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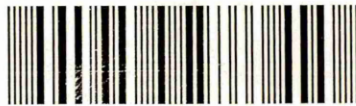
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**Women Returning to the Labour Market:
Case Studies in Sheffield**

Yvonne Smith

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the degree of Master of Philosophy

December 1994

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WOMEN RETURNING TO THE LABOUR MARKET : CASE STUDIES IN SHEFFIELD

YVONNE SMITH

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Sheffield Hallam University for the degree of Master of Philosophy

ABSTRACT

The study is a comparative analysis of women returners living in two spatially and socio-economically segregated areas of Sheffield: Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway. It examines the experience of returning to paid work after childbearing, identifying both variations and similarities which occur between the two cohorts. The study is located within a theoretical framework which is principally informed by dual systems theory. It is therefore concerned with the structuring effect of both patriarchy and class on women's choices, when re-entering paid employment. The influence of the particular local labour market in which the study is placed, Sheffield, is also acknowledged.

The study consists of three sections. The first section provides a theoretical overview, examining various labour market theories. Relevant themes and concepts are explored which relate to women returners: the family, education, "gendering" of jobs within the labour market, deskilling and the reserve army of labour. The second section examines research methods, especially practical and methodological considerations relating to women in general and the subjects of this study in particular. It also analyses Sheffield's local labour market and its effect on women's employment. The last section is concerned with an analysis of empirical data, examining factors which influence women's return to employment. It compares and contrasts interviewees' experiences and attitudes towards their education, employment prior to childbearing, patterns of return and spatially related determinants. The study concludes with a brief discussion concerning social polarisation and the underclass.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

TOPIC OF STUDY

This study arose in part, from my own experience as a woman returning to the labour market in Sheffield. After completing my degree as a mature student, I realised that obtaining employment would be far from easy. In common with many women in my position, I was reluctant to relocate due to family responsibilities. Alternatively, Sheffield's labour market appeared to offer limited opportunities for well qualified women. In conjunction with high levels of employment in the city, returning to paid work was distinctly problematic. Fortuitously I obtained employment as a research associate at Sheffield Hallam University. Nevertheless, I continued to speculate about the motivations and limitations experienced by women returning to paid work in Sheffield. I was particularly concerned with women who, like myself, were reasonably well qualified. I thus decided to undertake a study which would examine the experiences of women returning to employment after childbearing, within the context of a specific local labour market: Sheffield.

This rather broad objective was developed further during work on a skill survey which identified the effects of economic regeneration on three adjacent areas of local authority housing in Sheffield's inner city: Kelvin Flats, Netherthorpe and Upperthorpe. The estate is acknowledged as an area of acute poverty, (Directorate of Planning and Economic Development, Sheffield City Council, 1993, p. 50, 90, 94). For example, unemployment levels of 46% existed on Kelvin/Thorpe, compared to 10% for Sheffield as a whole (Lawless, Short and Smith, 1993, p1). When considering the employment opportunities of women living in this area, it seems probable that a range of factors associated with social and economic deprivation structure their experience of the labour market.

Following the skills survey conducted in Kelvin/Thorpe, a comparative skills survey was undertaken in a relatively affluent suburban area of Sheffield: Greenhill/Bradway. During work on this project, it became apparent that a wide diversity in employment experience exists between women living in these two areas of Sheffield. My personal experience as a woman returning to Sheffield's labour market, and my knowledge of the social and economic experiences of women living in both Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway, allowed me to conjecture that:

- i) The experience of returning to paid employment after childbearing, may vary between women living in Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway. This variation may occur as spatial segregation appears to reflect socio-economic diversity.
- ii) Regardless of socio-economic background, women living in both Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway, may experience factors in common when returning to paid work. This may occur due to their shared experience as women and the influence of gender related determinants.
- iii) The employment participation of women returning to paid work in both areas, Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway, may be influenced by the requirements of the local labour market.

I therefore decided to develop the original broad research objective. More specifically, this study will examine the above three suppositions in relation to a comparative study of women returners living in two spatially and socio-economically segregated areas of Sheffield: Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway. A more complete examination of the practical and theoretical factors associated with this research approach is presented in Chapter Five. The decision to conduct this study is, to an extent, motivated by personal interest. The intention is also to provide a contribution to the existing literature. As Rees points out (1992, p.12), there has been a plethora of studies

concerning women's experience of employment during the last three decades. The experiences of women returning to employment are implicit in much of this work. A number of studies have also explicitly examined the experience of women returning to the labour market after childbearing (for example: Brannen and Moss, 1991; Chaney, 1981). Furthermore, at the time of developing this particular study, a variety of reports emerged regarding women returning to the labour market after childbearing. These reports largely emanated from the debate concerning the "demographic time-bomb" and the perceived need to entice women into the labour market to compensate for a potential decline in younger workers. These reports are largely aimed at policy makers, employers and training providers (for example: Healy and Kraithman, 1989; Hardhill and Green, 1990). A review of background literature which discusses factors associated with women's return to the labour market after childbearing is provided in Section A of this study.

It seems pertinent to state, however, that despite the abundance of available literature concerning women's employment, there appears to be only a limited amount relating to women's experience of paid work in Sheffield. Whilst literature is available relating to Sheffield's labour market, this generally tends to be concerned with male employment/unemployment. In a city which has been heavily influenced by the rise and fall of male dominated steel and engineering industries, this is perhaps hardly surprising. Nevertheless, this study is an attempt to redress the balance. Furthermore, there also appears to be a relatively limited number of studies which examine the differing employment experiences of women within local labour markets. Again, it is hoped that this study will provide a contribution.

PLAN OF THIS STUDY

Although this study is informed by various theories of the labour market, it is principally influenced by dual systems theory. Thus Section A begins with a brief discussion concerning dual systems analysis, and its relevance to this study. The remainder of Section A, Chapters 1-4, presents a literature review analysing labour market theories, in relation to women returning to employment after childbearing. Chapter One provides a thematic framework in which to examine neo-classical labour market theory in relation to women's employment. It concentrates on two themes which are of particular concern to this study: the family and education. Chapter Two discusses dual and segmented labour market theories, exploring processes within the labour market which structure women's employment. Chapter Three examines the influence of economic restructuring on women's labour market participation, particularly with reference to Braverman's analysis of deskilling and the reserve army of labour. A discussion of factors associated with women's employment in relation to local labour markets, is provided in Chapter Four. Section B consists of Chapters Five and Six. Chapter Five begins with an examination of the practical and theoretical reasons for conducting a comparative study within a local labour market. It proceeds to discuss research methods, particularly in relation to this study. Chapter Six examines Sheffield's labour market from the late 1970s, to the present day. It identifies the changes which have occurred in this specific local labour market in relation to women's return to employment. Section C provides an analysis of empirical data obtained in this study. Chapter Seven is concerned with interviewees' educational experiences and employment prior to childbearing. It compares and contrasts the views of women from both study areas. Chapter Eight looks at patterns of return and assesses the influence of various factors relating to individuals, the family, the state and local labour market. Again the two cohorts studied are compared and contrasted. Finally, the Conclusion considers the issue of social polarisation in relation to this study.

**WOMEN RETURNING TO PAID EMPLOYMENT
- A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

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SECTION A

WOMEN RETURNING TO PAID EMPLOYMENT - A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

PREFACE

i An analysis of women's return to the labour market following childbearing, necessitates a consideration of various social and economic factors which both influence and structure women's labour market participation. The nature and impact of these factors on women's employment, may be gained by examining theories of the labour market (Cutter, 1992). This study will utilise various labour market and labour process theories to illustrate and explain social and economic factors which may impact on women's return to the labour market after childbearing. This approach appears to be appropriate, as it has been indicated (Rees, 1992) that structures in the labour market, for example gender segregation, may be analysed with reference to a form of theoretical pluralism. The theories which will be examined in this section are not exclusive; rather they have been chosen because of their important contribution in understanding women's employment participation. Although this study acknowledges the need to consider a variety of theories, it will be principally influenced by dual systems theory. It will accordingly emphasise the structuring influence of the inter-relationship of patriarchy and capitalism in relation to the labour market.

The following section will begin by discussing dual systems theory and its relevance to women's labour market participation. It will then proceed to analyse economic and social factors which may affect women's return to the labour market after childbearing, in the context of neo-classical economic theory, dual labour market theory and Braverman's theory of restructuring. An awareness of dual systems theory will allow this study to indicate theoretical limitations of the preceding three theories, as well as the advantages. As this study is concerned with women's return to a specific local

labour market, this section will also include a theoretical overview of local labour markets in relation to gender.

ii **Dual Systems Theory** - Dual systems theory, as a major branch of feminist theory, does not provide an analysis which is specific to the labour market. Rather dual systems theory is concerned with an overall analysis of women's oppression in society. It comprises a synthesis of Marxist and radical feminist theories, arguing that both capitalism and patriarchy structure gender inequality in contemporary society. Marxist feminists consider that gender inequality is a by-product of capitalism, the main focus of inequality being class division (Walby, 1990, p 4). It is proposed that women's oppression is structured by the needs of capital, as delineated in the domestic labour debate (Bradley, 1989, p 44). The above argument has been criticised as failing to account for gender inequality in non-capitalist societies and thus providing an analysis which does not consider that gender inequality exists as a discrete structure (Walby, 1990, p4). Alternatively, radical feminists contend that women's oppression is the result of patriarchy, a system of male dominance which exists because men benefit from women's subjugation (Walby, 1990, p3). Again, this analysis has been subject to criticism, not least because it appears to suggest that male dominance is biologically determined.

Bradley (1989, p58) has stated that few academics would accept either of these arguments in isolation, as presenting an adequate framework when defining the position of women in society. Dual systems theory appears to provide a solution, combining an analysis of both patriarchy and class. The exact nature of the inter-relationship between patriarchy and class has, however, been subject to various explanations. It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the range of suggested articulations in any depth. Thus a brief overview will be given. It has been indicated (Walby, 1990, p.5) that patriarchy and capitalism may be perceived as comprising one symbiotic system, a position which has been taken by commentators such as

Eisenstein. Alternatively, Cockburn (1983, p.191-209) and Hartmann (1979) argue that capitalism and patriarchy comprise two distinct, but interacting systems. For example, Hartmann offers an historical analysis which considers that the system of patriarchy pre-dated capitalism:

"... before capitalism, a patriarchal system was established in which men controlled the labour of women and children in the family ..." (Hartmann, 1976, p.137)

She proposes that the system of patriarchy continues to exist during capitalism and maintains its power by expropriating female labour. This occurs both in the labour market and within the family. In the labour market job segregation and women's resultant low wages, cause women to be financially dependent on men and reliant on marriage. Within the family, married women's domestic role weakens their position in the labour market. These two structures thus reinforce one another and preserve men's superiority over women. As Hartmann observes:

"This process is the present outcome of the continuing interaction of two interlocking systems, capitalism and patriarchy." (Hartmann, 1976, p.138)

Hartmann's analysis appears to be particularly relevant to this study, which examines the labour market participation of women returners. On the other hand, it has been suggested that all dual systems theories are problematic. For example, they cannot adequately sustain the interrelationship between capitalism and patriarchy throughout all levels of society (Walby, 1990, p.6).

Despite this limitation, dual systems theory may enhance our understanding of women returning to the labour market. Rees has argued (1992, p. 32-33) that aspects of dual systems theory demonstrate that women's employment is influenced by both class and gender related inequality. Women's inequality in the market is articulated through a range of social structures and is reinforced by the state. It may be assumed that women returning to the labour market after childbearing, will be similarly affected:

"... the effects of patriarchal relations in a number of sites, reinforced by the state, confirm and reproduce women's restricted access to a labour market that is organised in a way that privileges both capital and men."
(Rees, 1992, p.33)

It therefore seems appropriate to locate a study of women returning to the labour market after childbearing, within a theoretical framework which is principally informed by an awareness of the structuring influence of both patriarchy and class. This section will proceed to examine macro labour market theories, with particular reference to factors which influence women's return to the labour market. It will indicate the effect of both class and gender inequality.

CHAPTER ONE

A THEMATIC APPROACH TO NEO-CLASSICAL LABOUR MARKET THEORY - A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE FAMILY AND EDUCATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

It is not possible for this chapter to examine neo-classical theory in depth, rather it will provide an analysis of themes which seem to be particularly relevant to women's labour market participation: the family and education. Since neo-classical theory rests on a priori principles, theory is verified by calculus. As this thesis is a predominantly sociological rather than economic work, it is not the intention of this section to explain econometric techniques. Neo-classical theory is premised on the concept of a hypothetical market place, where supply and demand for labour meet. The market is populated by economically rational individuals, whose labour market behaviour is therefore consistent over time. Employers as rational beings, are not assumed to be influenced by variations between workers, such as gender. Workers are considered to be homogeneous within each skill category, all receiving identical treatment. Similarly, it is assumed that workers will behave in an equally rational manner, dividing their time between work and leisure to gain optimum utility.

1.2 THE FAMILY AND WOMEN'S PAID EMPLOYMENT

Neo-classical theory contends that individual decisions to participate in the labour market are constrained only by time and wages. During the period of time in which individuals decide whether or not to participate in the labour market, known as the short-run (Fleisher, 1970), time is perceived as only divisible between two possible uses: work and leisure. Work is necessary in order to produce wages and whilst

leisure produces utility, it is constrained by budgets. Economic equilibrium occurs when the amount of work is equal to the amount of leisure that is substituted.

This analysis does not appear to provide an adequate framework for describing women's employment participation. It has been suggested (Dex, 1985, p.114) that describing all non-market activity as leisure is a "particularly male choice of label". It does not take account of work in the home that women perform and the possible constraints that this may impose on women's labour market activity. The relationship between women's role in the family and participation in paid work, is acknowledged by Mincer (1980) who observes that a third use for time exists; work "not paid for" (Mincer, 1980, p.18). In the case of married women this may take the form of housework and caring for young children. Consequently, he states that it is pertinent for analyses of women's employment to consider hours of work spent in the home:

"Let us consider the relevant choices of married women as between leisure, work at home, and the market." (Mincer, 1980, p.19)

When considering factors which may affect women's return to paid employment, Mincer's work appears to deserve attention. He is instrumental in extending neo-classical theory to regard life outside the market and emphasises the effect of the family on structuring labour market participation, especially for married women.

1.2.1 Women's Employment Participation in Relation to Partners Employment

Status - One of Mincer's main concerns (Walby, 1985, p.146) is whether married women are more likely to obtain work during periods of economic expansion, when jobs are readily available, or whether they work more during economic recessions to substitute husband's wages. Mincer shows that both effects occur, emphasising that women's labour market participation may be influenced by the employment status of partners. It has been suggested, however, that Mincer's findings are particularly relevant to early post-war America (Walby, 1985, p.146). This seems to be an

accurate observation when examining married women's employment participation in contemporary Britain, in relation to partners' employment status. Martin and Roberts (1984, p.97) report that wives of unemployed men have a greater tendency to be unemployed themselves than the wives of either working or economically inactive men. This suggests that there is a relationship between wives' unemployment and the unemployment of husbands. This relationship may be attributed to a variety of factors. For example, husbands and wives generally have similar social and educational backgrounds and will be similarly affected by high levels of local unemployment (Martin and Roberts, 1984, p.98). It is also possible (Martin and Roberts, 1984, p.98; Metcalf and Leighton, 1989, p. 57-63; Davies, Elias and Penn, 1994, p. 184-185) that women with unemployed partners are discouraged from participating in paid work due to the influence of the social security system. As the system disregards a relatively small proportion of a wife's earnings before the family's benefit is reduced, the level of earnings needed by a woman to make employment profitable is raised (Metcalf and Leighton, 1989, p.59). It therefore seems reasonable to suggest that women's return to the labour market after childbearing, may be constrained if partners are unemployed. It is necessary to consider why this occurs. It may be argued (Land, 1976, p. 226-262) that the social security system appears to reinforce women's domestic role and that this is not unintentional. Rather it is implicit in a social policy which is founded on the ideological assumption that women's primary role is to be carers in the family, not workers in the labour market. The state thus contributes towards the maintenance of the "traditional" (Morris, 1990, p.80) sexual division of labour, where a dependent wife is primarily engaged in a domestic role whilst the husband is the chief earner.

In summary, when examining women returning to the labour market, Mincer's work suggests that an analysis is necessary which considers the effect of the family on women's labour market participation, particularly the influence of partners' employment status. In conjunction with an awareness of structural gender inequality,

it may be argued that social security legislation constrains women living with unemployed partners from returning to the labour market. The state may therefore be perceived as both maintaining and reinforcing the ideology of the patriarchal family.

1.2.2 The Sexual Division of Labour - The relationship between the family and labour market is further extended by Becker, in "A Theory of the Allocation of Time" (1980), in which he develops a general theory of the allocation of time in areas outside the labour market. Becker suggests that labour market participation of individuals is dependent upon joint decision making within households. It is argued that if one member of a family is more efficient in the market than another, time will be reallocated by family members to allow the individual a greater level of employment participation. Becker extends this concept in his "new home economics" (Dex, 1985, p.74), where he analyses the relationship between the sexual division of labour in the home and the labour market. Becker defines the sexual division of labour as work performed by married women, who have traditionally devoted their time to child rearing and domestic activity and men, who have traditionally spent their time hunting, fighting or farming, that is, engaged in "market" activities (Becker, 1981, p.14). He considers that the sexual division of labour is necessary to promote economic efficiency within households. By applying the theory of comparative advantages to the family, Becker is able to suggest that tasks are allocated to each family member according to differing levels of skill, thus ensuring maximisation of output and economic equilibrium. Variations in skill, and hence the differing gender roles associated with the sexual division of labour, are apparently determined by biological gender variations. Becker appears to argue that women have primary responsibility for childcare, as they are committed to their children to protect their biological investment. Men, on the other hand, are assumed to have less interest in protecting their biological progeny:

"... women have been willing to spend much time and energy caring for their children because they want their heavy biological investment in production to be worthwhile ...

Men are less biologically committed to the care of children, and have spent time and energy on food, clothing, protection, and other market activities." (Becker, 1981, p.15)

Since women's skills are primarily related to childcare and housework, Becker considers that it is economically rational to allocate women's time mainly to household duties and men's time generally to the market. Thus, women's relationship to the labour market appears to be marginal, participation being constrained by their "natural" domestic role.

How does Becker's analysis relate to women returning to employment after childbearing? He emphasises that the sexual division of labour within the family, particularly women's role as mothers, constrains the labour market participation of married women. This appears to be particularly relevant for women returning to the labour market after childbearing and has been confirmed by other commentators. For example, Brannen and Moss, (1991); Metcalf and Leighton, (1989); Yeandle, (1984); Martin and Roberts, (1984) have discussed both the practical and emotional constraints associated with childcare, when attempting to obtain paid work. On the other hand, whilst women's role in the family as primary carers of children appears to constrain paid employment, Becker's analysis may be perceived as limited. It is the contention of this study that the constraints associated with women's domestic role as mothers, are not biologically determined as Becker suggests, but are rather the product of a patriarchal culture. The origin of the sexual division of labour has been one area which has attracted much research over the last twenty years (Bradley, 1989, p.27), particularly to determine whether gender inequality is biologically or culturally determined. Due to constraints of space, it is not within the scope of this study to discuss the above debate in any depth. It can only be stated that evidence suggests that both biological and cultural factors may have been integral to the

development of the sexual division of labour in the past. During recent times, the sexual division of labour does not appear to be biologically immutable, but varies between societies (Bradley, 1989, p.32). Thus cultural factors appear to be significant.

It is therefore necessary to consider why motherhood may constrain paid employment. Land (1978 p.257) states that the meaning of marriage may differ between women and men. Men may feel that caring for the family is synonymous with providing financial support, perceiving that their main responsibility is within the labour market. Alternatively, women who have primary responsibility in the family for the care of children, the sick, the old and able bodied men, may experience a conflict of responsibility between remaining in the home to care for the family and paid employment (Land, 1978, p.260). This conflict appears to be reinforced by the state which does not provide adequate support for working mothers. Childcare provision in state nurseries has declined since the Second World War and is largely a resource for the social services, whilst parents are taxed if they use nurseries subsidised by employers (Brannen and Moss, 1991, p.29). Land's argument is particularly relevant to women returning to the labour market after childbearing. Whilst this study acknowledges that women may not always want to return to paid work, preferring to care for their children, it is also possible that internalised beliefs concerning women's role as housewives and carers of children may constrain labour market participation. In their report of unemployed women, Cragg and Dawson (1984, p. 64-65) record that a tension appears to exist in the attitude of interviewees towards domestic duties and employment. On the one hand, women said that it was "in the natural order of things for men to work and women to mind the home", whilst at the same time opposing this stereotype by desiring employment. It is possible that the above tension, reinforced by limited childcare provision, may cause some women difficulties in returning to paid work.

Furthermore, Becker's (1981) examination of the sexual division of labour assumes that decisions made in the family, concerning labour market participation, are equally beneficial to all members of the family. This analysis is logical in the context of neo-classical economic theory, which postulates that all individuals behave in an economically rational manner. It may be argued (Morris 1990, p. 17-18), however, that Becker's analysis is problematic. Alternatively, it has been suggested that the family is not a consensual unit, but a patriarchal structure, where husbands may strongly influence their wives' decision to obtain paid work (Walby, 1985, p.147). Husbands may be motivated not by economic rationality, but by ideological beliefs which view women's "place" as being in the family not the labour market (Ungerson, 1983, p.35). Women's employment participation may be limited to the extent that it is not beneficial to the household as a whole, but it ensures that the husband maintains his authority in the family. Studies of women who have returned to paid work, or are considering returning after childbearing (Yeandle, 1984; Cragg and Dawson, p.1984), reveal that whilst some men may be supportive concerning their wives' return to employment, (Yeandle, 1984, p. 145-146; Cragg and Dawson, 1984, p. 67-68) others express more negative attitudes. Some men only tolerate wives' employment providing standards of housework do not decline, and others are openly hostile. The latter oppose their wives' working, either because they consider that it is men's responsibility to support families, or because "they saw the arrangement as a challenge to their authority" (Yeandle, 1984, p.146). Apart from indirect control, husbands may also influence women's return to paid employment by maintaining direct control over financial resources. Although Becker acknowledges that selfishness may occur between family members, he does not take account of power relations within the household (Morris 1990, p.17). Pahl (1983) has noted that a variety of financial arrangements exist within households and has indicated that the distribution of power is related to control over resources. Control appears to be located at the point of entry (Pahl, 1983, p.254), therefore husbands who are solely responsible for obtaining finances may also be assumed to command power within

the household. This may influence women's employment participation if economically dependent wives feel impelled to obtain paid work because they are denied access to husbands' earnings.

To sum up, when considering factors which may influence women's return to the labour market after childbearing, it is necessary to be aware that women's employment participation may be affected by both the indirect and direct control that husbands exert within the household. Women may be discouraged from re-entering employment due to the influence of husbands who prefer their wives to remain at home. Conversely, women may be motivated to return to paid work because of inadequate access to finance. Becker's analysis of the sexual division of labour may also be perceived as limited, as it does not take account of the "tastes and preferences" (Morris, 1990, p.18) of individuals. By assuming that the sexual division of labour exists as a rational method of promoting economic efficiency, Becker does not consider the responses and perceptions of individuals to their circumstances. Studies of women returners, which are informed by an awareness of gender inequality, have examined women's reasons for re-entry to the labour market. They suggest that a variety of perceptions occur, for example, some women may report that dissatisfaction with the domestic role may be an incentive to return to paid work (Yeandle, 1984, p.59). Other women, living in low income areas, may state that financial incentives are the prime motivation to re-enter employment (Chaney, 1981, p.27). It may be argued therefore, that an examination of women returners benefits from an analysis which perceives women as individuals and not as a homogeneous group. The above discussion concerning the family and women's employment, draws attention to a number of issues which appear relevant when considering the labour market participation of women returners. It has been argued that neo-classical labour market theory may not be adequately analysed without reference to the sexual division of labour in the family, and the constraints on women's employment associated with their role as wives and mothers. An awareness of structural gender

inequality has prompted this study to suggest that women's employment participation is constrained by the ideology of women's "place" in the family and that this may be mediated through the state.

1.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND WOMEN'S RETURN TO PAID WORK

It is necessary to examine human capital theory in order to explore the relationship between education and women's return to paid work. This aspect of neo-classical theory is concerned with the process of individual skill acquisition and job selection (Fleisher, 1970, p.92). Individuals are thought to invest in their own education and training to promote individual productivity and to increase potential wages, thus increasing their human capital. How does this affect women's paid employment? Mincer and Polachek (1980) suggest that following formal education, most individual investment occurs at work, in the form of job experience. The level of investment depends on expected rates of return in the future. The authors assume that women expect to spend the majority of their lives in the home and therefore will perceive limited economic advantage in gaining skills related to the labour market. Resultant employment will be obtained in jobs requiring low levels of skill and training, and which are consequently low paid. Mincer and Polachek appear to argue that women's low earnings, in comparison to men's, reflects their low attachment to the labour market. In effect, women are held responsible for their own low wages, because they prefer a domestic role rather than the labour market. This in turn justifies the "economic rationality" of the sexual division of labour in the home. Clearly the argument appears to be tautological. When considering why neo-classical theory assumes that women prefer a domestic role, in contrast to paid employment, Becker (1981) suggests that the sexual division of labour exists due to the biological diversity of the sexes. He extends this analysis to human capital theory, and proposes that biological differences are reinforced by economically rational behaviour. For example, he argues that investments in girls' human capital will be related to the home, because of their presumed biological orientation towards the domestic role. Hence occupational

segregation and women's low earnings, in comparison to men's, reflects lack of human capital investment in labour market skills because women develop skills appropriate to their biological role of mothers (Becker, 1981, p.24). Therefore sexual inequality in the labour market is justified as "natural".

To an extent, even Becker is reluctant (Ben-Porath, 1982, p.53) to base his work entirely on biological determinism. Even so, when considering factors which may affect women returning to the labour market after childbearing, human capital theory draws attention to a number of important issues. First, the influence of sex stereotyping during childhood which may structure labour market behaviour. Rees (1992, p.58) has argued that sex stereotyping in education is a complex process, where individual choice in future employment is severely constrained. Girls are limited in their potential choice of jobs by both their own assumptions concerning their future domestic role, and the reinforcing effect of attitudes from employers, teachers, careers officers, family and peer group. These are attitudes which largely confine girls to their "place" in the family, and which reflect the assumptions of a patriarchal society.

Second, human capital theory examines the acquisition of skills and training in relation to subsequent employment. It links this to occupational segregation in the labour market and women's comparative levels of low earnings, in relation to men. This is relevant when considering women's re-entry to employment, as levels of education and skill may impact on the return to the labour market in a variety of ways. For example, Dex (1984, p. 41-45) has indicated that there appears to be a correlation between type of employment and patterns of return to the labour market subsequent to childbearing. She also indicates (Dex, 1984, p. 46-48) that women working in professional and associated professional jobs prior to childbearing, are more likely to return to previous employment than women working in lower skilled jobs. Whilst various factors may contribute this, one issue may be the ability to afford childcare

due to higher levels of earnings associated with professional employment. Another issue, is the effect on women's employment participation of skills which have deteriorated, or become out dated, during absence from the labour market. Even highly qualified women (Firth-Cozens and West, 1991) may experience difficulty in obtaining paid work when returning to the labour market, due to the need for retraining. To recapitulate, human capital theory draws attention to the relationship between levels of education and skill and women's consequent position in the labour market. It also allows for a consideration of sex stereotyping experienced by girls and the consequent affect on women's paid employment. On the other hand, whilst neo-classical theory suggests that women's status in the labour market is biologically determined, this study proposes that it is influenced by a patriarchal culture.

1.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has examined two themes within the context of neo-classical labour market theory, which offer a significant insight into women's labour market participation after childbearing. First, an analysis of the inter-relationship between the family and women's paid work has identified incentives and constraints associated with both childcare and patriarchal relations in the family. These may impact on women returning to the labour market. It has also been suggested that these structures are reinforced by the state. Second, an examination of the inter-relationship of education and women's paid work, suggests that factors associated with gender, such as sex stereotyping, may encourage or inhibit women's return to paid employment. Neo-classical theory has clearly contributed towards a fuller understanding of women's labour market participation. This chapter, however, has argued that it fails to provide a comprehensive analysis of women's employment situation because it does not take account of structural gender inequality.

CHAPTER TWO

DUAL AND SEGMENTED LABOUR MARKET THEORIES - A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PROCESSES WITHIN THE LABOUR MARKET

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Theories of segmented labour markets arose, in part, as a response to the perceived inability of human capital theory to explain the economic disadvantage of black Americans in inner cities. These individuals were disadvantaged, despite education and training. Neo-classical economic theory concentrates on supply side factors to explain divisions in the labour market arguing, for example, that women's lower labour market returns, in comparison with men's, are due to limited skills and education. Alternatively, dual and segmented labour market theories analyse the operation of the labour market by examining demand side factors. These theories suggest that divisions are caused by the demand of employers for a differentiated workforce, which in turn reinforces the divisions (Beechey and Perkins, 1987, p.34). This chapter will examine dual and segmented labour market theories with reference to the participation of women in the labour market. In particular it will analyse factors which may influence women's return to paid work subsequent to childbearing. To commence with, there will be a brief discussion concerning basic dual and segmentation theory and its relevance to women returning to paid work. The relationship between the family, state and women's employment has also been included. This is intentionally limited, however, since this topic has been examined in chapter one. The main focus of this chapter is an analysis of processes *within* the labour market which structure women's labour market participation, particularly women returning to paid work after childbearing. The chapter ends with an alternative analysis of women's labour market segregation.

2.2 BASIC DUAL AND SEGMENTATION THEORY

Dual labour market theory argues that the market is divided into primary and secondary workers. Primary workers possess high wages, stable employment, good working conditions and promotion prospects. Alternatively, workers in the secondary sector encounter low wages, poor work conditions and employment instability. Unlike neo-classical theory which assumes that individuals behave in an economically rational manner, dual and segmented theories acknowledge the influence of normative assumptions on labour market behaviour. Kerr, for example, considers how institutional rules may structure the labour market:

"Institutional rules take the place of individual preferences in setting the boundaries. Such institutional rules are established by employers associations, by the informal understandings of employers among each other (gentlemen's agreement), by companies when they set up their personnel policies, by trade unions, by collective agreements and by the actions of governments." (Kerr, 1982, p.49)

Whilst dual and segmentation theorists have suggested a variety of models to characterise the operation of the labour market (Walby, 1985, p.154), the concept of internal labour markets (Doeringer and Piore, 1980) is illustrative. Doeringer and Piore argue that management desire stability from labour in order to reduce turnover costs, particularly as modern technology has exacerbated the expense of training staff. The workforce, similarly, desires economic stability and long term employment. Doeringer and Piore suggest that to secure these requirements, a process of negotiation occurs between management and labour which structures the "ports of entry". As far as possible recruitment of non-skilled secondary workers occurs through the market, whilst recruitment of skilled workers occurs from within the firm. Thus a distinction is created between skilled primary workers and non-skilled secondary workers. Piore states that to an extent this division reflects social class position (Loveridge and Mok, 1979), as education and skills appear to be related to class. Consequently, individuals from working class backgrounds with lower levels of education are employed in the secondary sector, whilst the more educated middle

classes tend to work in the primary sector. To sum up, dual and segmentation theory analyses the labour market with reference to the structuring affect of social class and institutional rules. It proposes that the demands of employers for a divided workforce reinforce existing social divisions.

