obviously resulted in a very comfortable living standard.

"I'm sure that if I did work I couldn't ask him to do anything. He works far too hard - his job is so demanding that when he comes home he's just ready for relaxing."

Of those already having some help, the most optimistic forecasts were that when they returned to work domestic job sharing would revert to that experienced when they had both had jobs before children were born. This would mean sharing shopping, cooking, washing, cleaning, etc., but would still leave child care - visits to doctor and school, clothes buying and holiday and sick care to the mother; the father's role being restricted to playmate and chauffeur.

Only two women had ever employed paid domestic help - both for one half day per week during the pregnancy/nursing period. Not surprisingly both women were in the highest income group, less predictably they were in the youngest age group. Both of these would employ domestic help again if they returned to work, as would two others. None of those actually working had any paid help, a reflection perhaps of the lower average income.

### Job Search Methods

The other area of general agreement, along with a preference for part-time working, was in job search methods. All of those who had re-entered employment had got their jobs through personal contacts. They had either been approached by their previous employer or they had heard through a friend that a vacancy was coming up, and had secured the job before it was advertised. Those women working from home had had clients referred to them by personal recommendations.

All of the housewives not currently working considered that, for preference, they would re-enter employment by the same route - by approaching previous employers and by sounding out friends and neighbours. All those with professional experience had kept up contact with old colleagues and many had also continued to take their professional journals since leaving employment. These journals and, for the non-professional housewives, local papers would provide the second choice of job search methods for this sample.

### Downward Job Mobility

Despite full consciousness of the difficult and probably worsening employment situation, only one of the women was pessimistic about her chances of finding a suitable

job when she wanted one, though most were rather less optimistic than the women who said,

"If I decided tomorrow I really wanted a job, I think I could have one within a week."

Given their skills and experience, their husbands' occupations and the potential neighbourhood contacts, however, their modified optimism did not seem too unrealistic.

The type of occupation sought after the period of domesticity highlights a further difference between the two sub-groups of early re-entrants and deferred re-entrants. Patterns for the group who had already re-entered employment illustrate the general downward career mobility, long established as typical of working mothers, but it would seem that this is not likely to be a characteristic of the other group.

Only one woman of the group already returned went back to exactly the same job as before, although on a part-time basis. Another returned to the same employer but at a lower position, and one who had previously combined performing and teaching music withdrew from the former to concentrate solely on teaching from home. Of the remaining four who changed occupations, all the changes would be classed as downward movements,

three clerical workers becoming respectively a child minder, a shop assistant and a night shift hospital orderly, and an ex-dental nurse also moving into child minding.

That this downward mobility occurs does not necessarily mean that it is perceived as such and thus resented or disliked by those experiencing it. Indeed the reverse would seem to be the case, the women regarding their work as either a temporary expansion of work experience in the case of the child minders, or as a welcome reduction in the demands and responsibilities from what they saw as their major jobs as mothers and housewives.

"I wouldn't want a demanding job ...  
I just want to be able to go out to  
work, do a job of work, and come home  
and not have to think about it."

The comments of two women seemed particularly significant, since both specifically referred to putting on or taking off their uniforms,

"I think really I go there because I've  
no responsibility. I don't bring any-  
thing home. I go, do my job, take off  
my uniform, and that's it."

Since uniforms are perhaps the most obvious of role signals it would seem that what the women sought from employment was the relaxation brought about by a temporary role change.

Almost all of the women who had returned to work made some comment like 'I don't want to bring anything home', making no distinction between tangible work and pre-occupation with work problems, thus demonstrating that home problems may intrude on work, but not vice versa.

#### Decline in Aspirations

The eight women who had not yet re-entered employment were in general agreement with the early re-entrants about their current role priorities.

"I've lost my ambitions. All my aspirations have been reduced to just looking after the children."

The difference seemed to be a recognition that this probably would not always be so and an unwillingness to lower their employment horizons.

"Until they're certainly well into middle school I don't foresee having any career intentions at all - but on the other hand I'm not prepared to cut myself off from a career."

Whilst not willing to drop in employment status, many were aware that a change of focus might be necessary in order to satisfy their stated preference for part-time working, the nurse pointing out the availability of part-time work in child and family planning clinics and a teacher noting that part-time employment was relatively common in remedial fields. This group appeared to be using the period of domesticity to reflect and to work out a strategy for their future careers, in contrast with the early re-entrants who tended to be more pragmatic. However, as has been pointed out, the deferred re-entrants as a group had better qualifications and higher family incomes and so were much more favourably placed to adopt a reflective attitude.

One individual case merits special consideration.

One woman, an under-16 school leaver with a husband in the highest income category, was totally indecisive about her re-entry thoughts, her ideas ranging from being a typist or play group assistant, to taking a university degree, commenting

"I think that's part of the pressure of living round here where people have got degrees and are better educated."

her ambivalence seemed to be less related to career aspirations than to considerations of self worth and social evaluation.

"Just knowing that you're capable of doing something like that would be a help."

This interviewee seemed to be a classic example of the syndrome of low self esteem and poor self image of the housewife, noted as typical by Michaels (1973) and others. But it was completely atypical of this Hallam sample.

#### The Potential Role of the M.S.C.

Not one of the middle class sample had ever been into a Job Centre, many did not know where they were, two were obviously unaware that the Job Centres were in any respects different from the commercial bureaux, and none was aware of the distinction between the industrial and the commercial Job Centres in Sheffield.

Hardly anything was known of the M.S.C.'s other services. None had heard of the Occupational Guidance Unit, two knew of the Professional and Executive Register and three were aware of the T.O.P.S. Courses. The two who knew of P.E.R. commented that their own vocational

fields of education and nursing were no longer covered by the service. And the three who knew of T.O.P.S. courses had come across leaflets through local authority evening classes.

Perception of the relevance of the services was low. Even after a brief outline of the facilities has been given, responses seemed to imply 'very interesting, but it really has nothing to do with me'. Only two responses could be interpreted as hostile or in disagreement with the general aims or ideology of the services.

One woman felt very strongly that the government supported agencies should be concentrating their attentions on the problems of the young unemployed, virtually to the exclusion of services to dependent wives with working husbands.

"I think there must be lots of school leavers who could work if the married women in some jobs didn't ... I think really that if there was a choice of me going for a job and a school-leaver going for the job, I think I would prefer the school leaver to get it, because I think it's more important for them to have a job, and I can manage."

The other negative response to the role of the agencies reflected an aversion to what was seen as state cossetting.

"I think you can overdo it - what you expect other people to do for you."

This last comment seems to express negatively what appears to have been felt, in its positive form, by all the women in this sample - a preference for doing things for themselves in their own way. Even those with professional qualifications would use journals, the Education Office, etc., only as a second choice of job search, personal contacts being much preferred by all. That this should be so reflects the high level of self confidence general to this sample, unusual for a housewife group if the findings of researchers as as Seear (1971) and Hunt (1968.) are to be accepted as general. It also, of course, reflects a confidence in their local and social contacts to facilitate this re-entry to employment via personal contacts.

Occupational guidance appealed to only one woman in the sample - the one atypically insecure about her self image and unsure of her aspirations. It would seem that this is exactly the type of person that the service is best equipped to assist, and so it is regrettable that it is not better known. All the other women felt that they did not need guidance. As one woman reflected, the years of domesticity had provided an ideal break during which abilities and interests could be re-assessed

while detached from the immediate pressures of the work situation. They felt that knowing what they wanted to do was not the problem at all - the problems were in finding the opportunities.

It might be thought that of all the services offered by the agencies the most appealing to this sample would have been the T.O.P.S. courses - which were in fact the best known (albeit by only 20 per cent of the sample). These were not considered a possible option by any of the group who had had professional or higher education, however. These women all thought that either they already had all the qualifications they needed or wanted, or else that their higher qualifications excluded them from consideration for T.O.P.S. training.

None of the remaining eight who were prepared to consider the courses thought them a practical proposition under existing conditions. The reasons for rejection focused on locations and hours. A number of the colleges providing the venues for T.O.P.S. training are not centrally located, and even those women who would consider full-time work at some stage would not consider seeking full-time courses at the other side of the City.

The most common barriers to considering training though, were the full-time restrictions - both the fact that training was itself full-time, and also that an assurance of availability for full-time work was generally required during the selection process.

Generally, the services on offer by the agencies were in the main not considered, or when considered, thought irrelevant. When asked to speculate on the type of service they thought the agencies might possibly provide which would be relevant to their needs, the responses to such a hypothetical question were understandably tentative. They did lean however towards suggestions for some sort of up-to-date, local, general information service, publicising what the trends and opportunities were in local employment.

## THE WORKING CLASS SAMPLE

### Introduction

Although initial approaches were made simultaneously to the middle and working class sample areas, the interviews were not carried out concurrently since entry to the Darnall group took longer to establish. This chronology had methodological consequences. To have treated the data from Darnall in complete isolation,

as if the previous research had contributed no insights, would have been impossible. Therefore, it was decided to make explicit where the previous findings had affected the interpretation of data collected later. Thus phrases such as 'Unlike Hallam ....' 'In contrast with the middle class area ....' appear in the analysis of the Darnall interviews. This could lead to the misinterpretation that the middle class sample had been taken as the norm and the working class sample interpreted as a deviation from it. This was not the case.

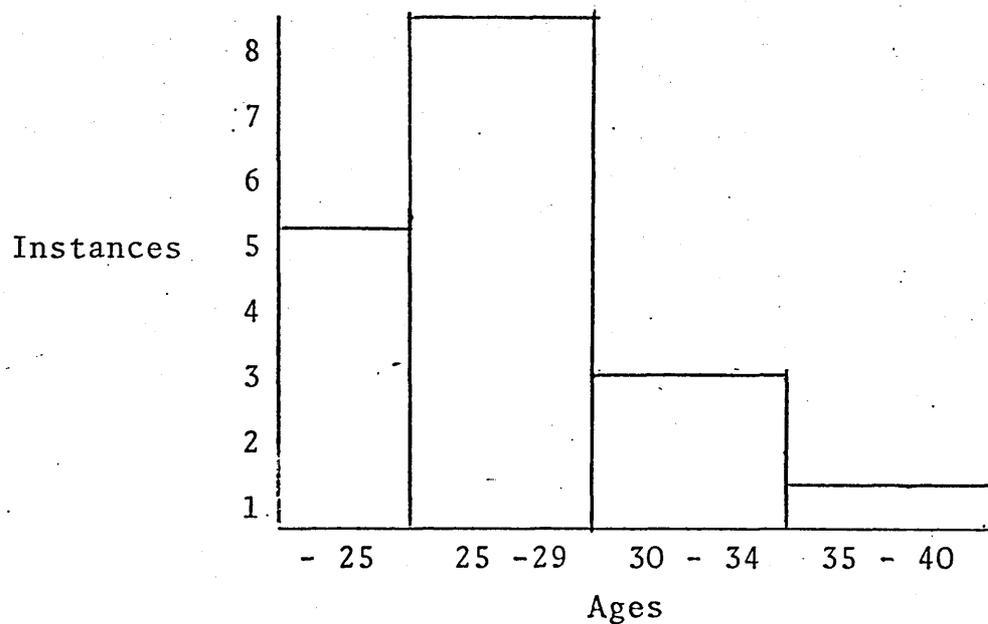
#### Life Style and Personal Characteristics

The respondents, with one exception who lived on business premises, lived in small (two up/two down) terraced houses, with or without bathrooms and generally with outside toilets. Industrial waste from the factories, the railway and the canal all combined to generate a polluted atmosphere. Vandalism was not in evidence, however, even in the demolition areas.

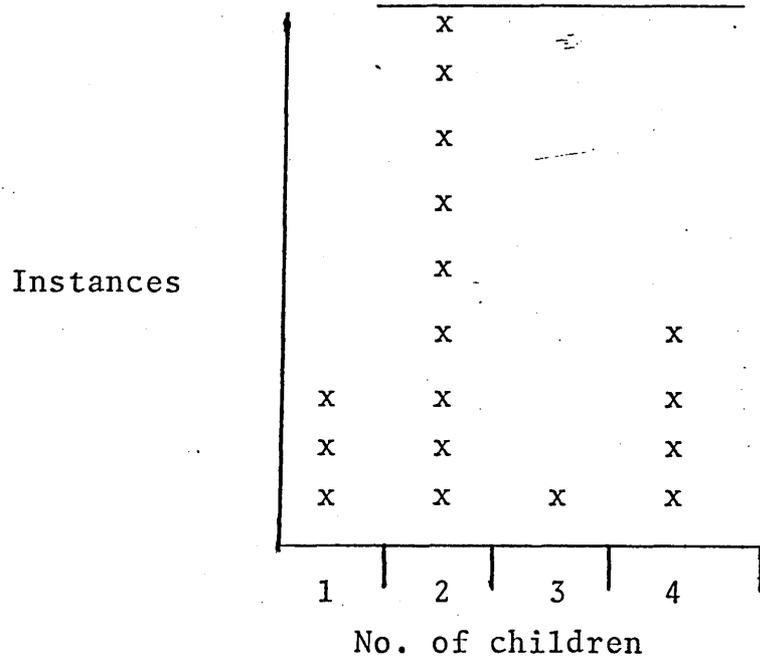
Almost half the sample of women interviewed were in the 25 - 29 age group; four were older and five younger. One was separated and the rest married, though two have had periods of separation from their husbands. Nine mothers each had two children, which was median and mode, but two respondents were pregnant and a further five stated that they would like more children. Although

a number indicated that they were currently practising family planning, only one mother said that her family had actually been planned.

Ages of Sample



Numbers of Children



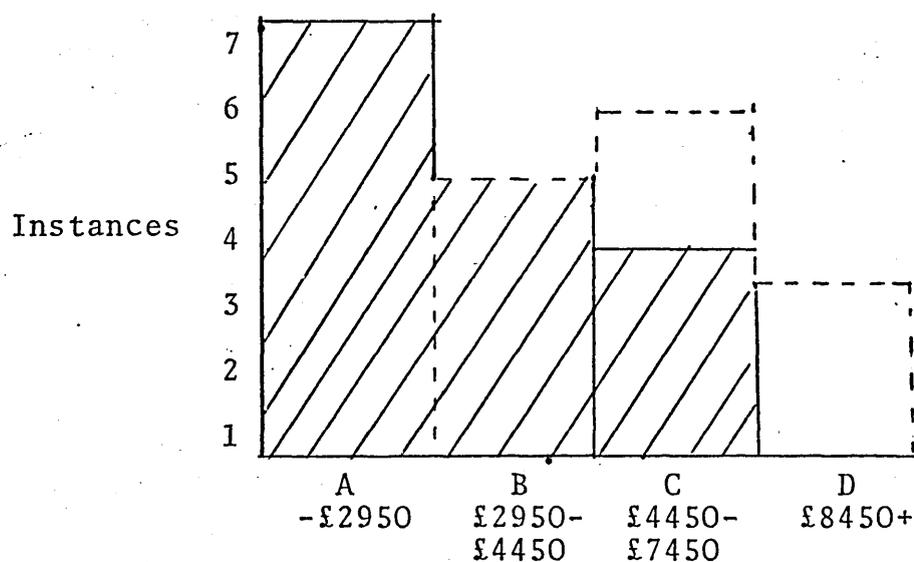
Only one woman had a dependent relative (a father) living with her, though apart from the immigrants the proximity of relatives very close by, (next door, across the road, at the end of the street) was the rule rather than the exception. All but two of the English born respondents had lived in the area all their lives. None of the women had a driving licence.

Husbands' occupations fell mainly into two groupings. Nine were unskilled (e.g. labourer/millhand/night security guard), and five were semi-skilled (e.g. driver/steel machinist/turner); there were also two skilled workers, a telephone engineer and a jeweller. No husband was unemployed or working short time; five were shiftworkers.

Stated incomes excluded the highest category but were otherwise well distributed among the other groupings. The spread was probably more even in reality than seems apparent, as three women who did not know their husband's income guessed the lowest grade, whilst the same job category had been credited with a higher income by other respondents. This perhaps illustrates how a statistic on 'family income' may bear little relationship to the relative affluence or poverty experienced by the wife and family or the earner. One extreme example of this was one woman who was accompanied on a weekly

groceries shopping expedition by her husband who paid the bill, but expected that any further household demands for the week would be met out of the State Child Allowance! It is against this type of situation that one should weigh the fact that there was a 60% overlap between the income distributions in the Darnall and Hallam samples.

Income Distribution - Darnall



----- = Hallam

In contrast with the Hallam group, none of the Darnall sample made any reference to their own hobbies, interests, or social activities outside the home, apart from those connected with the school, which seemed to hold a dominant place in the lives of the respondents. This was more

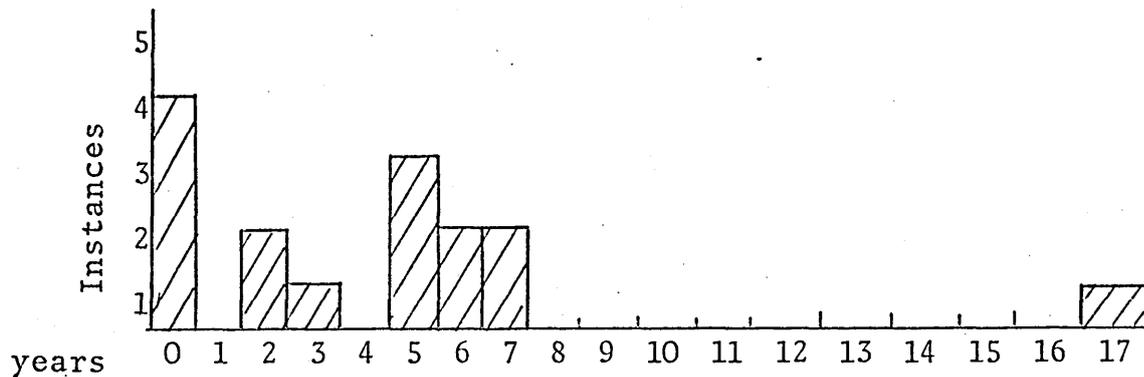
significant since almost one-third referred to their husband's hobbies (one woman indicated that she would like an evening job but couldn't take one since her husband liked to practice with 'a group').

### Work History

Four of the women interviewed had had no work experience prior to domesticity - three were immigrants and one had been pregnant on leaving school. Of the others, all had left school under 16 years old, without qualifications, and had gone straight into unskilled work; shops and factory work had been most common choices, with office work, hairdressing and catering having one representative each. More than half the sample had been directed towards their first job by parents, who either actually arranged the job or organised application and interview.

Length of work experience ranged from two to 17 years, but this latter case was so atypical (the next longest being seven years) that it has been discounted in calculating the average length of employment prior to domesticity. The Darnall figure of 4.8 years contrasts with an eight year average for Hallam.

Years in Employment Prior to Domesticity



One marked feature of employment history in this sample was the frequency of job change - almost invariably horizontally, moving to a similar job with a different firm. At one extreme was a respondent who had 'lost count' of all the jobs she had held in her two-year experience, but managed to recall over half a dozen. Only one woman in the entire sample had remained in the same job for her entire employment period of five years.

There were only three instances of vertical movement. A woman who had started as an assistant cook had quickly risen to be chief cook; and the office worker had taken advantage of day release and acquired commercial skills, moving to a better job. The other instance of perceived vertical movement may not have been so in terms of skills needed or financial gain, but was certainly viewed as such by the interviewee.

"I was determined to try and get an office job. I felt if I worked in an office I'd bettered myself a little bit."

Because most respondents had had a variety of jobs it was usually impossible to give a blanket response for their enjoyment/dislike of working. Usually both had been experienced. An analysis of reasons stated for job satisfaction or dissatisfaction however, gave some interesting insights. Whereas the Hallam sample had revealed support for theories of intrinsic job satisfiers and extrinsic sources of dissatisfaction, in Darnall the situation seemed to be almost the reverse.

Reasons given for enjoying one job more than another were almost invariably social.

"It were like a firm for the district  
... all Darnall people went there ...  
you knew everybody, even before you  
started you knew everybody."

and

"They were lovely people to work with."

A number stressed that the job they had liked best was less well paid than others they had rejected. Atypically, both money and responsibility were mentioned as satisfiers by one of the three women who had moved vertically; she also expressed perhaps the most positive job satisfaction.

"I used to really enjoy it. It were great. Well, I were only 16 and I were head of me own shift and every-thing, I were earning £45 a week and more, that was me basic."

Work dissatisfaction was recorded more frequently and freely in Darnall than in Hallam. Overwhelmingly, the greatest single complaint was of the intrinsic monotony of the work itself, vividly described by one woman:

"It were terribly boring. He put me on this job screwing little screws onto things ... and I thought 'I'll go crazy. I'll go crackers ...' And I was reciting poetry and singing songs to myself, you know, all to while time away while I were doing this big massive pile of these things. And I said to me friend 'Oh Cath, I can't stick this! I can't stand another day of this!' "

It was notable that some jobs with the same job title - particularly 'shop assistant' were found 'boring' by some respondents but 'interesting - meeting people' by others.

Secondary causes of dissatisfaction were the same as those for the Hallam group, oversupervision,

"They was behind you all the time."

poor relationships with bosses ('slave drivers' was a term frequently used), and dirty or unpleasant working conditions. One other feature stands out; hard work, itself was never complained of. In fact variations of,

"It were hard work, but it were good fun."

occurred frequently in the tapes.

### Domestic Experience

Pregnancy, generally unplanned, two at 15 and three unmarried, was the most common reason given for leaving employment, though two women had left on marriage and one on moving to the U.K. Three women expressed positive pleasure at their pregnancy and consequent transition to a domestic role. Four expressed regret at giving up work - mainly because of the money and the company.

"I missed the company - the days seemed to drag."

But most of the respondents simply accepted the transition almost fatalistically - one even saying

"But it's all fated."

Given the low overall level of job satisfaction expressed, it might have been expected that domesticity would have proved a more fulfilling role. Yet this seems to have been the case for only a small minority of the sample - mainly immigrant mothers - and only one was satisfied with the domestic role completely, to the exclusion of any employment. Three factors pervading the Darnall interviews may go a long way towards explaining this; poverty, ill health, and low role status.

Poverty, as Townsend (1979) has recently pointed out, is a relative concept. Although a 60 per cent overlap in incomes between Darnall and Hallam was noted, and though taking mortgages, rates, etc., into account, the actual available purchasing power was probably often higher in the Darnall sample, yet poverty was a frequent experience for many women - in terms of the money 'running out' before the end of the week, or only getting butter 'on special occasions', (this latter from a woman whose living room was dominated by a large 'fridge/freezer!'). Poverty in the more non-specific sense of deprivation was experienced constantly by everyone in the sample in so far as most homes were damp, only three houses had even a tiny 'garden', the houses were extremely small (families of four children and two adults living in two-bedroomed houses with very small living rooms), many did not have

bathrooms, and toilets were generally outside.

Despite - or perhaps because of - this there seemed often to be a high concentration on consumer durables such as 'fridges, freezers, automatic washers, stereo units and an aquarium sized tropical fish tank.

Three families had had continental holidays, and despite imminent demolition, four homes were in the process of major re-furbishing, even to the extent of replacing rotted skirting boards, taking out fireplaces and tiling a kitchen floor. However, one woman mentioned using hire purchase and three using mail order 'clubs'.

The incidence of poor health came as a complete contrast to the Hallam sample, where only one instance - that of a physically handicapped child - was mentioned. In the Darnall sample, two miscarriages, two infant deaths, and one case of epilepsy were recorded while at the actual time of interview three mothers had a school age child at home sick. As well as this physical ill health, there was some evidence of emotional/psychological problems, as with three marital break ups (two temporary), one case of wife beating and some evidence of social isolation among the immigrant women and expressions of overt racism among the native respondents.

Perception of low role status is not easy to define.

In general, the Darnall mothers seemed to see theirs as a service role for their children - providing mainly material comforts, such as meals, and toys, unlike the middle-class mothers who adopted a more supervisory and management role. One Darnall woman talked of taking her children to the park, another spoke of reading books to her children as a preparation for school,

"Well, they're interested then, you see. You've learnt them to sit and listen haven't you?"

and a small number of others spoke with obvious pride of how well their children were doing at school. But these were the exceptions, and overall there was a complete absence of the expressions of 'responsibility', 'concern', 'duty', etc. which figure so prominently on the Hallam tapes, where mothers obviously spent a lot of time and effort in organising and supervising extra school activities. The element of 'investment' in one's children was totally lacking in Darnall - as one mother put it

"I don't believe in being behind 'em all the time. You only wear yourself out, and the kids don't bother."

This resistance to over supervision and organisation of children extended to some expressed resistance to organised after school or holiday supervision of children to enable mothers to work. Some preferred to take a break from work themselves as

"It's no holiday for 't kids - they're supervised again and told what to do."

Another factor indicative of low role concept was in the area of responsibility. In Hallam two different systems seemed to operate - one a sort of power sharing where decisions were discussed and family responsibilities shared (albeit unevenly), the other where the woman seemed to have full responsibility both in making domestic decisions and in carrying them out. In Darnall the women seemed generally to have most of the responsibility for carrying out but little or none for making the decisions. Furthermore there appeared to be an amount of cognitive dissonance about this role. One woman who insisted

"I wear the trousers."

later stated

"When I was working for M.....s, I was getting more than him and he was ashamed of himself, and that made me stop actually."