2.1 Women and the Dual Labour Market - How may the above analysis enhance an understanding of women's position in the British labour market? It has been contended that except for the best educated, women are generally employed in low paid industries, often earning substantially less than men in comparable jobs (Bosenquet and Doeringer, 1973, p.427). Overall, women are identified as members of the secondary sector in the labour market (Beechey and Perkins, 1987, p.135). This position is reiterated by Barron and Norris who contend that low pay characterises unstable jobs (Walby, 1985, p.153) and may thus be used as a criterion to assess the labour market composition of the secondary sector. Accordingly, Barron and Norris indicate that in Britain, the secondary sector in the labour market consists for the most part of women:

"In Britain, the secondary labour market is pre-eminently a female labour market if low earnings levels are taken as an indicator of the secondary status of a job." (Barron and Norris, 1976, p.48)

Dual and segmented labour market theories appear to offer an important contribution to the study of women's employment, drawing attention to gender inequality within the labour market and emphasising that women work predominantly in low paid, insecure jobs. When considering the labour market situation of women returning to employment after child bearing, it may be assumed that their experience will bear some similarities. To explore this further, it is necessary to examine why women appear to be employed within the secondary sector. The Cambridge Labour Studies Group, which has revised dual and segmentation theory, has identified factors which structure women's position as secondary workers. It suggests that the participation of

women in the labour market may be related to the processes of social reproduction - the family, education and state welfare (Beechey and Perkins, 1987, p.138). This chapter proceeds to examine revised dual and segmentation theory with regard to two factors relating to the processes of social reproduction: the family and state welfare.

2.2 The Effect of the Family and State Welfare on Women's Employment

Participation - In their analysis of outwork, Rubery and Wilkinson (1981) account for the position of women as secondary workers. Although this constitutes indirect employment, they argue (Rubery and Wilkinson, 1981, p.128) that it is analogous to the secondary labour market in direct employment. When examining the motivation of individuals who perform outwork, and hence accept employment in the secondary sector, Rubery and Wilkinson (1981, p.127) conclude that some workers have no other option, or alternatively, perceive it as a substitute for part-time work. Two factors appear to structure the choice of individuals who perform outwork. First, minimal financial needs are supplied by either the state or family and thus low wages are acceptable as they constitute additional income. Second, the labour market participation of outworkers is influenced by their position in the system of social reproduction. It is suggested that women accept outwork, and hence low paid jobs in the secondary sector, because they are partially supported by a partner or the state. Meanwhile their opportunities in the labour market are limited by constraints associated with housework and child care responsibilities.

Rubery and Wilkinson's study appears to be particularly relevant to an examination of women returning to the labour market after childbearing, as the position of women within the secondary sector of the labour market is associated with their role in the family. It also identifies the function of the state in maintaining the traditional sexual division of labour. The above argument appears to confirm previous discussion within this study (Chapter One, 1.2) which contends that the labour market participation of

women returners is influenced by their position in the family, a role reinforced by the state. Rubery and Wilkinson also acknowledge that the structuring effect of women's domestic role accords employers a pool of cheap labour. On the other hand, the authors do not offer an analysis which explains *why* the sexual division of labour in the home exists in its traditional form. In short, why is it women, not men, who have primary responsibility for childcare? This study contends that dual and segmentation theories are limited by an analysis which does not fully account for the existence of gender inequality in society. It has been suggested (Chapter One, 1.2) that the "traditional" sexual division of labour is a product of a patriarchal culture.

2.3 PROCESSES WITHIN THE LABOUR MARKET WHICH INFLUENCE THE EMPLOYMENT POSITION OF WOMEN RETURNERS

This section now turns to a discussion of processes within the labour market which may structure the employment participation of women returning to paid work after childbearing.

2.3.1 The "Gendering" of Jobs Within the Labour Market - An analysis of processes within the labour market which may influence women's experience of paid work, has been provided by Barron and Norris (1976). They suggest that women are employed predominantly in the secondary sector of the labour market due to five determining factors: dispensability, visible social difference, limited interest in training, low economism and lack of solidarity. Barron and Norris contend that it is not possible to determine whether these "individual" characteristics may be attributed to individuals, or whether they are acquired through the labour market. To elucidate, employers may ascribe characteristics to women. For example, they may perceive that female employees are easy to dispense with because of family commitments. Or

they may assume that women have little interest in obtaining training, or that female employees will accept lower wages than men, particularly as they are perceived as lacking an ability to organise collectively. The assumption that women possess these characteristics may become self- fulfilling:

"When ascriptive characteristics, like sex, are used as selection criteria, it has the effect of confining the groups so delineated to the secondary sector over the whole of their working lives ... the actual confinement of particular groups to the secondary sector will result in their having higher rates of labour turnover and job mobility. Thus a "vicious circle" is created which reinforces the discriminating power of the trait which was made the basis of the selection criteria, and the labelling process becomes self-fulfilling." (Barron and Norris, 1976, p.53)

Barron and Norris appear to provide a valuable contribution to an understanding of the participation of women in the labour market. They indicate that women's jobs may be constructed in relation to gender, and that this gendering process influences women to be employed in low paid, low status, insecure jobs. They also suggest that the gendering of employment is dependent on the perceptions of employers. On the other hand, the analysis provided by Barron and Norris appears problematic, as it does not adequately conceptualise women. It has been argued (Beechey and Perkins, 1987, p.136) that this is a general feature of dual and segmentation theories. Barron and Norris's analysis appears limited by the perception of women as a homogeneous group, their position in the labour market undifferentiated by issues such as social class background, education and familial status. This appears to be an over simplification when analysing the labour market experience of women returners. The structuring effect of education on women's labour market participation has already been discussed (Chapter One, 1.3), indicating that it appears to be related to varying patterns of return to employment. Whilst this has been discussed in relation to sex-stereotyping, it is necessary to emphasise that there is also an association between educational achievement and socio-economic class. As Rees points out (1992, p.35), children from middle class homes have a higher propensity to enter further and higher education than their working class counterparts. Thus women

originating from middle class households are more likely to obtain higher grade employment than women from working class backgrounds.

Similarly, it appears erroneous to perceive women as a homogeneous group in relation to their familial status. Barron and Norris appear to indicate that women's domestic role is an important factor in shaping the perceptions of employers, with regard to their labour market participation (Beechey, 1978, p.180). Beechey argues that of the five attributes which Barron and Norris suggest influence employer's attitudes towards women's employment, only solidarism is not related to women's role in the family. Yet, Barron and Norris do not consider possible variations in labour market participation between women assuming or not assuming a domestic role. It is possible, however, that the perception of employers towards single unmarried women on the one hand, and women returning to employment after childbearing on the other, may differ. Employers may perceive the latter as more marginal to the labour market than single women. This might result in a further reduction in employment opportunities. The omission of factors relating to familial status is of particular significance to this study, which is concerned with issues influencing the employment participation of women returners who may be assumed to have a substantial domestic role.

The view that employers' perceptions may be influenced by women's familial status may be illustrated when considering a study of women returners undertaken by the Institute of Manpower Studies (1992, p.94). This suggests that there appears to be a decline in employers' perceptions of women's career development and potential following a return to employment after childbearing. Similarly, restricted employment opportunities for women returners may be observed when considering the labour market position of part-time workers. The 1991 Labour Force Survey (Employment Gazette, September, 1992, p.436) estimates that two thirds of women returning to employment in 1991 obtained part-time employment. Evidence suggests, however,

that part-time women workers obtain limited employment opportunities in comparison to full-time workers. For example, the Equal Opportunities Commission (1991, p.17) compared full-time and part-time women employees in 1989, and identified that full-time workers were twice as likely to receive training. It is now pertinent to consider *why* women, particularly women returning to the labour market after childbearing, may find that their employment opportunities are constrained.

It is a contention of this study that employers' attitudes towards women employees are influenced by the ideology of the traditional family, within which women experience the role of a financial dependant responsible for the care of other dependants. When this view is applied to women returners, who are known to have domestic responsibilities, it may be particularly constraining. This argument appears to be supported by Beechey and Perkins (1987, p.118). They suggest that part-time women workers are not offered training or promotion because employers define them in terms of their domestic role, and assume that they do not want further labour market opportunities. It is thus possible that employers attribute characteristics to women employees which are related to their domestic role. This view is reinforced by Hunt, (Ungerson, 1983, p.38) who has shown that male managers may possess an ideological view of women employees which is influenced by their own home lives. She notes that a low proportion of managers had wives who worked. Managers moreover contributed little to the running of the home. They had high academic expectations for their sons, whilst their daughters were expected to become nurses and secretaries. The family lives of these managers reflect a situation where wives and daughters either performed, or were expected to perform, traditional gender related roles. This traditional perception of women's role appeared to be transferred to their female staff. For example, 47% of managers thought that men were more intelligent than women and generally they considered that men were less likely to be absent from work in comparison to women. This observation was not confirmed by relevant company statistics. The application of these ideological views to female employees has the

effect of reinforcing women's role as mothers and housewives and limiting labour market participation (Ungerson, 1983, p.38). In short, it is possible to observe a "vicious circle" identified by Barron and Norris.

It would be misleading to suggest that women's employment participation is structured within the labour market by employers' perceptions alone. It is also necessary to consider the effect of male workers. Revised dual and segmentation theories argue that class conflict and trade union organisations may influence employment conditions. For example, Craig et al (1985) propose that trade unions are an influential factor in providing higher wage levels for women. Whilst trade union organisation has improved the position of women within the labour market, it has also been the case that male workers have organised collectively to limit women's employment participation. Hartmann (1976), describes how historically, male workers have constrained women's employment opportunities and that during the capitalist era this has occurred through unions' policies. It is argued that this has been an attempt to maintain patriarchal relations both in the home (Hartmann, 1976,) and within the labour market to maintain earnings and status (Cockburn, 1988, p.34).

"But why their (male workers) response was to attempt to exclude women rather than to organise them is explained, not by capitalism but by patriarchal relations between men and women: men wanted to assure that women would continue to perform the appropriate tasks at home."
(Hartmann, 1976, p.153)

To reiterate, when analysing women's return to employment subsequent to childbearing, it seems possible that women's position in the labour market may be limited by a process of "gendering" which occurs within the market itself. It is argued here that employers may be influenced by an ideological view of women which causes them to perceive returners as marginal to the labour market. Employers may consequently limit the employment participation of women returners, which has the effect of reinforcing the ideology of women's "place" and at the same time maintains a cheap workforce. Similarly, male workers may also seek to constrain women's paid

work in order to maintain their status both at home and in the labour market. It may therefore be suggested that "gendering" in the labour market results from the structuring effect of both patriarchal and class relations.

2.3.2 Flexibility? - The above process of "gendering" may be further illustrated when examining recent developments in the labour market. Dual and segmented labour market theory has been utilised (Beechey, 1988, p.47) to assess the new forms of flexibility which have been emerging in the labour market, for example, the "flexible firm" model developed by Atkinson (Employment Gazette, May 1992, p.226). Instead of describing the structure of the labour market in terms of primary and secondary workers, stress is laid upon core and periphery groups. Atkinson argues that during the economic restructuring which emerged after the recession in the late 1970s, flexibility was perceived as desirable to reduce labour costs. Employers required "functional flexibility" from core workers who possess a variety of skills, are geographically mobile and are key employees within organisations. In recompense for their skills, these workers are employed in full-time posts which offer job security and promotion. Alternatively, the peripheral workforce provides "numerical flexibility". These workers insulate the core staff from fluctuations in demand and consequent redundancy. Hence their jobs are characterised by instability. Although this group may consist of full-time workers, it also includes those who are employed part-time and on short-term contracts.

The above analysis may contribute to an awareness of factors which influence the labour market position of women returning to the labour market. Importantly Atkinson's study emphasises recent changes in the labour market. It does not however, consider the construction of gender in relation to these changes (Beechey and Perkins, 1987, 144). This appears to be a significant omission, considering that many peripheral sector workers, who work part-time, are women. Furthermore, as

stated above (2.3.1) part-time work is an issue which is particularly relevant to women returners. It is possible that a process of "gendering" has occurred during recent structural changes within the labour market. Employers, influenced by both economic motivations and ideological perceptions of women, may assume that unskilled part-time work is "women's" work, whilst skilled full-time work is the prerogative of men. Crewe has examined restructuring in the labour market in relation to the textile industry and observes that this is "a gender differentiable process" (1990, p.47). She indicates that women comprise the majority of peripheral workers, obtaining semi-skilled, part-time and temporary employment, whilst skilled, full-time core workers are generally men. When considering the position of women returners, it may be assumed that re-entry to the labour market for many women will entail obtaining part-time, low paid, insecure employment as peripheral workers. It would, of course, be unrealistic to assume that some women do not want to return to part-time paid work. But, where the only work available is part-time, women's choice on re-entry to the labour is severely constrained. As Crewe points out, the term "flexible" becomes ironic:

The irony of the term 'numerical flexibility' is at once apparent: employers have complete flexibility, employees have none." (Crewe, 1990, p.48)

2.3.3 Vertical and Horizontal Segregation - The above discussion has centred predominantly on women's work within the secondary sector. Clearly dual and segmentation theories offer opportunities to examine women's inequality in the labour market. It may, however, be something of an over statement to define women's employment as predominantly within the secondary sector. Beechey (1988, p.48) remarks that this tendency within dual and segmentation theories is contrary to empirical evidence. For example, jobs such as nursing and teaching do not easily conform to this category. Dual and segmentation theories may therefore be of limited value, as they do not provide a complete analysis of women's occupational

segregation. An alternative model emerges from Hakim's discussion of "horizontal" and "vertical" segregation (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990, p.32). Horizontal segregation describes a situation when men and women possess different types of jobs. Vertical segregation outlines a situation when men are observed to occupy higher grade employment, whilst women are found in lower grades.

It has been stated that horizontal segregation is maintained by the sex-typing of jobs, which ensures that individuals are employed in gender related occupations (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990, p.32). For example, the construction industry is associated with male employment: for every 1 woman employed in a skilled construction trade, there are 58 men. Conversely, "caring" professions are identified with female employment. In health associated professions, women outnumber men 7:1 (Employment Gazette, September 1992). Horizontal segregation appears to be the consequence of a variety of inter-relating social and economic factors, some of which have already been examined in this section. This study has previously discussed the impact of sex stereotyping during education in relation to women's employment. It has also discussed the "gendering" of women's employment due to the effect of male exclusion within certain occupations and the effect of employers' perceptions. Vertical segregation seems to be maintained by differential recruitment into the same type of job, and lack of career progression for women. A variety of factors may contribute to vertical segregation, such as women's lower educational qualifications in comparison to men's. It has also been suggested (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990, p.34) that male management excludes women from managerial positions. It has been estimated (Howe and McRae, 1991, p.2) that in 1991 only 6% of the 35,000 membership of the Institute of Directors were women, a situation which according to Howe and McRae (1991, p. 4-5) reflects both organisational and attitudinal barriers to women's career progression.

How does the above analysis enhance an awareness of factors which may influence

women's return to paid work after childbearing? First, horizontal segregation has the effect of confining women within a relatively limited number of occupations. The 1991 Labour Force Survey estimates that 48% of all women workers are employed in five Standard Occupational Categories: clerical workers, personal services, sales assistants/checkout operators, other sales/services and secretarial (Employment Gazette, Sept 1992, p.440). Second, vertical segregation ensures that even where women are not members of the secondary sector, but are employed in professional and managerial occupations, they tend to occupy the lowest grades. Third, a consequence of employment segregation is that women's employment is predominantly low paid. It has been estimated (Industrial Relations Services, 1991, p.3) that in the ten year period up to 1990, women earned approximately two-thirds of men's hourly earnings.

Unsurprisingly, Metcalf and Leighton (1989, p.38) suggest that limited job prospects arising from occupational segregation may act as a disincentive for women returning to the labour market after childbearing. Presumably their implicit assumption is that women can always rely on a partner, or the state, to provide financial support. This study would argue that the situation is more complex and determined by an inter-relationship of socio-economic factors and individual motivations. For example, Cragg and Dawson's (1984, p.21) study of women returners suggests that non-financial reasons for obtaining paid work, are relevant, such as the desire to escape domesticity. Thus it may be assumed that despite low earnings and limited job opportunities, the desire for social contact may motivate some women to return to employment after childbearing. On the other hand, financial incentives for obtaining paid work are important for many women (Martin and Roberts, 1984, p.68), and as Chaney (1981, p.28) observes, this may be particularly applicable to women from low income households. Consequently, it appears that a proportion of women will re-enter employment and accept low pay, because they cannot afford not to be in paid work. Labour market segmentation may act as a disincentive to women returning to the

labour market, but personal and financial needs may act as a counterbalancing tendency.

2.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has examined the labour market participation of women returners, in the context of dual and segmentation theories. Dual and segmentation theories reiterate the argument presented in Chapter One, that the employment participation of women returners is structured by their domestic role in the family and that this role is reinforced by the state. They also suggest that employers' attitudes towards women may be shaped by conceptions of women's "appropriate" role, perceiving that women's "place" is in the family, not the workforce. Accordingly, women returners may experience particular discrimination in the labour market, often obtaining employment which is low paid and insecure. This assumption appears to be borne out when considering the "flexibility" debate. Whilst dual and segmentation theories offer an important contribution to women's labour market studies, they appear to be constrained by an inadequate analysis of structural gender inequality. Although basic dual and segmentation theories consider that social class structures employment participation, this does not appear to be particularly stressed in relation to women's labour market participation. It is the contention of this study that women are not a homogeneous group and that employment participation may vary due to socio-economic factors.

CHAPTER THREE

BRAVERMAN - THE DESKILLING AND RESERVE ARMY OF LABOUR THESES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The work of Braverman in "Labour and Monopoly Capital", has been included in this study for two reasons. First, it has been argued (Dex, 1985, p.191,) that Braverman provides a vivid account of the restructuring of the labour market. He examines the effect of technological development on both the process of work and social relations, identifying changes in the organisation of the labour process, such as rationalisation and simplification and divisions of tasks. Braverman argues that this transformation of the labour process alienates and degrades the skills of workers, both men and women, in all sectors of the market. He also identifies the decline of employment in the manufacturing industries, combined with the growth of the service sector which employs largely women. As this study demonstrates in Chapter Six, this issue is of particular significance when considering women's labour market participation in Sheffield. Second, two themes which dominate "Labour and Monopoly Capital", the "deskilling thesis" and the "reserve army thesis", are concepts which have frequently been used to describe the status of women's employment (Beechey, 1982, p.54). This chapter begins with an examination of the deskilling thesis, and considers how it may contribute to an analysis of women returning to the labour market after childbearing. It then discusses Braverman's reserve army of labour thesis in relation to women's return to the labour market. It concludes with an alternative discussion of the reserve army thesis.

3.2 DESKILLING - THE EFFECT ON WOMEN RETURNERS

Braverman analyses the historical transition of the organisation of labour, a process where workers have progressively lost control over their labour during the development of monopoly capitalism. He argues that the work process altered from one based primarily on skill, to one based on scientific knowledge which was held by management. As manual and mental work processes were separated, and correspondingly levels of skill declined, Braverman suggests that workers sank "to the level of general and undifferentiated labour power" (Braverman, 1974). They lost both control over, and fulfilment in, their labour. He argues that as the work process has developed, levels of skill within the working class have been lowered: "the meaning of skill itself becomes degraded" (Braverman, 1974, p.130).

How may the above theory extend our understanding of factors which may influence women's return to the labour market after childbearing? Braverman's analysis of deskilling is situated within the context of the restructuring of the labour market, and consequently acknowledges both the decline of manufacturing and the expansion of the service industries. Significantly he also indicates that, within the latter industries, the bulk of unskilled labour is carried out by women. It is also recognised that these jobs are characterised by high unemployment, lack of training and limited career prospects. Consequently, Braverman's analysis of deskilling appears relevant to a study of women returners, contributing to an understanding of the effect of economic restructuring on women's employment.

Braverman's work, however, also exhibits limitations concerning the analysis of women's labour market participation. For example, he appears to assume that deskilling is the same phenomenon for both men and women. Alternatively, it is possible that deskilling has affected men and women differently and that it is necessary to take into account gender. This argument may be elucidated when

considering how the definition of "skill" is developed. Dex has argued (1985, p.191) that skill may not be defined in relation to objective criteria alone, but is partly a social construct. Empirical research indicates that the definition of skill is related to the sexual division of labour and its associated ideology. Hence the meaning of skill appears to be dependent on the ideological perspectives of those defining it. For example, Coyle's (1982) examination of deskilling within the clothing industry suggests that gender related definitions of skill have contributed towards a process of deskilling which is variable between men and women. She reports that traditionally within the clothing industry the main assembly of the product was performed by a skilled male worker, whilst minor operations were performed by less skilled female and male "assistants". With the introduction of mechanisation and the sub-division of tasks, skilled male workers were effectively deskilled. Even so, they retained their skilled status by a substitution of the work process. Consequently, men assumed responsibility for other "skilled" areas of work and women became "unskilled" machine minders:

"... the concentration of men in the cutting room and the stock room, and the absolute mushrooming of managerial and supervisory jobs for men (is) a reflection of the extent of deskilling and the growth of managerial control. Once men were involved in the making of the garment but, now deskilled, it has become "women's work". (Coyle, 1982, p14)

It appears that deskilling within the clothing industry did not affect men and women in an identical manner. Rather it reinforced the sexual division of labour within the work process. Furthermore, when analysing the definition of skill associated with these new work processes, it is not clear that differential skill levels exist between men and women. Coyle argues (1982, p. 13-15) that the work performed by men, for example in the cutting room, is defined as skilled even though the technology has limited skill requirements. On the other hand, work performed by women is not defined as skilled, although it is possible that the level of skill is no lower than that found in jobs performed by men. This appears to corroborate the contention that the definition of skill is socially constructed, and may be related to the sexual division of labour. It is

also necessary to point out that Coyle's example of differential deskilling is not an isolated incident. Crewe's (1990) examination of restructuring within the textile industry, leads her to conclude that the transformation of the labour process reinforces and even intensifies the sexual division of labour. She states that many female workers previously holding skilled or semi-skilled status are now reduced to machine minders. Alternatively, men are being up-graded from operators to skilled engineers or technicians. As Crewe argues, "female jobs undergo a process of deskilling, while male jobs are reskilled" (1990, p.50). To sum up, the above discussion appears to identify a further factor which contributes towards the "gendering" of women's jobs within the labour market. The implications of "gendering" in the process of production, for women returning to the labour market, have already been discussed in Chapter Two.

3.3 DO WOMEN RETURNERS CONSTITUTE A RESERVE ARMY OF LABOUR?

Braverman's account of economic restructuring utilises Marx's thesis of the "reserve army of labour". This states that the development of capital accumulation draws people into the labour market and conversely, during periods of economic decline, the work force is jettisoned. Braverman suggests that increased mechanisation has caused employment in manufacturing industries to decline, resulting in a surplus of workers. Meanwhile, the service sector has expanded and become increasingly labour intensive, as the work process does not so readily lend itself to mechanisation. Consequently, in order to produce a profit, capital has a vested interest in pursuing methods of production which maintain low labour costs. This is made possible by employing surplus workers from the manufacturing industries, who accept insecure employment due to high levels of unemployment. Braverman views these surplus workers as synonymous with Marx's concept of a "disposable industrial reserve army"

(Braverman, 1974, p.383). He extends his concept of the reserve army to cover periods of rapid accumulation, during which additions to the "natural" surplus are supplied by other workers: immigrants and particularly women.

The relevance of Braverman's reserve army of labour thesis to this study may be examined by reference to two issues. First, it may be particularly pertinent to women returning to the labour market after childbearing, rather than women in general. Although the reserve army increases with the entry of both men and women, women are perceived to join the reserve army when they become *employed*, men when they become *unemployed* (Beechey, 1987, p.86). As Walby indicates (1986, p.79), it is unclear why men and women should become part of the reserve army by different routes. Possibly Braverman's underlying assumption is that women's principal job is within the family and that an "aberration" occurs when they enter paid work. This argument is not explicitly stated, but his analysis of the family asserts that originally it was the central unit of production until the growth of capitalism helped to "drive women out of the home and into industry" (Braverman, 1974, p.276). Women's role as workers for capital was deplored by Braverman, who argued that it weakened family life and impaired social functions such as caring for the elderly or disabled (Braverman, 1974, p.279). If it is assumed that Braverman considers that women entering the reserve army have previously experienced a domestic role, clearly the reserve army thesis is relevant to women returning to paid work after childbearing. Second, Braverman's analysis is relevant to a study of women returning to paid work, because he observes that women's labour market participation fluctuates. Braverman considers that women are encouraged to enter employment during periods of economic expansion and jettisoned when the economy slumps. At first sight this appears to be an accurate description of the labour market experience of women returners. For example, during the period of economic expansion in the late 1980s, it appears that a plethora of reports, press articles and advertisements for training, encouraged women to abandon the home and return to paid work. It was notable,

however, that during the subsequent economic slump women returners ceased to be news! Alternatively, as Braverman points out, increasing numbers of women are entering the labour market as the service industries expand. Therefore, Braverman's assumption that women comprise a reserve army which may be jettisoned from the labour market, appears problematic.

A further limitation in Braverman's work concerns his analysis of gender. He does not consider why women, in preference to men, have increasingly obtained low paid work in the service industries. This study argues that Braverman's analysis is limited because it does not provide a full account of structural gender inequality in society. Having noted the limitations of Braverman's analysis of the reserve army of labour, it is necessary to consider whether the concept sheds any further light on the employment position of women returning to paid work after childbearing? This emerges from the work of other commentators who have examined the reserve army thesis. For example, Bruegel (1982) has utilised the reserve army thesis to examine labour market experience of women. She accepts that women have provided a "reserve" of labour which is an element of Marx's reserve army, but attempts to extend the concept to consider whether women are more "disposable" than men in periods of economic recession (1982, p.106). She defines "disposability" as having two meanings: first, any individual woman is more likely to be made redundant or unemployed than any individual man in a similar situation. Second, the employment position of women as a whole deteriorates in comparison to men. To establish her analysis, Bruegel examined employment and unemployment statistics between 1974-1978, during which time the official rate of women's unemployment was three times the rate for men (1982, p.109). Bruegel suggests that within manufacturing industries, which employed substantial numbers of women, female unemployment was proportionally greater than men's. This was particularly evident in relation to part-time women workers, who Bruegel considered most closely conform to a disposable reserve army (Bruegel, 1983, p.114). Alternatively, Bruegel acknowledges that overall

female employment during the period 1974-1978 rose as men's employment decreased, reflecting a long-term transition towards an increasingly female work force (1983, p.111). The above analysis raises two relevant issues in relation to the participation of women returners in the labour market. At the level of individual industrial sectors, women who have returned to work may experience an increased propensity to be made redundant, when compared with men. This may be illustrative of gender inequality in the labour market, which as this study has previously argued, results from a process of "gendering":

"Even today, women as a group are more likely to be 'last hired and first fired'. This is particularly true where women have made inroads into 'male jobs'. When layoffs come women, the last hired, are the first to go. This is a visible and dramatic aspect of women's vulnerability and subordinate status in the labour force." (Yanz and Smith, 1983, p.103)

It should be noted that this is despite the passing of the Sex Discrimination Act - 1975, which legislates against deliberate discrimination against women. On a general level, however, it seems improbable that women returning to paid employment will constitute a disposable reserve army of labour. Rather as Bruegel has identified, restructuring within the labour market appears to ensure that women will compose an increasing proportion of the labour force. Consequently, women returners may feel secure about the future availability of employment, but occupational segregation and its attendant inequalities predispose women's work to be both insecure and low paid:

"... non-enforcement of affirmative action and anti-discrimination legislation may severely hamper women's ability to improve (or even maintain) their economic position, but the fact is that women's production work in the home is no longer available for them to do. They can be unemployed, of course, or employed temporarily or sporadically, but they cannot, in any meaningful numbers, just be sent 'home' - the latent reserve army, once it has been activated, can never become latent one again." (Power, 1983, p.83)

3.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed two predominant themes within "Labour and Monopoly Capital" (1974), which are relevant to an analysis of women's position in the labour market. It has been argued that the deskilling thesis is pertinent to a study of women returning to the labour market after childbearing, because it describes the effects of economic restructuring on women's labour market activity. Braverman's analysis appears to be limited, however, because it does not take account of structural gender inequality. This chapter has suggested that when a feminist analysis is applied to the deskilling thesis, it is possible to identify that the process of deskilling varies between the sexes. Furthermore, deskilling appears to reinforce the sexual division of labour. The reserve army thesis has similarly been observed to be pertinent to a discussion of women returners, as it appears to suggest that women who comprise the reserve army have experienced a domestic role prior to entering the labour market. This chapter has also contended that Braverman's reserve army thesis is problematic in assuming that, subsequent to restructuring, women will be jettisoned from the labour market en masse. Alternatively, it has been argued that although women as individuals may suffer redundancy in preference to individual men, at a general level, women's employment appears to be increasing. The increase, however, tends to be in relatively low paid, insecure employment.

CHAPTER FOUR

LOCAL LABOUR MARKETS - THE EFFECT ON WOMEN RETURNERS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Preceding chapters have analysed macro labour market theory. The intention has been to offer a theoretical overview which examines labour markets in relation to gender, and to relate this to women returners in particular. Empirical research data has been utilised to illustrate the argument and this has deliberately focused on work which has been at a national or regional level. This study, however, is primarily concerned with analysing women's return to paid employment in the context of a local labour market. The following chapter will consequently consider features associated with local labour markets which may affect women's return to paid work. It is not within the remit of this study to provide an in-depth analysis of local labour markets. The intention is rather to contribute a summary.

4.2 TOWARDS A THEORY OF LOCAL LABOUR MARKETS

Providing an analysis of local labour market issues which may influence women's return to employment is not without difficulties. For example, it is contended (Haughton et al, 1993, p.12) that there is no single theory of the local labour market. Haughton suggests that an understanding (1992, p.24) of local labour market issues may be gained by appreciating the alternative explanations for labour market structures contributed by macro labour market theories, a view which is echoed in Rees's (1992) conceptualisation of pluralist labour market studies. A similar approach has been attempted in this study (Section A, Preface). On the other hand, Haughton et al (1993, p.12) claim that the applicability of macro theories to local labour market

analysis is limited, as it is necessary to appreciate that local labour markets have their own dynamic. In view of these constraints, an alternative theoretical model of local labour markets is proposed (Haughton, 1993, p. 12-13; Campbell and Duffy, 1992, p. 4-5), defining them as; several inter-relating sub-markets, for example of class or gender, which are structured by an inter-relationship of factors which exist on both a general and specific level. Thus social, political, economic, cultural, historical and institutional constructs, which may have both a national and local identity, impact on local labour markets. A further issue which may render local labour market studies to be problematic is that of identification. Empirical studies may utilise a variety of definitions (Hasluck and Duffy, 1992, p7) when identifying local labour markets. For example, boundaries may approximate to the employment area of most residents such as Travel to Work Areas, or administrative boundaries such as local authority wards or counties. In order to operationalise empirical research it is clearly necessary to provide boundaries. Yet it may be argued (Haughton, 1992, p.37), that defining local labour markets in terms of hypothetical boundaries is limiting if wider issues which impact on local labour markets are not embraced.

4.2.1 Women's Position in the Labour Market - Variations *Between* Local Areas -

Massey examines the social, political and economic development of local areas (1984, p. 194-233). She explains how local areas may be defined in terms of hypothetical boundaries; in this context the definition of "local" appears to be as broad as "regional" structures. Correspondingly, Massey also incorporates into her analysis an illustration of the structuring effect of general and specific factors on local labour markets. She attempts an historical analysis of economic structures and suggests that industrial sectors became confined to specific geographical areas in response to Britain's international trading history. As industrial production became spatially specific, increasing economic diversity existed between local areas (Massey, 1984, p. 125-131), which was mirrored by the development of specific and diverse social and

cultural structures. In summary, Massey identifies how local areas developed specific economic and social structures in response to general economic and political trends. The effect of both general and specific factors, on women's labour market participation, may be examined with reference to her analysis of economic restructuring in the coal mining areas of South Wales and North-East England, and the rural economy of Cornwall. Massey characterises the coalfields of South Wales and North-East England as areas which were formerly dominated by a single industry and a self-contained community. Men actively fought class oppression, centering around trade union organisation. As a corollary to these structures, a strong patriarchal culture emerged which propelled women away from public activities and placed them firmly in the home. In comparison, Cornwall is portrayed as an area in which class struggle was confined, primarily because industry was small and self-employment predominated. Although women's employment in Cornwall prior to restructuring appears limited, self sufficient forms of paid work may have occurred. Massey appears to describe two economically and socially diverse labour markets.

In response to general political and economic factors, both areas experienced a process of restructuring. When examining the impact of restructuring, she suggests that similarities between the two areas occurred. Women's employment increased with the expansion of the service industries and male employment decreased due to the decline of manufacturing. On the other hand, Massey contends (1984, p. 227) that "the differences are striking" between the two areas. These differences arose because "national" changes may vary in their operation and impact within different spatial structures (Massey, 1984, p.194-232). She suggests that restructuring of the local coalfield labour markets dramatically modified the traditional economic and social culture. Men experienced increasing unemployment whilst women obtained more opportunities for paid employment. This situation created "enormous personal dislocation" (Massey, 1984, p.211) and affected gender relations. Alternatively, Massey argues that in Cornwall social upheaval was limited although women's labour

and wage levels became the subject of increasing competition. Thus small local businesses attempted to constrain women's wage levels and opportunities for employment, by limiting in-migration of big business which would provide enhanced competition. In brief, Massey describes how two economically and socially diverse local labour markets responded to general economic and political trends. Although similarities appeared to exist between the two areas, variations were also observed. Specific local economic and social factors help to differentiate local labour markets within broader processes.

This discussion emphasises a number of salient issues which need to be addressed when analysing women's return to paid employment in local labour markets. First, their employment position will be affected by a broad framework of inter-relating structures. These include for example, international and national economic policy, political activity at a local and national level, and historical and cultural traditions. Second, the structuring effect of general economic and political trends may produce some similarities between areas. Local variations in traditional economic and social structures may, however, cause the impact and operation of general trends to differ between local labour markets. This argument is illustrated by Walby and Bagguley (1990). They compare sex segregation in seven local labour markets, which represent stereotypes of decline and expansion in the north and the south of England, between 1971 and 1981 (Walby and Bagguley 1990,p.63). Walby and Bagguley establish that local areas exhibit similarities which are commensurate with national trends. For example within the seven local areas studied, women's employment became more horizontally segregated between 1971 and 1981. On the other hand, they also indicate that there was a "substantial local variation in the extent of the industrial segregation" (1990, p.65). Walby and Bagguley conclude that variations in sex segregation between local areas are related to divergent traditional economic structures, and the differing impact of restructuring. Thus between 1971-1981 Teeside exhibited high levels of horizontal segregation for both men and women. This

appears to be related to a preponderance of "traditional" heavy manufacturing which largely employed men and an over representation of other forms of manufacturing employing women. In Swindon, however, male sex segregation was reduced as the male dominated motor trade declined, whilst women's segregation increased in response to an expansion of service industries (Walby and Bagguley, 1990, p.67).

4.2.2 Women's Position in the Labour Market - Variation *Within* Local Labour

Markets - So far this chapter has suggested that the employment participation of women returners may differ between local labour market areas, due to spatial variations in social, economic and political structures. Employment participation of women returners may also vary between women living *within* local labour markets. It is beyond the scope of this study to offer a comprehensive analysis of factors which may influence women's labour market participation rates within local areas. Rather the issue of travel mobility, may be illustrative. Travel mobility is obviously related to labour market activity, as most individuals are employed outside the home. Women's labour market participation is therefore generally dependent on the availability of reliable transport, an issue which may be particularly relevant to women returners. Women returning to paid work after childbearing may be involved in "a complex and intricate scheduling of activities in both time and space" (Pickup, 1988, p.99), as they journey between home, work place, school and shops. It thus seems reasonable to assume that the employment participation of women returners may be structured by the availability of transport. This is illustrated by Duffy and Geddes (1990) in their study of women and work in Harlow. They indicate that the vast majority of women in their sample considered that they would only travel to work which was within a five mile radius of home. The reluctance of these women to travel further related both to domestic commitments and to a lack of access to personal transport. Some women also recounted that they had been refused employment because they lacked personal transport and the appropriate bus service was inadequate (Duffy and Geddes, 1990,

When considering why women returners may have problems in travelling to work, it may be argued that in general women are disadvantaged as a group in relation to transport (Pickup, p.102). This may be associated with structural gender inequality. For example, within households it is generally husbands who have priority over the use of cars whilst wives are often expected to rely on public transport. Whilst all women may be disadvantaged, the ability to travel to paid employment will also tend to vary between women within local labour markets. This may be illustrated when examining the work of Hardhill and Green (1990). They analysed the labour market experience of women returners living in two contrasting wards in Newcastle. One ward, Benwell is an area of high unemployment and deprivation, whilst South Gosforth boasts relatively high levels of employment and affluence. Hardhill and Green observed that the cohorts varied when comparing where women preferred to work. For example, 50% of women living in South Gosforth said that they would be prepared to work outside the city. In comparison, women living in Benwell preferred jobs in the city centre. This appears to be related to accessibility of personal transport. Women living in South Gosforth were far more likely to live in a car owning household and possess a driving licence, compared to women living in Benwell. Variations in car ownership and hence ability to travel to employment, appears to be spatially specific within Newcastle and associated with socio economic class. Therefore it is possible that the employment participation of women returners will vary within a local labour market, due to the effects of socio economic class. Furthermore this variation may be spatially specific.

4.3 CONCLUSION

Although a theory of local labour markets has not been developed, this chapter has attempted to highlight issues which may influence the participation of women returning to paid work within local labour markets. It is the contention of this study that an analysis of the local labour market participation of women returners should be situated within the context of general macro-labour market theory. It has also been suggested that a study of women returners at a local level necessitates a consideration of a broad range of general and specific factors. The inter-relationship of these factors may structure labour market participation both within and between local labour markets. Furthermore, it may be argued (Walby, 1985, p.163) that spatial differences in women's employment participation rates may only be satisfactorily understood through an analysis which accounts for gender inequality and explains the articulation between patriarchy and capital:

"Most of the existing regionalism literature is unsatisfactory in its approach to gender relations. Though some analyses note the differentiation of female and wage labour and its effects, this is rarely developed, and others ignore gender altogether. The focus of analyses on capital-labour relations has tended to preclude any understanding of the connections between different aspects of gender relations. The problem with many of these analyses is a lack of an understanding of patriarchal relations." (Walby, 1985, p.163)

**THE SHEFFIELD LABOUR MARKET -
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CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH APPROACH

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the structure within which this study is situated. Its first concern is to examine the focus of the research, that is the practical and theoretical reasons for conducting a comparative study within a local labour market. In this connection the concept of social polarisation is explored. As this issue is associated with social inequality, a brief discussion will follow concerning women and social class. The remainder of this chapter discusses research methods, reasons for conducting a literature review and the decision to conduct a qualitative survey method of data collection. It explores questionnaire design, selection of sample and interviews. Particular emphasis is laid upon considerations which influence research methods involving women interviewees. The chapter concludes by examining the process of data analysis.

5.2 RESEARCH FOCUS - HOUSEHOLD POLARISATION

Previous chapters have examined factors which may influence women's decision to return to the labour market, and hence specific constructs with which this study is concerned. Two further preliminary considerations also warrant discussion. First, the issue of the geographical area within which the study is to be situated: national, regional or local. The foregoing chapters have indicated that previous studies have analysed women returners in relation to all these areas, thus a precedent may be given for any choice. A second preliminary consideration concerned whether this

study should analyse women returners within a single geographical area, or make comparisons between two or more areas. Again, work previously cited (Hardhill and Green, 1990; Duffy and Geddes, 1990) has demonstrated that all these approaches may be appropriate. This study is based on an analysis of a local labour market, Sheffield, and adopts a comparative approach. The study is situated within two separate districts of the city, comprising one area of largely local authority housing and another of owner occupation, (Appendix A).

5.2.1 Practical Considerations - The decision to conduct a comparative study within a local labour market depended on both practical and theoretical considerations. On a practical level, this study developed from work with which I was involved as a research associate in the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University. The Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research and Sheffield's Department of Employment and Economic Development were jointly conducting research into the skills, aspirations and training needs of residents in an area of local authority housing within Sheffield's inner city: Kelvin Flats and North and South Netherthorpe estates. Subsequently, a similar survey was also conducted in an area of privately owned housing in the southern suburbs of the city, Greenhill and Bradway. This latter survey was conducted to provide comparative data between the inner city and suburb districts. As I was already involved with working on these projects, it seemed appropriate to conduct this study around the above two areas. Although this study is distinct from the surveys of Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway and provides totally separate data, the above surveys have helped to make some important connections. First, quantitative data could be included which would help inform this study. Second, the surveys could provide the names and addresses of contacts to be utilised within the empirical phase of analysis.

5.2.2 Social Polarisation - The decision to adopt a comparative approach within a local labour market, also appears to be appropriate on theoretical grounds. It has been indicated (Chapter Four, 4.2.2) that the employment participation of women returners may vary within local markets and that this variation may be spatially specific. To explore this issue further this study will examine women returning to the labour market within the wider debate concerning social polarisation. It should be stated at this juncture that the concept of social polarisation appears to be lacking in clarity (Hamnett, 1994). It has been suggested (Hamnett, 1994, p.405) that two main forms of social polarisation may be identified. The first thesis, originating in the United States, argues that within global cities there is a decline of middle income groups and an expansion of higher and lower income groups. This polarisation of labour is reflected in social and spatial divisions (Hamnett, 1991). The alternative thesis, which is of particular relevance to this study, emerges from Britain and the work of Pahl (1984). This thesis is concerned with the divide which occurs between employed and unemployed households, and the resultant division in living standards. It has been contended that Pahl's polarisation thesis is one of the most persuasive observations concerning changes in the British economy in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Dale and Bamford, 1989). Not unsurprisingly, his thesis has been influential in the development of other studies concerned with the labour market and employment/unemployment (Jordan and Redley, 1994, p.157). These studies have examined issues such as segmentation, deskilling and household allocation systems. Section A of this study has discussed these issues, suggesting that they structure women's employment participation. Furthermore, Jordan and Redley (1994, p.161) assert that theories and studies of women's labour market participation have been closely associated with the study of social polarisation. It thus seems appropriate to locate this study within the social polarisation debate.

This chapter will consider the applicability of social polarisation to this study, by briefly

examining the debate in relation to the labour market. As this study is situated within a local area, it will pay particular attention to two local labour market studies which explicitly consider the issue of social polarisation. "Divisions of Labour" (Pahl, 1984) examines the interrelationship within households of all forms of work, (including formal paid work, informal work in the household, work for neighbours and "self provisioning") and sources of labour. Pahl argues (1984, p.313) that at one pole some households engage in all forms of work. This is particularly the case in households which possess multiple wage earners, including an adult female. At the other pole, households in which members are unemployed do not participate in any form of work. A process of social polarisation may therefore be observed between "unemployed" and "employed" households:

"Thus the polarisation that I described...involves a process of positive and negative feedback; households with members in employment are more likely to engage in all other forms of work, and the reverse is the case in households where no one is in employment." (Pahl, 1984, p.333-334)

The debate concerning polarisation has been expanded by other British writers, for example, Dale and Bamford in their analysis of the General Household Survey 1973-1982 (International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1989). Dale and Bamford contend that data from 1973 to 1979 suggest that households were likely to be confined to either the category of "no-earner" or "multi-earner". Although this pattern varied during the recession of 1980 to 1982, causing a decrease in dual earner households (Dale and Bamford, 1989, p.488), they consider that there is evidence to support the polarisation thesis:

"It would appear, then, that there is considerable evidence of a process of polarisation at work in British society, but that, during the period 1980-1982, this was operating more clearly at the "no-earner" pole than at the "multi-earner" pole." (Dale and Bamford, 1989, p.488)

Furthermore, they confirm that labour market polarisation appears to be related to household tenure. They observe that there is an increased tendency for owner

occupiers to live in multi-earner households. In contrast, there has been a steady increase of households with no earners living in local authority accommodation (Dale and Bamford, p.496).

Whilst Dale and Bamford's research is based on national data, Morris (1987) provides data from a spatially structured household survey of a local labour market: Hartlepool. She suggests that there is evidence to support a thesis of social polarisation between employed and unemployed households. Morris indicates that where husbands are in employment, wives also tend to be in work and conversely, where husbands are unemployed wives also remain without paid work. Thus a division is created between working and workless households. Morris also observes that polarisation is spatially distributed within Hartlepool. Unemployment is greater in areas of local authority housing, particularly where estates are unpopular, compared to owner occupied areas. Similarly, Pinch and Storey (1991) utilise the polarisation thesis to interpret their study of a relatively prosperous local labour market. They also conducted a spatially structured household survey and, perhaps unsurprisingly, did not observe a large unemployed "underclass" (Pinch and Storey, 1991, p.456). The research did, however, identify a relatively high proportion of multi-earner households. Polarisation appears to exist between multi-earner households and single earner households, where a divide in living standards is observable.

To sum up, Pahl has indicated that social and economic diversity occurs between, on the one hand, households in which members are unemployed and, on the other hand, households in which members are employed. He also suggests that the employment of women within dual adult households is an important factor in affecting a household's economic and social position. Dale and Bamford have utilised national data to confirm the existence of social polarity and its relationship to labour market participation. Local studies of Southampton and Hartlepool have identified polarisation within local labour markets, but suggested that the structure of

polarisation varies between localities. In Hartlepool social polarisation occurs between employed and unemployed households, whilst in Southampton polarisation is observable between multi-earner and single earner households. This would appear to be consistent with the contention of this study (Chapter Four) that the operation of local labour markets varies. As this chapter has previously indicated, this study will examine women returning the labour market in two spatially distinct areas of Sheffield. These areas differ both in terms of tenure and socio-economic structure (Chapter Six, 6.6). It will compare interviewees living in Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway, examining both individual and household factors which may influence women's return to employment.

5.3 WOMEN AND SOCIAL CLASS

It seems pertinent at this point to consider the issue of socio-economic class in relation to women. Traditionally women have been ignored in class analysis (Walby, 1990, p.8). Conventional theory has asserted that it is possible to derive women's social class from the employment position of the male head of household. Thus women, particularly married women, do not have a class position which is determined by their own employment. Rather their socio-economic position is dependent on the person with whom they live. Conventional stratification theory has been challenged by feminist scholars as both theoretically and empirically limited. These perceived limitations have caused a wide ranging debate to ensue between feminist and more traditionally orientated sociologists. It is beyond the limits of this study to provide a comprehensive account of this debate. Rather, this section will briefly consider the major objections that have been raised and suggestions for the inclusion of women into class analysis. Abbott and Sapsford (1987, p, 4) consider that the challenge to conventional theory has focused on two main themes. First, the need to redefine stratification theory so that gender inequalities are recognised. For example, authors such as Delphy and Walby (Abbott and Sapsford, 1987, p.5) suggest that, despite

differing standards of living, all wives share the same class. This arises from their position as unpaid labourers in the home. Second, it appears necessary to revise class theory to take account of women's class relationships. For example, commentators such as West (Abott and Sapsford, 1987, p.13) argue that women's labour market position should be considered, and that it is important to recognise that not all women live with a man. Accepting these theoretical objections, how should women be incorporated into class analysis? Four main positions appear to have been suggested: first, taking women's occupation into consideration when determining the class position of households. Second, women's class position may be determined by their own employment, regardless of the household. Third, women's class position may be located in relation to both their job and role as housewife. Fourth, women's class position may be determined by assessing the consumption level of the household. Each of these positions exhibit theoretical and empirical constraints. Clearly, attempting to analyse social inequality in relation to women's class position is problematic. On the other hand, as this study assumes that women's inequality derives in part from class, it is necessary to consider this issue. This study accepts that conventional methods of assigning women a class position appear to be limited. Thus a variety of measures are utilised in this study which may give some indication of interviewees' socio-economic status, for example, husbands' economic status, interviewees' economic status, educational qualifications, tenure and household income.

5.4 RESEARCH METHODS

The development of this study may be divided into three phases. First, an initial literature review was undertaken to gain knowledge of both theoretical and empirical work relating to women in the labour market, and women returners in particular. This phase terminated with the "writing up" of a draft version of the theoretical framework, comprising Section A of this study. It should be stressed that supplementary reading continued throughout the research period and the progressive accumulation of knowledge provided a dynamic for the research. The completion of the final literature review was, therefore, intentionally delayed until the end of the study. The second phase commenced with determining the focus of the study, discussed previously in this chapter (5.2). It was also necessary to consider the type of empirical research most appropriate to the practical limitations and theoretical considerations within which this study is situated. It continued with the design of the interview schedule for the empirical work and the selection, contact and interviewing of the sample. The third phase comprised the analysis of interview material and "writing up" of this study. This section will now examine these phases in more depth.

5.4.1 First Phase of the Research - Literature Review - The first phase of the study, the literature review, was considered necessary for a variety of reasons. It would enable the study to be situated within a wider theoretical framework, permitting analysis of interview material to be related to wider structural and social divisions. This approach appears to be appropriate, for example, Graham has discussed the importance of linking the study of individuals to society in order to avoid analyses based on micro theory (Graham, 1983, p.142). It also provided a basis for devising the questionnaire utilised in the empirical work within this study. Both factors are important as it is recognised that there is a need to provide research results which are both reliable and valid.

"Reliability is the degree to which the finding is independent of accidental circumstances of the research, and validity is the degree to which the finding is interpreted in a correct way." (Kirk and Miller, p.20)

Consequently, as both analysis and empirical work are related to a wider body of knowledge concerning women in the labour market, it is hoped that this will assist in ensuring that the influence of extraneous factors is limited, in relation to both the questions and analysis of results.

5.4.2 Second Phase of the Research - Which Method of Analysis? - The second phase entailed deciding the most appropriate method of empirical research. This study examines in depth, the feelings and motivations of women towards paid work, regarding both past and present experience. Thus interviewees would need time to reflect, to think about issues which may sometimes be complicated and personal, and to weigh up how best to express themselves. As this study is informed by feminist theory concerning women's position in the labour market, it is appropriate to take into account feminist theory concerning social research methods. After deliberating on these issues, a form of survey was adopted. It was, however, recognised that all social surveys are potentially inadequate when interviewing women. It has been argued (Graham, 1983) that the survey method in general, may not permit a complete understanding of women's lives. Graham contends, for example, that the principle under-pinning surveys is that experiences can be verbalised. Anything that cannot, is not recorded and studied. This assumption may not be adequate for understanding women's experience, where much may be left unspoken. The most obvious alternative to the survey method, participant observation, was considered impossible on a purely practical level. Obtaining information about household management of finances, for example, would have necessitated living with women in their homes. The decision to conduct a survey, also necessitated a consideration of whether to utilise a quantitative or qualitative form of data collection. Although both quantitative

and qualitative methods of research are used by feminist academics, some concern has been expressed about quantitative social surveys. Quantitative research has been equated with a "male 'style of knowing'", where information is generated through impersonal means (Graham, 1983, p.136). Mies, for example, argues that quantitative research methods have an inherent male bias, since they are founded on the belief of a value-free, objective mode of research (1993, p.67). She claims that this causes difficulties for women scholars, when studying other women. By following the pre-requisites of quantitative research, they are confronted with repressing or negating their own experience of sexist oppression, and thus their own subjective experience as a woman is seen as a handicap. Mies recommends research which utilises a more phenomenological stance, where women researchers may use their subjective experiences as women, in order to perceive the situations of other women (1993, p.68). On the other hand, Jayaratne (1993, p.116) argues that quantitative research may offer a means of providing complex research designs and analysis, particularly with the increasing development of computer techniques. She does, however, point out that in general quantitative data provides findings which are superficial compared to qualitative data.

The above discussion may be associated with the debate between quantitative and qualitative researchers which has continued for decades (Jayaratne (1993, p.109). It reflects previous criticisms which have been directed towards positivism with its insistence on the "unity of scientific method", reasoning that humanity may be studied in the same manner as inanimate objects (Mies, 1993, p.66). Opposing this view is that of the phenomenologists. Their philosophy of "Verstehen", argues that since individuals have emotions, values and thoughts which direct action, they cannot be studied in the same manner as inanimate objects. Consequently in order to study humanity, the meanings of actions and their underlying subjective conditions must be understood (Kolakowski, 1993; Von Wright, 1993; Patton, 1980, p.44-46). It is beyond the scope of this study to enter into a discussion concerning the merits of

positivism versus phenomenology and related research methods. Having considered both feminist and traditional arguments concerning quantitative and qualitative research, the latter method was decided upon. It was felt that a qualitative survey, in the form of a guided interview, would provide the most effective method of obtaining in-depth information concerning women's feelings and motivations towards paid work.

5.4.3 Questionnaire Design - It was necessary to determine the type of interview most suited to the requirements of this study. Patton has argued that qualitative interviews may take three forms, informal conversations, general interview guides and standardised interviews (Patton, 1980, p.197). For the purposes of this study an informal conversation was not considered. It was thought that this would prove difficult to implement, when interviewing women who were not confident and articulate. It is possible that they may have felt intimidated by a researcher from a university. Furthermore, analysis would be constrained by lack of a systematic approach. Initially a standardised questionnaire was produced. This proved useful considering the many different topics that were relevant to the study, but did not appear to provide sufficient flexibility. Interviewees would be constrained by pre-set questions and would not have the opportunity to develop their own perceptions of events. Thus, a guided interview was thought to be the most appropriate method of interview (Appendix B). A detailed outline of topics was produced which would form the basis of each interview. Questions were not be asked in a pre-set form, but rather were to be adapted to individual circumstance. Questions were open-ended, to enable interviewees to pursue ideas and insights. It was hoped that this form of questioning would ensure rigour in the research, as predetermined responses would be minimised (Patton, 1980, p.211). This would also provide another check on the reliability and validity of the study.

Interviews were framed in order to produce life history analyses which concentrated

on issues specifically related to employment. This approach also allowed common themes to be identified (Graham, 1984, p.109). Dex has contended that this method is important as it acknowledges that the past may influence the present, and it allows for a chronological examination of the relationship between individuals and social and institutional structures (Dex, 1991). Whilst a life history method was considered appropriate for this study, it was also recognised that some bias may be introduced due to unreliability when recalling the past. Therefore although flexibility was placed at a premium, questions were generally asked in a chronological order, as it was hoped that a sequential pattern might aid memory recall. It has been noted that "key" events, such as the first job after leaving school and longer term periods of employment, are remembered with a good degree of accuracy. Precise details of past employment, such as wages, have not been asked. Bias is more evident when interviewees attempt to recall short term events (Dex, 1991, p.6). Thus some bias may exist within the interviews, although efforts have been made to minimise this.

5.4.4 Selection of Sample - As stated above (5.2.1), this study is related to (although independent from) work with which I was already involved, the two quantitative surveys corresponding to the two areas of Sheffield examined in this study. Potential interviewees for this study were obtained from these surveys. In anticipation of the empirical work necessary for this study, women who had returned to work or were intending to do so, were asked during the quantitative surveys if they would consent to a subsequent interview. A list of potential interviewees from each survey area was therefore made available. Obtaining the sample from the quantitative surveys, rather than an independent source serves two functions. First, data from the quantitative surveys would provide some corroboration of material gained in the qualitative interviews. Second, since the qualitative interviews took place approximately a year after the quantitative survey, some degree of longitudinal information was available. To an extent, women subsequently interviewed were self

selected and may have had particular reasons for being interviewed, compared with women chosen at random. Again some bias may have been introduced into the survey. Even so, it was felt that it was both impracticable and an infringement of individual privacy, to approach women who had previously been interviewed concerning their labour market activities, without prior consent. Considerations of impracticability were particularly relevant to those women living on the Kelvin/Thorpe estates. During the course of conducting the quantitative survey on Kelvin/Thorpe, I had been informed by Housing Department officers responsible for managing the estates, that access to residents was difficult. This was partly due to security doors which had been fitted onto walkways in Kelvin Flats, but largely due to the reluctance of residents to talk to anyone they did not know. Difficulties in contacting residents obviously had severe implications for this study. Therefore it was decided that there was a higher chance of gaining admittance to potential interviewees if they were self selected.

It was intended that thirty interviews would take place, fifteen in the Kelvin/Netherthorpe/Upperthorpe area and fifteen in the Greenhill/Bradway area. Furthermore, it was hoped that a geographical spread would be possible within each of these areas. For both areas, two lists of contacts were available from the two surveys. One list contained names and addresses of women who had returned to paid work and were employed at the time of the quantitative survey. A further list of women was obtained who had stated in the quantitative survey that they would like to return to work. To provide some comparability within the sample, all women contacted were either married or cohabiting at the time of the quantitative survey. Due to anticipated difficulties in gaining access to interviewees on the Kelvin/Thorpe estates, different methods of initial contact were utilised between the two research areas.

5.4.5 Contacting Sample in Greenhill/Bradway - In the Greenhill/Bradway area, fifteen letters were initially sent to women from both lists, reminding them of the previous quantitative survey and requesting further help (Appendix C). Three women replied to the letters and were interviewed. Those who did not reply were telephoned, resulting in a further explanation and request for assistance. Generally these women were apologetic about not replying earlier and very agreeable to be interviewed. Only three of the women telephoned were reluctant to take part. Their reluctance appeared to be founded on the belief that their experience of paid work was so inconsequential, that they could not perceive how they could help. After assurances that all experience was important, their apparent intimidation was overcome and they agreed to be interviewed. A similar situation is recorded by Finch (1993, P.167) who describes the initial reluctance of some women to talk to interviewers as they are worried about their "performance" in the interview. Only one potential interviewee failed to participate in a pre-arranged interview, understandably because of a family crisis, and only one woman refused to be interviewed. Contact was made with three further women, all of whom agreed to be interviewed. Sixteen interviews took place in the Greenhill/Bradway area. Gaining access to women within Greenhill and Bradway, for the purposes of this study, was relatively simple. This may be compared with the difficulties of gaining access to women in Kelvin/Thorpe.

5.4.6 Contacting Sample in Kelvin/Thorpe - Previous experience of interviewing residents in a deprived local authority estate (Cole and Smith, 1994) had led to the conclusion that initial contact, via a letter, would yield poor results. This may be because of limited levels of literacy. Also, as stated previously (5.4.4), it was anticipated that access to the Kelvin/Thorpe estates would be difficult. It was therefore necessary to devise a method which would facilitate this. It was decided that a female resident of the estate, Deborah, would be employed to approach those women who had expressed an interest in participating in a further interview, during the

quantitative survey. Deborah had been employed as an interviewer on the quantitative survey and was therefore experienced in gaining admittance to residents for the purpose of social surveys. She was also known and trusted by many residents. I explained the intention of the interviews to her, enabling her adequately to inform potential interviewees.

Despite the fact that women who were approached had previously agreed to undertake another interview, the response rate was very low. Although the original intention was to interview fifteen women, only fourteen of the thirty-nine contacts were available for interview. This may be due to a variety of reasons. First, a number of women contacted in the quantitative survey were no longer available at the address given. Kelvin Flats was due for demolition at the time of interview and whilst some residents still remained in the flats, others had been moved to other accommodation. It may also be that some residents lived in Kelvin as a temporary measure, as it was perceived to be undesirable, and had moved on. Second, it is possible that some women refused to be interviewed because of fears concerning the possible involvement of Social Security officers in their financial affairs. This is particularly the case for women living in households claiming benefit, but where a member of the household is also economically active and where these activities are not reported to the Department of Social Security. Social Security legislation is thus disregarded. For example, one interviewee agreed to be interviewed, but on arrival was absent. During a subsequent telephone conversation she agreed to be interviewed, but was clearly reluctant. In the course of the interview, the interviewee admitted that her reluctance was caused by fear that I would report her economic affairs to the Department of Social Security. This was particularly pertinent, since her previous illegal economic activities had been reported to the Department of Social Security by an old and trusted friend. A third reason which may have contributed to women's reluctance to be interviewed, was a disinclination to talk to any individual who appeared to be a figure of authority attempting to gain access to their lives. It is possible that women

living on Kelvin/Thorpe estates are aware of the influence of "professionals" such as social workers, probation officers and police. Therefore they may be reluctant to talk to an individual they perceive as another "professional". This may be due to personal intimidation, which as observed in the case of Greenhill/Bradway (5.4.5), may cause women to be reluctant to talk to interviewers. Or it may be due to fear of neighbours' gossip, particularly within such an enclosed community. Certainly, when I was walking around Kelvin/Thorpe to interviews I was aware of people standing on walkways watching me. Finally, it may also be that Deborah was not sufficiently persuasive. One incident, however, highlights the extreme reluctance of some women to be interviewed. I attended one prearranged meeting for an interview. On arrival the door was not answered, although I was aware that people were inside the house. Returning later, the door was opened and I was told by the interviewee's husband that she was not at home, but I could contact her again if I wished. I later telephoned to arrange another meeting, which was agreed. On arrival for the second interview, the woman told me that she did not want to be interviewed. Clearly therefore, gaining admittance to women on the Kelvin /Thorpe estates for the purpose of the interviews in this study was far from simple. As previously argued difficulty may have occurred for many reasons, not least a desire from women to protect themselves from potentially threatening intrusions into their lives. This may be compared to the Greenhill/Bradway area, where women possibly felt less threatened.

5.4.7 Conducting The Interviews - Despite the above difficulties, when women were interviewed in both the areas of Greenhill/Bradway and Kelvin/Thorpe, they were generally very frank and enthusiastic in their response. For the purpose of gaining interview material, this was very welcome. Women in both areas answered personal questions relating for instance, to husband's earnings, household expenditure and control of financial resources. Also in the course of interviews, women would sometimes divulge intimate details of their lives. Two women spoke of problems with

their emotional health and others difficulties surrounding divorces.