Another woman who declared 'I'm t' boss' again admitted

"He says 'You've got more than enough to do at home and you can't even manage that. So you're not going out to work.'"

after which she had given up her evening cleaning job!

Despite this being the general picture there were a number of instances of fathers taking a major role in looking after children in the evening when mothers worked on twilight shifts. The decision whether they would do so remained, unquestioned, solely that of the man. The level of dependence was such that arguably the biggest differential in the lives of these women was between those with a co-operative husband and those with an unco-operative one.

Not surprisingly, only two women said they would miss the role of full-time housewife when they returned to employment.

#### Work During Domesticity

With only two exceptions, all the women interviewed in the Darnall sample were working or had worked at some stage since leaving full-time employment for child rearing. One of the exceptions was an immigrant, very domestically

oriented, the other was one of the youngest women interviewed, whose husband was in the highest earnings range represented, but working continental shifts.

All the other women seemed to fall into the same category as the early re-entrant group in Hallam. Again, husbands and relatives provided the only assistance with child minding, and consequently much of the work was done in unsocial hours - twilight or overnight shifts, in every case part-time. Access to the job had invariably been via personal contacts and recommendations. Here too, re-entry followed the pattern of downward career mobility. The majority worked as cleaners but other jobs each mentioned once were barmaid, ice cream van work, bingo caller and fish shop worker.

Motivation to work was partly a response to financial pull factors, as at Hallam.

"It's the money, more than anything."

"I mean it's alright talking about job satisfaction, but money's the big thing, isn't it?"

One woman actually entered employment for the first time ever when her husband became temporarily unemployed, but found she enjoyed it and continued after he got another job.

Unlike Hallam, the push factor of boredom at home and escape from an uneventful routine was very frequently cited as a reason for working.

"I felt I wanted to go out. It just seemed a change to get ready to go out somewhere at night, even though it were only to clean."

"I know it's only cleaning, but it's something different. You're going out. You're on your own aren't you? - a bit independent like."

Cleaning work was enjoyed by most of those interviewed, mainly because of the relative autonomy,

"They just show you what you have to do at first then they leave you to it."

though an additional source of satisfaction for one woman at least, was that the cleaning shift co-operated to finish their notional two hour stint in one hour per night. Intrinsic satisfaction - 'always interesting' was claimed by one respondent whose cleaning duties were overnight in the Casualty Department of a hospital. And for the three immigrant women who were working, the chance to learn and practice English was given as an additional attraction in each case.

The oft repeated phrase 'only cleaning' illustrates the ambivalence that many interviewees felt about their work. They needed the money, and liked the company and relief from the home environment, but felt very conscious of the low status of the work they did. One woman admitted that she would never let any of her husband's friends know that she was a hospital cleaner, claiming instead the title of 'orderly'. All the interviewees, however, were very realistic about the options currently available to them, with the constraints of children, time, and mobility, as the woman who worked in a chip shop put it,

"It's slave labour, but where else can I get a job where if I can't make it the boss'll get his wife to fill in, or one of his daughters will come and baby sit?"

As with their initial work experience, most of the respondents tended to change jobs or drop in and out of their part-time employment quite frequently. This seemed to be partly due to personal finances, partly due to seasonal effects (there was a tendency to stop work after Christmas in the cold months, and resume in time to save for Summer holidays), and partly as a response to husbands' availability for childminding - shift work being the chief problem. Since none of the part-time work had job security or benefits such as entitlement to holidays with pay, this lack of attachment seemed perfectly reasonable.

The lack of attachment was apparent on a psychological as well as a physical level, as two factors demonstrate. First, on no occasion did any woman include her own earnings along with those of her husband in the section of the personal schedule asking for 'family income level'. Secondly, the great majority of the respondents had identified themselves at the start of the interview as full-time housewives. One woman, for instance, had said early on the tape,

"I like being at home ... I wouldn't leave my kids with anybody. I think they need their mother when they're young ... I put my kids first you know, rather than go out to work."

yet was working five evenings a week! This certainly did not indicate any intention to deceive but simply that, because the work was not in normal working hours, and in fact was seen, to some extent at least, as a welcome relief, the woman had not identified herself as 'a worker'. All the women interviewed considered themselves as housewives or mothers, and talked of their aspirations or plans for employment as something in the future.

#### Future Work Plans

Given their work history, plus the amount of personal

insecurity experienced in their lives (e.g. almost all the homes visited were scheduled for demolition within the next 18 month period), it is hardly surprising that many women felt hesitant in responding to questions about future employment plans. Initial responses were frequently along the lines of

"I've never really thought that far ahead."

or

"You can't honestly say now what you're going to do in five or six years time."

A number of considerations did eventually emerge, however. As in Hallam, the vast majority of the women (70%) would seek part-time work, at least initially. In both areas a number of women made the reservation 'until the children can look after themselves', but whereas the age for this was put about 14/15 in Hallam, in Darnall it was given as 10/12 years.

About the same proportion of women interviewed in each area said they would like to return to work similar to that they had done prior to child rearing. In general, as well as being mainly unskilled these were the traditional areas of female employment, shops, hairdressing, catering, etc. Most frequently no real alternatives had been considered but where they had been, conservative views were expressed.

"I don't believe in women's lib.  
I don't want to be treated as an  
equal.... I mean let men do mens'  
work and women do jobs that's alright  
for women."

Presumably, this group of women would experience the same qualified (and mainly extrinsic) job satisfactions as previously, and would change employment frequently and horizontally as before. As Cook (1975) noted in her study,

"They prefer to earn money where and how they can, to change jobs when better opportunities arise, if they ever do, and to drop in and out of work as family pressures dictate." (1)

and she concludes,

"This is, after all, not an unrealistic or illogical conclusion for women to reach, given the world in which they live." (2)

For a minority (one quarter) in this sample, however, the period of domesticity had provided a time for introspection and reassessment of themselves and their lives.

As one woman put it,

"When you're young you don't really know what you want, do you? It's when you get older you discover yourself and what you are - what suits you, you know."

Some of the most poignant moments on the tapes come when these women talk with bitter regret about their missed educational opportunities.

"I'd just love to go back to school.  
I'd give anything to go back to school."

"I were stupid. Well, I didn't think so then, but when I look back I think of all the things I wasted. I've just wasted everything just because everyone else I knew were leaving I wouldn't stay on."

For these women, regrets about leaving school with no qualifications were mingled with general dissatisfaction with their employment prospects; sensing that their aspirations outstripped their qualifications and, most probably the opportunities which would be available to them. Their comments reflect their frustration.

"I'd want to do something worthwhile - I don't really know, but I'd want to do something where you'd think you were doing something, instead of just sitting at a bench ... I need something that needs thinking about."

"You can't just flit from one pokey job to another ... Well surely there must be something more?"

The attitudes and aspirations of this minority group differed so markedly from the majority that, despite

the statistical unreliability of associations drawn from such a small sample it seemed worthwhile to see if they had any qualities in common but in contrast with the rest of the sample group. A strong visual impression was that all were personally better groomed and their houses were notably tidier and looked more cared for than the sample average, but individuals within the majority group could also fit this description. Two were married to two of the three husbands most mentioned and most obviously supportive. And all knew they had had the mental ability to benefit by staying on at school - though again, at least two of the majority group were also in this category. Thus no single factor can by itself explain the marked difference between the two groups in terms of job aspirations. It might, however, be tentatively suggested that a combination of innate ability, higher than average feelings of self worth, (as reflected in self and home presentation), plus a supportive husband, when taken together would promote a desire towards actualisation through work.

#### Re-entry - Job Search Methods

In this area, the two sample groups were in broad agreement, both maintaining a preference for informal networks as a first choice of re-entry method. The only

difference was in the informal structures themselves. In Hallam, these consisted of contacts with friends, influential husbands of friends and neighbours, and previous employers. In Darnall, contacts were with friends and relatives, and after that direct speculative enquiry at local shops and firms. Only one person in the Darnall sample thought she might contact a previous employer, most concurring with the view,

"I'd like to make a fresh start completely."

The second choice of job search method in both areas was using local papers. In addition, a number of the Darnall sample said they would use the local job advertising programmes on local radio (a method never mentioned in Hallam).

Finally, use of Job Centres was the least popular job search method, again such expressions as 'a last resort' were used though for reasons somewhat different from those given in Hallam.

#### The Potential Role of the M.S.C.

Knowledge of the M.S.C. agencies was marginally higher in Darnall than in Hallam. Eleven of the 17 interviewees knew of Job Centres in general and knew of the location

of at least one of the Sheffield Centres - although no-one was aware of the different role of the West Street and Rockingham Gate Centres.

Four of the women had actually used Job Centres or Employment Offices, three reporting satisfaction and one speaking scathingly of the service given. Despite this awareness of the facility only five women thought that they would probably use the Job Centres for job search on re-entry.

This aversion was partly on the same grounds as reported in Hallam - a preference for doing things for themselves.

"I'd sooner find one (a job) myself."

"I like to know myself. I don't like to go and they'll say 'we'll find out for you'. I like to pick up a 'phone and find out for myself."

This latter, as well as stating a preference for an independent approach, also demonstrates a misconception of the way Job Centres work - since they frequently suggest that clients do just that, i.e. pick up a 'phone and speak directly to the employer. In fact, two other misconceptions about the function of the Job Centres were responsible for their rejection by other women interviewed. First it was thought by some that they only served school leavers or those made redundant, and secondly, a number thought that the types of job

dealt with were those requiring a level of skill or qualification beyond that represented by the respondents.

Finally, a reason frequently given for declining to use the service was related to the interviewees special circumstances, with domestic responsibilities leading to restricted hours and low mobility. It was felt, probably correctly, that the Job Centres were not geared to the local part-time employment market - interestingly two women interviewed planned to visit Firth Park, a suburban Job Centre, rather than the central City ones for this reason.

There was a general lack of knowledge of any other M.S.C. services.

No-one among those interviewed had heard of the Occupational Guidance Unit - nor did anyone, when told, see any relevance for herself.

"It might as well not be there. It's not benefiting me."

Only two knew of the T.O.P.S. training programme. Both were in the minority group who regretted leaving school and had job aspirations beyond what they had experienced prior to domesticity. One would not consider applying, however, because the only person she knew who had done

T.O.P.S. training had not been able to find a suitable job and had reverted to being a shop assistant.

The second woman had actually gone so far as to visit a Job Centre to enquire about courses. The immediate circumstances triggering the visit were separation from her husband and the realisation that she had now to support her child unaided and saw herself,

"... more in need of some sort of training for a decent job than a married woman, 'cos I mean everything falls onto you, and as they get older they want more and you need a decent job, and you need that training and support."

Most unfortunately, she had not got it. Her report of the visit was that the M.S.C. Officer advised her that because she had responsibility for a child and could not, at the time of the visit, assure him that suitable provision would be made she could not be considered, and was advised to go to night school (the one thing she could not do, with a young child). She recalled,

"I thought, 'Well he's not bothered' and he so put me down I never bothered after. I just left it."

Of those who had not known of the T.O.P.S. schemes before, two thought they might make further enquiries, but the attitude of the majority was a negative one,

"I'm not cut out for it. I've no patience to learn things."

"I never think of myself as doing owt like that, I don't know why. I don't think I've got much confidence to go and do that."

Although very few would use the Job Centres, even fewer training courses, and none at all Occupational Guidance, none of the interviewees gave any suggestions at all about how the M.S.C. might provide services which would be relevant to them. All saw the chief problems as lying with the employers, and the inflexibility of the local labour market.

### SUMMARY

This survey revealed two distinct patterns with regard to women's dual roles, that followed by the majority - early re-entrants - and that followed by the minority - late re-entrants. The two patterns showed a class bias but neither was class exclusive; one third of the middle-class sample were early re-entrants and two members of the working class sample were late re-entrants.

The early re-entrants who took a break of around four years for child rearing were, on average, the younger, less well qualified and less affluent group. They had had fewer years of work experience prior to domesticity and this had usually been characterised by a number of horizontal job changes. When they re-entered employment it was for financial reasons and via personal contacts. Work was generally in unsocial hours and reflected a downward job mobility.

The late re-entrants - the minority group - were better educated and qualified and had generally higher than average family incomes for their area. They had had longer work experience prior to domesticity, which had usually exhibited stability or else vertical job movement. After a more extended break for child rearing they planned to return to work at the same level or else considered training with a view to upward mobility.

Two points on which both groups were in agreement were in the strong preference for part-time work, and in the acceptance of continuing total domestic responsibility.

For different reasons, almost all the respondents saw the services of the M.S.C. as irrelevant to their needs. The middle-class sample had more confidence in their qualifications and their professional and personal

contacts. The working class sample considered that local informal networks were more attuned to their needs and constraints. The small number of respondents who did see the M.S.C. services as relevant were those for whom the break for child rearing had stimulated a desire for upward job mobility.

### EVALUATION

As stated in Chapter II (pp 35-36) this type of survey was chosen primarily to explore the perceptions and attitudes of the potential re-entrants, and it frequently proved an effective tool for this. For instance, by revealing how responsibility had been a valued attribute of work prior to domesticity and how lack of responsibility had often been actively sought on re-entry, it showed that women's work aspirations are qualitatively as well as quantitatively changed by the domestic experience.

(The quantitative change in preference of part-time work has long been established, and is further confirmed here). The survey also revealed the underlying domestic priority of the respondents by finding that many women with regular paid employment nevertheless identified themselves as full-time housewives.

The depth interviews also proved useful in enabling a realistic interpretation of factual information. For instance, the 60 per cent overlap in incomes between

the middle and working class areas was revealed as having limited significance. Since access to that income was different in the two areas so the experience of financial pressure and financial motivation to work was different.

One unforeseen advantage was found in using a sample where the respondents knew each other. Although strict confidentiality was maintained at all times by the interviewer, the interviewees were under no such obligation. Consequently a certain amount of information about local norms and attitudes was gleaned by way of members of the sample commenting about each other.

The location of the interviews in the respondent's home had the obvious advantage of permitting the incorporation of observational techniques and allowing some check between the cognitive values expressed by the respondent and the operational values observed by the interviewer.

Apart from the most obvious limitations of this type of survey mentioned before (pp 40 - 41), - the susceptibility to interviewer bias, and impossibility of knowing whether the sample is representative - two other problems became apparent; intimacy and irrelevance.

Depth interviews are by their nature intimate, and depend for their success upon empathy between interviewer and respondent. Consequently every introduction of a sensitive or taboo subject, while the *raison d'être* for this methodology, is also a threat to its success. Arguably the last taboo in our society is to ask someone his income, and sitting in a woman's home, drinking her tea or coffee, this seemed an unduly intrusive question. To circumvent this a short personal specification sheet was prepared for the respondent to fill in anonymously at the end of the interview, asking this question along with innocuous ones about age, numbers and ages of children which had already been covered on the tapes.

The problem of irrelevance was that the methodology allowed for the discovery of many interesting insights into the phenomenological world of the interviewee and suggested class bases for some of the differences (such as the structuring of time). To have to edit out such insights on the grounds of irrelevance to the central thrust of the thesis seems to be a frustration inherent in depth survey methodology.

CHAPTER VII - SURVEY OF THE ROLE OF THE MANPOWER  
SERVICES COMMISSION

	<u>Page</u>
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	213
<u>REVIEW OF PUBLICATIONS</u>	214
Research and Affirmative Action	215
Motivation and Attitudes	217
The Part-Time Issue	221
Employer Education	225
Summary of Publications Review	227
<u>M.S.C. STAFF ATTITUDINAL SURVEY</u>	228
Attitudes and Commitment of Job Seekers	229
Motivation to Work	230
Perception of Employers' Attitudes	231
Part-Time Working	232
The Role of the M.S.C.	234
Additional Staff Comments	235
Summary of Staff Attitudes	238
<u>CONCLUSIONS</u>	239
<u>EVALUATION</u>	241

# SURVEY OF THE ROLE OF THE MANPOWER SERVICES COMMISSION

## INTRODUCTION

Although the major focus of this research was on the women themselves, their needs, and their perceptions of the facilitating role of the M.S.C., some investigation of the situation as viewed from the M.S.C. standpoint was called for. The material in this chapter gives a view of re-entrants as presented in documents published by the M.S.C. at national level, and the view taken by M.S.C. staff at a local level.

The reason for collecting and presenting this material was to clarify the views within the M.S.C. so as to establish the degree of fit between these and the views of the re-entrants themselves. Because of the constraints outlined in Chapter II (pp47-48), the findings of the M.S.C. surveys were to be regarded as a basis for informed discussion rather than as definitive statements. They are therefore presented here along with interpretations, comparisons with findings from the surveys of re-entrants, and additional information obtained in more informal contacts with M.S.C. staff members at all levels over the period of the research.

## REVIEW OF PUBLICATIONS

There is ample evidence that at an organisational level, the M.S.C. is aware of re-entry women as a special group, is sensitive to many of their needs, and is actively promoting programmes to meet these perceived needs. Its publications demonstrate this particular concern.

"Women may be in particular need of help in the transition .... to work, especially if their lives have previously been dominated by domestic concerns."

(1)

although these clients are also covered by the general brief of the agencies to

"help workers who wish, or are forced to change their job to find a new job which matches their abilities and aptitudes as quickly as possible."

(2)

In reviewing the publications four specific areas were investigated. Two were of a general descriptive nature of the M.S.C. role: research and affirmative action, and motivation and attitudes. The two others were areas identified as of special concern to the re-entrants, the part-time issue, and employer education.

(a) Research and Affirmative Action

For a long time, the D. of E. has been in the forefront of research into women's employment both directly, and indirectly by funding independent studies. The former tradition extends from the excellent Manpower studies by King and others in the early 1970s<sup>(3)</sup> to the wide ranging and comprehensive 'Women and Employment' survey to start in 1980 at a cost of £290,300. The second tradition includes not only the current survey but also a number of other evaluative reports, such as that of Bell (1978). This willingness to fund external, independent reports in particular suggests both confidence and a genuine desire for independent information and continued improvement of services.

As well as participating in research, the M.S.C. has initiated action to deal with the problems highlighted. In general, this has been to stress the suitability and applicability of its established services to the needs of women. This has been most evident to date in the case of the T.O.P.S. scheme, particularly suited to the needs of re-entrants. It has been noted, by internal surveys and confirmed by the current study, that the first need is one of information as to what help is available to re-entrants.

"We recommend that greater efforts should be made through the M.S.C. marketing and counselling activities to ensure that women are made aware of the full range of T.O.P.S. courses available both locally and nationally."

(4)

Not only quantity, but also quality of opportunities is stressed. Here the problem is identified as that of encouraging women to look beyond the traditional courses, particularly in commercial skills, towards training in non-traditional fields. It would seem that whilst the M.S.C. is anxious to improve the employment status of women, and promote equality in this way, the chief barrier is the innate conservatism of the women themselves. This problem is consistent with the survey's findings of women's overall domestic orientation and the general lack of desire for upward job mobility. Recent suggestions<sup>(5)</sup> that schemes other than T.O.P.S. may be relevant to the needs of re-entrants (particularly the STEP programme) indicate continuing commitment towards this group, and flexibility in thinking.

The scheme specifically designed with the needs of re-entry women in mind, however, is the M.S.C. 'Wider Opportunities for Women' programme.

"W.O.W. courses were developed to help women returners to work to make a realistic choice of occupation and to give them the information and confidence required to carry out occupational plans."

(6)

In practice, the pilot W.O.W. courses concentrated on two aspects of re-entry. First, by talks, visits, sampling and skill tests, women were helped to assess their own aptitudes and preferences and relate these to available job types. Secondly, by group discussion they were helped to overcome feelings of isolation, insecurity and lack of confidence which might be acting as barriers to re-entry or to achievement of full potential in terms of job satisfaction. The five pilot courses were favourably evaluated

"There can be little doubt that the W.O.W. course is meeting real needs of women returners."

(7)

and the scheme is to be considerably extended.

(b) Motivation and Attitudes

The most frequently cited motivation for considering the needs of re-entrants appears to be economic,

though moving from the optimistic expansionist  
line of the mid 1970s

"Married women are potentially  
the most important source of extra  
labour over the next decade."

(8)

to a more cautious note at the end of the decade

"The rapid increase in unemployment  
among girls and women and the decline  
in traditionally female areas of  
employment make it vital that girls  
and women obtain a full share of every  
kind of opportunity in the special  
programmes."

(9)

But it is not only economic factors that account  
for this concern. The ideals of the emerging  
Women's Movement are clearly reflected in the  
wording of an M.S.C. publication in 1975

"But the main case for doing more for  
women rests essentially on simple  
considerations of equity. So long  
as they are denied access to better  
paid, more responsible and more  
satisfying employment ... women will  
remain 'second class citizens'; and  
this is no longer acceptable."

(10)

The document survey also revealed some evidence of an attitude which a number of re-entrants enquiring about training claimed to have encountered among Job Centre staff. Many used phrases such as 'grilled', 'interrogated' and 'put down' to describe how they felt during interviews. What seemed to come over to them was that staff were implying that they might be trying to 'rip off' the organisation. Whilst it is acknowledged that in every case where public funds subsidise personal advancement some accountability is necessary, this does seem to be stressed with regard to women almost to the point of discrimination.

The W.O.W. final report by insisting

"The course is not for someone who wants to 'better themselves' by taking some form of training but has no clear intention to seek work at the end of it."

(11)

suggests that not only is a clear intention to work considered good, but that wanting to better oneself at public expense is reprehensible.

Likewise the 1978 T.O.P.S. review notes

"The fear is sometimes expressed that women may take advantage of T.O.P.S. training without any clear intention of taking employment afterwards."

(12)

Though adding that this fear is 'in general groundless' the mere fact that it is printed specifically with regard to women, rather than referring to the total client group suggests an underlying attitude of suspicion directed, selectively, at women seeking training.

A more recent publication<sup>(13)</sup> seems totally free of this attitude and further is sensitive to the need for encouragement and support from staff through the re-entry process. This, of course, only re-affirms the M.S.C.s own brief to have

"well trained and sympathetic employment officers capable of giving practical and effective advice ... The ability, experience and manner of the employment officers are what counts."

(14)

Overall then it can be concluded that at an organisational level, as indicated by formal policy, the M.S.C. is aware of re-entrants' needs, encouraging in research to identify problem areas, and actively supportive in many fields, particularly information, training and counselling.

It must be noted, however, that these are the areas where the interests of the clients and the interests of the organisation overlap. Identification of greater client needs in the field of guidance, for instance, must be fortuitous at a time when the staffing needs of the organisation are being questioned. That is not to suggest that any moves to help clients are any the less genuine, less necessary or less beneficial, because they also, coincidentally, serve the interests of the organisation. What does seem to be questionable, however, is whether those needs identified by clients, but not obviously coincidental with organisational needs are met with the same degree of enthusiastic response. Two such pre-occupations of clients revealed by the survey were the desire for part-time work, and, linked with this, the need for employer education.

(c) Part-Time Issue

Almost all independent research from Klein (1957 ) onwards has emphasised the overwhelming preference of working mothers for part-time work. This may be traditional part-time (i.e. fewer hours within the normal working day) or increasingly, may include unsocial hours - twilight shifts, night work, weekend work. Not only is this what clients want, but

according to statistical evidence,<sup>(15)</sup> even from the formal economy, this is the fastest growing sector. That it is prevalent in the 'black economy' was demonstrated by the depth interviews. Unions are increasingly demanding shorter hours and longer holidays in response to recession, and evidence is mounting<sup>(16)</sup> that this is an effective use of labour at many levels. Despite all this the M.S.C. attitude towards clients seeking part-time work or training seems at best grudging.

The T.O.P.S. 1978 Review suggests that a 'small number' of training courses on an 'experimental basis' should be set up for those women

"... who will soon be ready to return to full-time employment and wish to prepare themselves through training on a part-time course."

(17)

In other words, full-time work is still to be regarded as the norm, and a concession is to be made to part-time work on the understanding that it is just a stage towards full-time employment, again in the face of much evidence.<sup>(18)</sup> And the statement of the W.O.W. final report

"Since part-time training opportunities are so extremely rare and the range of part-time jobs restricted, tutors found it unrealistic to 'sell' wider opportunities to women who could only be available for part-time occupations."

(19)

has the ring of both circular argument and self-fulfilling prophesy. Since M.S.C. has shown itself to be very sensitive to social change in general and client needs in particular, this block seems atypical and calls for investigation.

One answer could be that the organisation was unduly influenced by a number of highly regarded studies in the early 1970s<sup>(20)</sup> which indicated that women were becoming more work conscious, while men were giving more domestic help and that the dual career family with full domestic role sharing was at hand. It has since been suggested that this view was more the result of ideological prescription than empirical description, and that the idea that what the readers of the Guardian Women's Page do today, will be done by the readers of Woman's Own tomorrow is unproven. However, many of these studies had considerable weight and it is possible that the M.S.C. thought that part-time commitment - and part-time work - was about to decline.

Demographic considerations of a lower birth rate and smaller families with childbearing spread over fewer years might have supported that view.