Oakley argues (1981) that interviewing is most successful when the interviewer is prepared to be accepted as a person. She argues that this is contrary to traditional methods of conducting research, which impose a hierarchical relationship on interviewees who are treated as information producing objects. For example, Oakley describes how interviewees asked her questions which if ignored would have jeopardised rapport. A similar situation occurred during interviewing in this study. Interviewees often asked me for personal information: whether or not I had children and how old they were, or concerning my work and what it involved. Whilst I was happy to offer this information, I was also aware that in doing so I might intimidate women who were, for example, substantially less well educated than myself. Thus some tact was needed. Many questions, however, were also asked concerning training for jobs, where to obtain information and where courses were held. Perhaps the most poignant example was one woman who, throughout the interview, repeatedly asked me to find her a job at the university. In order not to bias interviews I attempted to leave all questions until the interview was over. Yet, it highlights the need to treat interviewees as people, not objects. Finch (1993, p.170) contends that woman-to-woman interviews may have an in-built tendency to produce situations where interviewees talk to interviewers with ease, often displaying much trust. She considers that this occurs because both interviewee and interviewer, due to their gender, share a subordinate structural position. Consequently, women interviewees identify with the interviewer.

On the other hand, such a lack of caution could be potentially damaging. It became apparent from the interviews that at least four women were claiming Social Security benefit in situations where this was probably illegal. For example, one interviewee's husband was engaged in casual paid labour which appeared not to be reported to the authorities. Two other women were claiming benefit individually, as were their

partners, rather than claiming at the lower rate as a couple. It is difficult not to agree with Finch that:

"... my interviewees need to know how to protect themselves from people like me. They have often revealed very private parts of their lives in return for what must be, in the last resort, very flimsy guarantees of confidentiality. (1993, p.173)

Clearly considerations concerning trust between interviewer and interviewee, and the potential for damaging interviewees should this trust be broken, leads to an awareness of the need for ethical conduct during social research. As Burgess (1990, p.188) states, there is a need to question:

".. the obligations that researchers have to those who are researched, whether they should be identified and what steps, if any, should be taken to avoid harming those individuals who are identified or identifiable."

With only one exception, interviews were tape recorded to provide comprehensive data. All interviewees were given assurances of confidentiality and permission was asked before taping interviews. Only one woman declined to be tape recorded, feeling that the process was intimidating. Although I offered reassurance, I did not press the point. After all, she had invited me into her home and agreed to talk to me. Interview material has only been seen by myself and the transcriber, and the identity of interviewees has been hidden. It is not anticipated that this study will cause any distress or damage to interviewees.

5.4.8 Third Phase of the Research - Analysis of Research Data - The third phase of the study entailed analysing interview data. After each interview, tapes were checked to ascertain that there were no problems with recording and then stored for safe keeping until transcription. Interview notes were produced, recording details which would aid analysis of the questionnaire. For example, information that may

have been contributed after the formal interview was concluded, the attitude and body language of the interviewee. Tapes were subsequently transcribed to provide a permanent record from which to analyse data. Some tapes were transcribed by myself, but due to constraints of time relating to other work, the remainder were transcribed by a member of the clerical staff. All tapes were saved, enabling me to read through transcriptions of the data whilst listening to the recordings. I considered that this was necessary, first to clarify typing errors. It is intended that this will ensure further validity of the research findings (Patton, 1987, p.139). Second, to assist recollection of the interviews. During analysis of the data interpretation was aided by listening to the tones of voice and language of interviewees.

Two copies of the data were made, one was stored for safety and the other was used for working from. I began the process of analysis by reading the data in an "interactive" (Dey, 1993, p.83) manner, initially asking myself questions relating to the research as a whole, for example, what was I interested in finding out? I then attempted to identify particular themes relating to the questions asked and associated theoretical issues. It was pertinent to recognise that each theme did not exist in isolation, rather links and overlaps occurred. Thus the process of data analysis required continual modification. It was also important to examine sub-categories within each theme. As Dey (1993, p.84) suggests, to an extent this involves devising a "checklist" of relevant concerns. To take the general theme of education, I identified various concerns which were associated with the educational performance of girls, for example, *relationships* such as family background and peer group influence, *different settings* such as the type of school attended and *definitions of the situation* - whether or not they enjoyed or disliked school. Each theme and its associated sub-categories were colour coded to aid identification and every interview was read and reread many times until I was thoroughly familiar with the material.

Familiarity with the data was important, as analysis involved identification of thematic

patterns between interviews. For example, did themes and related sub-categories recur in each interview, or were they omitted in some cases? It was also necessary to be aware that although cases may have seemed similar, there were subtle differences between them. Generally, the process of analysis was concerned with questions such as: what influenced actions and events, and how and why did these occur? It was thus essential to examine data critically, whilst at the same time utilising previous sociological knowledge and life experience. It may also be considered that the analysis of qualitative data is, essentially, a creative endeavour (Patton, 1987, p.146).

5.5 SUMMARY

This chapter has stated that women returning to the labour market in Sheffield, will be examined within the context of two case study areas: Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway. It has been argued that this appears to be appropriate on both practical and theoretical grounds, allowing for a comparative approach which may be located within the concept of social polarisation. There subsequently followed an examination concerning the limitations which appear to exist in relation to women and social class. Finally, the chapter examined both practical and theoretical considerations which influenced the choice of methodology. Hence the research design of this study was influenced by considerations relating to women in general as research subjects and the particular needs and limitations associated with both actual and potential interviewees in this study.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SHEFFIELD LABOUR MARKET- OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN RETURNERS?

6.1 INTRODUCTION

As this study examines the employment participation of women returners within a particular locality, Sheffield, it is pertinent to include an analysis of the local labour market. This chapter will examine economic restructuring in Sheffield, especially since 1980, and its effect on women's labour market participation. This will be analysed with particular reference to the employment position of women returning to the labour market after childbearing. It has been argued previously (Chapter Four) that the employment participation of women returners within local labour markets may be influenced by a range of social, political and economic factors. It has also been suggested that these constructs may have both a general, and a specifically local, identity. An awareness of these issues will inform this chapter. As this study intends to locate a discussion of women returners within the social polarisation debate, the chapter will proceed to look at labour market participation of women living in two spatially distinct areas of Sheffield: Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway.

As Haughton et al suggest, (1993, p.13) local cultural practices may be important in influencing labour market participation. Sheffield may be perceived as a city whose culture has been heavily influenced by its traditional labour market in the metal industries: cutlery, steel and engineering. In 1971, 82,000 people were working in these industries in Sheffield, out of a total workforce of approximately 300,000 (Lawless, 1990, p.134). Even in 1981, after a period of decline, Sheffield's employment dependency on these industries was the third highest of any other urban area in Britain (Seyd, 1993, p.152). Furthermore, employment in these industries was predominantly male. This is not to suggest that women in Sheffield were not

employed within metal related industries, but rather that their numbers were limited. In 1981, before the onset of excessive redundancies, only 13% of women workers were employed in Sheffield's traditional manufacturing industries (Women in Sheffield, No. 1, 1986, p.1). Therefore it is perhaps not unreasonable to suggest that both the industrial pattern and culture of Sheffield has been particularly male-dominated (Dunkley, 1993, p.279). During the last fifteen years, Sheffield's labour market has experienced economic re-structuring which has, to a great extent, reflected national changes. In short, its manufacturing industry has declined whilst the service sector continues to expand. It is to a consideration of these factors, particularly in relation to women's paid work after childbearing, that this chapter will now turn.

6.2 RE-STRUCTURING OF SHEFFIELD'S LABOUR MARKET DURING THE 1970S - THE EFFECT ON WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Sheffield in common with other cities, experienced a decline in manufacturing during the 1970s (Dabinett, 1990, p.3). Whilst approximately 47,700 jobs were lost in these industries, the service sector expanded during the 1970s creating employment for 19,100. Much new employment was within the private sector, although some job creation was attributable to the National Health Service. Women obtained 74% of these jobs, much of it part-time (Sheffield City Council, DEED, 1986, p.1). As part-time work allows women the opportunity to combine employment with childcare responsibilities, it is not unreasonable to assume that the growth of the service sector in Sheffield offered increased employment to women returners. As Purcell and Wood point out (1986, p.4) in the early 1970s the service industries, particularly the public sector, deliberately sought workers from the ranks of women returners. In Sheffield this may have enabled many women to return paid work and to obtain an individual income. In a period when male unemployment had not reached the proportions that were to emerge subsequently, these jobs may have contributed towards both

personal and local prosperity. Of course, it would be erroneous not to bear in mind constraints synonymous with part-time work, such as low pay and lack of training (Chapter Two, 2.3.1). Therefore, whilst initial re-structuring in Sheffield may have made some advances in ameliorating a male-dominated industrial structure, this appears limited.

6.3 RE-STRUCTURING OF SHEFFIELD'S LABOUR MARKET IN THE EARLY 1980S - THE EFFECT ON WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Possible advances in the local labour market for women, were soon threatened by dramatic rises in unemployment during the early 1980s. An international recession arising from increasingly competitive markets, amongst other factors, resulted in the deflation of the national economy. In Sheffield, women's employment was directly affected as public and private sector services endured 3,300 redundancies between 1981 and 1984 (Women in Sheffield, No. 1, 1986, p.1). Between 1979 and 1985, women's unemployment in Sheffield rose from 4.2% to 11.9%. Even this acute rise in unemployment may be an under-estimation, since government statistics from 1982 do not take account of those seeking work, only those claiming benefit. As many women may seek work, but not be eligible for benefit, women's unemployment was estimated to be twice the official figure (Sheffield City Council, DEED, 1986, p.4). International and national forces partially affected the viability of local metal related industries. Factors such as more competitively priced steel products emerging from third world countries, combined with deflation of the domestic economy and rationalisation of British Steel Corporation (Lawless, 1991, p. 2-3) further decimated Sheffield's manufacturing base. Following initial losses in manufacturing in the 1970s, a further 40% of employment in this sector was lost between 1981 and 1986, particularly in steel making, cutlery, tools and engineering (Dabinett, 1990, p.3).

How did the collapse of Sheffield's manufacturing base affect women's employment? As stated above, only a minority of women worked within these industries and were therefore directly affected, either because they were made redundant, or because they could no longer obtain employment within these sectors. Indirectly, the decline of Sheffield's wealth generating industrial sector may have had a subsidiary effect on the newly developing service industries. Consequently, a combination of local, national and international factors may have contributed to the decline of the service industries in Sheffield, and hence limited job opportunities for women. A study of women attempting to return to the labour market at the turn of the decade (Johnston, 1980), suggests that job opportunities may not have been easily available. Johnston states that over 50% of women who wanted to return to work, had been seeking employment for over six months and a further 15% had been searching for employment for even longer.

It is also probable that a substantial number of women in Sheffield were indirectly affected by the above redundancies, as they were living with men who became unemployed. Officially by 1986, over 19% of men in Sheffield were without paid work (Sheffield City Council, DEED, 1987). As Dabinett comments, (1990, p.2) descriptions of economic re-structuring and unemployment do not reflect the real hardship that many Sheffield people experienced. It is possible that many women wanted to re-enter employment in order to maintain their standard of living, but limited employment opportunities deterred them. The psychological affects of male unemployment on marital relationships, combined with area specific mass unemployment, may have discouraged other women from considering a return to the labour market. Social Security legislation, which reduces unemployment benefit for families where women earn above a predetermined limit (Chapter One, 1.2.1), may have formed a further barrier to women returning to the labour market.

High levels of unemployment and industrial decline, prompted a local political response. During the early 1980s, Sheffield's political structure was dominated by the radical economic and social policies of the "new urban left" (Lawless, 1990; Seyd, 1993). Strategies were developed for local economic regeneration, some of which may still impact on women's labour market participation. These appear to have achieved either a direct, or indirect influence on women's employment. Direct influences occurred through the implementation of economic initiatives and indirect influences resulted from social policies which increased women's employment. This chapter will briefly assess these policies in order to analyse their impact on women's employment.

Economic policies were designed to alleviate unemployment, prevent further job loss and encourage investment and worker control over production (Seyd, 1993, p.160). Although discrimination on the basis of gender was considered to be subordinate to class distinctions, (Seyd, 1993, p.165) there were some concessions to the requirements of women. The Department of Employment, created in 1981 to co-ordinate the council's economic programme, initiated several projects specifically relating to the position of women in Sheffield's labour market. These projects were designed to increase awareness of women's right to paid work, of the existence of gender based inequalities within the labour market, and of the need for equal opportunities in training and recruitment (Coulson and Baker, 1986, p. 28-30). In a city in which employment and wealth creation was synonymous with male dominance, these were innovative concepts:

"Many of these issues have traditionally gone unrecognised by Sheffield's labour movement, and council policies, reflecting the city's past dominance by traditional heavy manufacturing industries and the nature of the labour movement's structures generally." (Coulson and Baker, 1986, p.29)

Generally, the activities of the Department of Employment and Economic Development (formerly the Department of Employment) are evaluated as having a

limited longer term impact, mainly because of the inconsistency between available resources and scale of economic regeneration necessary (Lawless, 1990, p.141). Whilst lack of finance affected all projects, those relating to women possibly had a lower priority than others (Seyd, 1993, p.165). Some women-related projects begun in the 1980s, remain in existence. The Women's Technology Training Workshop, still provides opportunities for further training. On the whole, however, the Department could do little to influence the decline in job opportunities for women. But perhaps one of the most important achievements of the Department of Employment and Economic Development, has been in raising awareness of women's employment issues within the city. Prior to the advent of the Department, information concerning women's participation in Sheffield's labour market appears virtually non-existent. This of course may have implications for policies relating to women:

"Our invisibility in many of the official publications and reports, contribute to an invisibility in policy initiatives." (Equal Opportunities Team, Employment Department, 1984, p10)

As a corollary to continued high unemployment, there were increasing levels of poverty in Sheffield. In response to the growing needs of the poor and as a crucial part of the new left's political strategy, (Seyd, 1990, p.341) the Council enhanced expenditure on social and personal services. A 10% increase in these services in the first half of the 1980s, (Seyd, 1993, p.165) caused a subsequent rise in employment by the local council. Coulson and Baker (1986, p.2) note that in 1984 Sheffield City Council was the biggest single employer within the service sector, accounting for 14.5% of all jobs. In common with other expanding service industries, a high proportion of workers were women. Female employees comprised 57% of the Council's workforce in 1987. It is possible that the social policies of the new left contributed towards increased employment opportunities for women in Sheffield. Partly because they produced an enhanced number of jobs, but also by providing some employment which offered women fulfilling employment. The provision of extra services in education and social services, allowed for the growth of professional jobs

associated with high employment of women, such as teaching and social workers. On the other hand, it is necessary to bear in mind that gender based inequality existed within Council employment, in the form of horizontal and vertical segregation (Chapter Two, 2.3.3). Over half the women employed by the Council, 53%, were part-time workers. Many were in low grade jobs as cleaners, school meals assistants, home helps and canteen assistants, and were correspondingly, low paid (Sheffield City Council, DEED, March 1987). Even those women not employed as manual workers, tended to occupy the lowest grades (Equal Opportunities Team, 1984, p.20). Whilst the Council may have contributed towards increased employment opportunities for women, gender inequality limited these advances.

Women's access to paid employment is, of course, also related to adequate childcare facilities. In an attempt to alleviate distinctions in childcare caused by class divisions, the Council instigated a policy of positive discrimination in relation to nursery provision. Thus nurseries were increased in areas of poverty. On the other hand, a survey of childcare conducted in the early 1980s, concluded that the Council's provisions were "on the good side of average though not exceptionally good" (Simons and Bennett, 1983, p.20). Provision was weakened by lack of council support for the private and voluntary sector. Whilst this is consistent with the political policies of the era, it seems likely that it had the effect of further limiting women's access to paid work. As Simons and Bennett indicate, (1983, p.80) policies implicitly assumed that there would be substantial levels of informal care.

To sum up, re-structuring of Sheffield's local economy during the 1970s, produced some limited advances for the participation of women in the labour market. Prior to the 1980s, the decline of manufacturing had only a minimal direct impact on women's employment. Conversely, the growth of private and public sector employment offered female job opportunities in a labour market which had previously been dominated by male employment. During the early 1980s, the collapse of Sheffield's traditional

manufacturing base further eroded the dominance of male employment. Whilst the recession of the early 1980s created some female unemployment, the growth of the service sector in Sheffield caused the position of women in the labour market to be relatively strong at this time, in comparison to men. Alternatively, this was counterbalanced by limited hours, pay and status. Women returning to paid work after childbearing, could expect to be employed in conditions where gender segregation and its attendant inequalities, were still in evidence.

6.4 RE-STRUCTURING OF SHEFFIELD'S LABOUR MARKET DURING THE LATE 1980S - THE EFFECT ON WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

After 1985, Sheffield's labour market was again affected by political considerations. Expanded public sector service provision, and hence increased opportunities for female employment, had occurred despite central government cuts in spending. Tougher sanctions imposed on local government, as well as shifts within the Labour party nationally, encouraged Sheffield City Council to transform its "radical" policies. After 1985, a period of reconciliation occurred between the Council and local business. Emerging from this partnership was the formation of the Sheffield Economic Regeneration Committee (SERC) in 1987, consisting of members of the local authority, private sector, trade unions, higher education, community groups and Sheffield Development Corporation (Lawless, 1993, p.144).

How did this change in political direction affect women's position in the local labour market? It has been suggested (Lawless, 1993, p.144) that in common with similar urban coalitions elsewhere, SERC's activities were market-orientated. That they were primarily directed towards building a positive image of Sheffield, to encourage inward investment from the private sector. Although it is not possible to evaluate how much private sector activity would have occurred without SERC, Lawless (1993, p.147)

argues that retail and commercial developments in Sheffield may have resulted from the improved image of the city. The 1989-1990 Labour Market Annual Report (Training Agency, 1989-1990, pp 11-15) indicates that during 1988/89 growth within the private service sector, for example in the retail, hotel and catering industries, was related to developments taking place in the city. In common with national trends (Training Agency, 1989-1990, p.14) Sheffield's expanding service sector continued to provide jobs for women, many part-time. In 1987 a survey of 1,500 companies in the Sheffield/Rotherham area, identified that 59.2% of service sector workers were women and that 30% of jobs were part-time. It may be assumed therefore that this sector supplied convenient employment for women returners.

By 1987, women comprised 45% of Sheffield's workforce. In comparison to 1971, when only 36% of all jobs in Sheffield were performed by women, (Labour Market Notes, No. 7, 1991, p. 8-9) it may be observed that women were now an important asset in the city's labour market. There was an observable emphasis during the late 1980s on enticing women in Sheffield to return to paid work after childbearing:

"... The projected changes in Sheffield's population and labour force have implications for employers ... In particular, however, the drop in the numbers of young people will mean that the potential for recruitment from new entrants to the labour market will be reduced. Employers will therefore have to obtain workers from other sources. Quite clearly, these sources will, in general, be re-entrants to the labour market and unemployed. Generally, re-entrants to the labour market will be women with children of school age or those whose children have grown up."
(Sheffield City Council: DEED, 1988, p.15-16)

As discussed in the General Introduction (p3), the perceived need to encourage women to return to the labour market subsequent to childbearing, was also a national trend. This was partially introduced as a response to the "demographic time bomb". As Sheffield's population is particularly elderly and a further decrease in the working population was forecast due to out migration (Sheffield City Council, DEED, 1988, p. 14-15), it is possible that demographic trends appeared particularly significant in the city. Women may also have been encouraged to return to paid work because

Sheffield, in line with national trends, was emerging from the economic recession (Sheffield City Council, DEED, 1991, p.1). Significantly growth was predominantly occurring in the service sector, a high employer of women.

One positive outcome of this trend was the emergence of training courses specifically for women returning to employment after childbearing. Courses, instigated by both the private and public sector, were designed either to update previous employment related skills or to train women in new skills (Sheffield Training and Access Points, Women's Courses in Sheffield, 1992). A further development related to the perceived "demographic time bomb", was the public acknowledgement that women's employment was dependent on adequate childcare. An example of this awareness, was the Council's "Childcare Through Partnership" project which considered means of increasing childcare options in the city (Sheffield City Council, Central Policy Unit, 1990).

Whilst the trend to encourage women to return to the labour market initially appears to offer increased opportunities, it is necessary to consider how far this constitutes an improvement in the position of women in the labour market (Sheffield City Council, March 1991, p.2). Nationally between 1987 and 1989, 60% of new employment was full-time. Of this full-time employment, 65% was acquired by women. Conversely in Sheffield during the late 1980s, although 58% of new jobs were full-time, 75% of these were obtained by men. Whilst women obtained 62% of newly created employment in Sheffield, unsurprisingly 76% of these jobs were part-time. Accordingly, part-time work accounted for 47% of women's employment in Sheffield, compared to 43% nationally. As Sheffield's Department of Employment and Economic Development commented:

"Part-time work for women in Sheffield is far more significant than it is nationally". (Sheffield City Council, DEED, June 1991, p.5)

It is possible that increases in part-time work offered many women a welcome

opportunity to return to paid work (Chapter 2.3.2). Even so, there is little to suggest a real improvement in women's labour market position in Sheffield. A survey of Sheffield employers undertaken in 1989, (Rahtz, 1990) examined employment practices in four industries: Retail and Food/Drink, in which women comprise a large proportion of the workforce, Steel/Engineering and Construction which employ predominantly men. The survey (Rahtz, 1990, p.7) disclosed that Retail and Food/Drink extended hours of part-time work to evenings and weekends, hours which may be readily adapted to childcare responsibilities. Yet, it is debatable whether women's employment needs were being considered. Other forms of flexible working which may benefit women, for example job sharing, appear to be non-existent. Harmonisation of employment conditions between workers and management was also lacking in Retail and Food/Drink. Only 20-30% of these industries mentioned common pension schemes, sick pay and holidays. In comparison, 58% of Steel/Engineering companies referred to equal schemes. Similarly, Steel/Engineering was perceived to have a high level of communication and involvement with employees, whilst other industries in the survey exhibited limited worker involvement. It would not be true to claim that high levels of communication between management and workers only existed in male dominated industries. It also appeared to be lacking in the Construction industry. But here, as in Steel/Engineering, workers could bargain with employers through well developed union membership. In industries employing high numbers of women, unionisation was restricted. Trade union membership was not recognised by 40% of employers in Food/Drink and 33% of Retail firms (Rahtz, 1990, p. 14-16).

Low pay also featured as a detrimental aspect of women's employment conditions in Sheffield. Regionally, the earnings of women full-time workers were only 65% of those earned by full-time men (Yorkshire and Humberside Low Pay Unit, 1989, p.3). Locally, a survey of job centre vacancies demonstrated that earnings for part-time workers were particularly poor. For example, in Sheffield 76.6% of manual part-time

vacancies in Hotel and Catering offered earnings below £2 an hour. This may be compared to the national average of £3.17 an hour (Yorks. and Humberside Low Pay Unit, 1989, p. 9-10). Therefore women may have returned to the labour market as part-time workers, only to experience employment conditions which were less than adequate. It is necessary to pause briefly and consider why these conditions existed in Sheffield's labour market. This study has argued (Chapter Two, 2.3.1) that the employment position of women returning to the labour market after childbearing may be influenced by a process of "gendering". Furthermore, this process may have occurred during recent structural changes in the labour market and be mediated through "flexible" forms of work (Chapter Two, 2.3.2). In summary, Sheffield's labour market in late 1980s appeared to consolidate previous developments in women's employment patterns. The decline of manufacturing and growth of the service sector, were associated with women's increasing participation in the labour market. Demographic trends contributed towards a climate where much publicity was given to encouraging women to return to work subsequent to childbearing. Despite these positive factors, there is limited evidence to suggest that gender inequality in Sheffield's labour market had eroded. Women, returning to paid work after childbearing, could still generally expect to be employed in part-time, low paid, low status work in the service industry.

6.5 THE 1990S - RETURNING TO SHEFFIELD'S LABOUR MARKET

It appears unlikely that in the early 1990s, the employment position of women in Sheffield had improved. Rather, it is more probable that women returning to paid work at this time found that it had deteriorated. During the early 1990s, women's employment in Sheffield was threatened again by international recession (Sheffield City Council, DEED, March 1991, p.3). Following national trends, unemployment in Sheffield increased rapidly at the beginning of the 1990 recession. Although

becoming less acute during the early 1990s, it was still expected to grow in the city (Sheffield City Council, DEED, October 1993, p.11). Women continued to remain a significant proportion of Sheffield's workforce, comprising 48.3% of workers in 1993, but employment opportunities appeared increasingly constrained. Women's unemployment increased at a faster rate than men's (Sheffield City Council, DEED, 1992, p.8) and official female unemployment in Sheffield was recorded as the highest ever (Sheffield City Council, DEED, October 1993, p.13). Commentators remarked on women's reversal of economic fortune from the late 1980s when women were encouraged to return to work, to the early 1990s and high levels of female unemployment. It was suggested that this might reflect the attitudes of employers who perceived women to be a "surplus army of labour" (Sheffield City Council, DEED, 1992, p.8). As this study has previously suggested (Chapter Three, 3.3) whilst women may experience an increased propensity to be made redundant, compared to men, generally women do not appear to compose a reserve army of labour. Rather restructuring of the labour market appears to indicate that in the long term, women in Sheffield will compose an increasing proportion of the labour force. Even so, the employment prospects for women in the city appear bleak. This observation may be illustrated by briefly considering industries which employ large numbers of women. It was estimated that in 1993, 69% of women in Sheffield worked in "other services" and retail (Training and Enterprise Council, 1993b, p.14). It is to an examination of these industries that this chapter will turn.

At the time of writing, "other services": public administration, education, health and social services are currently subject to both internal restructuring and financial constraints. Employment has become associated with both insecurity and ultimately job loss. Employment in the City Council fell by 23% in the last five years, with approximately 2,300 jobs lost in the first four months of 1993 (Sheffield Training and Enterprise Council, 1993a, p.37). Similarly, twelve schools within Sheffield are due to close in the near future and in 1993 over one hundred jobs were lost, in the local

health services. With a £20 million shortfall in Sheffield Health Authority's budget, further redundancies are expected (Sheffield City Council, DEED, October 1993, p.10). The decline of the public service sector, which began in the 1980s, continues into the 1990s with associated loss of employment. Similarly, recent indicators (Sheffield Training and Enterprise Council, 1993a, p.45) suggest that employment for sales staff decreased at a higher rate than all other occupations in Sheffield in 1992/3. This is partially an effect of the recession. But there are also specific local factors which have contributed to this decline. The Meadowhall shopping complex, one of the flagships of the city's "regeneration", offered approximately 3,000 jobs. It has now been suggested that the development has had a profound effect on the composition of retail in Sheffield, contributing to a decline of retail in the inner city area (Sheffield Training and Enterprise Council, 1993a, p.28). Apart from unemployment, women returning to paid work in Sheffield's labour market in the 1990s appeared to encounter a situation which bore other similarities to the 1980s. A recent survey emphasised that horizontal and vertical gender segregation remain integral to Sheffield's labour market in the early 1990s. Women remaining over associated with low grade jobs in the service industries:

"... the survey highlights the marked segregation experienced by men and women in employment. Only 7 per cent of men work in clerical and secretarial occupations compared to 26.3 per cent of females. Conversely, only 2 per cent of females work in skilled manual trades compared to 25.4 per cent of males. 50 per cent of female employees are to be found in the three occupational categories of secretarial, personal services, and sales occupations. In contrast 50 per cent of male employees work in the occupational categories of managers, skilled manual and plant and machine operatives." (Sheffield Training and Enterprise Council, 1993b, p.12)

Part-time work is increasingly popular within the above quoted industries (Sheffield Training and Enterprise Council, 1993a, p.14) and it seems probable that associated poor employment conditions and low pay remain. Even when women obtain jobs that are not generally perceived as "women's work", they may encounter substantial difficulties. A survey of women employed in the construction craft trades in Sheffield

(Jones, 1994), highlights women's low rate of participation and high drop out rate in these industries. Jones (1994) suggests that this may be related to a range of gender associated difficulties such as overt and covert forms of sexual harassment, male perceptions of women's roles which cause them to be unwelcoming, and a male culture which is competitive and conflictual.

Continuing levels of high unemployment, reminiscent of much of the 1980s, is a barrier to paid work for many women wishing to return to the labour market. The 1990s does, however, appear to differ from the previous decade in the type of employment which may be increasingly available. Although many service industries in Sheffield provide low grade work, the public sector at least, has provided some women with more fulfilling employment: as teachers, social workers, nurses and clerical/secretarial staff. With the decline of the public service sector, women in Sheffield may lack opportunities for obtaining this type of work. Available employment may be increasingly concentrated in low grade jobs in the private service sector. Part-time employment in this sector may become the only alternative for women returning to work, constrained by childcare responsibilities. Meanwhile, the Training and Enterprise Council, continue to talk of "13000 potential women returners this represents a rich source of labour" (sic), (Sheffield Training and Enterprise Council, 1993a, p.58). It can only be wondered if this "rich source of labour" will really want to return to the employment which may be on offer.

6.6 A COMPARISON OF LABOUR MARKET EXPERIENCES BETWEEN WOMEN LIVING IN TWO DISTINCT AREAS OF SHEFFIELD

The preceding section of this chapter has discussed restructuring in the Sheffield labour market and its effect on the employment participation of women, particularly returners. Inevitably, this has been a generalisation. This study does not view all women returning to the labour market after childbearing, as a homogeneous group. It accepts that employment participation may differ in relation to socio-economic class and that this variation may be spatially specific. It has suggested (Chapter Five 5.2.2) that a form of social polarisation may exist between two cohorts of women returners living in two distinct geographical areas of Sheffield: Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway. To examine this further, the following section will consider the labour market behaviour of women living in these two distinct areas.

6.6.1 Kelvin/Thorpe - A full understanding of the labour market behaviour of women living in Kelvin/Thorpe is not possible without briefly considering the area in which they live. Kelvin/Thorpe consists of two adjoining areas situated near to the city centre. Kelvin Flats was a block of 944 units built in the 1960s, in multi-deck design. It almost completely consisted of local authority housing and was identified as a local area of acute poverty. Social indicators of poverty disclosed that 80% of children attending school were eligible for free school meals, 59% of families received income support and 84% of households did not have access to a car. It was also subject to concentrations of individuals suffering from factors related to poverty, such as ill health and mental illness (Sheffield City Council, Directorate of Planning and Economic Development, 1993, p.14). The flats had also been subject to much adverse publicity, which may have partly accounted for its negative reputation in the city. 'Thorpe' which consists of Netherthorpe, North and South, comprises approximately 2,000 dwellings built in the 1960s and 1970s. These are a mixture of

multi-storey, low rise flats and maisonettes. Although Netherthorpe is also identified as an area of poverty, it is perhaps not as extreme as Kelvin. Income support is received by 43% of individuals in the North and 44% of those living in the South of Netherthorpe (Sheffield City Council, Directorate of Planning and Economic Development, 1993, p. 90-94). Netherthorpe also appears to have less of a negative reputation in the city in comparison to Kelvin, but has the potential for serious social problems. For example, individuals removed from mental hospitals as a result of care in the community policies have been housed in the area without access to adequate social support.