It is also possible that internal structural policies may have been influential. Although the M.S.C. itself employs many part-time staff, these tend to be overwhelmingly at the lower levels. Indeed the operational policy appears to be that a re-entrant ex-member of staff wishing to return to the service on a part-time basis must - if she has attained higher levels - take a drop in both status and salary. The consequence of this practice may be two-fold. First, any women at the top of the organisation and so involved in policy making, will be those who have themselves made the choice in favour of full-time careers. Secondly, the implicit message of the policy is that an option for part-time work is coincidental with a lowering of aspirations and consequently status and pay. Given this situation within the structure of the organisation itself, it is hardly surprising that low priority is given to demands for part-time work from its clients.

(d) Employer Education

The second area where client demands seem to run ahead of organisational activity is with regard to employer education. As shown by the survey, most clients believe that agency staff have 'some' or 'a lot' of influence with employers. The M.S.C. itself acknowledges the importance of such links

"The ability of the service to fulfil its social role depends to a large extent on its knowledge of the labour market and the extensive contacts with employers."

(21)

and

"... employment officers must have good contacts with employers in their area. Time must be made available for building and maintaining these contacts."

(22)

The relative importance of employers is also demonstrated by a recent Job Centre advertisement in the national press, showing an employer and an employee with the caption "Before we talk to the one on the right (the employee) we talk to the one on the left (the employer)."

There does seem to be some ambivalence, however, in determining whether the M.S.C. role in relation

to employers should be a re-active or a pro-active one. The amplification of the service as being

"... to advise employers about probable changes in the local labour market."

(23)

suggests a pro-active stance, whereas

"... to help employers fill vacancies as quickly as possible with workers who have the ability or can be trained to perform the job satisfactorily."

(24)

suggests a re-active role. The impression gained by some re-entrants that the Job Centres appeared to be re-active towards employers' needs but pro-active with regard to job seekers is substantiated in the recent publication 'The Employment Service in the 1980s'.

"Continuing contact with unemployed job seekers gives the employment service the opportunity to stimulate them into taking jobs they might otherwise not consider. However where very low rates of pay are offered, it is far from easy to persuade job seekers to take the job"

(my emphasis)

(25)

It may be because of this ambivalence at a formal directive level, that the M.S.C. has not (as perceived by its clients) been sufficiently assertive in recommending to employers that flexibility is necessary if re-entrants are to be well accommodated into the workforce.

Such demands do not seem to be limited to the area of the current study. The M.S.C.s own report<sup>(26)</sup> notes the London 'Skill Search' finding of a need to 'educate employers' and the E.S.D. report on research in Caerphilly included the recommendation

"... that Job Centres campaign employers to provide more part-time vacancies."

(27)

(e) Summary of Publications Review

In conclusion, a review of publications suggested that, despite an already good record particularly in the provision of information and affirmative action there is still room at the formal level for more direction to expand the facilitating role of the M.S.C. with regard to women re-entering the workforce after domesticity. This expansion, however, is likely to be difficult since it would

involve movement into new areas (eg. employer education and part-time work), in which the immediate 'pay off' to the service is not clear. In fact, it must be admitted that in the short run there would be a risk of counter productive employer resentment. For this reason such reaction to client needs might be judged inopportune. As the M.S.C. points out

"The conclusion is inescapable that for many job seekers, especially the least skilled, the individual help that can be given is strictly limited so long as unemployment remains high."

(28)

#### M.S.C. STAFF ATTITUDINAL SURVEY

"There is potentially ... a gulf to be bridged between the wishes and intentions of the commission itself and the reality as seen by the staff who actually deal with the public."

(29)

With this in mind this survey explored staff attitudes and perceptions in relation to five different topic areas : the re-entrant job seekers' attitudes and commitment; their motivation for working; the attitudes of employers towards them; the part-time issue, and

the facilitating role of the M.S.C. In addition, staff were invited to make any comments of a general nature regarding re-entrant women and the service offered to them.

Six Job Centres and the Occupational Guidance Unit provided the sample of 54 staff responses. No-one refused to take part in the survey, and though the sample was not randomly selected (for instance, no attempt was made to contact staff absent on the day of the survey), there is no reason to believe that it is unrepresentative. Because numbers from some Job Centres were so small, and because total anonymity was the condition of union agreement to participate, any breakdown of the sample by sex, professional grade, or part-time/full-time status was not possible.

(a) Attitudes and Commitment of Job Seekers

This was the section of the survey on which staff were most prepared to commit themselves - i.e. fewest 'don't know's' were recorded. (For actual responses see Appendix IV). Staff overwhelmingly believed that women were often more serious about their work than men, although they also believed

that women typically put their home needs before those of their job. Staff were almost equally divided about women's aspirations, with marginally more believing them to be generally lower than men's. About three-quarters of staff believed, however, that the women's commitment to work rises with her educational level.

These perceptions accord quite well with those of the re-entrants themselves, particularly with regard to overall domestic orientation. The last assumption however received no support from the surveys which showed no positive association between education and work commitment whether measured in terms of general orientation or in the preference for full-time work. In fact the surveys suggested that longer education was associated with social orientation and desire for part-time work.

(b) Motivation to Work

Few 'don't know's' were recorded in this section also, and it was the area of second strongest consensus among staff members. They were strongly agreed that the vast majority of women worked out of economic necessity although they also believed that the women

were as interested in their hours and conditions of work as in their actual wages. Staff were also of the opinion that more women were now seeking work commensurate with their abilities than previously.

The positions taken by the staff closely reflect the findings of the job seekers' survey with regard to both financial motivation and concern over hours and conditions. Since the survey was taken at one point in time only, it could not establish trends however, and the general consensus of opinion among staff regarding women's increasing aspirations is therefore valuable additional data.

(c) Perception of Employers' Attitudes

Although staff were personally convinced that women's domestic orientation did not interfere with their loyalty and involvement as employees, they were divided as to how they thought employers viewed the situation. Slightly under half thought that employers still behaved as if they were doing women a favour by employing them, with more than half disagreeing with this. Under half considered that the re-entry woman's keenness to work would be appreciated by the employer, and rather more thought this would not be the case.

While it might have been expected that staff would be unwilling to speculate about the attitude of employers, (which would have been indicated by a high 'don't know' response), it was surprising to find that they were willing to ascribe views to employers, but that there was a clear division of opinion among staff as to what those employer views might be.

(d) Part-Time Working

This was the section in which there was the highest consensus of staff opinions. It was also the section in which the highest number of extreme views (strongly agree/strongly disagree) was recorded. Arguably then the part-time issue is seen as the most salient by M.S.C. staff in dealing with re-entry women, and in this they accurately reflect the principal concern of their re-entrant clients.

There was no dissent whatever from the view that

"The trend towards part-time employment for married women seems a strong and irreversable one, and the employer who turns his back on it is opting out of a large and expanding field of labour supply."

(30)

Almost all staff agreed that some jobs are done more efficiently by people working part-time and a strong majority believed that a part-time preference did not signal a lack of serious commitment to work; yet they were very divided about the job type that this part-time preference implied. A majority felt that the restrictions women placed on the hours that they were available for work necessarily excluded them from highly skilled responsible jobs.

However, most staff did believe it was possible for a woman to carry a full-time job indefinitely without any ill effects on the job, her family or herself. On this last point, evidence from the depth interviews suggests that this confidence was not shared by the potential clients. Gratuitous comments to interviewers by a number of solo parents in the Job Centre Users' Survey also indicated that many women in this group felt forced into full-time work despite concern over deleterious effects on their children.

(e) The Role of the M.S.C.

Surprisingly this was the section where most 'don't know' responses were recorded, and where only one of the five quotations selected produced a high degree of consensus.

The suggestion that there was a need to disperse women throughout the range of occupations available produced more indecision and division than at any other point in the survey. This finding highlighted the ambivalence of the position of the staff. On the one hand they must be aware of the M.S.C. policy of encouraging women to consider non-traditional fields, on the other hand they must be sensitive to the needs of their clients who, in this respect, are revealed by the surveys as much more conservative.

Many staff were also unprepared to commit themselves about training, and there was again substantial disagreement as to whether women had taken advantage of opportunities and as to the demand for part-time training. The only strong consensus was that more attention should be paid to the needs of the unskilled and unqualified women. Almost one-third of the staff surveyed thought that the M.S.C. was insufficiently aware of women's special needs and was making insufficient effort to meet them.

(f) Additional Staff Comments

Fewer than half of the staff surveyed responded to the invitation to offer their own comments. General comments about the service offered to re-entrants fell into two groups: affirmation of policy

"All clients are given equal treatment."

and personal opinion contradicting that policy

"No priority should be given to re-entrants at all. Young people have a greater claim."

Problems of facilitating re-entrants centred on the general economic situation and the attitude of employers.

"Although it (equality of opportunity) is a reality on paper, the economic facts of life make it impossible to achieve e.g. lack of nursery provision lack of part-time vacancies etc."

"Employers think they (re-entrants) can be taken on a completely no-responsibility no-blame basis, part-time only, to hire and fire as they wish, untrammelled by employment laws and often at a low wage."

Attitudes of other staff members were questioned too

"Some people seem to write them off."

Comments about aspects of their own work in relation to re-entrants revealed that two aspects of the clients' situation caused them most problems. First was the re-entrant woman's frequent concern for special conditions, sometimes complicated by indecision.

"They place too many restrictions re hours etc."

"Only when confronted with the opportunity of finding work do they really consider what it entails."

The second problem identified by staff was that many re-entrants 'set their sights too high'. This was frequently mentioned in relation to social work.

"They want to use personal experience to do careers of a social service or supportive nature ... in ignorance of the pre-entry qualifications and the intellectual ability needed to do the job."

The survey of re-entrants had also identified this problem of raised aspirations during domesticity, but found it confined to a small minority. For this minority however it was a real and very deeply felt problem and staff clearly reflect the frustration of their clients over this - although not in a very positive way.

A third problem was noted by a number of staff but appeared to be unique to one Job Centre.

"Our services are being misused ... many so called re-entrants only register for the financial benefits."

Significantly perhaps this Job Centre was surveyed at the height of the British Steel strike.

Finally some staff drew parallels between their own situation and that of the re-entrants, indicating that personal factors may have both a positive and a negative effect on the service given to the clients.

"We sometimes seem to be regarded as second class citizens because we work part-time so it motivates us to try and help women in the same circumstances."

"They place more restrictions in terms of locality, hours, etc. This can lead to frustrations and irritability amongst staff dealing with them, particularly if they themselves have overcome similar problems."

#### Summary of Staff Attitudes

Overall the views given by the staff were, predictably, most definite when giving judgements based on their own personal contacts with the women re-entrants whom they encountered as clients. Their perceptions about the attitudes, motivation and commitment of the re-entrants were, with very few exceptions, in close accord with the findings of the surveys; and both their strong consensus over the part-time issue and their own general comments closely reflected the frustrations and pre-occupations of their clients.

Staff were conscious of the restrictions of the current economic climate, but were divided when speculating on employer attitudes. They showed both most ambivalence and most division however in responding to matters related to M.S.C. policy. This would suggest that the staff surveyed have clearer and closer links with their clients than they have with the policy of their organisation.

### CONCLUSIONS

The investigation of the facilitating role of the M.S.C highlighted the dichotomy which exists for the organisation at both a formal and at an informal level. On the one hand there is an evident general desire to provide the best service for the individual client and to identify groups of clients with special needs so as to provide a particular service for them. On the other hand external and internal constraints limit the extent to which these organisational goals can be carried out.

Externally, in a contracting economy, those clients with least to offer in terms of qualifications, work experience and availability will obviously be hardest to place with employers. This situation is related to internal constraints. As long as the M.S.C. is evaluated in terms of vacancies submitted and placements made, it is obviously dysfunctional in organisational terms to

encourage clients to register who may be hard to place with employers. Not only would this adversely affect the placements ratio, but any attempts by staff to exert pressure on employers to take the hard to place, could result in employers withdrawing their vacancies and submitting them elsewhere. Lower submissions and lower placements could lead to contraction of the service with staff redundancies.

That these considerations - though not explicit - produce conflict at the staff/client interface was apparent from the number of staff, at all grades, who in general conversation indicated a sympathy for the situation of re-entrants and a desire to do more but "it's not in our control", "we've got to be realistic", "we can't afford to get carried away with the social function" and "we're not social workers and employers aren't philanthropists".

The dichotomy seems to be inescapable unless there is a major change: either an economic expansion forcing employers to be more flexible; or a contraction of such dimensions as to make part-time working the norm. Alternatively evaluation of the work of the M.S.C., which places less emphasis on numbers of submissions and placements and more stress on experimentation and creative projects for an optimum use of manpower/womanpower, could be introduced.

## EVALUATION

The decision to conduct the M.S.C. survey at both formal and informal levels led to the discovery of some interesting discrepancies. One of these was the gulf between the organisation's objective of dispersal of women throughout the economy, and the client preferences (as perceived by front line staff) for traditional female employment.

The substitution of an attitudinal survey for the originally intended methodology of interviewing staff (see Chapter II p 49 ) was successful. The method was quick and simple to apply. The use of unascribed quotations in the survey document seemed to generate interest and discussion amongst the respondents. And the data yielded was both qualitative and quantitative.

Because of this last point the attitudinal survey was a particularly useful basis for providing acceptable feed back to the M.S.C. The hard core of factual data gave a firm basis for informed discussion, while the qualitative data gave scope for M.S.C. debate as to the interpretation and significance of the findings.

CHAPTER VIII - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

	<u>Page</u>
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	242
<u>THE RE-ENTRANTS</u>	243
<u>THE ROLE OF THE M.S.C.</u>	248
<u>THE RESEARCH PROCESS</u>	252
<u>CONCLUSIONS</u>	255

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### INTRODUCTION

The P.E.P. report on 'Women and Top Jobs' (1971) noted

"It is theoretically possible to devise an ideology of women's place in work and society and to impose it on the women themselves, their husbands, and their employers irrespective of what they or any group of them may think."

(1)

In similar vein the T.U.C. reported in 1973

"We need to know a lot more about the demand of women themselves for work, as opposed to what we think women should want. "

(2)

The aim of this thesis has been to respond to these injunctions with regard to re-entrants. For this reason the survey findings were first presented (Chapters IV to VI) as a direct report of the responses given by the re-entrants themselves. In this summary, however, the findings are placed within the context of recent research on dual role women, in order to estimate the contribution of the thesis to the sum of knowledge on the subject. That contribution may be in terms of confirming previously held findings, contesting previous assumptions, adding new information, or revealing gaps in knowledge where further research is needed. These areas are covered in the two summary

sections, 'The Re-Entrants' and 'The Role of the M.S.C.'; and the chapter concludes with a review of the contribution to methodology of the research process itself.

### THE RE-ENTRANTS

The bulk of the findings have tended to confirm the conclusions of previous researchers, with some significant qualifications. The fact that problem areas first identified up to a quarter of a century ago are still salient, may be due to the slow implementation of research findings; it is also probably a consequence of some intransigent factors inherent in the dual role of working mothers.

Foremost among these factors is domestic orientation, identified by many researchers from Zweig (1952) to Hudson (1978). Analysis of both the questionnaires and depth interviews suggests that, for choice, most mothers would like employment which fits in with their domestic responsibilities. Spontaneous calls for the reverse situation, where social services would allow family responsibilities to fit in with work timetables, were exceptional. Though whether this confirms Seear's view (1971)

"Many women do not want to have a marginal influence in their children's lives."

(3)

/or is evidence for Swarbrick's assertion

"The prevailing assumptions of society that women's labour is largely marginal, ancillary and of secondary importance to the role of wife and mother tend to become a self fulfilling prophecy where constructive alternatives are not apparent."

(4)

is debatable. Oakley (1974), favouring the latter view, identified domestic priorities as women 'internalizing their own oppression'. Whether the root causes were personal, structural or both, however, only in a very few cases did the women surveyed seem to experience their domestic orientation as 'oppression' - internalized or otherwise.

Women's 'low' aspirations have been frequently commented on. The questionnaire analysis revealed that women were generally downwardly mobile in job terms on re-entry; and a specific desire for 'no responsibilities' was frequently recorded on the tapes. However when considered alongside the primarily domestic orientation of most re-entrants this 'low' aspiration could be seen as an accepted, rather than desired, accommodation to the dual role. There was evidence from the pilot probe and in unsolicited comments during the questionnaire survey that although aspirations may be low at the initial stage of re-entry, some women further along in the adjustment process felt frustration at the under-utilisation of their talents.

In a minority of cases, as Bell et al (1978) noted, women of ability who had taken stop gap jobs before marriage had used the domestic break to re-assess their situation and wanted more interesting work on their return to employment. These were the women most likely to re-enter education or training courses.

The great majority of the women surveyed had previously worked within the traditional female sector of the economy. That is within what Barrons and Norris (1976) have defined as the secondary employment sector, characterised by low pay, high voluntary turnover and lack of vertical movement. Almost all were wanting to return to this sector, and those seeking training were wanting it largely within this traditional area. Though this appeared to be mainly a pragmatic decision the interviews, particularly in the working class area, suggested some ideological commitment to women sticking to 'women's work'.

The current research supports Myrdal and Klein (1968), Williams (1969), Cook (1975) and Seear (1971) in finding a very strong preference for part-time employment. As revealed by the survey part-time work was generally preferred as a permanent employment schedule; not, as had been suggested by Seear (1971) and others, as a

transitory stage between full-time domesticity and full-time employment. This is undoubtedly related to the finding that women expected to retain full domestic responsibility despite paid employment. Though 'help' from husbands was appreciated there was no evidence that total domestic job sharing was expected or desired. The survey would support the view of Adams (1975) and Johnson (1979) that domestic job demarcation is perpetuated to guard the woman's only sphere of expertise, legitimate power and status. / L.F.

As noted by Vogel (1976), Liddydahl (1980) and Schwartz (1978), financial considerations are paramount as motivators to return to work. The current research revealed that in only a small minority of cases did financial considerations exclude all other motivators. For the majority, financial goals combined with social or with work satisfaction needs were operative. Mixed motivation may account for P. Hunt's (1974) finding that although initially seeking a job for financial reasons, choices between alternative jobs may be made according to satisfactions at work (i.e. social) or in work (i.e. intrinsic) rather than for work (i.e. financial). Evidence for this type of choice was common in the depth interviews.

The most significant substantive contributions of the research have been to document the facts that re-entry women are younger, and that their children

are younger than had been supposed, and that the break in employment is considerably shorter than has been previously estimated.

There is no official figure for the number of years that women, on average, withdraw from paid employment in order to have and raise a family. Seear (1971) quoted 'a gap of ten to twenty years', and King (1975) produced a 'guestimate' of eight years. The data from the questionnaires produced a median of nine years, though five years was the mode. Re-entrants who had had a break of less than four years were specifically excluded from the questionnaire however, and estimates (see Chapter V pp111-112) suggest that had these been included, the median would also have been around five years. The interview findings revealed a gap of under five years for the majority, with a minority of more affluent, better educated, late re-entrants.

Since the length of break for domesticity has implications for both training needs and social provisions, it is an area in which further investigation is needed. Two other topics were identified where further research would be valuable. The first concerns the term 'part-time work', which was used in this thesis, as it most commonly

is used, to cover all employment for reduced working hours. It is obvious however that this blanket term covers a range of work schedules, for instance 'within school hours', 'weekend work only', 'twilight shifts', and that each schedule has its own particular problems and benefits. It would be interesting to know if different groups of women tend to use different types of part-time work to accommodate their dual roles. Secondly, as the depth interviews revealed, there is a whole area to be investigated in women's role in the black economy. Finally, the suggestion revealed in the pilot probe, that geographical mobility might lead to increased activity rates was neither substantiated nor disproved by the survey, mainly because of low numbers. Further research into this area may need a specifically designed survey, perhaps using a sample obtained from Estate Agents' lists.

#### THE ROLE OF THE M.S.C.

Since there has been no previous research specifically on this issue of the interface between re-entrants and the M.S.C., all the findings are new.

Most of the women surveyed seemed to have no very clear perception of the role of the M.S.C. in relation to their needs. For two groups the role was very peripheral. Women at the top end of the social scale, financially

secure and with marketable qualifications and influential informal networks, felt that they could negotiate the best deal for themselves without resort to any organisation. Women at the lowest end of the social scale saw their needs as so immediate and local that they too felt that informal local networks provided the best and quickest solutions to their problems. Both groups recognised their own extreme positions, felt that their informal channels were adequate, and had no expectations of the M.S.C. Agencies.

The section of re-entrants availing themselves of the M.S.C. services therefore, was largely the middle group socially, and, in work terms, the group not so qualified as to be able to dictate their own terms but not so restrictive in their demands as to be beyond the scope of a large organisation.

What the majority of re-entrants most wanted was specific help and information about the job situation at the local level. Training and Occupational Guidance were given a much lower priority; and practical help with forms and interviews was seen by the majority of clients as the least useful service which could be offered.

The service given to registered job seekers appeared to be most effective. Almost half of these clients had had suitable jobs referred to them, and 36% had discussed training with staff. With regard to the non-registered job seekers - the 'through traffic' of the self-service areas - it would seem that the service could be considerably improved at all levels. More advertising of additional services, better organisation of suitable work displays and better physical provisions (chairs, paper, pencils, etc.) would all be useful, in addition to more staff help available if required.

Investigation of attitudes towards potential clients revealed that there is no clear policy. Certainly the M.S.C. has never sought a monopoly over the employment market and has maintained a happy co-existence alongside commercial bureaux, newspaper advertising, informal networks, etc. However, its main 'raison d'être' as distinct from the commercial bureaux may lie in its responsibility to provide an overview of manpower needs and potential and to facilitate the matching of the two. This would imply at least a consideration of potential - though non using - clients and also a strong commitment towards the harder to place worker and the harder to fill vacancy. Re-entrants could well be considered more in relation to these factors.

One further point for consideration regarding the role of the M.S.C. is the disparity between the organisational viewpoint as revealed by the publications review and the staff perceptions as revealed by the attitudinal survey. Where organisational interests conflict with client interests (as in the case of M.S.C. commitment to the dispersal of women throughout the economy versus client preference for traditional female employment), cognitive dissonance and general tension is produced for front line staff. This would seem to be an area where ventilation of the problem could only do good.

Some staff training to promote more positive attitudes towards both groups of re-entrants would obviate the situation where women seeking part-time work, with low mobility, were frequently regarded as deviants, rather than as a special work group with their own legitimate characteristics. Staff training could also raise sensitivity to the social implications of their own role as gatekeepers to scarce public resources such as training, and their consequent influence in maintaining or changing the occupational status quo.

One problem of the research in relation to the role of the M.S.C. was that clients who had received satisfactory help from the Job Centres would presumably be working, not re-visiting the Job Centres. Therefore, the

standardised survey was likely to pick up either first time visitors, or else those who were returning, having failed to find suitable work. It is arguable, therefore, that the service can only be better than the survey suggests.

### THE RESEARCH PROCESS

In assessing the substantive contribution of the thesis it was noted that, in general, previous findings were confirmed, though with some modifications, and the sum of knowledge was extended slightly. The same overall assessment could be made with regard to the methodology.

It was no surprise that the research confirmed in practice what has long been known - that standardised interviews can produce reliable quantitative data and that depth interviews can produce rich qualitative data. Even this broad generalisation needs modification however. Despite a well controlled sample and standardised questionnaire, quantitative data can be misleading. For instance, the finding that 73 per cent of re-entrants would 'consider taking advantage of Occupational Guidance', when seen within the context of all the responses, probably indicates little more than a general predisposition to accept any help on offer. Qualitative data, as much as quantitative, needs interpretation.

The richness commonly associated with depth interviewing is likewise not a simple benefit. It is often assumed that problems only arise when the methodology fails to produce the required data. Problems can also result, however, when the methodology yields more than the anticipated data; opening up many seductive new lines of enquiry. This was the case with the depth interviews, when many instances of class differences with regard to such things as time budgets and socialisation of children were revealed, which, with unlimited research time, it would have been interesting to explore. It is possible that this 'siren' factor may be one cause of low completion rates of theses, and there is certainly a case for looking at the importance of the omission process in research.

The research process also revealed the value of combining elements generally associated with different methodologies. The introduction of a personal schedule to be filled in by the respondent at the end of the depth interviews avoided the need to ask potentially embarrassing financial questions, and also indicated that the interview was at an end. Selection of interviewers is generally discussed in methodological texts with regard to control of bias in unstructured interviews but is not considered significant for applied questionnaires. The extremely high response rate (over 90 per cent), and 100 per cent completion rate, of the standardised survey, was almost certainly due to the careful selection of interviewers.

Finally, one point to be considered when deciding on a methodology - very evident in practice but largely ignored in methodological texts - is acceptability to the funding agency. Obviously credibility is more important in such cases as the current thesis, where a single organisation, with its own research policy, is involved; and where it is the same organisation providing the funds and access to the data. Regarding this point, and with hindsight, it was apparent that the attitudinal survey was a more appropriate research tool to use in the investigation of M.S.C. staff, than the originally preferred one of interviewing. Results of the attitudinal survey could be assessed more objectively than findings from interviews, and thus there was more scope for the M.S.C. personnel receiving the feedback to contribute their own interpretations and draw their own conclusions.