Poverty in both Kelvin Flats and Netherthorpe is related to high levels of registered unemployment, which is experienced by 37% of the area's population (1991 Census). Comparison with the city level of unemployment - 14%, identifies Kelvin/Thorpe as an area of extreme economic deprivation (1991 Census). When a wider definition of unemployment is utilised, including unregistered unemployed who are seeking work immediately, unemployment escalates even further to 52% (Lawless, Smith and Short, 1993, p.12). It is hardly surprising therefore, to discover that the Kelvin/Thorpe Skills Survey estimated that 38% of women living in the area are registered unemployed, six times the city average. A further 32% were recorded as economically inactive, the majority caring for dependents. The extent to which inactive women may in fact be unemployed, is of course debatable. Many women may define themselves as inactive, despite seeking paid work. It is perhaps significant that although 52% of inactive women wanted to return to paid employment immediately, only 39% of women in paid employment in Kelvin/Thorpe are returners (Lawless, Smith and Short 1993, p55). Clearly severe levels of unemployment affect women living in Kelvin/Thorpe, particularly women returners.

Three factors may contribute to high rates of unemployment, for all women living in the area, first, levels of skills and educational qualifications. 53% of women

interviewed recorded a complete absence of educational qualifications. Only 23% of women possessed "O" level or CSE Mathematics and 34% a similar qualification in English. This may have a negative influence on obtaining employment, as a correlation appears to exist between employment and possession of basic numeracy and literacy (Lawless, Smith and Short, 1993, p.50). Second, the reputation of the area, particularly Kelvin, was considered by many residents to act as a barrier to employment. Poor image may contribute to employer discrimination (Lawless, Smith and Short, p.1992, p.68). Third, high concentrations of unemployment within the area may prevent knowledge of job vacancies. This is particularly relevant considering that a heavy reliance is placed on personal contact to obtain employment, a method used by 41% of women interviewed (Lawless, Smith and Short, 1993, p.51).

As far as women who intend to return to paid work after childbearing are concerned, the above barriers to employment may be further reinforced by factors relating to the home. Whilst these may be common to all women who wish to return to paid work (Chapter One, 1.2), women living in Kelvin/Thorpe may exhibit a particularly acute level of disadvantage. Difficulties obtaining childcare may be compounded by the inability of women in the area to afford private facilities. This is related to low earnings, which characterise the employment of both men and women living in Kelvin/Thorpe. Only 9% of women interviewed in the quantitative survey were employed in potentially well paid jobs in Standard Occupational Groups 1-3, compared to 28% for the city as a whole. Employment status of partners may also be associated with women's return to the labour market in Kelvin/Thorpe. 83% of women returners in the area live with partners who are employed (Lawless, Smith, Short, 1993, p.51). It seems likely that social security legislation may have an extremely negative affect on women's labour market participation subsequent to childbearing, in an area of such prevalent male unemployment. It is perhaps surprising that despite the above difficulties, the Kelvin/Thorpe Skills Survey identified 39% of women in paid work as returners. Hours and type of employment were, however, limited. Of those

returning to employment, 56% obtained part-time work and for 44% of women this was within Standard Occupational Group 9, generally as cleaners (Lawless, Smith and Short, p.14). Returners experienced a decline in their labour market position, as only 22% of the cohort were employed in this type of job prior to childbearing. Unfortunately for women living in Kelvin/Thorpe, the decline in employment position on returning to the labour market could hardly have been much lower.

6.6.2 Greenhill/Bradway - In contrast to the above inner city area, Greenhill and adjacent Bradway, are situated 5 miles to the South West of the city centre, within close proximity of the open countryside. The area consists almost entirely of owner occupied semi-detached and detached dwellings, built during the inter-war years, or in the 1960s and 1980s. Whilst Kelvin/Thorpe is designated as an area of poverty, Greenhill/Bradway exhibits few signs of social deprivation. For example, only 15% of households do not possess a car and 33% own two (1991 Census of Population). It has been suggested above, that poverty in Kelvin/Thorpe is associated with high levels of unemployment. Conversely, lack of social deprivation in Greenhill/Bradway may be related to high levels of employment. According to the 1991 Census, only 4.% of the total population in the area was unemployed. In comparison to both Kelvin/Thorpe and the city as a whole, where 14% unemployment was recorded, Greenhill/Bradway appears to be a relatively affluent area of Sheffield.

Not unexpectedly, female registered unemployment is very low in Greenhill/Bradway, affecting approximately only 7% of women. Of course in practice female unemployment may be more widespread. Research has estimated that a further 24% of women in the area are economically inactive (Lawless, Smith and Short, 1994), this may include women who are seeking work. But unlike Kelvin/Thorpe, there appears little indication that returners in Greenhill/Bradway have profound difficulties in returning to the labour market. In this area, women returners comprise 54% of all

women in employment. High levels of female employment in Greenhill/Bradway, for both returners and non-returners, may be related to equally high levels of educational achievement. 27% of women in the area possess a University Degree, whilst "A" levels or equivalent have been obtained by 46%. Basic qualifications are almost universal, 95% of women having "O" level English. Not unexpectedly, 43% of women in Greenhill/Bradway are employed in Standard Occupational Groups 1-3: as managers, professional and technical workers. A further 35% experience middle range employment as clerical workers. Significantly, only 3% of women in paid work in Greenhill/Bradway are employed in "other elementary services" in Standard Occupational Group 9 (Lawless, Smith and Short, 1994). A marked polarisation therefore appears to exist between women in the two study areas in relation to both educational qualifications and the type of paid work obtained.

High labour market participation for women returners in Greenhill/Bradway, also appears to be partially related to the absence of constraints that impact on women in Kelvin/Thorpe. Male employment, rather than unemployment, is the norm for men in Greenhill/Bradway. Only 7% of men were recorded as unemployed (Lawless, Smith and Short, 1994). Thus labour market participation of women returners is not constrained by social security legislation. Childcare may also be less problematic in Greenhill/Bradway, as 24% of households have access to paid care, an option only adopted by 13% of households in Kelvin/Thorpe. Variation in ability to pay for childcare is probably related to higher levels of household income in Greenhill/Bradway, compared to Kelvin/Netherthorpe. In the former area, 61% of men are employed in relatively well paid, professional/managerial jobs. Alternatively, only 15% of men in Kelvin/Thorpe experience this type of employment. When job related earnings of women are also considered, the divergence in household income becomes even greater. Thus it appears that the diversity which exists between individual women living in the two areas, reflects household polarity. At one pole, households in Greenhill/Bradway tend to be employed, generally in relatively well paid

jobs. At the other pole, households in Kelvin/Thorpe are either unemployed, or employed in relatively low grade work.

On the other hand, there are similarities between the two cohorts of returners. Women in Greenhill/Bradway also experience a decline in labour market position when returning to paid work. Employment in Standard Occupational Groups 1-3, was only obtained by 20% of returners, likewise clerical work by only 27%. Therefore women tended to return to lower grade occupations, although significantly not in the lowest SOC groups. Only 2% of women returning to the labour market in Greenhill/Bradway obtained work in "other elementary services". The decline in labour market position therefore appears related to area based constraints. A further analysis of these constraints will be given in Chapters Seven and Eight.

6.7 SUMMARY

This chapter has argued that women's return to paid work in Sheffield has been determined, to an extent, by the composition of the local labour market. It has been demonstrated that women's return to paid work after childbearing is partially structured by political and economic forces affecting the local economy. These factors have restructured Sheffield's labour market from one reliant on a male dominated manufacturing industry, to a labour market in which women's employment has become increasingly important. Women returning to paid work may therefore experience more opportunities for employment than in the past. On the other hand, whether this constitutes an improved labour market position is more debatable. Much new employment in Sheffield consists of low paid, part-time work in the service industries. At the present time, the public service sector remains the largest employer in Sheffield. If this continues to decline, opportunities for professional and middle range jobs may also decline. Women returning to Sheffield's labour market could find

their choice of employment severely limited.

This chapter has also compared and contrasted the labour market position of two cohorts of women living in distinct areas of Sheffield. It has contended that the experience of returning to paid work after childbearing may vary between these two groups. It has been observed that women living in an inner city estate exhibit limited educational qualifications and suffer from high levels of unemployment, both as non-returners and returners. When these women return to paid work, it is often to the most menial type of job. Alternatively, well educated women living in the suburbs of Sheffield appear to have fewer problems in returning to the labour market, generally obtaining relatively high grade jobs. Ironically, it may be this type of employment which may decrease in Sheffield and women living in the suburbs who may in the future experience problems in obtaining paid work. Meanwhile, social polarity between individual women and households living in the two areas, remains.

**WOMEN RETURNERS IN KELVIN/THORPE
AND GREENHILL/BRADWAY - AN ANALYSIS
OF DATA**

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LIFE BEFORE CHILDREN - EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will explore interviewees' educational and job related experiences prior to childbearing. It seems appropriate to examine these issues, as this study has indicated (Chapter 1, 1.3) that both educational experience and acquisition of skill and training impact on women's labour market participation after childbearing. This chapter will begin by comparing the experiences and attitudes of women from Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway, with regard to their education. The chapter compares and contrasts the employment experiences of women from both cohorts, prior to childbearing. Particular attention will be paid to the experiences of women who worked in Sheffield's traditional industries.

7.2 EDUCATION - INTERVIEWEES' EXPERIENCES AND ATTITUDES

It is not within the remit of this thesis to give an in-depth analysis of interviewees' experiences of and attitudes towards their school days, particularly as much of value has already been written (for example Stanworth, 1983 and Spender and Sarah, 1980), concerning the impact of the educational system on women's life chances. Furthermore, since interviewees in this study would be expected to recall circumstances which occurred sometimes as long as twenty-five years ago, recollections may be subject to distortion and inaccuracy. Therefore the intention is to give an overview of interviewees' attitudes towards their education as this may shed light upon whether, whilst at school, they entertained aspirations about their future employment and why these were held.

When comparing interviewees' experiences of education, perhaps the most obvious contrast is that of school leaving age and qualifications (See Tables 7a and 7b). All interviewees from Kelvin/Thorpe left school at the earliest opportunity, usually without any qualifications. Only two women obtained vocational qualifications, which related to typing skills. On the other hand, interviewees from Greenhill/Bradway are relatively well qualified. Of the sixteen interviewees in this cohort, only one woman who left school as soon as possible, holds no educational qualifications. The remainder possess passes at "O" level or CSE standard, and almost a half have gained "A" levels. Many had also entered further education or engaged in professional training. They gained degrees or post graduate qualifications, for example in teaching and nursing

Why does this disparity in educational achievement exist? This question may be answered by an examination of interviewees' attitudes and aspirations whilst at school. This may prove to be particularly useful if these factors are considered in relation to both socio-economic background of interviewees whilst children, and to gender. As this study has indicated in Chapters One and Two, both factors appear to be important determinants of educational experience. To consider socio-economic factors it is necessary to ascertain the class position of interviewees whilst children. Difficulties in determining the class position of women have already been discussed in Chapter Five (5.3). In order to provide an indication of the socio-economic position of interviewees whilst adults, this study will utilise a variety of criteria. Gaining access to a range of specific particulars concerning the childhood of interviewees', however, is problematic. In many cases interviewees may not have known the information required. Alternatively, it may be possible to determine the socio-economic position of interviewees, whilst children, solely from the male head of the household. Again deriving this information is not without its problems. For example, interviewees did not always have detailed information concerning their father's occupation. Bearing in

Table 7a

KELVIN/THORPE - QUALIFICATIONS

Sample	QUALIFICATIONS						
	City & Guilds	'O' Level/ GCSE/CSE	'A' Level	Technical	Professional	Degree	Higher Degree
Jenny	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carol	-	1 'O' Level	-	-	-	-	-
Joy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pat	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chris	Typing & NP	3 CSEs	-	-	-	-	-
Jean	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Karen	-	6 CSEs	-	-	-	-	-
Rose	Typing	7 CSEs/3 'O' Levels	-	-	-	-	-
Lisa	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Donna	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Teresa	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lorna	Maths & English	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sharon	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Janet	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

GREENHILL/BRADWAY - QUALIFICATIONS

Table 7b

Sample	QUALIFICATIONS						
	City & Guilds	'O' Level/GCSE/CSE	'A' Level	Technical	Professional	Degree/Higher Cert	Higher Degree
Kate	-	8 CSE/3 'O' Levels	-	City & Guilds	-	-	-
Diane	-	5 CSE/5 'O' Levels	-	-	-	-	-
Laura	-	6 'O' Levels	2	-	Teaching Cert	-	-
Penny	Typing	5 'O' Levels	-	-	-	-	-
Sandra	Typing	4 'O' Levels	-	-	-	-	-
Ann	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Clare	-	8 CSEs/4 'O' Levels	-	Funeral Director	-	-	-
Julia	-	5 'O' Levels	-	-	NNEB	-	-
Catherine	-	9 'O' Levels	2	-	SRN	-	-
Sara	-	5 'O' Levels	2	-	-	HNC	M.A.
Angela	Typing	1 CSE/6 'O' Levels	-	-	-	-	-
Louise	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Jane	-	9 'O' Levels	3	-	Certificate of Ed	Business Studies	-
Ellen	Typing	7 CSEs	-	-	-	-	-
Pam	-	5 'O' Levels	2	Cert in Computing	-	-	-
Linda	-	7 'O' Levels	2	-	-	-	-

mind the above caveats, it would appear that the fathers of women from Kelvin/Thorpe had occupations which generally ranged from Class 111M to Class V on the Registrar General Scale, whilst the fathers of women from Greenhill/Bradway had occupations which ranged from Class 1/11 to Class V on the same scale. Thus interviewees from Kelvin/Thorpe appear to have originated from working class households, whilst women in Greenhill/Bradway may have had either working class or middle class origins. Some attempt at identifying the potential impact of the socio-economic background of interviewees on educational performance, may therefore be made. To consider the above factors in more detail, this chapter will proceed to discuss interviewees' attitudes towards school and aspirations for employment before leaving school. It will examine each cohort separately and identify possible variations and similarities.

7.2.1 Kelvin/Thorpe - Generally, interviewees from Kelvin/Thorpe appear to have held negative attitudes towards school. For a small minority this antagonism seems to be related to specific educational problems. For example, Lorna suffered from dyslexia and Sharon committed truancy, culminating in attendance at a special educational unit. For the most part, however, interviewees do not appear to have had specific problems. Rather, they perceived school as being of little relevance and interest, something that had to be tolerated until the moment they could leave. As Donna put it:

"I used to take each day as it came. I used go to school and that was it, but I was glad to leave."

Two main factors appear to have influenced interviewees' attitudes towards school and education, whilst they were young. First, lack of motivation at school and a desire to leave, was perceived by many of those interviewed as an almost "natural" phenomenon: an attitude to be expected during mid teens. It was a sentiment shared by contemporaries and individual behaviour was influenced by peer group pressure.

Furthermore, immediate preoccupations, such as boyfriends, took precedence over long term educational aims. A similar situation is described by McRobbie (1991) in her study of working class girls. She describes how girls made school "tolerable" by developing friendships and talking about boys. McRobbie contends that these attitudes are partly determined by cultural expectations concerning women's domestic role in the home:

"Working-class girls are taught to look forward to a 'feminine' career in the home. The pressures which are exerted on them particularly in the mass media, make contradictory demands ... working class and middle class girls alike, begin to under achieve, as 'romance' and boys take on an increased importance." (McRobbie, 1991, p.46)

Thus all girls, regardless of class, may perceive their future role as being within the family, not the labour market. Consequently, educational aspirations may be limited. For working class girls in particular, however, the domestic role may appear to be the only available option. This expectation may be reinforced within the family, for example, when they care for younger siblings (McRobbie, 1991, p.51-54). Furthermore within the family, gaining educational qualifications may not be perceived as important. Rather negative attitudes towards education may be perceived as the norm. This may be illustrated when considering Sharon, who explained her dislike of school in terms of family history:

"I just didn't like it. I used to hate school. Then my brother, he got sent to the unit (special educational unit) ... two sisters as well. So it's the whole family."

It is possible that even when working class girls have ability, they may adopt an attitude of disinterest or antagonism towards education. This may be further reinforced within schools. Girls who appear to have a lack of academic ability may be labelled as failures and "factory material" (Griffin, 1985, p.12-14). This definition may further contribute towards the self perception of girls, who become increasingly less motivated at school. It is perhaps hardly surprising that many interviewees in Kelvin/Thorpe appeared slightly puzzled when asked why they did not like school. It is

possible that education became an irrelevance in their lives, and that it appeared "normal" to dislike school during adolescence. In short, it was considered to be synonymous with growing up, a stage in development. As Lisa said disliking school was:

"One of those things you go through, I think. Like my little girl now she can't stand school."

A further factor which may reinforce lack of motivation at school from working class girls may be labour market conditions. This appears to be particularly observable when considering interviewees from Kelvin/Thorpe who left school during the late 1960s and early 1970s, when employment was readily available. These women spoke of their desire to earn a wage and the relative ease of obtaining jobs when leaving school. Jenny describes her experience of leaving school in 1974:

"We had two streams (at school), a top stream and a bottom stream, and I was in the bottom stream. Even them in the top stream, very few of them stayed on. There was plenty of work around when we left school."

The desire to earn a wage may also have been related to low income associated with working class households. It is possible that these women may have felt some pressure to leave school.

To sum up, women living in Kelvin/Thorpe held very limited educational qualifications and displayed an apparent disinterest in school during adolescence. During this time they generally lacked employment aspirations and were content to leave school as soon as possible. It has been suggested that these attitudes and expectations have been structured by an inter-relationship of factors relating to gender and social class, and that these are articulated through the family, educational system and labour market.

7.2.2 Greenhill/Bradway - Since women from Greenhill/Bradway appear to have originated from both working class and middle class backgrounds, it might be expected that interviewees would adopt attitudes that correspond to the social class of origin. In fact, a more complicated picture emerges. Interviewees from Greenhill/Bradway generally expressed a positive attitude towards their education, stating that they "enjoyed" school or at least certain subjects. Furthermore, unlike the women in Kelvin/Thorpe, the majority of interviewees in Greenhill/Bradway had some expectations concerning future employment, whilst at school. For example, they saw themselves teaching, nursing, working as managers in retail shops, going to art college, working as secretaries or clerical workers. It would seem that they were prepared to work for these goals and in this respect, the influence of family and friends was important:

Laura: "I quite enjoyed school. I come from a large family and school was very important. We all sort of worked together. I enjoyed school and I had an elder sister and it was a natural thing to work hard, get good exam results and go on to further education. Right from Year 9 I always wanted to teach."

Interviewer: "Why was that?"

Laura: "Probably the influence of teachers and people in school".

Jane: "I am the elder of two, so I have a younger sister who more or less followed in my footsteps in terms of education. I suppose it was expected of her as well because I took them. I had always done well at school, so I think it was expected that I would stay on."

Julia: "I enjoyed school ... I think I always knew I would end up doing something with children, but I wasn't convinced. Right up to going to college at 16, I still hadn't made up my mind a few weeks before I went, which direction to go in ... I could see myself in the caring professions, either nursing or working with children as a teacher ... at that time they were the professions most girls went into and they were the professions mentioned at the time by the peer group."

Diane: "My father encouraged me. He had not had a particularly good education and wanted to encourage his children to do it ... I went to work for Cole Brothers, John Lewis partnership. I originally wanted to do an "A" level management trainee course with them ..."

Interviewer: "What made you think about working for them originally?"

Diane: "From a girl's point of view, I had always enjoyed shopping and it was one of the "in" shops in Sheffield, up and coming. And they had quite a good reputation for looking after staff. I had originally done selling work as a student. Out of all the shops in Sheffield they had the better programme for retail management, so I decided to go to them."

As the above four interviewees from Greenhill/Bradway indicate, contrary to the experience of women from Kelvin/Thorpe, the attitudes and expectations of family and peer group were generally positive towards education. It was expected within families that girls would "stay on" at school to gain qualifications and to plan for future jobs. Parents gave encouragement and the behaviour of siblings and friends, conforming to this expectation, provided an example to be followed. Furthermore, this appears to have occurred regardless of social class. Women from both middle and working class origins reporting all or some of these factors. This chapter has suggested that social class of origin appears to have been an influential factor in determining educational and job related expectations, for women living in Kelvin/Thorpe. Interviewees from Greenhill/Bradway, however, appear to indicate that it may be too deterministic to regard social class as a force which may *always* structure attitudes.

On the other hand, interviews suggest that financial factors associated with class position may have had a more instrumental effect in determining educational achievement. For example, Louise regretted not attending grammar school, despite passing the 11+, because her family could not afford the uniform. Her father, a machine operator and labourer, was constantly ill and often unable to work. Similarly, although Kate wanted to remain at school to take 'A' levels, this was not possible. Her father a school caretaker earned low wages and thus it was necessary for her to earn a wage, in order to supplement the household income. It may be observed that girls from working class households had constraints imposed upon their education due to limited household finance. This particularly seems to have affected their ability to enter further education. Conversely, interviewees who gained further education

generally originated from middle class households. This may have occurred because these households could afford to be without the extra income that working children would provide.

Although women from Greenhill/Bradway appear to have encountered some encouragement concerning education and potential career prospects, this support was not without its restrictions. Interviewees were encouraged within boundaries which were largely confined to gender stereotyped subjects and occupations. Subjects chosen for further study tended to be arts based, not sciences, and aspirations were usually limited to employment which is generally associated with women, such as the caring professions, retail and clerical work. Many interviewees were aware of the influence of gender stereotyping on their educational performance, linking it to peer group pressure and school curriculums, particularly those in grammar schools:

Clare: "We were expected to take clerical or nursing work. If we wanted to do physics, or chemistry, there was only one girl in the whole year who managed to get chemistry and that was by a long fight with her parents, there weren't that many facilities. We weren't given the facilities they are given today, I feel that there was perhaps a lack of training there for women in a world of today."

Laura: "Then again, it was an all girls' grammar school, it was very much arts based. Girls didn't tend to go into scientific things in those days. You looked much more towards the arts, than towards the sciences when you were doing 'A' levels."

As with interviewees in Kelvin/Thorpe, the future of women from Greenhill/Bradway was determined by expectations concerning the "appropriate" role for their gender. Again this was reinforced through formal channels, such as the educational system and, informally, through friends.

To summarise, there appears to be a wide diversity between the two cohorts when considering educational achievement, attitudes towards education and employment

aspirations whilst at school. Women from Kelvin/Thorpe appeared to have negative attitudes towards school, leaving as soon as possible and obtaining very limited educational achievements. On the other hand, interviewees from Greenhill/Bradway generally expressed a positive attitude towards school, and in any case usually achieved well and entertained aspirations for future employment. Of course, it is not possible to determine whether the attitudes expressed were a cause or effect of educational success. It might be expected that those who achieved well would recollect their school days with some confidence and vice versa. It has been argued, however, that gender stereo-typed expectations within the home and school may structure girls educational achievement, and that this may be particularly limiting when combined with class related determinants. Clearly, educational success or failure affects future employment after school leaving; it is to this that the chapter will now turn.

7.3 EMPLOYMENT PRIOR TO CHILDBEARING

It has been argued in Chapter Five (5.4.3), that one purpose of presenting a life history analysis is to reveal how the past affects the present. Thus, interviewees were encouraged to discuss previous employment prior to the birth of children, and to explore possible factors which may influence their return to work and choice of jobs. With the exception of one woman from Bradway/Greenhill, all interviewees had worked before child bearing.

7.3.1 Hours - In accordance with similar studies (Martin and Roberts, 1984, p.124) it was not surprising to find that hours of employment, prior to child bearing, were generally full-time for all interviewees. There were, however, some exceptions to this pattern. Four women from Kelvin/Thorpe had also worked part-time, prior to

childbearing. Two interviewees chose part-time hours in order to spend longer in the home caring for husbands and two women had little option as they had difficulty in obtaining full-time paid work. It is the contention of this study that both women's role in the family and lack of skills may act as constraints on women's ability to return to paid work. It would appear that at least for some women living in Kelvin/Thorpe, these factors limited employment opportunities before child bearing.

7.3.2 Occupations - When considering the occupations of all members of the sample, prior to childbearing, employment was focused in three areas generally associated with women's labour market activity (Table 7c and 7d). First it is focused within the "caring professions", for example, teaching, care assistants, nursing and related work in the health authority. Second, employment is concentrated in clerical and secretarial work, and third, work within the service sector, such as shop work or jobs in the catering industry. It is thus possible to identify the existence of horizontal segregation, a factor usually associated with women's employment (Chapter Two, 2.3.3). Not all employment experience was gained within Sheffield. When considering jobs obtained *in* the city, it is possible to identify the structuring effect (Chapter Four, 4.2.1) of the local labour market on women's employment. Thus women obtained jobs in industries not generally associated with female employment - the steel industry, cutlery and engineering. Stark variations, however, emerge when comparing women living in Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway concerning the type of occupations experienced, prior to child bearing (Table 7c and 7d). No interviewees in Kelvin/Thorpe had been employed in professional occupations and only one woman spoke of paid work at a managerial level. Rather, half the cohort from Kelvin/Thorpe had previously worked in clerical occupations or low grade work in the service sector, for example, as waitresses or shop assistants. The remainder had been previously employed as unskilled manual labour. This compares with interviewees from Greenhill/Bradway, where over half the sample had worked in professional or

Table 7c KELVIN/THORPE

Sample	OCCUPATIONS PRIOR TO CHILDBEARING									Unemployed
	SOC 1	SOC 2	SOC 3	SOC 4	SOC 5	SOC 6	SOC 7	SOC 8	SOC 9	
Jenny	M'gr Retail	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Ass'bly Line Worker Eng	
Carol	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Machinist - sewing	Cleaner W'hs Packer	
Joy	-	-	-	Clerk/Typist	-	-	-	-	-	
Pat	-	-	-	-	-	-	Sales Assistant	-	-	
Chris	-	-	-	Clerk/Typist	-	-	-	-	-	
Jean	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Machinist - sewing	Unskilled Factory	
Karen	-	-	-	-	-	-	Sales Assistant	-	-	-
Rose	-	-	-	Clerk/Typist	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lisa	-	-	-	-	-	Nursing Assistant	Sales Assistant	Machinist - sewing	-	-
Donna	-	-	-	Clerk/Acc'ts	-	-	-	-	-	-
Teresa	-	-	-	-	-	-	Sales Assistant	-	Waitress Factory/Unskd	-
Lorna	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Catering Asst Waitress	-
Sharon	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Packing Warehouse	-
Janet	-	-	-	-	-	Home Help	-	-	-	-

See Appendix D

Table 7d

GREENHILL/BRADWAY

Sample	OCCUPATIONS PRIOR TO CHILDBEARING										
	SOC 1	SOC 2	SOC 3	SOC 4	SOC 5	SOC 6	SOC 7	SOC 8	SOC 9	Unemployed	
Kate	-	-	Hosp Tech	-	-	Care Assist	-	-	-	-	
Diane	M'gr Retail	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Laura	-	Teacher	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Penny	-	-	-	Clerk	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Sandra	M'gr Steel Ind	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Ann	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Clare	-	-	-	Clerk	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Julia	-	-	Nursy Nurse	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Catherine	-	-	Nurse	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Sara	Mark'g Mam't	H.E. Lec	-	Secretary	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Angela	-	-	-	Clerk/Typ't	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Louise	-	-	-	Clerk	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Jane	M'gr Steel In	F.E. Lec	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Ellen	-	-	-	Secretary	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Pam	Hight'r Admin	-	Comp Prog'r	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Linda	Civil Service	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	

See Appendix D

associated professional/technical jobs, as lecturers, teachers, nurses, operating theatre technicians and computer programmers. An additional two interviewees had obtained previous jobs in management, whilst the remainder worked in clerical posts. Clearly a wide diversity appears to exist between the two cohorts concerning the types of occupation experienced. Women in Greenhill/Bradway exhibited a higher incidence of professional/managerial employment, in comparison to their counterparts living in Kelvin/Thorpe. Conversely, over half of women in Kelvin/Thorpe tended to have been employed largely in manual factory work. Clerical work appears to have provided a common middle ground, being experienced by women in both cohorts. Since clerical workers comprise 26% (Employment Gazette, November, 1993, p.489) of employed women, this is perhaps hardly surprising. It seems likely that the disparity between the two cohorts, concerning occupation, may be related to variations in educational achievements discussed above.

7.3.3 Patterns of Employment - It is also possible to detect variations between the two groups of women when comparing patterns of employment. Interviewees from Kelvin/Thorpe had generally worked for only a few years before leaving paid work for childbearing (Table 7e). During this time they may have experienced working for a number of employers, sometimes for short periods, leaving each after a few months. It was not unusual for these women to move in and out of different sections of the labour market. For example, Teresa had worked as a silver service waitress, shop assistant, and an unskilled factory worker. Even Jenny who had worked for several years as a manager in a retail outlet, had worked prior to that as an unskilled factory worker. The exception to this fluctuating pattern of employment were clerical workers. Whilst they also tended to change jobs frequently, they always obtained employment within this sector. To an extent it is possible to argue that the fluctuating pattern of employment identified above, was a response to structural economic factors. It is observable that women who left school in the 1960s and 1970s during a time of

relative economic prosperity, tended to have changed jobs more frequently than women who left school during the 1980s, at a time when the economy was generally depressed. Presumably there were fewer jobs available for the latter cohort of women. This pattern of employment suggests that although many women from Kelvin/Thorpe may have experienced a variety of employment, the limited time spent in each job may have restricted the opportunity to gain skills and work experience.

How do patterns of employment for women living in Kelvin/Thorpe compare to women living in Greenhill/Bradway? Over one third of interviewees from Greenhill/Bradway remained working for the same employer before childbearing, generally for at least five years and sometimes substantially longer (Table 7f). Attainment of promotion was related to length of employment, which was achieved by a small number of women. Clearly, this pattern of employment is at variance with that observed for interviewees in Kelvin/Thorpe. A more complicated picture emerges when considering work experience prior to childbearing, of the remaining two-thirds of the sample from Greenhill/Bradway. At first sight a fluctuating pattern of employment is identifiable, which bears similarities to that relating to women living in Kelvin/Thorpe. It was not unusual for these women to have experienced a number of jobs and to have remained in some for just short periods, possibly a few months. Furthermore, employment often crossed different sectors of the labour market, although as in the case of women in Kelvin/Thorpe, this was not the case with clerical jobs. Closer examination, however, shows that on the whole this similarity is largely superficial. First, although these women may have experienced many jobs which only lasted a short time, they also worked in jobs which lasted for a number of years. Second, total length of employment was never less than six years and often substantially longer (Table 7f). This is demonstrated by Jane who worked for two and a half years as a management trainee in marketing. She then spent six months involved in similar work for another company, before finally spending a further two and a half years as a lecturer in a college of further education immediately prior to childbearing. Similarly,

after spending three years training to be a nurse, Catherine worked for eighteen months as a staff nurse. She subsequently obtained promotion as a nursing sister, working in this job for a further five years before childbearing. After accepting maternity leave, Catherine has continued to work in this employment for the last five years. Thus it may be observed that for two-thirds of the sample from Greenhill/Bradway, short term employment merely interrupted longer term periods of paid work. For women in Kelvin/Thorpe, short term paid work was often the norm. Furthermore, again contrary to women in Kelvin/Thorpe, the period of employment before childbirth was often lengthy and in three cases only interrupted by maternity leave. This was not an option accepted by women in Kelvin/Thorpe. It thus seems likely that interviewees in Greenhill/Bradway, have gained substantial work experience and job related skills.

7.3.4 Factors Influencing Employment Patterns - What factors might influence variations in employment patterns between the two cohorts? One factor may be socio-economic position and related expectations concerning marriage and particularly motherhood. This chapter has suggested that women in Kelvin/Thorpe were influenced by expectations concerning working class gender roles and the associated assumption that motherhood and not employment was their real destiny. Certainly the majority of women living in Kelvin/Thorpe became mothers at a relatively early age, compared with women in Greenhill/Bradway (Table 7g and 7h). Another contributory determinant may be women's experience of employment and their attitudes to this. Women from both cohorts described practical factors which had influenced them to move jobs, such as poor working conditions, unsatisfactory relationships with colleagues or difficulties in travelling to work. It is also possible, however, to observe variations in attitude between the two cohorts. Interviewees in Kelvin/Thorpe were likely to change employment because they could no longer endure working in a particular job. This attitude may be related to the specific type of

paid employment experienced by women in this cohort: usually repetitious jobs, sometimes performed in poor working conditions. Alternatively, the desire to change employment for interviewees from Greenhill/Bradway was more often related to a desire to obtain paid work which offered promotion, or with increased scope for their abilities. Consequently, although interviewees in both cohorts changed jobs in order to search for more fulfilling employment, women in Greenhill/Bradway sought more positive goals. This is perhaps hardly surprising. Unlike women from Kelvin/Thorpe, their employment was usually less mundane and generally performed in good working conditions. Furthermore, their relatively high levels of skills and qualifications, plus a positive attitude towards enhanced education and training, gave them a strong position in the labour market. For these women, obtaining increasingly satisfactory employment was a real possibility. This may be illustrated by the following two women from Greenhill/Bradway. Julia progressed from being a nursery nurse, to a nursery co-ordinator in order to obtain more "challenging" work:

"It was advertised in "The Star", I saw it and fancied a challenge. I had been at Chancetwood (nursery) for six years and felt ready for a change and a challenge and I wanted to move on with my career."

Similarly, Sara experienced five clerical/secretarial jobs in as many years. Whilst employed in these positions she became increasingly bored and frustrated with her work. She decided to study for 'A' levels, in order to alleviate these feelings:

"I was probably always under used at work. I think I was reasonably bright and having flunked my 'O' levels I got into a situation where the work I was doing wasn't stretching me and I needed something outside of work, and some 'A' levels just kept me going."

As Sara's confidence in her own abilities grew, she continued her education by undertaking a HND and a masters degree. This eventually led to employment she enjoyed as a lecturer in higher education.

7.4 EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE WITHIN SHEFFIELD'S TRADITIONAL INDUSTRIES

Dex has observed (1988, p.109) that it is generally assumed that the attitudes of younger childless women are homogeneous. This study appears to indicate that differences in attitude towards employment existed between the two cohorts, prior to childbearing. This chapter will proceed to examine in more depth the employment experiences and attitudes of interviewees. It is beyond the scope of this study to review the work experience of *all* interviewees prior to childbearing. This chapter will therefore examine the experiences of women who worked in Sheffield's traditional industries. This will offer an insight into the experience of women in a specific local labour market: Sheffield.

7.4.1 Kelvin/Thorpe - Four interviewees from Kelvin/Thorpe had worked full-time in manual jobs connected with Sheffield's traditional industrial base: the metal industry, engineering and cutlery. Conditions at work were often dirty and jobs mundane and repetitive, as women were engaged in tasks such as packing in warehouses, cleaning and checking cutlery, or unskilled assembly work. Jenny described her job in the engineering industry in this manner:

"They made chuck drills. I was there roughly a year and I hated it. It was dirty, filthy, oily. The bits of drills at the top, the actual teeth, you used to have to hold them in and twiddle them around and make sure they were all controlled. It was really boring. That was more of an assembly type thing."

In the context of what appear to be unsatisfactory working conditions, relationships with colleagues assumed a particular importance. They seemed to influence women's attachment to jobs and acted as either an incentive or disincentive to remaining in specific employment. For example, Jean experienced various jobs which she considered to be unsatisfactory, prior to childbearing. Her most enjoyable job was

one in the cutlery industry where, compared to her previous jobs, working conditions appear to have been particularly unfavourable. Relationships at work, however, were a compensation for these conditions:

Jean: "I know what my best job I ever had were, (at) Gibson's Pewter Tankard firm. And I right enjoyed that because it was a very small firm and everybody knew everybody, and they were nice women and nice blokes. So I enjoyed that."

Interviewer: "So what did you do there?"

Jean: "... they (Tankards) were actually made before they went to buffing, after buffing they had to be polished and we had to wash all buffing muck off. It was a right dirty job, I used to come home black. We used to get all gunge and things off in a big sink. It was a good laugh."

Alternatively, Sharon worked as a packer in the cutlery industry performing a job described as "boring". She was prepared to risk losing her job when relationships at work, which she considered to be unsatisfactory, motivated her to fight with a female colleague:

Sharon "Some of the lasses were right bitchy. I didn't like that. Some of them were all right, some of them weren't. So, this lass started causing trouble, so I started having a fight with her. So I got sacked for that"

As this chapter has previously indicated (7.3.4), unsatisfactory conditions and relationships at work appear to have been factors which influenced women's employment patterns, prior to childbearing. In the case of interviewees living in Kelvin/Thorpe, it has been suggested that their experience was one of working in several, short term jobs and that this pattern may have limited work related experience and skills. On the other hand, as women employed in Sheffield's traditional industries indicate, they appear to have been employed to perform largely mundane tasks. Hence it seems unlikely that there were many skills to gain. Skilled jobs existed within Sheffield's traditional industries, but interviews suggest that these were the preserve of men. For example, in the cutlery industry production of implements was performed

by male workers. Women merely performed subsidiary tasks, such as checking for mistakes. Segregation of tasks was reflected in gender related spatial segregation, as men and women occupied different areas of the factory:

Carol: "I worked in what they called the warehouse. I had to look at the knife handles, he (husband) had polished them and sent in. There was a lot more women than men. We had to check for black spots and holes, and send them back to be done again if they weren't polished good enough."

Sharon: "(I) was doing surgical instruments, cleaning them. See if there was any holes in them. If there was any holes, you had to send them back. That weren't too bad."

Interviewer: "What about the people you worked with, were they women or men?"

Sharon: "All women, fairly young, a couple that were old. They were all right."

Interviewer: "Were there men working in the place as well?"

Sharon: "Yes, but they worked the other side. They made them, the surgical instruments and that. We didn't talk to them because they were right over the other side of Skidmores."

It seems that the requirements of Sheffield's particular local labour market allowed at least some women, to work in occupational sectors which are not generally associated with female employment. Despite this, it may be observed that employment within these industries appears to have been "gendered". The effects of vertical segregation ensured that women living in Kelvin/Thorpe, who worked in Sheffield's traditional industries prior to childbearing, experienced work which was low grade. Men working within these industries appear to have been employed in work which involved higher levels of skill.

It is necessary to consider how the employment experience of these interviewees, prior to childbearing, may effect their ability to return to paid work. As discussed in Chapter Six (6.1), women's employment in Sheffield's traditional industries has always been limited. After the decline of these industries in the 1970s and 1980s, it may be assumed that women's employment opportunities within this sector have been

substantially reduced. Women with previous work experience in Sheffield's traditional industries, who wish to return to this sector, may find it especially difficult to obtain jobs. None of the sample from Kelvin/Thorpe had returned to work in the cutlery, metal or engineering industries. On the other hand, no one in this cohort expressed a desire to return to this type of employment. This may not be surprising considering interviewees' experiences of these industries. What employment may be available for women from Kelvin/Thorpe who previously worked in Sheffield's traditional industries? Increased employment may exist in Sheffield's service sector. However, high levels of unemployment within the city generally and in Kelvin/Thorpe particularly (Chapter Six, 6.6-6.8), suggest that these interviewees may encounter some difficulties in returning to paid work. Whilst interviewees may obtain employment in the service sector, their limited educational qualifications and job related skills, suggest that generally only low grade jobs will be obtained. At the time of interview, only two women from Kelvin/Thorpe with previous work experience in Sheffield's traditional industries, prior to childbearing, were working: one as a bar maid and cleaner, the other as a home help. Of the remainder, two had worked in the past as cleaners or bar maids and one had never returned to employment. These last three women considered that various factors hindered their ability to return to paid work, for example, lack of educational qualifications, lack of affordable childcare facilities, social security legislation relating to unemployed partners and high levels of unemployment within Sheffield.

7.4.2 Greenhill/Bradway - Four interviewees from Greenhill/Bradway had worked within Sheffield's traditional industries, prior to childbearing. Unlike women in Kelvin/Thorpe who had previously worked in these industries, they were not employed in a manual capacity. Two were employed as clerical workers and two in management. Variations in work experience between the two cohorts are probably to be expected and considerable differences emerge, particularly when considering the work experience of women who held managerial posts in Sheffield's traditional

industries. Both interviewees who had gained managerial experience, spoke with enthusiasm about their previous employment. They were assigned a wide variety of tasks, which were considered to be both mentally stimulating and enjoyable. Sandra obtained her position by internal promotion during seventeen years of service. She moved through different departments learning a range of skills, slowly assuming increased responsibility. She described her job in this way:

"I enjoyed all aspects of it really, it was an ideal job ... when I left I was in middle management, two grades higher than graduate entry. I didn't do too bad, it wasn't planned, but how things evolved. The project accountants job that I had became very flexible, because a lot of it involved travel through the Lake District, at least once a fortnight. And staying there a couple of days. When I got on to that upper grade I was on a par with estimators, planners, in between a draughtsman and engineer. I was sort of on the same level, but they were all men. They had interviews with people from different parts of British Steel for this position, and then my name was put forward."

Jane's experience as a trainee manager in Sheffield's steel industry was similar to Sandra's. She gained experience by moving throughout the organisation, learning a variety of jobs. She was also offered the opportunity to continue her education, as the company allowed her day release on a HNC Business course. This motivated her to attend evening classes to obtain a degree in Business Studies.

The fulfilling work experiences of these women diverges greatly from the experiences of interviewees in Kelvin/Thorpe who worked in Sheffield's traditional industries, prior to childbearing. Yet it is possible to argue that assumptions concerning gender, which structured the employment participation of women in Kelvin/Thorpe, also limited the achievements of Sandra and Jane. This chapter has discussed the effects of vertical segregation in Sheffield's traditional industries, in relation to the employment experiences of women from Kelvin Thorpe. It may be observed that a similar process of "gendering" also appears to have existed concerning managerial appointments. Clearly, achieving a management position in the steel industry was possible for women. On the other hand as Sandra states above, she was the only woman

manager in her department. Furthermore, she was offered no formal job training and only achieved a managerial position after working for the company for many years. On the whole, it appears that her job in management was the outcome of approximately fifteen years of dogged determination, rather than positive encouragement on the part of upper management. Even for Jane who appears to have encountered encouragement, there was also discriminatory behaviour to contend with from management:

Jane: "When I went to work in the Sales Department, the Marketing Department manager had to persuade them to let me in, because I was the first female that had ever worked in the department. It was interesting. The people were the same sort of age, the sales office staff, the men were fine, no problems with them they accepted me as equal ... but the managers tolerated me. One day, they had given me this particular task to be responsible for in the department and they hadn't realised that as part of that task I was occasionally on the 'phone to their most important customer, that is Ford Motor Company. There was no problem at all as I understood it, until the Sales Office manager found out I was talking to Ford and said, "that's it, I will not allow her to." What they thought I was going to do to their most important customer?"

Greater similarity between women living in Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway, in relation to employment experience, exists when considering the two interviewees from the latter area who held clerical jobs in Sheffield's traditional industries. This is perhaps not unexpected, since these jobs were relatively low grade. Echoing the views of women from Kelvin/Thorpe, these clerical workers spoke of unsatisfactory working conditions and difficulties with colleagues. As with women in Kelvin/Thorpe, these factors influenced them to leave their employment. Unlike women in Kelvin/Thorpe, however, these clerical workers were sufficiently well skilled to be able to obtain employment which appears to have been satisfactory. Certainly, subsequent employment was maintained for a number of years. For example prior to childbirth, Ellen worked as a copy typist for a steel manufacturer, leaving her job after a short period because of dissatisfaction with pay and work conditions. These factors did not improve, she claimed, despite the introduction of unionisation. She then obtained other employment within the steel industry, but again quit her job. She

considered that her employer's attitude towards her was unreasonable, as he refused her leave of absence in order to marry. Subsequently Ellen obtained satisfactory employment outside the steel industry and was content to maintain this position for nine years. Similarly, Louise was employed as a clerical worker in Sheffield's steel industry. Generally she remained in specific jobs for a number of years. Unsatisfactory relations with colleagues, however, motivated Louise to leave one job after just four months. As she said:

"I didn't like the people that I worked with. One person in particular really made my life a misery, she was really awful. I just hated going every day, so I went and found something else and I was there until I had my first child."

It is again necessary to consider how the above factors may affect women who wish to return to work. As with interviewees in Kelvin/Thorpe, no member of the cohort from Greenhill/Bradway had returned to work in the steel industry. All interviewees with previous work experience in Sheffield's traditional industries had returned to work since childbearing. Apart from Jane, however, they appear to have encountered a variety of constraints. Ellen who has typing skills returned to clerical work, but left due to problems with childcare. She is unable to obtain further employment because of lack of affordable childcare. Louise's skills as a wages clerk have become obsolete as her previous job has been computerised. She has returned to work as a check-out operator at a local supermarket. Sandra returned to work as a telephone sales clerk despite her previous experience in management. Both Louise and Sandra appear to be under utilising their skills, whilst Jane who obtained a degree, went on to teach full-time in further education.

7.5 SUMMARY

The educational achievements and aspirations for future employment of women within this study, have been influenced by an inter-relationship of factors relating to both social class and gender. Whilst gender stereo-typed expectations appear to have structured the educational achievements of women from both cohorts, interviewees from Kelvin/Thorpe were also particularly limited by their socio-economic status as children. Thus interviewees in Greenhill/Bradway are substantially better educated than their counterparts in Kelvin/Thorpe. The chapter then proceeded to consider employment prior to childbirth, which appears to have been influenced by educational achievement. Consequently, women in Greenhill/Bradway appear to be more skilled, have greater work experience, and possibly a more positive attitude towards gaining employment than women in Kelvin/Thorpe. When considering the effect of previous educational and employment experience on women's ability to return to paid work, women from Greenhill/Bradway who worked in Sheffield's traditional industries are more likely to have returned to work than women from Kelvin/Thorpe who were similarly employed. This study does not wish to suggest that educational qualifications and past work experience alone, are solely responsible for influencing women's to return to work. Rather, it will suggest that return is also dependent on a variety of determinants relating to their role within the family and local social and economic factors. The study will now turn to a discussion of these factors.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RETURNING TO THE LABOUR MARKET

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines factors which may influence interviewees' return to paid work, particularly in relation to the household and local labour market. These factors are discussed within the context of three differing patterns of return. It also examines variations and similarities relating to labour market behaviour between the two cohorts. The chapter proceeds to discuss in depth two further socio-economic factors which may influence interviewees' return to the labour market: job search and household location.

8.2 PATTERNS OF RETURN

It has been demonstrated (Martin and Roberts, 1984) that following the birth of first children, most women withdraw from the labour market. Withdrawal is generally temporary and is followed by a subsequent return to paid work. Previous studies (Martin and Roberts, 1984: Dex, 1984: Sargent, 1989) have demonstrated that various patterns of return to the labour market occur. Dex (1984, p.33-34) has possibly produced the most comprehensive account of patterns of return:

- i) "never returns" - occurring when women do not return to the labour market after childbearing;
- ii) "returns after all births" - childbearing is restricted to a set period after which women return to paid work;

- iii) "returns between births" - women return to work between births, though not necessarily each birth;
- iv) "works after every birth" - women with more than one child return to work after each child;
- v) "returns after one birth" - women return to paid work following the birth of an only child;
- vi) "family formation continuous workers" - despite childbearing, women are almost continuous workers, limiting periods out of the labour market to six months or less.

This study will examine interviewees who were in employment at the time of interview. It will consider interviewees' return to employment within the context of three of the above patterns of return: "family formation continuous workers", "returns between births" and "returns after all births". The decision to utilise only three patterns of return, rather than all six, is dependent on two factors. First, this study is restricted by constraints of space. It seems reasonable to suggest that within this study, "returns between births" and "works after every birth", may be combined into the former category only. Similarly, it appears appropriate to disregard interviewees' who may comprise a "returns after one birth", as only two interviewees' had borne only one child. Second, it seems inappropriate to categorise some interviewees' as women who will "never return" to paid employment. At the time of interview, five interviewees had no experience of paid work since childbearing. However, these women did not consider that they would "never return" to the labour market. Rather they identified themselves as potential returners. It is also pertinent to emphasise that interviewees' life and work histories are incomplete and subject to change. For example, it is

possible that women classified as "returns after all births" may bear further children. Thus it is acknowledged that utilising Dex's patterns of return may only provide a partial picture. Despite this limitation, however her categories provide a structure within which to analyse interviewees' return to the labour market.

8.2.1 Orientation to the Labour Market - It is necessary to consider women's orientation to work and why these attitudes are held in order to examine factors which may influence their return to the labour market. Dex (1988, p.82-86) has indicated that whilst there has been a tradition of studying men's orientations to work, the study of women's orientations has been a recent development. It has not been uncommon for women's orientations to work to be explained in a gender stereo-typical manner. For example, it may be suggested that women work merely for pin money. This view is contradicted by Martin and Roberts who emphasise that most women not only enjoy paid work, but rely upon it financially (1984, p.68). Dex (1988, p.82-86) also indicates that there may be no single feminine orientation to work. Rather, attitudes towards employment vary during the life cycle and between cohorts of women. Furthermore, studies of women within local labour markets suggest that attitudes towards working are influenced by a range of determinants. These include: work-history, local labour market conditions - such as level of demand, and both non-work and work-related factors (Dex, 1988, p.86). It thus seems appropriate that this study should examine the orientations of women living in Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway, concerning their return to employment after childbearing, in relation to these issues.

8.2.2 GROUP A - Family Formation Continuous Workers - In this study only a small proportion of the sample, three women, approximated to the continuous workers identified by Dex. These women returned to work after accepting maternity leave, either within six months of their first birth, or soon afterwards. They are relatively well qualified and employed in higher grade occupations. One woman was a lecturer in higher education, another a nursing sister and the third an administrative officer in the civil service. This appears to conform to Martin and Roberts' findings (1984, p.125) which indicate that women who return to work within six months of bearing their first child are a relatively small group. It should be pointed out, however, that the "greatest increase in labour market participation since 1984 has been among women with children aged under 5" (Employment gazette, November 1994, p.404). Martin and Roberts also suggest (1984, p126) that women who choose to return to work within six months tend to be relatively well qualified and consequently employed in higher level occupations, for example, teaching, other intermediate non-manual occupations and other skilled workers (Table 8a). The relationship between an early return to work and high levels of educational qualifications has been confirmed by the Labour Force Survey - Winter 1993/94. The survey revealed that 75% of women with "higher qualifications" returned to work when children were aged 0-4 years, compared to 30% of women with "no qualifications" who had children of the same age (Employment Gazette, November 1994, p.411)

The previous chapter has indicated that there are differences between women living in Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway, concerning qualifications and level of occupation. Furthermore, it has been suggested that this diversity may be associated with spatial divisions. Women living in Greenhill/Bradway are relatively well qualified, have often worked for many years prior to childbearing and appear to exhibit a positive attitude to employment. It is therefore hardly surprising to discover that all three continuous workers identified in this study live in Greenhill/Bradway. It seems probable that a continuous pattern of return might, for example, be adopted by women

PROFILE OF 'CONTINUOUS' WORKERS - GREENHILL/BRADWAY

Table 8a

Name	Age	Number of Children	Job	Hours	Earnings per Annum	Husbands Job	Husbands Earning per Annum
Sara	48	2	Lecturer - Higher Ed	Full-time	£27,000	Lecturer - Higher Ed	£30,000
Angela	30	1	Admin Officer - Civil Service	Full-time	£12,000	Admin Officer - Civil Service	£15,000
Catherine	39	3	District Nursing Sister	Part-time	£10,500	Owner of Shop	Unknown but variable

who may be reluctant to disrupt their careers, whose career progression may be jeopardised by a lengthy disruption, who want to avoid loss of earnings and for whom high earnings would ensure that paid childcare was a reality (Martin and Roberts, 1984, p. 126). On the other hand, members of the sample possessing limited qualifications and employment histories, tend to live in Kelvin/Thorpe. Immediately prior to childbearing, one third of interviewees from Kelvin/Thorpe were unemployed. This effectively precluded these women from working continuously. It has also been suggested that maternity leave is important in influencing women to adopt a continuous pattern of return (Dex, 1984, p.41). Yet maternity leave is only available for women who have been employed by the same employer for at least two years, prior to childbearing. This option was not available to a number of women living in Kelvin/Thorpe because they had not worked for the same employer for the statutory time period. As Brannen and Moss (1991, p. 29) point out, this policy is so restrictive that it is estimated that almost a half of all employed women are not eligible for maternity leave.

What motivated women in Group A to adopt a continuous pattern of return? As suggested above, women may be motivated to return to paid work by a combination of both personal and financial factors. This section will first consider financial factors in relation to the household. Morris observes (1990,p.101) that financial motivations for employment are open to two interpretations. On the one hand, attitudes towards employment and participation in the labour market may only be understood by examining access to, and uses of, earned income. It is thus possible to question motivations for earning and to ask whether individuals earn for themselves or for the household. On the other hand, it may also be assumed that the way a household organises its finances may be influenced by the position of its members in the labour market. This study indicates that both these assumptions may be applicable when examining interviewees who choose a continuous pattern of return.

When considering access to and uses of earned income, it appears that all interviewees in Group A worked in order not to forgo earnings. These were needed to maintain households' standard of living, when one wage was perceived to be insufficient. For example, Angela's continued earnings, have allowed the household to purchase property in the relatively affluent suburbs of Sheffield. Without her earnings, approximately £10,000 per annum, a single wage of £15,000 per annum would be the household's sole income. This was thought to be insufficient to provide a desirable life style. Alternatively, Catherine described the financial insecurity associated with a self employed husband whose income was consequently variable. Without Catherine's earnings, £12,000 per annum, the household would also encounter difficulties in maintaining their standard of living:

Interviewer: "Did you ever consider giving up work at all, after you had your first baby?"

Interviewee: "No, I had no choice. My husband started working self employed a year before I had her, so I knew that I was having her on the understanding that I had to go back to work full time at that point. He (husband) has wanted a shop for a long time, one came up last year and he got it ... but that involved him taking on a loan of £25,000 - bad time to buy a business - and so far he has done very well, better than how he was doing on the market. He is managing to pay our bills. He pays all the bills and I just pay for the food. We couldn't afford for me not to work. We don't have a luxurious life style, the children take up most of the money. We haven't bought any furniture in a long time. Can't consider doing anything to the house - extensions etc. It is quite difficult to replace anything like a Hoover or washer. We manage to have a holiday and my money goes to that. It would be impossible not to work."

Similarly, Sara returned to work in order to help maintain the household. Although her husband earns approximately £30,000 per annum, a large proportion of this income supports his previous family. Since Sara's earnings are similar to her husband's, she felt impelled to continue working:

Interviewer: "When you had your children, did you ever consider giving up your job at all?"

Interviewee: "That was difficult. My husband has to support his previous family and is still doing that for two of them (children), and there was always his

wife. When we first got married, over half his income went to his previous family, so I had to work."

Thus it appears, that on the one hand, these interviewees returned to work at the earliest opportunity and continued to work, because of perceived financial necessity. It should be stressed that financial necessity in this context may be associated with the desire to maintain a relatively high standard of living. The decision to work appears to relate to an assessment of household income, versus potential outgoings. In each case the husband's earnings alone were considered to be either too low, too insecure or both. Since the earnings capacity of these interviewees is comparatively high, they returned to work soon after childbearing and continued to work after successive children, in order to maintain the household income.

On the other hand, the lifestyles which these interviewees support may not have developed without their prior earning ability. For example, it is possible that Angela would not have considered buying a new house without the prior realisation that her earnings would support this expenditure. Similarly, Catherine's husband may have been more reluctant to start a new business without the prior knowledge that his wife's earnings could support the family if the venture failed. It is even possible that Sara may not have borne children, if her earnings could not have contributed towards supporting a second family. Thus it appears that a complicated inter-relationship of factors associated with household finance may motivate women to continue working after child bearing. To an extent, these interviewees also work for their individual financial gain. Their earnings grant them a certain measure of independence, although this is not considered a relevant factor to Sara. Her independence is so taken for granted, that she has difficulty in perceiving dependency:

Interviewer: "How important is it to you, to earn a wage?"

Sara: "I'm not sure that it is important. We don't have the sort of relationship where I am dependent on my husband. I don't think that it is that important. But then, I don't know because I've never experienced it (dependency).

It would be too limiting to suggest that financial factors alone influence interviewees to adopt a continuous pattern of employment. It is possible that more "expressive" (Brannen and Moss, 1991, p.72) rather than "instrumental" factors related to employment may also be significant. Certainly non financial factors associated with employment are also relevant, but seem to be less critical than financial considerations. For example, maintaining a career appears to be important to Angela and Catherine. Both women engaged in further training to enhance their opportunities, although enthusiasm for their employment seems limited. In the case of Sara, enthusiasm for her job appears to be almost non-existent. Why is this? Evidence in this study indicates that two factors may be responsible. First, local labour market conditions. All three women work in the public sector which, as previously suggested (Chapter 6, 6.6), is subject to internal restructuring and financial constraints. It is perhaps hardly surprising that all three women appear to be discouraged by the resultant insecurity. For example, Angela's desire for promotion is curbed by uncertainty:

Angela: "Once I get trained, when I have the qualifications to be a personal secretary, then if I get a personal secretary's job within the Civil Service I will probably stay there. There is so much uncertainty at the moment, they are privatising bits off, that you just don't know what is happening. There are just no jobs, as soon as I started about four or five years ago. Before that when it was flourishing, from the mid 1970s onwards, there used to be three or four promotion panels a year for different grades. There has just not been any for admin. grades."

Similarly, Catherine maintains that she does not want promotion. Since it does not exist in her job due to financial constraints, Catherine's reaction may be the only pragmatic response possible:

Interviewer: "What about promotion ... would you want it?"

Catherine: "I wouldn't want it. I have got enough on. I don't want to work full-time ever again. I don't think there are any full-time jobs. The clinical nurse managers, which is the next step up from mine ... they are on temporary contracts. Everything is temporary contracts these days. I think they are trying to save money because it is a very expensive service. There are a lot of qualified nurses who are sisters ... and we are very expensive and we just cost too much. We are on top pay."

Until they get rid of us we are all right."

A second factor which may influence these interviewees to perceive the financial rewards associated with paid work to be more significant than more "expressive" considerations, is the influence of motherhood. It has been indicated (Brannen and Moss, 1991, p.76) that when comparing women's attitudes towards employment both prior to, and after childbearing, employment may become less important to some women. They suggest that this change in attitude may be related to childbearing. It is not possible for this study to examine interviewees' attitudes prior to childbearing, but evidence indicates that assuming a continuous pattern of return is not a simple choice. Interviewees returned to work when children were a few months old, and continued to work when children were very young. This study has observed (Chapter One 1.4) that women's role as mothers may constrain employment. It has argued that women may perceive their role in the family primarily as carers, rather than members of the labour market, and that this belief is reinforced by inadequate childcare facilities. To an extent, women in this group had the freedom to choose their role as continuous workers because childcare was available. Yet there was a price to be paid. Affection for their children caused interviewees to express feelings of loss and regret concerning their children. The rather poignant example below, sums up these feelings:

Interviewee: "How have you found it, working and having children?"

Sara: "I don't think it is a good idea, I would always tell people not to do it, if they could afford not to. You miss so much, the development. I just think I am very maternal, I didn't realise until I had children. The physical relationship - bathing the kids. I was desperate not to miss things like the first tooth and the first step. I don't like the fact that Katie goes to swimming lessons and I can't be there to watch how she is getting on. And yet I'm not jealous of the nanny, I don't mind when she calls me Theresa (the nanny) sometimes and she will call Theresa mummy. I don't mind that. I just want her to be looked after well."

It is also possible that strain and guilt associated with disregarding ideological constraints concerning their role as mothers, causes interviewees added stress. It is probably to be expected, therefore, that a certain amount of doubt and confusion is

felt by these interviewees concerning their decision to be employed continuously. Whilst they returned to work due to perceived financial necessity and because they enjoy their careers, they also desire to care for their young children. As Crehan (1986, p. 33) observes, the "moral balancing act" between paid work and motherhood induces ambivalent answers from women when asked about paid work and home. The internal tension experienced by these women, due to the conflicting roles of mother and paid worker, are expressed by Angela:

"I don't think I could stay at home all the time. I could if I was rich, if money wasn't a problem! Just staying at home with a young child. No, I just couldn't do it. I am not one of these stay at home mothers."

In particular, interviewees who worked full-time work seemed to experience relatively high levels of stress. For example:

Sara: "At the moment I don't think I do anything properly. To do my job properly, I probably ought to work until 8 every night, and I can't. I leave at 4.30 to get back to the kids and I am not going to start letting my work encroach on the kids. But at the weekends my daughter will say, "can we play this" and I have the washing to do or the clearing up ... I feel I am not giving the kids enough, I am probably not coping well enough with the job at work ... I think you feel guilty. Whatever you are doing, you feel guilty that you are not doing it properly."

Alternatively, in an attempt to reconcile this inner conflict, two women chose to work part-time. This of course entailed accepting lower earnings. Thus whilst interviewees chose a continuous pattern of return, based on an assessment of financial and personal factors, the competing roles of paid worker and mother ensure that this choice is far from simple.

To sum up, only interviewees living in Greenhill/Bradway assumed a continuous pattern of return. This diversity between the two cohorts appears to be related to previous educational and occupational achievements, socio-economic status of the household and state policies which reinforce gender roles within the family. It has been argued that a relatively high earnings capacity and a positive attitude towards

employment, influenced interviewees to assume a continuous pattern of return. Whilst employment is important to these women, due to financial considerations, enthusiasm for their jobs appears subdued. This may be related to both women's role as mothers and local labour market conditions.

8.2.3 GROUP B - Returns after all births - Nine women appear to conform to an "after all births" pattern of return in this study. Whilst it is not possible to be definite that these women will never bear further children, all interviewees returned to paid work after a substantial period of time away from the labour market. In all cases this was not less than four years and often sometimes longer. It has been suggested (Dex, 1984, p. 35) that the "return after all births pattern", is the most prevalent. Dex specifies that this option was adopted by 33% of women in the "Women and Employment" survey. In this study, however, the above pattern was not the most common. Although 27% of the total sample chose to return to paid work after completing their families, the majority of interviewees; almost 50%, returned to employment *before* completing their families. Why therefore should a return after all births pattern be limited in this study? To an extent this may be due to changes in patterns of employment which have occurred since the "Women and Employment" (1984) survey was conducted in 1980. As Martin and Roberts point out (1984, p.128), there is an increasing tendency for women to return to employment between births.