The research process overall confirmed the view expressed in the methodology chapter that each of the various tools of the research trade have an appropriate use, choice being dependent upon the problem addressed. Debates as to the superiority of qualitative over quantitative data (or vice versa), in general terms, are sometimes unnecessary. These same debates are often extended to the choice between open and closed questions, but the combination of the two in the standardised survey was found to produce both reliable quantitative data and interesting qualitative findings.

## CONCLUSIONS

"... the researcher in interpreting his results is inevitably - and rightly - influenced by all that has gone before, by his acquaintance with the raw material behind the figures and by his own judgement .... The researcher who cautiously confines his conclusions to those strictly justified by the data, may be safe from criticism, but he is not making his own full potential contribution."

(5)

In the light of Moser's dictum, a disclaimer of any responsibility other than to provide a descriptive analysis of the current situation, looks like cowardice. If familiarity with the background raw material of this research permits one prescriptive judgement, therefore, it must be that there is need for more flexibility.

On behalf of the women this would mean a recognition of the extremely temporary nature of the domestic phase. This would imply greater openness to training and promotion in the pre-domestic phase; much more encouragement of domestic job sharing; and willingness to consider jobs outside the traditional female sector.

Employers need to be more flexible in their attitudes towards work schedules. Manufacturing industry and the private sector need to catch up with the public and

service sectors in encouraging flexitime, part-time work, job sharing and various shifts; so that employment may be fitted to the needs of the job rather than determined by traditional hours of work. In addition, with evidence of a much shorter domestic break than has been supposed, employers might be more encouraging towards apprenticeships and promotions for young women.

Flexibility within the M.S.C. might be translated into a greater acknowledgement of their role as social gatekeepers. This would imply a more sympathetic and reactive stance towards re-entrants wishing to accommodate their dual role through part-time work or those whose aspirations have grown during domesticity. A more proactive stance towards employer education might also be considered.

Government flexibility could be implemented in a number of ways; financially through the tax system and by repeal of the requirement for employers to pay full social security contributions for part-time workers; legally by repeal of discriminatory 'protective' legislation; and socially by increased provision of creches and after school and holiday supervision.

Finally there may be a case for more flexible thinking and avoidance of stereotyping in the media. It is

perhaps significant that the only working mother of small children in any current T.V. series is a solo parent, doing part-time typing (apparently in the black economy), from home, and with another woman sharing child care.

## NOTES

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CHAPTER V THE STANDARDISED SURVEY OF RE-ENTRY WOMEN  
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O. About what pay range would you be looking for:

- a) below £1040 p.a. (£20 per week)
- b) £1,040 - £1,560 p.a. (£20 - £30 per week)
- c) £1,560 - £2,600 p.a. (£20 - £50 per week)
- d) £2,600 - £3,640 p.a. (£50 - £70 per week)
- e) above £3,640 p.a. (£70 per week)

N.B. IF THEY HAVE STATED PREFERENCE FOR PART TIME TICK THE APPROPRIATE FULL TIME RATE.

14

1. Do you think any of the following might cause you difficulty in getting a job. (ASK SEPARATELY)

- a) your age
- b) your qualifications
- c) lack of information about the local job market
- d) lack of confidence
- or
- e) the general economic situation.

15

16

17

18

19

2. If you could not get a perfect job, which of the things on the list would you want most. PRESENT CARD 12.

- a) closeness to home \_\_\_\_\_
- b) work within school hours \_\_\_\_\_
- c) employment outside husband's normal work hours \_\_\_\_\_
- d) opportunity to use or develop your skills. \_\_\_\_\_
- e) possibilities of promotion \_\_\_\_\_
- f) interesting work \_\_\_\_\_
- g) friendly atmosphere \_\_\_\_\_
- h) an attractive work place \_\_\_\_\_
- i) working with people with similar interests \_\_\_\_\_
- j) anything else \_\_\_\_\_

20

21

22

2 (a) which would be your 2nd choice

2 (b) Which would be your 3rd choice

3. Which of the things on the list would most put you off accepting a job which was otherwise suitable.

PRESENT CARD 13

- a) work outside normal working hours (9 - 5) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) difficulty travelling to work \_\_\_\_\_
- c) not near home \_\_\_\_\_
- d) no possibilities of promotion \_\_\_\_\_
- e) low pay \_\_\_\_\_
- f) boring or repetitive work \_\_\_\_\_
- g) a difficult boss \_\_\_\_\_
- h) most of the people working there would be male \_\_\_\_\_
- i) dirty or noisy working conditions \_\_\_\_\_
- j) anything else \_\_\_\_\_

23

24

25

26

3.a Which would put you off next.

3.b Which would put you off next.

SECTION B. ABOUT YOU AND THE AGENCIES

Have you registered at a Job Centre? IF 'YES' PROCEED, IF 'NO' TURN TO ALTERNATIVE SCHEDULE B.

How long is it since you decided to return to work?

- a) under 1 month
- b) between 1 and 3 months
- c) between 3 and 6 months
- d) over 6 months

27

How long have you been registered at the Job Centre?

28

What was your MAIN reason for registering?

- a) to get information and advice about jobs available locally
- b) to get a chance of training.
- c) to obtain career or occupational guidance.
- d) to maintain payment of state benefits.
- e) to get help and advice from staff in getting a job.
- f) other \_\_\_\_\_

29

Until now who have you spoken to?

- a) reception only for a few minutes
- b) special interview with an occupational guidance officer or similar professional person.
- c) an interview with an employment officer/ adviser for more than a few minutes.
- d) others \_\_\_\_\_

30

31

32

33

Has the Job Centre sent you any details of any jobs which you could have applied for? YES/NO

34

IF YES What was the result?

- a) was interviewed but did not get the job
- b) an interview was offered by could not attend.
- c) was offered a job and accepted it.
- d) was offered a job but declined it.
- e) decided not to consider that particular job.

35

Have you discussed training with anyone from the Job Centre? YES/NO

36

Have you applied for training? YES/NO (IF YES, GO STRAIGHT TO NO. 23).

37

IF 'NO' Would you consider it if it was offered? YES/NO (IF 'NO' GO STRAIGHT TO NO. 25).

38

What would you like to train for.

39

4.	(IF YES TO 22) Would you only consider training,		40
	a) if it was local	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	or		
	b) if it was part time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	41
	or		
	c) if it considerably improved your job prospects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	42
5.	(IF 'NO' TO 22) Is this because you feel any of the following		
	a) you are too old	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	b) you are just not interested.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	c) it would not be useful for the sort of job you want.	<input type="checkbox"/>	43
	d) you do not have enough qualifications.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	or is there		
	e) another reason		
6.	Could you list the six things on the card in the order that they might help you get a suitable job. PRESENT CARD 26.		
	a) Advice on filling application forms	_____	44
	b) Advice about interviews	_____	45
	c) Information about the local job market	_____	46
	d) Information about what training is available.	_____	47
	e) Occupational guidance	_____	48
	f) Help from staff in obtaining a suitable job.	_____	49

ASK EACH  
SEPARATELY

7. How much influence do you think Job Centre staff have with employers.

- a) A lot
- b) Some
- c) Not much
- or
- d) None at all

50

8. Have you taken any of the following steps to try to get a job

- a) Asked friends or relatives.
- b) Replied to newspaper adverts.
- c) Contacted employers.
- d) Placed an advert. in a shop or newspaper.
- e) Consulted commercial agencies.
- f) Consulted social services.

ASK EACH SEPARATELY

51

9. Do any of these apply to you

Since visiting the Job Centre

- a) I am still looking for the same type of job.
- b) I am considering a wider range of job.
- c) I am considering a training course
- d) I am not sure whether it is worthwhile looking for a job at present.
- e) I am considering different hours of work.
- f) I am considering a job offering less money.
- g) I am considering looking further afield for a job.

ASK EACH SEPARATELY

52

53

54

55

56

57

58

SECTION C. ABOUT YOU YOURSELF.

<p>0. Is your age group</p> <p>a) under 25 <input type="checkbox"/>      c) 35 - 44 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>b) 25 - 34 <input type="checkbox"/>      d) over 44 <input type="checkbox"/></p>	59
<p>1. Are you</p> <p>a) single <input type="checkbox"/>      b) married <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>c) separated <input type="checkbox"/>      d) divorced <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>e) widowed <input type="checkbox"/>      f) living with a partner. <input type="checkbox"/></p>	60
<p>2. How many children of school age are living with you?</p> <p>_____</p>	61
<p>3. How many are under 12. _____</p>	62
<p>4. What age is the youngest? _____</p>	63
<p>5. How long have you lived in your present area?</p> <p>_____ years. (N.B. CHECK, AND DO NOT INCLUDE SUBURBAN MOVES).</p>	64
<p>6. At what age did you complete full-time education?</p> <p>_____ years.</p>	65
<p>7. What qualifications did you get?</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>a) None <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>b) 1 - 4 'O' levels or C.S.E.s <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>c) More than 5 'O' levels. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>d) 1 or more 'A' levels. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>e) Further education diploma or certificates. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>f) Degree <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>g) Other qualifications (please specify) <input type="checkbox"/></p> </div>	66
<p>8. Have you done any further training since leaving full-time education?</p> <p>YES/NO (IF 'NO' GO STRAIGHT TO 41).</p>	67
<p>(IF YES) What was it.</p> <p>_____</p>	68

40. Was this

a) in your employer's time

or

b) in your own time.

ASK TWO PARTS SEPARATELY.

40a. and was it

c) at your employer's expense

or

d) at your own expense

69

1. What is/was the occupation of your husband or partner?

70

2. What is/was the occupation of your father?

71

3. Do you regularly use the public library?

YES/NO

72

4. Have you ever used any of the following:-

a) The Local Authority Careers Service

b) The Consumer Protection Service.

c) Adult Education Classes.

d) The Citizens' Advice Bureau

ASK SEPARATELY

73

74

5. Which are the 3 things on the card which best describe your motives for returning to work (In order). PRESENT CARD 45.

a) To make ends meet

b) To buy family extras.

c) To contribute to family living standards.

d) For financial independence

e) Because I like working.

f) To develop my mind

g) Boredom at home

h) To meet more people.

i) Because most of my friends work.

75

CENTRE	West Street	=	1
	Rockingham	=	2
	Rotherham	=	3
	Firth Park	=	4

PART T

Combine codes for PTT1 (13) PTTZ(76) and PTT3 (77) where these read (13) 2 (76) 1 (77) 2 score = 1  
 where 2 of these are present score = 2  
 where 1 of these are present score = 3  
 where none of these are present score = 4

RETRAIN

Combine codes for Reason (29) TRAIN1 (36) TRAIN 2 (37) TRAIN 3 (38) LOOKING 3(54) OPTRN (88) CONTRN (92)  
 If (29) is coded 2 score = 1  
 or if '1' is coded 4 times in  
 any combination of the above also score = 1  
 if '1' is coded 3 times score = 2  
 " " " " 2 times score = 3  
 " " " " 1 time score = 4  
 " " " " no time score = 5

OCCGUID

combine codes for Reason (29) Guidoc (89) Consocc (97) Iloff (98)  
 If code for (29) is 3 score = 1  
 or  
 If codes for all 3 others are '1' score = 1  
 " " " 2 of " " " score = 2  
 " " " 1 of " is '1' score = 3  
 " " " none of" " " score = 4

5.	LASTOC	by employment categories sheet		
6.	LEFT	1st pregnancy	=	1
		subsequent	=	2
		marriage	=	3
		other reason	=	4
7.	YRSWKD	3 or under	=	1
		4 - 10	=	2
		over 10	=	3
8.	YRSLFT	5 or under	=	1
		6 - 12	=	2
		over 12	=	3
9.	ANTIC	a or b	=	1
		c or d	=	2
10.	TIME	a	=	1
		b	=	2
		c	=	3
11.	ACCESS	a	=	1
		b	=	2
		c	=	3
				if more than 1 ticked score highest number.
12.	OCCDES	by employment categories sheet.		
13.	PTTI	a	=	1
		b	=	2
		c	=	3

14.	RATE	a	=	1	if more than 1 ticked code lowest.
		b	=	2	
		c	=	3	
		d	=	4	
		e	=	5	
15.	TOOOLD	(a) tick	=	1	
		(b) no tick	=	2	
16.	UNQUAL	(b) tick	=	1	
		(b) no tick	=	2	
17.	LAKINF	(c) tick	=	1	
		(c) no tick	=	2	
18.	CONFID	(d) tick	=	1	
		(d) no tick	=	2	
19.	ECONSIT	(e) tick	=	1	
		(e) no tick	=	2	
20.	DOMEST 1	combine responses a, b & c; scoring 3 points for a 1st, 2 points for a 2nd and 1 point for a 3rd choice, add together the total and write it in (6 will be the maximum and 0 the minimum).			
21.	CAREER 1	Combine responses d, e & f and proceed as above.			
22.	SOCIAL 1	combine responses g, h, and l and score as above.			
23.	DOMEST 2	combine responses a, b & c and proceed as above.			
24.	CAREER 2	Combine responses d, e, & f and proceed as above.			