Nevertheless, it is possible to identify a divergence occurs between the two cohorts in this study. Of the nine interviewees who conform to this pattern of returns after all births, only two live in Kelvin/Thorpe, the remainder in Greenhill/Bradway. It thus seems probable that socio-economic factors are important determinants of behaviour. Dex has observed (1984,p.41) that there is a tendency for well educated women to delay returning to paid work until after all births. Furthermore, this appears to be related to household income as the "return after all births" pattern is greatest amongst

households which are relatively affluent (Dex, 1984, p. 45). Since well educated women generally live with partners who have a high earnings capacity, they may delay returning to paid employment due to limited financial pressure. These findings seem to be borne out in this study. Apart from the two interviewees living in Kelvin/Thorpe, the partners of interviewees who returned after all births, are generally amongst the highest paid in the sample (Table 8b).

Three factors appear to be relevant when considering why interviewees in this study exhibit an after all births pattern of return. First, women living in Greenhill/Bradway appear to have experienced limited financial pressure to work. This is not to suggest that they consider the financial benefits of paid work to be unimportant. Furthermore, as indicated in Chapter One (1.4), it cannot be assumed that wives have adequate access to household income. This factor may be pertinent even when husbands' earnings are relatively high. It is suggested, however, that interviewees do not appear to perceive financial incentives as instrumental in encouraging their return. One woman spoke of the desire to restart a career, another considered that she had been pressured into returning to work by her employer. For the majority, emotional and psychological well being appears to be the most significant factors. Women in Group B from Greenhill/Bradway spoke of boredom, isolation and lack of mental stimulation associated with being a housewife. That social needs may stimulate a return to work has been documented previously (for example, Yeandle, 1984, p. 59, Martin and Roberts, 1984, p. 158). In this study, however, the need for companionship and mental stimulation may have been temporarily fulfilled through other activities, such as unpaid voluntary work and leisure pursuits. Hence interviewees could delay returning to employment to fulfil their need for companionship and mental stimulation. For example, prior to gaining paid work Pam worked in the local school supervising children's use of computers. When all her children were school age, she decided to obtain paid work:

Interviewer: "Can you remember what made you want to go back to work at that time?"

Pam: "The lad had been at school and I had been on my own in the house for about a week or so and it was boring. You can only do so much housework. When he was little I used to take him to toddler group, swimming club and get out and meet people. I wasn't getting out as often. I wanted to get out of the house again."

Interviewer: "Did financial reasons come into it at all?"

Pam: "Not really. It was useful, but I think the first consideration was that it was boring at home on my own."

Similarly, Sandra gained mental stimulation from working in a Parents/Teachers Association. It should be noted that she did not re-enter the labour market until her youngest child had been at school for four years:

"I had been thinking for three or four years that I'd had enough time at home, that the children were growing up and that I could do with something for myself. Some people are happy to stay at home, be a mum and dust all day, take pride in the ironing. I am not like that. I have to have something to stimulate the brain. I started in a voluntary sense, joined the Parents Association three years ago, just for something different to do. After a while I decided maybe I could get some qualifications and started looking into training."

When considering the two interviewees in Group B who live in Kelvin/Thorpe, both women said that they returned to employment to alleviate boredom and isolation. On the other hand, it seems less probable that they should assume an "after all births" pattern of return due to limited financial pressure. Carol's husband has been unemployed for ten years, during which time she has borne her children. Teresa does not know her husband's earnings, but it may be assumed that these are variable as he is a self employed builder. What influences these women to assume an "after all births" pattern of return?

It is possible that interviewees from both Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway delayed returning to work due to factors associated with women's role in the family. For example, Carol's incentive to return to employment appears to have been limited

Table 8b

PROFILE OF "AFTER ALL BIRTHS" - RETURNSKelvin/Thorpe

Name	Age	Number of Children	Job	Hours	Earnings per Annum	Husband/ Partners Job	Husband/ Partners Earnings
Carol	34	4	School lunch time super	Part-time - 10 hours p/w	£1,700	Unemployed	Unemployment Benefit
Teresa	44	2	Supermarket - shop assist	Part-time - 20 hours p/w	£3,300	Self-employed Builder	Not Known

Greenhill/Bradway

Name	Age	Number of Children	Job	Hours	Earnings per Annum	Husband/ Partners Job	Husband/ Partners Earnings
Kate	33	2	Cleaner	Part-time - 4 hours p/w	£2,300	Sales Rep	£15,000 per annum
Julia	32	2	Childcare Assist	Full-time (temporary)	£9,600	Admin Officer - Civil Service	£17,000 per annum
Sandra	45	2	Telephone Sales	Part-time - 27½ hours p/w	£3,500	Insurance Broker	£28,000
Linda	37	2	Admin Officer - Civil Service	Full-time	£18,000	Admin Officer - Civil Service	£18,000
Pam	45	3	Admin Assist	Part-time - 16 hours p/w	£4,500	Computer Specialist	£30,000
Clare	36	1	Clerical	Full-time	£7,000	Computer Consultant	£8,000
Laura	39	2	Teacher	Part-time - 3 days p/w	£9,500	Management	£27,000

by her husband's unemployment and associated social security legislation. Although she is currently employed, only a relatively low proportion of her earnings are disregarded before the family's benefit level is reduced. As this study has indicated (Chapter 1, 1.3), state policy appears to reinforce women's role in the family and reduce their labour market participation. Carol purposely limits the hours she works, as it would be uneconomic to work for longer. As she points out:

Carol: "They don't give you any incentive to go out to work, but I don't like to be in the house all the time, especially as my husband is not working. I get a cheque for £23, they take £16. I get £7 really."

Problems surrounding childcare may also have proved limiting to interviewees' in both cohorts. It has been indicated that women from Kelvin/Thorpe may have experienced reduced access to maternity leave. It is not unreasonable, however, to suggest that interviewees in Group B living in Greenhill/Bradway, could have accepted maternity leave. Even so, these women did not appear to perceive maternity leave as a viable option. When asked why, it was common for interviewees to utter phrases such as "I don't think I had any choice" or "But there was just no alternative". Laura, a teacher, illustrates the role of ideological factors which may limit women's participation in the labour market. It may be assumed that her earnings would have been sufficient to permit paid childcare. Yet Laura said that maternity leave was inconceivable at the time, as no member of her social circle had taken this option:

Laura: "... it never entered my mind to hang onto my job. I resigned from my job, worked until I was six months pregnant and then decided I wanted to be full time mum."

Interviewer: "Why didn't it enter your mind?"

Laura: "Probably my own upbringing. First of all I think we thought we had family around and I didn't know of anybody, none of my friends I had at that time had children and had used a child minder. I didn't consider that as an option at all. We were in a position for me to give up work even though we had to tighten our belts a lot. My mum never worked and I have three older sisters, and they did the same sort of thing. None of us entered into that sort of way of dealing with home and work."

As Laura's household could maintain a reasonable standard of living, relying solely on one partner's earnings, she accepted her gender related role in the family: that of financial dependent responsible for the primary care of children. This was a role she was reluctant to dismiss, as she had no alternative model to follow.

Interviewees from both areas spoke of practical difficulties relating to childcare, such as inadequate and expensive childcare facilities. These difficulties are well documented (Cohen and Fraser, 1991) and, as this study has previously indicated (Chapter 1, 1.4), serve to reinforce ideological constraints. As Kate from Greenhill/Bradway illustrates:

Interviewer: "After you had your little boy, did you ever consider going back after maternity leave?"

Kate: "Yes, but I thought, I had decided to have him, he wasn't an accident, and I thought my duty was to be with him, rather than palm him off on somebody.

Interviewer: "Would it be possible to have a childminder?"

Kate: "I would consider it, but at the end of the day, the rates that they pay for looking after the children, it wouldn't be worth it, out of what I'd earn. Plus you have to be so careful in selecting people, even qualified childminders, I don't really trust them. I don't let them (children) out of my sight very often. I don't know why."

Practical problems associated with childcare appear to have been particularly limiting for Carol and Teresa of Kelvin/Thorpe, as both interviewees bore their children in rapid succession. Hence returning to employment between births was not readily considered:

Interviewer: "Did you think about getting a job after your first child?"

Carol: "I didn't, I had my second whilst the first was under two years and then the third one under two years. Four years between my first and third."

Thus it appears that an early return to employment was a limited option for women in both cohorts because of constraints associated with women's role in the family. It is possible that they are particularly limiting for interviewees living in Kelvin/Thorpe,

where financial incentives to return to work may be substantial. To combine employment with childcare and restrictions imposed by Social Security legislation, interviewees from Kelvin/Thorpe obtained employment in work which "fitted in" around childcare, or in which hours were deliberately reduced. They tended to work in the evenings and mornings as cleaners, or during lunch hours as school meals supervisors. This may be compared to women living in Greenhill/Bradway, where the relative affluence of households reinforced constraints associated with childcare. Hence they returned to paid work when children were older and at school, when they no longer needed constant maternal care. Part-time hours ensured that childcare was a limited problem. If necessary, it was provided by friends or childminders. Generally it was possible for most interviewees to return to employment which was the same, or similar, to previous jobs.

Local labour market conditions may have been another contributory factor which influenced interviewees to delay returning to the labour market. As discussed in the previous section, work in the public sector has been subject to financial constraints. It is not surprising to observe that interviewees who were employed in the sector, prior to childbearing, encountered problems in returning to employment. Julia previously worked for the local authority as a nursery nurse. She returned to work in similar employment with Sheffield Education Authority, but on a temporary basis. She considers temporary employment to be unsatisfactory, but describes the difficulties involved with obtaining work for the education authority:

Interviewer: "Are there the jobs (you want) in Sheffield?"

Julia: "There are one or two, they are few and far between and it isn't always easy to get into them ... and also with re-deployment about, if there is anything coming up then people with re-deployment rights get them. You are limited before you start. It is very difficult to get into education, at the moment."

Similarly, Sandra could not return to her previous employment as a manager in the steel industry. The decline of Sheffield's traditional industrial base has rendered her

skills obsolete. Alternatively, Pam relocated to Sheffield due to the demands of her husband's employment. She did not consider an early return to her previous employment in computing, because jobs were not available in Sheffield. Whilst employment in computing may have been generated by the relatively recent growth of the service industry, her skills are now outdated.

In summary, an "after all births" pattern of return appears to be primarily assumed by interviewees living in Greenhill/Bradway. Thus a diversity between the two cohorts may again be observed. It has been suggested that women from both areas may have assumed this pattern of return because factors associated with women's role in the family precluded an early return to work. When considering interviewees from Greenhill/Bradway, it also appears that these factors were reinforced by limited financial incentives in relation to the household and discouraging labour market conditions. Thus in general, they delayed returning to employment until children were school age. Alternatively, interviewees from Kelvin/Thorpe who may be assumed to have experienced some financial incentive, returned to employment which "fitted in" with the demands of childcare or social security legislation.

8.2.4 GROUP C - Returns Between Births - The third group of returners examined here are those who chose to return to paid work between bearing successive children. This pattern bears some similarities to the continuous workers discussed above. It differs in that interviewees did not work continuously, but rather their employment was often intermittent. Eleven interviewees, 33% of the sample, adopted a between births pattern of return, seven of whom were in paid work at the time of interview. This proportion appears to be larger than might be expected when taking into account Dex's findings. She suggests that only 12% (1984, p.36) of the sample from the "Women and Employment Survey" fall into this category. This increase may be due to changes which have occurred during the last fifteen years since conducting the

"Women and Employment Survey". Despite these caveats, this chapter has also suggested that there appears to be a relationship between the socio-economic position of the household and the pattern of return adopted. A divergence has been observed between the two cohorts in this study, with "continuous" and "after all births" pattern of return predominating amongst interviewees living in Greenhill/Bradway. "A between births" pattern of return, however, appears to be generally assumed by women living in both Kelvin/Thorpe (Table 8c). This section compares and contrast the experience of interviewees from both cohorts who conform to this latter pattern.

What factors motivate interviewees who return to paid work between births? Orientations towards returning to employment appear to vary between women living in Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway. Interviewees living in Kelvin/Thorpe are more likely to stress purely financial factors, whilst women living in Greenhill/Bradway tend to stress personal factors or a combination of both financial and personal factors. This may not be surprising, considering the socio-economic profile of the areas (Chapter 6, 6.7). A closer examination of interviewees' motives for return illustrates the diversity that exists between the two cohorts. This section first considers women from Kelvin/Thorpe, for whom financial orientations to work appear to be the most significant. It then discusses women from both cohorts who perceive that their employment participation is motivated by a combination of both financial and personal reasons.

Karen, who lives in Kelvin Flats, is adamant that her desire to return to paid work was motivated by financial need. She had suffered depression because she considered that her housing conditions were unsatisfactory, a perception which does not appear to be unjustified. Karen was prompted to return to paid work in order to buy a house. She spoke of her decision in this way:

Karen: "There is nowhere for them (children) to play. All right, I've got a big place here, but that is inside. There is no outdoor space as such, where they can play. OK. you've got your balcony, but you have got to

put your rubbish on there because there is nowhere else to put your rubbish. I am not having them playing around rubbish, you know ... also just about every other flat has got a dog and many a time I've let the kids out on the balcony on their own, but there is that many dogs that can come snapping at you. There is dog muck all over the balconies, kids walk in it, and noise, there is just about everything disadvantageous about living in a place like this..."

Interviewer: "What made you think about going back to work?"

A.H.: Well, the main problem was because I was going through a few emotional problems, connected with living on Kelvin. I wanted to get off because there is nowhere for these (children) to play. I was going to see a psychiatric nurse, but basically I never got to see this nurse in the end because they were so long getting through to them. I thought that's it, ... I got up and did something for myself ... I went down to the Job Centre most days and eventually got this job, you know. The reason were, I needed the money, my idea was to get some money together to buy a house, because I couldn't get one off the council."

Other interviewees living in Kelvin/Thorpe illustrate the importance of financial factors in determining a return to paid work. For example, Donna and Rose are both married to men who earn approximately £250 per week. As both women have large families, five and four children respectively, it is possible that husbands' wages may be insufficient to support the household. Furthermore, Donna and Rose both stress the value of financial independence, although both also maintain that financial control is operated jointly in the household. On the other hand, Jean illustrates the importance of financial independence to women who may not have control over household income and where access to financial resources may be limited (Pahl, 1983). Household finance was administered through an allowance system, where Jean is allocated a set sum of money by her husband in order to pay for outgoings. She cannot "borrow" extra money from her husband if the allowance is insufficient, although he may "borrow" money from her. Jean explains the situation:

Interviewer: "What sort of things do you spend your money on?"

Jean: "On these two (children) coats and shoes. I'd struggle. If I weren't working they wouldn't be able to have as much as they do. School trips and things, I pay for them all. He (husband) gives me mine and that's it. I have to do everything, do bills, make sure everything is paid. He just gives me mine and that's it. As long as my rent is paid. I pay electric bills, 'phone bills, if he's got enough he'll pay half and if not, I have to pay it all."

Interviewer: "Do you know how much he earns?"

Jean: No, it is usually different every week, depending on what jobs he's got on. I always know if he's had a good week somehow, and I always know when he's had a bad week, because he tells me. I'm not bothered. So long as he's got enough to spend on himself, I'm not bothered and he doesn't come to me."

Thus financial factors appear initially to have motivated these four interviewees to return to employment, and to continue in paid work. The importance of financial factors may relate to both socio-economic position of the household and household dynamics. It is not the intention of this study, however, to suggest that these women did not gain personal satisfaction from employment. All stated that they enjoyed their current jobs, gaining both social contact and increased self esteem.

That personal, as well as financial factors, may determine a return to employment is indicated by a further five women in this group. These women live in both Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway and illustrate how women's orientation to work may change during time, as personal circumstances alter. For example, Lorna's initial return to paid work was motivated by the need to alleviate the boredom and isolation she experienced as the mother of a new baby. As her daughter grew older, a subsequent return was associated with both social and financial reasons:

It did give me two nights away from the drudgery of home, of the routine. So I did get to meet different people, it was a bit like going out socially, because I never went anywhere socially. My husband was in engineering, he worked long hours for very little pay. So the money came in handy, it used to buy Melanie's (daughter) clothes, I used it for Melanie. It was hard in the 1970s, it was hard for everyone. Friends used to say the same, it was a struggle to make ends meet. It was very hard for a long time."

After another birth, Lorna's decision to return to paid work appears to be largely for psychological needs:

Interviewer: "Why did you want that job?"

Lorna: "Emotional, the constant threat of miscarriage with Kirsty, the emotional trauma and emotional troubles the marriage had been put through, with

my husbands accident. I needed something, because Kirsty (daughter) was hyperactive, she didn't sleep, she cried constantly day and night, I just needed something."

In common with other patterns of return examined in this chapter, the "between births" pattern of return appears to be influenced by factors associated with socio-economic status of the household and women's role in the family. This may be observed when considering the employment strategy developed by these interviewees. Only Jane and Penny, from Greenhill/Bradway, returned to work full-time. Although childcare is generally provided by relatives, comparatively high household incomes would appear to indicate that formal paid care can be obtained if necessary (Table 8c). On the other hand, the remainder of Group C worked part-time, but only in hours which were described as "fitting in" with available childcare. This was always provided by informal sources, which appears to reflect the inter-relationship of ideological and practical constraints surrounding childcare (Chapter 1, 1.2.2). On occasions where childcare was not provided by partners, other sources of informal care were secured, usually from close female relatives. For example, care was provided by mothers, mothers-in-law and sisters. Reliance on informal childcare, however, had the effect of restricting availability for work and consequently the type of occupation gained. Where female relatives were available for childminding, interviewees obtained day time employment. Alternatively, where there was no female relative to care for children, hours of employment corresponded to the availability of partners. Hours worked were early mornings, evenings, nights and week-ends, in short, times when partners were not themselves working. The type of employment gained reflected the hours worked. Day time employment was often similar to that experienced by interviewees prior to childbearing. Employment which involved more unsociable hours was typically in cleaning and catering. Loma worked for a number of years as a waitress during the evenings. She sums up the combination of childcare constraints that influenced her to work these hours:

Interviewer: "Would you have thought at that time about taking a job during the day?"

Lorna: "I would have done if I could have found someone to have her (child). The friends that we had, either had small children themselves, or they were working. I couldn't afford childcare out of this area. I couldn't afford the travelling expenses that would be involved, and I would think that it was fair to drag a small child out in the early mornings, in the winter waiting for buses that didn't turn up, to get to childcare. So it wasn't really an option. My mum wasn't well enough to have her, and my mother-in-law was getting on and didn't want to. But no, maybe my maternal instincts were too strong and still are."

Furthermore, acquiring more than one job at any one time, was not an uncommon experience for women living in Kelvin/Thorpe. It may also be emphasised that the ability of these interviewees to return to Sheffield's labour market, appears to be aided by the increasing prevalence of low grade employment in the service sector (Chapter Six).

As stated previously, interviewees who chose to return between births, displayed a intermittent pattern of return. Reliance on informal childcare also appears to structure the pattern of interviewees return in two ways. First, disruptions in labour market behaviour were often caused by alterations in childcare, particularly when a carer was no longer available because of other responsibilities. Second, the propensity for interviewees to obtain low grade jobs contributed towards disruptions, as employment was often temporary. Even so, despite disruptions, many interviewees displayed a considerable commitment to the labour market. When employment was more permanent and childcare reliable, they often worked in individual jobs for many years. For example, Lorna and Jane have worked for their present employers for the last five years, whilst Jenny and Donna have been in the same employment for two years. This approach might be expected from interviewees living in Greenhill/Bradway, who showed a commitment to the labour market prior to childbearing. It is perhaps surprising for interviewees living in Kelvin/Thorpe, where employment experience, prior to childbearing, was limited. It is argued above (Chapter 7, 7.3) that limited work experience may in part have been due to working class expectations with regard to early motherhood, and the perceived desirability of bearing children compared to employment. It is therefore somewhat ironic that the economic and emotional stress

Table 8c

PROFILE OF "IN BETWEEN BIRTHS" - RETURNSKelvin/Thorpe

Name	Age	Number of Children	Job	Hours	Earnings per Annum	Husband/ Partners Job	Husband/ Partners Earnings
Karen	25	2	1. Sales Assist 2. Cleaner	Part-time - 18 hours p/w	£2,750	Warehouse Foreman	£12,000
Lorna	40	2	1. Cleaner 2. Meals Super	Part-time - 21 hours p/w	£3,400	Management	Not Known
Donna	37	5	Care Assist	Part-time - 20 hours p/w	£4,300	Driver	£12,000
Jean	35	3	1. Cleaner 2. Bar Maid	Part-time - 17 hours p/w	£2,500	Self-employed Builder	Not Known
Rose	31	4	Home Help	Part-time - 32 hours p/w	£7,000	Skilled Craftsman	£12,000

Greenhill/Bradway

Name	Age	Number of Children	Job	Hours	Earnings per Annum	Husband/ Partners Job	Husband/ Partners Earnings
Jane	37	2	Lecturer - Further Ed	Full-time	£17,000	Lecturer - Further Ed	£23,000
Penny	32	2	Clerical	Part-time - 20 hours p/w	£3,500	Retired	Previously £15,000

related to motherhood should have encouraged these women to experience a strong attachment to the labour market.

In summary, interviewees returning to employment between births appear to have been motivated by both economic and personal reasons. As with previous groups, household finance seems largely responsible for structuring the particular pattern of return. Returning between births is generally a pattern assumed by interviewees whose household income is not sufficient to allow women to delay a return for any length of time. Consequently, it was adopted by both interviewees in Kelvin/Thorpe, and some interviewees in lower income households in Greenhill/Bradway.

8.3 SPATIALLY RELATED DETERMINANTS - This chapter has examined a variety of constraints and incentives which determine patterns of return. These factors have been largely related to women's role in the family, although some indication has been given concerning the structuring effect of the local labour market. This chapter now illustrates in more depth, socio-economic factors which appear to indicate a diversity in labour market behaviour between women living in Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway. It will discuss methods of job search and the effect of household location on returning to paid employment.

8.3.1 Job Search Behaviour - Morris has stated (1994, p.118) that one unsatisfactory aspect of the polarisation thesis, has been the lack of explanation concerning why some workers are more capable of finding employment than others. She suggests that informal methods of recruitment and personal contacts may provide an answer. This study appears to confirm this view, as the discussion below illustrates.

Kelvin/Thorpe - Interviews indicate that in Kelvin/Thorpe the employed tend to form a network. Only two interviewees in Kelvin/Thorpe had no experience of paid employment since childbearing. The remaining twelve women had obtained a total of approximately thirty three jobs, only eight of which were gained through formal job channels, for example, the Job Centre or newspaper. The other twenty five jobs were obtained through the influence of family, friends, neighbours or other personal contacts. These could be gained through either direct or indirect means. Direct means involved obtaining employment through contacts who were employed in a place of work where vacancies were available. Indirect information came through contacts who knew members of the employed who possessed knowledge of job vacancies: "a friend of a friend". Unsurprisingly, membership of this network means that the sample often obtained employment working with other family members or friends. Similarly, this informal method of job search also provides information concerning paid work inside the home, as child minders, although this occurs through personal contact with employed women who needed childcare.

Access to this network appears to be instrumental in permitting interviewees to return to paid work after childbearing. For example, Rose has held approximately four jobs since bearing children. Each job has been obtained either through friends, or on one occasion, her mother. Apart from one sister, all of Rose's many relatives including both parents are in employment. This is also true of most of her friends. It would appear that where women are part of a social network which is in employment, they too have enhanced opportunity for obtaining paid jobs. The converse also seems to be true. Women whose family and extended social network are largely unemployed, lack informal access to information concerning employment. Their employment opportunities are therefore reduced. For example, Sharon has had no experience of paid employment since leaving work to have her child, despite searching for work for two years. Her partner is unemployed, which as stated above largely precludes employment for her if benefit is claimed together. Even so, social contact with the

employed is restricted. Only her father is working, her mother has no job and her brother has been unemployed since leaving school. Many neighbours living on Kelvin are unemployed and friends are "all on the dole". Thus Sharon's ability to obtain employment through informal channels is limited.

Data from the Kelvin/Thorpe Skills Survey (1993, p.51), appears to confirm that informal methods of job search are frequently utilised. For example, 38% of employed women and 41% of unemployed women state that they searched for jobs by "word of mouth". This study has suggested that obtaining employment depends on access to an employed social network. It may be significant that a lower proportion of employed women used this method, compared to unemployed women. In an area of high employment, this method of job search may be expected to be relatively unsuccessful. Morris's study of Hartlepool similarly indicates the importance of informal job search methods (1994, p. 119). She states that whilst it accounts for one third of all methods of job search for both men and women, women rely on this method more than men. The most important informal sources for women are relatives, friends and acquaintances. Morris also confirms that the employment status of informants is crucial, the most successful job search occurring when the informant is employed. Therefore when family and friends tend to be unemployed, individuals have a reduced chance of obtaining employment.

"It is fairly clear, then, that the concentration of unemployment in the kinship and friendship networks of the unemployed is likely to reduce their chances of finding work in relation to those with stronger contacts in the world of employment." (Morris, 1994, p.119)

Greenhill/Bradway - On the other hand, interviewees from Greenhill/Bradway are less reliant on personal contacts to gain employment after childbearing. In comparison to their counterparts in Kelvin/Thorpe, they are more likely to use a wider range of job search methods. For example, excluding continuous workers and one woman who had not been employed since childbearing, twelve interviewees had

experience of approximately thirty jobs. Only eight jobs, however, were gained by informal methods. Furthermore, in four cases employers initiated the contact, suggesting that interviewees return to their previous jobs. This diversity between the two cohorts is further emphasised, when considering the range of methods utilised. Although eleven jobs were obtained through more obvious channels, such as the local newspaper, interviewees were also successful in gaining employment by self promotion. For example, seven jobs were gained by self advertisement, letters to employers or speculative contact with employers.

Why does this variation in job search method occur? It is possible that this may be related to the type of employment sought. For example, interviewees who adopt a "between births pattern of return", often seek work which is low grade, part-time and sometimes performed in unsociable hours in order to "fit in" with childcare responsibilities. In the case of women from Kelvin/Thorpe, this type of employment may also reflect lack of educational qualifications and job training. Clearly, many interviewees in Greenhill/Bradway are not prepared to work in low grade employment, but seek work of a similar nature to that previously experienced. Thus recruitment through personal contacts is not necessarily appropriate. Furthermore, it has been indicated (Burchell et al, 1994, p.302) that women part-time workers have a higher propensity to gain employment through friends and family, than women full-time workers. As full-time jobs were only experienced by women in Greenhill/Bradway, this may also account for the variation in job search method. Diversity of job search methods appears to be based on differing employment requirements. The effect is that job search for women in Greenhill/Bradway, unlike their counterparts in Kelvin/Thorpe, is not subject to area based constraints such as unemployment.

8.3.2 Household Location - Spatial variations are further emphasised, when considering the effect of an area's reputation on labour market participation.

Interviewees were asked if they considered that their postal address influenced job opportunities. Whilst interviewees' impressions concerning the perceptions of employers is highly subjective, these may offer an insight into how women view their position in the local labour market. Not surprisingly a wide diversity of opinion between the two cohorts was apparent. It is not a question readily understood by interviewees living in Greenhill/Bradway, who for the most part, had never considered that employers would be affected by an applicant's address. After explaining that employers may negatively discriminate against applicants because of their postal address, no one reported personal experience of this. In fact, the vast majority of interviewees living in Greenhill/Bradway did not think that this would occur. Whilst some women admitted that discrimination was possible, it was thought more likely that employers would discriminate positively, in favour of applicants from Greenhill/Bradway.

"... a lot of firms, if you go for an interviewee, one of the first questions they ask is where you live. If I said "I live in Beauchief", they would think, "that is a nice area". If I said I came from Kelvin, they think, "right on your bike".

A similar attitude was expressed by interviewees living in Netherthorpe and Upperthorpe, who thought it unlikely that their address would cause employer discrimination. This contrasts with interviewees living in Kelvin, all of whom thought that their address would produce a discriminatory attitude from employers. Two claimed that previously, they had been unsuccessful in obtaining employment solely because of living on Kelvin. For example:

Karen: "As soon as I have written a letter (of application), and I have written where I live, I have not heard anything from them. And also when I have been for interviews, these people say 'well!' I never put Kelvin Flats on my letters of application (now), because I know I won't hear anything. So I have gone to an interview to give them the opportunity to see me first, rather than judging what sort of person I am from where I live. Their faces dropped, I look for it and I have seen it, their face drops when you say I live at Kelvin."

As indicated in (Chapter Six, 6.8), Kelvin Flats has a negative reputation in Sheffield

which is partially due to the detrimental publicity from the local press. Understandably, people living on the flats are sensitive concerning this reputation and assume that they are the subject of prejudice from employers. Even so, the perception that employers discriminate against residents living on Kelvin Flats, does not appear unfounded. For example, a number of interviewees claim to have experience of direct discrimination when trying to obtain credit. Again this appears to be related to postal address, as credit refusal was a common experience for those living on the flats. It is not unreasonable to assume that employers may have a similarly jaundiced view of Kelvin's inhabitants, causing them to discriminate against those living in the locality. Certainly, there is some evidence to suggest that discrimination exists (Lawless, Smith and Short, 1993, p.68).

On the other hand, failure to gain paid employment may be due to individual factors, such as lack of skill or lack of confidence and self esteem in interviews. For some interviewees, maintaining confidence and self esteem may have been difficult because of feelings of shame attached to living on Kelvin and the strain of justifying themselves in the face of prejudice:

Chris: "If you're sat in the hairdressers, and they say, 'Do you live round here?'. I say, 'Oh yea, I live on Upperthorpe'. Then I think, why did you do that? You know, don't be ashamed, but you are. Even though I know that I am not bad, I am not whatever people think people are on Kelvin, it still makes me feel ashamed, and I shouldn't really."

Pat: "...a lot of people think it is a rough area because I mean, there is a lot of people who say, 'Oh what are you living on Kelvin for?' A lot of people who live on here are decent people, but they think everybody is rough and ready because they come from Kelvin. We are not, we are just normal people."

It seems reasonable to conclude that interviewees living on Kelvin/Flats experience the reputation of the flats as a barrier to employment when returning to paid employment. The prejudice of employers, compounded by women's lowered self esteem related to living on Kelvin Flats, may present difficult obstacles to overcome.

To sum up, methods of job search vary between women living in the two areas because of the differing type of employment sought. Women in Greenhill/Bradway tend to utilise formal methods of job search, whilst their counterparts in Kelvin/Thorpe use informal methods. Thus women in Kelvin/Thorpe may encounter barriers to employment, if social networks are largely confined to the unemployed. Spatial constraints to employment are also apparent when considering the effect of an area's reputation, as employment opportunities may be reduced due to employer discrimination.

8.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has analysed three patterns of return to employment after childbearing. It has been suggested that divisions exist between interviewees living in Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway. These divisions particularly reflect: an individual's educational and job related skills and qualifications, socio-economic position of household, women's role in the family and local labour market conditions. When considering women living in Greenhill/Bradway, a combination of relatively high levels of both individual job related skills and household income generally influence women to return to employment either "continuously" or "after all births". Whilst local labour market conditions may prove to be discouraging, employment is usually gained in jobs which are the same or similar to those experienced prior to childbirth. Alternatively, women living in Kelvin/Thorpe, who possess both limited job related skills and household income, generally return to employment "between all births". Employment is usually gained in low grade jobs within the service sector. The diversity which exists between the two cohorts. is further emphasised by other socio-economic factors: job search and household location.