25. SOCIAL 2

Combine responses g, h, & l and proceed as above.

26. ORIENT

To arrive at this composite index

1. add together totals in 20 + 23 = ?
2. add together totals in 21 + 24 = ?
3. add together totals in 22 + 25 = ?

4. If one total exceeds the sum of the other two (i.e. is 7 or more) and the others are both scored, then ignore the lower two and code as the higher score only, as follows:

- 20 + 23 group = 1
- 21 + 24 group = 2
- 22 + 25 group = 3

5. If one total is 2 or under then ignore it, and code according to which are the other two groups.

- (20 + 23) + (21 + 24) = 4
- (21 + 24) + (22 + 25) = 5
- (20 + 23) + (22 + 25) = 6

6. If the total of the lowest group is 3 or over, and the total of the highest group is 6 or less, then score = 7.

27. RETURN

- a = 1
- b = 2
- c = 3
- d = 4

28. REGIST.

- under 1 month = 1
- 1 - 3 months = 2
- 4 - 6 months = 3
- over 6 months = 4

9. REASON

- a = 1 ( if more than 1 ticked score 1st).
- b = 2
- c = 3
- d = 4
- e = 5

30.	CONTACT 1	(a) tick	=	1	
		(a) no tick	=	2	
31.	CONTACT 2	(b) tick	=	1	
		(b) no tick	=	2	
32.	CONTACT 3	(c) tick	=	1	
		(c) no tick	=	2	
33.	CONTACT 4	(d) tick	=	1	
		(d) no tick	=	2	
34.	REFERD	YES	=	1	
		NO	=	2	
35.	RESULT	a	=	1	
		b	=	2	
		c	=	3	
		d	=	4	
		e	=	5	
36.	TRAIN 1	YES	=	1	
		NO	=	2	
37.	TRAIN 2	YES	=	1	
		NO	=	2	
38.	TRAIN 3	YES	=	1	
		NO	=	2	
		this question omitted	=	∅	
39.	TRAINER	by employment categories			
40.	CONDIT 1	(a) tick	=	1	If not applicable (ie.
		(a) no tick	=	2	if <u>NO</u> to 22) ∅

1. CONDIT 2 (b) tick = 1 If not applicable (i.e.  
(b) no tick = 2 if NO to 22) 0
2. CONDIT 3 (c) tick = 1  
(c) no tick = 2 " " "
3. CONDIT 4 a = 1 If not applicable (i.e. YES  
to 22) 0  
b = 2  
c = 3  
d = 4  
e = 5
4. HELP 1 write in the nubmer opposite a.
5. HELP 2 write in the number opposite b.
6. HELP 3 write in the number opposite c.
7. HELP 4 write in the number opposite d.
8. HELP 5 write in the number opposite e.
9. HELP 6 write in the number opposite f.
0. INFLNCE a = 1  
b = 2  
c = 3  
d = 4  
'don't know' = 5
1. STEP add up number ticked a - f and write in total  
(6 max, 0 min.)
2. LOOKING 1 (a) tick = 1  
(b) no tick = 2

53.	LOOKING 2	(b) tick	=	1
		(b) no tick	=	2
54.	LOOKING 3	(c) tick	=	1
		(c) no tick	=	2
5.	LOOKING 4	(d) tick	=	1
		(d) no tick	=	2
6.	LOOKING 5	(e) tick	=	1
		(e) no tick	=	2
7.	LOOKING 6	(f) tick	=	1
		(f) no tick	=	2
8.	LOOKING 7	(g) tick	=	1
		(g) no tick	=	2
9.	AGE	a	=	1
		b	=	2
		c	=	3
		d	=	4
0.	MARITAL	a	=	1
		b	=	2
		c	=	3
		d	=	4
		e	=	5
		f	=	6

If more than 1 is ticked score the highest

1. CHLDEN  
Write in number up to 4  
Any number over 4 write '5'

62. UNDER12 Write in number up to 4  
Over 4 write in '5'

63. INGEST Write in age up to 6 Write 1 for up to 1 year.  
7 - 12 = 7  
over 12 = 8

64. RESIDNT Under 2 years = 1  
2 - 5 years = 2  
over 5 years = 3

5. EDUC 16 or under = 1  
17 - 19 = 2  
20 - 22 = 3  
Over 22 = 4

6. QUALIF a = 1  
b = 2  
c = 3  
d = 4  
e = 5  
f = 6

up to 'f' if more than one is ticked score only the highest.

g = 7

7. POSTSCL YES = 1  
NO = 2

8. TYPE TR by employment categories.

69. EXPENCE

a + c ticked	=	1
b + d ticked	=	2
a + d ticked	=	3
b + c ticked	=	4
blank	∅	

70. HUSBOCC

by employment categories    Blank ∅

71. SOCMOB

If same employment category as 70	=	1
If higher in employment category than 70	=	2
If lower in employment category than 70	=	3

72. LIBRY

YES	=	1
NO	=	2

73. GUIDNCE

If (a) ticked	=	1
If (a) no tick	=	2

74. AIDS

Combine b, c, & d and score number of ticks  
(3 max, ∅ min.)

5. MOTIVE

If ticks all in a - d	=	1
If ticks all in d - f	=	2
If ticks all in g - i	=	3
If combination of 1st and 2nd groups	=	4
If combination of 2nd and 3rd groups	=	5
If combination of 1st and 4rd groups	=	6
If equal combination of all groups	=	7

6. PTT2

a	=	1
b	=	2
c	=	3

77	PTT3	a	=	1
		b	=	2
		c	=	3
78.	holdays	a	=	1
		b	=	2
		c	=	3
		d	=	4
		e	=	5
		f	=	6
79.	FAMSIZE	YES	=	1
		NO	=	2
		(b)	=	3
		(c)	=	4
80.	CHANGE	If employment categories rating same for '5' and '12' score 1		
		If employment categories rating for '12' higher <del>in</del> alphabet than '5' score 2		
		If employment categories rating for '12' lower <del>in</del> alphabet than '5' score 3.		
81.	AS27	a	=	1
		b	=	2
		c	=	3
		d	=	4
82.	WHYVIS	a	=	1
		b	=	2
		c	=	3
		d	=	4
		f	=	5
3	CONREG	YES	=	1
		NO	=	2
4.	AS50	a	=	1
		b	=	2
		c	=	3
		d	=	4
		don't know	=	5

85	SERVOFF	TOPS	=	1	
		OCCGUID	=	2	
		BOTH	=	3	
		OTHERS	=	4	
		NONE	=	5	
86.	LOCJOBS	'a' tick	=	1	
		'a' no tick	=	2	
87	STAFASS	'b' tick	=	1	
		'b' no tick	=	2	
88	OPTRN	'c' tick	=	1	
		'd' no tick	=	2	
89.	GUIDOC	'd' tick	=	1	
		'd' no tick	=	2	
90.	FORMS	'e' tick	=	1	
		'e' no tick	=	2	
91	ADINT	'f' tick	=	1	
		'f' no tick	=	2	
92	CONTRN	YES	=	1	
		NO	=	2	
93.	NEAR	'a' tick	=	1	not applic. Ø (as NO
		'a' no tick	=	2	to 92)
94.	LOWHRS	'b' tick	=	1	
		'b' no tick	=	2	
95.	PROSPEC	'c' tick	=	1	
		'c' no tick	=	2	
96.	WHYNO	a	=	1	
		b	=	2	
		c	=	3	
		d	=	4	
		e	=	5	
97.	CONSOC	YES	=	1	
		NO	=	2	
98.	IFOFF	YES	=	1	
		NO	=	2	
		Not applicable	=	3	
99.	OTHSTPS	Add up number ticked a - f and write in total (6 max. Ø min).			

EMPLOYMENT CATEGORIES

Unskilled manual -	cleaner/unskilled catering/ routine factory work.
Unskilled non manual -	shop assistant/basic office work
Semi skilled manual -	with some basic training on the job. Bus driver/machinist/ cook.
Semi skilled non manual -	basic on the job training/bank clerk/dept. manageress.
Skilled manual -	With off the job training and qualifications/hairdresser/ confectioner/punch card operator.
Skilled non manual -	with off the job training and qualification. Secretary/
Lower professional and admini- strative. -	nursing, school teaching, personnel officer.
Higher professional and executive-	Directors, heads of schools, university and polytechnic staff, doctors.
= 'anything', 'variety', 'don't know', etc.	
= No response.	

1. Age

- |              |                          |              |                          |
|--------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| (a) under 25 | <input type="checkbox"/> | (d) 35 - 40  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) 25 - 29  | <input type="checkbox"/> | (e) over 40. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) 30 - 34  | <input type="checkbox"/> |              |                          |

2. Marital Status

- |               |                          |                         |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| (a) single    | <input type="checkbox"/> | (d) divorced            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) married   | <input type="checkbox"/> | (e) widowed             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) separated | <input type="checkbox"/> | (f) living with partner | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. Full time education completed at

- |          |                          |         |                          |
|----------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| under 16 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 19 - 22 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16 - 18  | <input type="checkbox"/> | over 22 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

4. Children

Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Ages \_\_\_\_\_

5. Husband's occupation.

---

6. Family income level

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| (a) up to £59 per week (£2950 p.a.)         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) £60 - £89 per week (£2950 - £4450 p.a.) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) £90 - £149 (£4450 - £7450 p.a.)         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) Over £150 per week (over £7450 p.a.)    | <input type="checkbox"/> |

7. Other dependants

YES/NO

8. Driving licence

YES/NO

9. Paid Domestic Help

YES/NO

APPENDIX IV M.S.C. STAFF ATTITUDINAL SURVEY

(Composite Analysis)

INSTRUCTIONS

Over the page are 20 quotations which represent the way some people think about women and work.

We would like you to indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with these opinions by ticking the appropriate column.

Please try to avoid the centre 'don't know' column as much as possible.

Would you please tick your first response. It is your immediate reaction rather than your considered opinion that we want.

Thank you.

Total Responses 54

	Strong Agree	Agree	Don't	Disagr	Strong Disagr
omen have a lower level of aspiration than men'	3	26	2	19	4
Women's commitment to work rises with educational evel.'	8	30	1	15	-
Though women are often less obsessive about their ork, they are also often more serious about it.'	5	32	4	12	1
Women typically put the needs of their home and hildren before the demands of their job.'	6	32	1	41	1
About $\frac{2}{3}$ of employed women work out of economic ecessity <sup>1</sup> .	11	33	4	5	1
omen are interested in their working conditions and ours as much or more than their wages.'	5	38	2	7	2
Increasingly, more women are concerned with securing ositions commensurate with their personal abilities.'	9	31	4	11	-
Employers are still apt to behave as if they were oing women a favour by employing them.'	5	17	2	27	3
The keenness of the woman who has been at home for me years is appreciated by employers because there s nothing nicer than having someone around who really	2	17	7	24	4

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
'Their concentration on domestic affairs prevents them developing that sense of loyalty and interest in the Company's affairs which Management requires.'	1	8	1	36	8
'The re-entry woman's interest in part time jobs tends to confirm the employers' view that she is not seriously committed to work.'	4	10	5	26	9
'The trend towards part time employment for married women seems a strong and irreversible one, and the employer who turns his back on it is opting out of a large and expanding field of labour supply.'	15	35	4	-	-
'Some jobs are done more efficiently by people working part time.'	18	28	2	6	-
'You can't expect to be given a highly skilled job with a lot of responsibility if you want to be let off at 3.30 p.m.'	11	19	1	18	5
'A full time job cannot be indefinitely carried on by a woman without strains occurring in the job, at home or the woman herself.'	5	9	2	26	12
'Within the M.S.C. there is both insufficient awareness of the special needs of women and insufficient effort to encourage them to use what services there are.'	1	15	6	27	5
'There is an urgent need to encourage the dispersal of women throughout the economy.'	2	22	12	17	1
'There is a clear need for more attention to be paid to the needs of women who are unskilled and unqualified'	7	34	-	13	-
'Women have not taken advantage of the training opportunities available.'	2	14	9	26	3
'There is a large unsatisfied demand for part time training.'	4	25	11	13	1



In addition,

1. Is there anything you would like to add about the Job Centre service to women or the priority of re-entrants in relation to other groups, which has not been covered by the questions?

2. Are there any aspects of your own work in relation to re-entry women which you would like to comment on?

3. (If applicable) Did contact with the survey within the Job Centres affect your views regarding women wishing to return to work in any way at all?