CONCLUSION

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This final chapter will begin by briefly reviewing themes which have dominated this study. It will examine these in the context of interviewees' employment experiences, prior to childbearing, as these may be considered to be illustrative. This study has also utilised these concepts to examine the experience of interviewees who had successfully returned to the labour market at the time of interview (Chapter Eight). Not all interviewees, however, had obtained a job at the time of interview. This chapter will thus analyse the experience of these women, concerning re-entry to paid work, and consider whether a process of social polarisation appears to exist between interviewees living in Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway.

This study has explored the experience of returning to work, after childbearing, within a specific local labour market: Sheffield. A comparative approach has been adopted focusing on two cohorts of women living in spatially segregated areas of the city: Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway. The study has examined commonalities and dissimilarities between the two cohorts, suggesting that these exist in relation to both the individual and household. Whilst women may experience factors in common due to their shared experience as women and gender related determinants, dissimilarities may reflect socio-economic status. Consequently the inter-relating effects of patriarchy and class on women's choices have also been indicated. To take the example of interviewees' employment prior to childbearing, it has been argued (Chapter Seven, 7.3) that a relatively large diversity of experience appears to exist between the two cohorts in relation to this issue. Generally, women living in Kelvin/Thorpe worked in low grade, low

paid employment. Often they were employed for only limited periods before leaving to bear children. Alternatively, women in Greenhill/Bradway tended to be employed for relatively lengthy periods before childbearing. They often worked in comparatively well paid jobs, sometimes obtaining managerial and professional occupations.

Bearing in mind the problems associated with determining women's class position (Chapter Five, 5.5), it seems reasonable to suggest that this diversity of employment experience may be associated with differing socio-economic status. This may relate both to interviewees' occupations and to class status whilst children. As indicated (Chapter Seven, 7.2) this latter factor may affect educational experience and hence future employment. On the other hand, the study has also identified apparent similarities between the two cohorts with regard to employment prior to childbearing (Chapter Seven, 7.3). It has been argued that this may be associated with gender related determinants. Interviewees appear to have been employed, prior to childbearing, in jobs generally perceived as "women's work". Thus the effects of horizontal segregation have been identified. Horizontal segregation may be the consequence of a variety of factors such as the "gendering" of women's employment (Chapter Two, 2.3.3). This process of "gendering" may be structured in the labour market by, for example, employers who perceive women's primary role as being in the family not the labour market (Chapter Two, 2.3.1). It is also suggested, however, that the effects of horizontal segregation were partially ameliorated by factors associated with the local labour market. Women working in Sheffield's traditional industries were employed in industrial sectors associated with predominantly male employment. Even so, vertical segregation ensured that interviewees in these industries obtained employment which appears to have been at a lower grade than male employees. One factor which may contribute to vertical segregation is women's exclusion from managerial positions by male management (Chapter Two, 2.3.3). This may reflect both organisational and attitudinal barriers to women's career progression. It appears that, to an extent, both vertical and horizontal

segregation may be the product of patriarchal relations.

9.2 SOCIAL POLARISATION - It was indicated that prior to this study two comparative quantitative surveys were conducted in relation to Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway (Chapter 5, 5.2.1). These surveys were concerned with the educational qualifications, skills, employment aspirations and training needs of residents in the two areas. It has been shown that differing levels of employment occur within the two study areas. Whilst both male and female employment appear to be the norm in Greenhill/Bradway, high levels of unemployment are observable in Kelvin/Thorpe. This is also reflected in labour market participation rates for women returners (Chapter 6.6). It thus seemed appropriate that women returning to the labour market in Sheffield should be examined within the wider debate of social polarisation (Chapter 5, 5.2). This debate is concerned with the divide which occurs between employed and unemployed households, and the resultant division in living standards.

As this study is situated within a local area particular attention was paid to local labour market studies which explicitly consider social polarisation. For example, Morris's data concerning Hartlepool suggests that not only does social polarisation exist between employed and unemployed households, but that it is also spatially distributed. Unemployment is greater in areas of local authority housing, particularly in unpopular estates, compared to owner occupied housing. It has been proposed that the divergent employment pattern identified between Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway may indicate a process of social polarisation (Chapter 6, 6.6). It thus seems necessary to examine why women living in Greenhill/Bradway tend to experience limited difficulties when returning to the labour market, when some women living in Kelvin/Thorpe appear to have more profound problems.

Before turning to this question it seems relevant to consider a further issue related to

social polarisation. It has been argued (Buck, 1992, p.9) that one aspect of the social polarisation thesis is the concept of an "underclass", a stratum of individuals existing below the rest of society. This debate is referred to because the underclass may be associated with lack of employment:

"... who are excluded, or exclude themselves, from many material benefits of society, and whose exclusion depends to a substantial degree on their non-participation in the labour market." (Buck, 1992, p.9)

It is beyond the scope of this study to offer an in-depth discussion of this concept and the surrounding debate. Rather it will briefly indicate some of the main issues. The concept of an underclass appears to have a relatively long history. It underpinned Victorian views concerning poverty and was associated with moral decline and the existence of "dangerous classes" (Morris, 1994, p.115). During the 1980s it emerged with renewed vigour, both in the United States and Britain, often connected to high levels of unemployment. The existence of the underclass tends to be explained in either cultural or structural terms, each synonymous with a particular political stance (Morris, 1993a, p.404). Thus theorists such as Murray, have emphasised cultural factors. He has implied that the growth of the underclass may be related to high rates of illegitimacy and criminal behaviour (Morris, 1993a, p.404; Buck, 1992, p.9). This sentiment may be seen to complement the views of some within the Conservative "new right" and their concerns about a "dependency culture". This perspective tends to blame an over generous welfare state for encouraging individual reliance on benefits, rather than unemployment. Other commentators, for example Wilson, argue that structural factors are responsible for creating an underclass. In this respect he has identified the influence of economic restructuring on unemployment (Morris, 1994, p.83). This view would equate with those holding "liberal" political stances. British sociologists have also attempted to integrate the concept of an underclass into conventional stratification theory. This has received some criticism (Morris and Irwin, 1992, p.403; Smith, 1992, p.5) in relation to stability of underclass membership and participation in the labour market. Clearly, defining and

explaining the "underclass" is problematic. It is also possible to argue that the idea of an underclass is not a completely adequate tool for examining and understanding social reality:

"... the notion of the underclass is an oversimplification, contaminated by its use as a tool of political rhetoric, which has been too readily applied to complex social phenomena." (Morris, 1993a, p.411)

It may be particularly appropriate, however, to suggest that the concept of an underclass does not lend itself to an analysis of women's labour market behaviour. Evidence in this study suggests that a range of inter-relating factors, which exist at *both* a cultural and structural level, appear to influence women's labour market participation. The chapter will proceed to consider some of these factors in relation to "non-returners" living in both Greenhill/Bradway and Kelvin/Thorpe.

9.3 NON-RETURNERS

As stated previously (Chapter Five, 5.4.4-5.4.5), contact with interviewees was gained through two quantitative surveys which were conducted prior to this study. Thirty women were contacted, fifteen in employment and fifteen without paid employment, at the time of the quantitative surveys. This latter group of "non-returners" consisted of interviewees from both areas, eight living in Kelvin/Thorpe and seven from Greenhill/Bradway. (It should be pointed out that at the time of the quantitative survey six "non-returners", three from each area, had previously returned to work but subsequently left employment). Interviews for this study occurred approximately one year after the initial quantitative surveys. It is thus possible to provide some limited longitudinal data. During the year following the quantitative survey, five women obtained employment. It may also be significant that four of the five women who returned to the labour market live in Greenhill/Bradway. What factors may have contributed to these women gaining

employment, whilst eleven interviewees failed to return to the labour market?

9.3.1 Employment Status of Partners - As social polarisation appears to relate to employment within households, it seems relevant to consider the employment status of partners. This is also applicable as it has been suggested that women living with unemployed partners have a greater tendency to be unemployed themselves, when compared with women living with employed partners (Chapter One, 1.3). The effect of the benefit system, combined with women's low earnings, may discourage women living with unemployed partners from obtaining employment. Thus women might consider working and disclaiming benefit, but generally earnings may be insufficient to support the household. Perhaps not unexpectedly, all five women who returned to paid work after the quantitative survey live with partners who are employed. This seems especially relevant because, with only one exception, all returners in this study are living with partners who are in employment.

It is also possible to identify a stark diversity between the two study areas in relation to partners' employment status. All "non- returners" from Greenhill/Bradway live with employed partners, whilst only one "non-returner" from Kelvin/Thorpe lives with a partner who is in employment. All remaining "non-returners" from Kelvin/Thorpe live with unemployed partners. Significantly the only "non-returner" from Kelvin/Thorpe to obtain employment after the quantitative survey, is also the only "non-returner" in this cohort to live with an employed partner. It seems reasonable to suggest that lower rates of return to employment, which appear to be experienced by women from Kelvin/Thorpe in comparison to their counterparts from Greenhill/Bradway, may be associated with differing levels of male employment in the two study areas.

This appears to be substantiated by interviews with "non-returners" in Kelvin/Thorpe.

Evidence suggests that interviewees consider the combination of benefit legislation and their capacity for obtaining only limited earnings, as a disincentive to returning to employment. This may be illustrated by Chris who would be prepared to return to work full-time whilst her unemployed husband remained at home to care for children. She does not, however, consider that her former occupation, clerical work, would provide a sufficient wage to support the household:

Chris: "I wouldn't be able to earn enough for Joe (husband) to stop working ... not the wages that my type of job you get paid. So I mean, that's not an option, not at all for him to stay at home and look after the kids. I mean, he'd be very willing to, we've spoken about it before, but I just wouldn't be able to find a job that would be worthwhile doing that ... if I'm reading the papers and I get to that section (jobs), well I look more for Joe (husband) than for me. But I do look at the ones that I could do. You know, I think, I could do that. But then I look at the salary per annum and it's like £4,000 or something and I think, well you know, I can't feed our Ben (young son) on that, never mind about the rest."

When considering a return to employment, women living with unemployed partners may perceive gender roles within the family as a further constraint. It has been suggested, for example, that husbands may discourage wives from obtaining work in order to maintain authority in the family (Chapter One, 1.2.1). Alternatively, women living with unemployed partners may be unwilling to obtain employment because they perceive that this may adversely affect husbands' self esteem (Davies et al, 1994, p.155). It is possible that this may provide sufficient inner conflict to provide a further disincentive in relation to re-entry to the labour market.

9.3.2 Childcare - It has been indicated that a return to employment for women living in both Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway may be constrained by their role in the family, as primary carers of children (Chapter One, 1.2.2). An inter- relationship of factors associated with this role and socio-economic status, may influence patterns of return, type of job obtained and hours worked (Chapter Eight, 8.2.2 - 8.2.4). Not unexpectedly, issues relating to childcare appear significant to "non-returners". All "non-returners"

consider that they cannot afford formal paid childcare, particularly as many have pre-school age children needing substantial care. Informal child care is not always possible and interviewees are understandably reluctant to impose on friends and relatives. Even when informal care is available it may be uncertain. This point is demonstrated by the experience of three "non-returners". These three women had returned to paid work previously, as childcare was available from relatives and partners. As the personal circumstances of carers changed, however, childcare became unavailable. Consequently, interviewees appeared to have little alternative but to leave their jobs.

Thus problems associated with childcare may affect the employment participation of women living in both Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway. It is possible, however, to argue that women living with unemployed partners in Kelvin/Thorpe may perceive childcare as more problematic than women living in Greenhill/Bradway. Morris (1994b, p.122) indicates that women living with unemployed partners are likely to cite childcare as a potential barrier to employment, when women with similar childcare responsibilities tend to be in paid employment. It is possible that labour market constraints associated with male unemployment and limited affordable childcare, may reinforce ideological beliefs concerning women's "place" in the family. Lisa, for example, requires night-time employment being reluctant to obtain paid work during the day. She feels that she needs to be available to care for her youngest child and does not want her husband, or others, to have responsibility for day time care. When it is considered that this child is eight years old, it might be suggested that her reluctance to share childcare is somewhat misplaced.

To sum up, women from both Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway may experience constraints associated with the sexual division of labour when returning to employment. Multiple barriers, however, are experienced by women living in Kelvin/Thorpe. This combination of barriers is indicated by Chris. She illustrates how these factors may delay

a return to employment, so that it becomes an uncertain option for the future:

Interviewer: "When do you think you'd like to return to work?"

Chris: "When Joe (husband) can find himself a full-time job. I mean I can't work while he's on social. Well, I could work but it's not worth us while really. So when Joe finds a job and when Ben's at nursery, then I'll look for one. So it's like about three or four years time really, if (stressed by Chris) he's working by then."

9.3.3 Educational Qualifications and Job Related Skills - As discussed in Chapter Seven (7.2 - 7.3) there is a marked differentiation between the two cohorts in relation to educational qualifications and job related skills. Women living in Kelvin/Thorpe possess limited educational qualifications and job related skills, whilst their counterparts in Greenhill/Bradway are relatively well qualified. This factor may further contribute towards contrasting levels of return between the two areas (Chapter Six, 6.6). Interviews appear to substantiate this view, with non-returners living in Kelvin/Thorpe perceiving their lack of qualifications as a hindrance to obtaining paid work. For example, Sharon has been searching for employment for a year without success:

Interviewer: "How often do you go to the job centre?"

Sharon: "Every two weeks. There's nothing there. Only with GCSE's and I can't do them. There's nowhere else to try... I think it's because I've got no qualifications anyway. So I can't get anywhere. It's exams what their looking for and I ain't got none of them."

9.3.4 Spatially Related Determinants - Chapter Eight has suggested that spatially related determinants (8.3) may also have a differential effect on women's return to work. This may be illustrated when considering job search and employers' perceptions. Whilst formal methods are preferred by women living in Greenhill/Bradway, informal networks assume importance for women in Kelvin/Thorpe. In an area of high unemployment this

may prove to be yet another barrier to acquiring paid work. Opportunities for employment may be further reduced for women living in Kelvin/Thorpe due to employer discrimination. This factor is related to the negative reputation of the Flats. Alternatively, there is little evidence to suggest that women living in Greenhill/Bradway experience their address as a liability in the labour market. If anything, the reverse appears to be true.

9.4 CONCLUSION

Returning to the labour market in Sheffield is clearly possible for women living in both Kelvin/Thorpe and Greenhill/Bradway. It seems reasonable to state, however, that re-entry to the labour market after childbearing is more problematic for women living in Kelvin/Thorpe, than their counterparts in Greenhill/Bradway. The former appear to experience an inter-relationship of multiple constraints which are not encountered by women in Greenhill/Bradway. This seems to account for the divergence in labour market participation between the two cohorts. It is also possible that the probability of returning to work for some women in Kelvin/Thorpe is relatively non-existent. The multiplicity of constraints discussed in this chapter may provide an almost insurmountable barrier to employment. Perhaps this is best illustrated by briefly considering Janet, a "non-returner" from Kelvin/Thorpe. During the interview Janet appeared extremely lethargic and shy. She could hardly bring herself to speak above a whisper and avoided eye contact, generally looking at the floor. She explained how she had left school without any qualifications and, after being unemployed for a year, obtained some work related experience on an Employment Training scheme. Her training was interrupted by her first pregnancy when she was nineteen. Obtaining subsequent paid work has not been feasible due to the birth of four further children within the last six years and her partner's unemployment. She now contemplates a further pregnancy, perhaps the only creative option available. It is perhaps not surprising that during the empirical stage of this study,

an air of unreality sometimes pervaded interviews with non-returners in Kelvin/Thorpe. It was difficult to avoid the impression that paid work was not a "real" option to these women, but rather a desirable fantasy.

It would be comforting at this point to offer some policy recommendations which would make employment an obtainable reality in these women's lives. Policy recommendations tend to offer childcare provision and training schemes as the panacea for women's labour market difficulties, particularly when attempting to return to employment. This study does not wish to suggest that these initiatives are not welcome or potentially effective. It seems, however, that for many non-returners in Kelvin/Thorpe and possibly similar areas of high unemployment, these initiatives may be insufficient. Further policy developments related to the social security system may be necessary. As McLaughlin (1991, p.505) points out, a variety of reforms may be required which would both encourage and facilitate women living with unemployed partners to obtain paid work. For example, (McLaughlin, 1991, p.505-506) a substantial increase in disregarded earnings may be needed and this should be combined with a commitment to minimise pay differentials between 'men's jobs' and 'women's jobs'. A system of transitional benefits may also be essential. This would ensure that additional benefits would continue until, for example, tax codes were adjusted. Thus disruptions to family income would be minimised.

It seems probable, however, that many women in a similar position to "non-returners" in Kelvin/Thorpe may not experience employment in the foreseeable future. Consequently, policies appear to be needed which offer alternatives to paid work. It may be necessary to develop initiatives whereby women living in areas of deprivation may become more integrated in the community, where they encounter the companionship, structure and self esteem that emerge through paid work. It thus seems appropriate to suggest that future research should be directed towards this issue in order to inform policy developments.

One example of potential research in which I would have an interest is an examination of women and unpaid work. Research experience relating to a residualised housing estate in York (Cole and Smith, 1994), indicates the benefits that may be gained by unemployed women who participate in unpaid work. Some women, for example, participated actively in developing new estate management structures on the estate. In interviews they spoke of the gains they had received from this work. They mentioned mental stimulation, feelings of increased self worth and an enhanced capacity to cope with personal problems. For some it was also perceived as a means of enhancing their prospects of gaining paid work. Of course unpaid work will not provide the financial rewards which these women need. It is also necessary to bear in mind the potential for exploitation which may occur in a situation where earnings are not available. Future research might include an assessment of schemes which offer women living in deprived areas positive experiences of work. It would also need to examine the positive and negative implications of this work.

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APPENDIX A

MAP OF SHEFFIELD:

**ILLUSTRATING
KELVIN/THORPE
and
GREENHILL/BRADWAY**

Map Showing
The Kelvin / Thorpe &
Greenhill / Bradway Areas



APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

CHECK INTERVIEWEE RETURNER / NON-RETURNER

SECTION 1 QUALIFICATIONS AND WORK HISTORY

ALL INTERVIEWEES

A) QUALIFICATIONS - Information concerning qualifications will be available from the quantitative questionnaire. I will need to check this.

B) EDUCATION

1) What type of school did you attend?

- a) Single sex or co-educational
- b) Grammar, secondary etc.

2) What did you feel about school?
(Probe - like/dislike/interested/bored, why did you like/dislike/were interested or bored at school?)

3) What did friends think about school?
(Probe - how did they behave? why?)

4) What did your parents feel about your education?
(Probe - interested/disinterested/encouraging?)

5) What did you want to do after leaving school?
(Probe - job/training/further education, why? what type? advice, where from?)

C WORK HISTORY PRIOR TO CHILDBEARING

- 6) What did you do when you left school?
(Probe - what type of job/course?, why? where? OR
if unemployed - why, how long, what did you do, how did you feel?)

IF APPLICABLE - FIRST JOB

- 7) What was your first job?
(Probe - description of duties, industry/occupation, full-time/part-time, hours, permanent/temporary/casual, fringe benefits, for example, sick pay, holiday pay, pensions?)
- 8) Where was this job?
(Probe - Sheffield/elsewhere?)
- 9) When did you start this job?
- 10) What did you feel about this job?
(Probe - like/dislike/interested/bored, why?)
- 11) How long did you stay in this job?
(Probe - why did you leave?, when did you leave?)
- 12) Who were the other people you worked with?
(Probe - colleagues - women/men, ages, did you see colleagues out of work, who were your supervisors/managers - male/female?)

SUBSEQUENT JOBS BEFORE CHILDBEARING

- 13) Apart from this first job, how many other jobs did you have BEFORE having children?
- 14) What was your second/third etc. job?
(Probe - description of duties, industry/occupation, hours, full-time/part-time, permanent/temporary/casual, fringe benefits, for example, sick pay, holiday pay, etc.?)

REPEAT QUESTIONS 8 - 12 FOR EACH JOB

CHECK - i) Last job before having children
 ii) Date that interviewee left employment

SECTION 2 - IF IN PAID EMPLOYMENT AT THE TIME OF INTERVIEW

A EMPLOYMENT SINCE CHILDBEARING

- 1) How long did you stay at home, to look after your children, before going back to work?
(Probe - maternity leave, why/why not, why not return to work before, feelings about staying at home?)
- 2) What was your reason for going back to work?
(Probe - boredom/ isolation, financial; for independence, for household, career orientations?)

I would like to talk to you now about the paid work that you done SINCE returning to work, after being a full-time housewife. When I talk about paid work I don't just mean a job that you go out to work for, I mean ANY kind of paid work either outside or inside you home. For example, childminding, outwork, casual labour.

- 3) How many paid jobs have you had SINCE returning to work?
- 4) What was your first/second etc. job since returning to work?
(Probe for each job - description of duties, industry/occupation, permanent/temporary/casual, fringe benefits?)
- 5) Where was this job?
(Probe - Sheffield/elsewhere?)
- 6) When did you start this job?
- 7) What did you feel about this job?
(Probe - like/dislike/interested/bored, why?)
- 8) How long did you stay in this job?
- 9) Who were the other people you worked with?
(Probe - colleagues - women/men, ages, do you see colleagues out of work, who were your supervisors/managers - male female?)

- 10) Why did you apply for this job?
(Probe - financial, interest in the job, boredom/isolation at home, personal contacts, convenience?)
- 11) What hours did/do you work?
(Probe - full-time, part-time, times, why did you choose to work these hours, are they fixed/flexi-time?)

FOR PRESENT JOB ONLY

- 12) What chances are there for promotion in your job?
(Probe - what would duties be, money, - if NO - why not?)
- 13) Have you been promoted in your job?
(If YES - why, how?)
- 14) What would you feel if you were offered promotion?
(Probe - if NOT wanted - why not? if wanted - why?)
- 15) Have you received any training where you work?
(If YES - what sort, in- house etc.)
- 16) What workers receive training where you work?
(Probe - full-time workers, men/women?)
- 17) Would you consider undertaking any form of training outside of work?
(Probe - night school, O.U., day-time college, barriers to training eg. childcare, money?)
- 18) What is your most important reason for having a job?
- 19) How much do you earn before deductions?

B TRANSPORT

- 20) How do you get to work?
(Probe - access to car and ability to drive?)
- 21) How long does your journey take you?
(Probe - difficulties, stress, why this length of time - childcare?)
- 22) When you decided to apply for your present job - how important was it for you to consider the time it would take to travel to work?

C JOB SEARCH

I want to talk to you now about applying for jobs.

- 23) When you were thinking about going back to work, were the sort of jobs that you were looking for available?
- 24) How long were you looking for a job before you got your present job?
- 25) How did you find out about your present job?
(Probe - newspaper (which one), job centre, friends, relatives, direct contact with employer?)

IF FRIENDS/RELATIVES

- 26a How did they know about the job?
(Probe - are they employed/unemployed, what job do they have, how often do you keep in touch with them?)

IF DIRECT CONTACT WITH EMPLOYER

- 26b) How did you contact the firm?
(Probe - personal contact, did you contact them, they did contact you, in writing, why these employers?)

REPEAT QUESTIONS 25 AND 26A/B FOR EACH JOB AFTER CHILDBEARING

SECTION 3 - IF NOT IN PAID WORK AT TIME OF INTERVIEW

- 1) What are your reasons for not being in a paid job, at the moment?
(Probe - not looking for a job, why not? childcare, care of care of other dependents, no jobs available?)
- 2) Have you ever had a paid job since having children?

When I talk about paid work, I don't just mean a job that you go out to work for, but ANY kind of paid work, either inside or outside the home. For example, childminding, part-time cleaning, outwork, any casual labour.

If NO to question 2 go to 14
If YES to question 2

A) EMPLOYMENT SINCE CHILDBEARING

- 3) What made you think about going back to paid work?
(Probe - money, company, boredom/isolation, financial - individual/household?)
- 4) How many paid jobs have you had since having children?
- 5) What was your second/third etc. job since having your children?
(Probe for EACH JOB - number, description of duties, industry/occupation, permanent/temporary/casual, fringe benefits, reasons for returning to job after a break or taking this job, more than one at a time?)

ALSO FOR EACH JOB SINCE CHILDBEARING

- 6) Where was this job?
(Probe - Sheffield/elsewhere?)
- 7) When did you start this job?

- 8) How did you find out about this job?
(Probe - newspaper, job centre, friends, relatives, contact with employers?)

IF FRIENDS/RELATIVES

- 9a) How did they know about the job?
(Probe - are they employed/unemployed, what job do they do, how often do you keep in touch with them?)

IF DIRECT CONTACT WITH EMPLOYERS

- 9b) How did you contact employers?
(Probe - personal contact, writing, why?)
- 10) What did you feel about this job?
(Probe - like/dislike/interested/bored, why?)
- 11) How long did you stay in this job?
(Probe - why/when did you leave?)
- 12) Who were the other people you worked with?
(Probe - colleagues, -women/men, seem out of work, who are your supervisors/managers - male/female?)
- 13) What hours did you work?
(Probe - full-time/part-time, times, why these hours, were hours fixed or flexi-time?)

- CHECK - i) Date of leaving last employment
ii) Length of time at home without a paid job

B) REASONS FOR WANTING TO RETURN TO PAID WORK

If NO to question 2

- 14) When did you first start thinking about going back to work?
(Probe - why this particular time?)

- 15) What made you think about returning to paid work?
(Probe - companionship/boredom/isolation, financial - individual, household?)

FOR ALL INTERVIEWEES NOT IN EMPLOYMENT

- 16) When do you want to return to paid work?
(Probe - why this particular time, constraints stopping earlier return, for example, childcare, lack of available jobs)

- 17) What type of job would you like?
(Probe - is it the same as before, or different - why? if looking for employment - what sort?)

- 18) How available are these jobs in Sheffield?
(Probe - would you be prepared to accept another sort of job, what?)

- 19) Have you taken any sort of training, since being at home with children, which would help you to get a job?
(Probe - if YES - what, where, how did you know about it, if NO why not - barriers eg. childcare)

- 20) What hours would you like to work?
(Probe - full-time, part-time, times, why?)

C) TRANSPORT

- 21) How would you get to work?
(Probe - access to car, ability to drive)
- 22) How much time would you be prepared to spend travelling to work each day?

D JOB SEARCH

- 23) How long have you been looking for a job?
(Probe - have you sent off application forms, interviews - explore)
- 24) How are you looking for a job?
(Probe - newspaper, job centre, friends, relatives, contact with employers)

SECTION 4 - SPATIAL RELATIONSHIP TO EMPLOYMENT - ALL INTERVIEWEES

- A) **TENURE** - Information concerning tenure will be available from the quantitative questionnaire. Check.
- 1) What reasons did you have for moving to this address?
(Probe - partner's job, this part of Sheffield convenient availability from council?)

IF MOVED TO SHEFFIELD DUE TO PARTNER'S EMPLOYMENT

- 2) What difference, if any, has moving to Sheffield made to your chances of getting the sort of job you would like?
- 3) How does living at Kelvin/Thorpe or Greenhill/Bradway, affect your chances of getting a job?
(Probe - negative or positive discrimination?)

SECTION 5 - SOCIAL NETWORK - ALL INTERVIEWEES

I would like to talk to you now about your family and friends.

- 1) Where do your parents live?
(Probe - outside/inside Sheffield, nearby?)
- 2) What job does/did your father do?
- 3) Did your mother have a paid job BEFORE and AFTER having children?
(Probe - type of job, hours?)
- 4) What does your father/mother think about you going back to work?
(Probe - supportive/non-supportive, help with job search, childcare?)
- 5) How often do you keep in contact with other members of your family, apart from your partner and children?
(Probe - who, less/more than before working, OR will returning affect level of contact, isolation?)
- 6) How often do you keep in touch with friends?
(Probe - as with question 5)
- 7) How often do you keep in touch with neighbours?
(Probe - as with question 5)
- 8) When you decided to return to work, - did you talk about this to anyone else?
(Probe - who, their reaction, IF NO - why not?)

SECTION 6 - CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

A - ELDERLY AND DISABLED - ALL INTERVIEWEES

- 1) Apart from your partner and children, do you have responsibility for caring for another adult member of your family?

IF NO QUESTION 1

- 2) Do you think that in the future you will have responsibility for caring for another adult member of your family?
(Probe - if yes - how would this affect your ability to work?)

IF YES TO QUESTION 1

- 3) What help do you give?
(Probe - how much time does it take up, does it affect your ability to work, IF NOT EMPLOYED - how might it affect returning to work?)

B - CHILDCARE - IF INTERVIEWEE EMPLOYED

Check information from quantitative questionnaire concerning ages and amount of children.

- 4) How are your children cared for when you are at work?
(Probe - main carer/s, if nursery - private/ local authority, cost, after school, holidays, if relevant - evenings, weekends?)
- 5) What arrangements do you make when your children are ill?
(Probe - friends, relatives, interviewee takes time off work, her husband/partner takes time off work?)
- 6) How difficult has it been to sort out arrangements for your childrens care, so that you could go back to work?
(Probe - who has made the arrangements - interviewee, her husband/partner?)

C - CHILDCARE - IF INTERVIEWEE NOT IN PAID WORK

Check information from quantitative questionnaire concerning ages and amount of children.

- 7) If you return to work, how would your children be cared for when you are at work?
(Probe - main carer/s, if nursery - private or local authority, cost, after school, holidays, if relevant - evenings, weekends?)

- 8) What arrangements would you make if your children were ill?
(Probe - friends, relatives, interviewees takes time off work, husband/partner takes time off work?)

- 9) How difficult will it be to sort out arrangements for your children's care, so that you can go back to work?
(Probe - who will make the arrangements - interviewee or her husband/partner, are carers available, proximity, cost of care?)

SECTION 8 - ABOUT THE HOUSEHOLD - ALL INTERVIEWEES

- 1) Is your husband/partner employed at the moment?

If No - why - eg. disabled unemployed?

If Yes - what job does he do?

- 2) Does his job affect your ability to be employed?
(Probe - eg. night shift, working away from home, plus side - hours coinciding)

- 3) What does your husband/partner think about you returning to work?

I'd like to talk to you now about the jobs that are done around the house, including looking after the children.

- 4) What jobs do you alone do?
(Probe - ask for examples, how often?)
- 5) What jobs does your husband/partner alone do?
(Probe - ask for examples, how often?)
- 6) What jobs do you both take turns in doing?
(Probe - how often?)
- 7) What do you feel about this routine?

IF EMPLOYED

- 8) Has this routine changed since being back at work?
(Probe - how, why, has interviewee brought about changes what does husband/partner feel, difficulties in relationship due to changes?)

- 9) How does having a paid job affect your health?
(Probe - stress, tired, mentally better?)

IF NOT IN PAID WORK

- 10) When you return to paid work, how will this routine carry on?
(Probe - will you need to change it, do you anticipate problems?)
- 11) What affect do you think that returning to work will have on your health?